WITCH HAZEL FAMILY.
HAMAMELIDACEAE.

Witch Hazel.
Wych Hazel.

Hamamelis virginiana.

Found from late September to November, by woodland pools,—near water always.

This is a shrub, or small tree, from 6 to 12 feet in height, with wide-spreading branches, very tough fibre, and a tight, firm bark, smooth and shining at the tips, of a mottled gray-brown color.

The large oval leaf, with its broad, flat shape, has a wavy and irregularly notched margin, many strong ribs, a tough texture, and a surface which is shining above, and hairy along the underside of the ribs; of a vigorous green color,—in autumn a strong gray-yellow. The leaves, on stout little foot-stems, are alternate.

The flower has 4 slender ribbons for petals, and 8 stamens (only 4 of which bear anthers), of a delicate greenish-yellow color; the calyx is small, and parted into 4 sharp divisions which show in the form of a square between the petals; it is downy, thin, and pale tawny in color. Beneath the calyx are 2 or 3 little bracts; and tough, bark-like, brown outer bracts hold 2 or 3 flowers in a close group upon a short stem; these groups are scattered all along the branches in the angles of the leaves.

Nothing of the spring approaches the mystery of this flower. Late in autumn the straggling Witch Hazel bushes, standing about a pool of dark water in front of bare woods, lift their full tawny leafage and evasive pale golden bloom against the lavender twiggery, and purple-gray sky, filling the air with their strange fragrance. Their seeds ripen during the following summer; they are brown, and nut-like, and the pods will burst with a subdued "pop-pop" if taken into a warm room.

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