

## Hamamelidaceae witch-hazel family

Trees or shrubs, ranging throughout eastern and tropical Asia; of the 120 species, a single common understory shrub reaches NS. Flowers are regular, perfect or unisexual. Corolla is 4–5-merous. Ovary is bilocular, producing a woody capsule, dehiscing at the top.

### ***Hamamelis* L.** **Witch-hazel**

Our single shrub bears alternate toothed leaves. Inflorescence is axillary and short-pedicellate. Corolla is four-merous. Petals are long and slender, subtended by short deltate sepals. Stamens also number four, shorter than the sepals and alternate with bractlike staminodes. Fruit is a bristly capsule.

### ***Hamamelis virginiana* L.** **Witch-hazel; hamamélis de Virginie**



Photo by Beth Cameron



Photo by Ross Hall

Shrub may reach 5m in height, bearing yellowish-brown twigs. Winter buds are stalked and covered with yellowish tomentum. Leaves are widely ovate, obovate or oblong, their margins wavy and toothed and sometimes with a shallow sinus at the base. Straplike petals and stamens are in fours. Fruit is a woody capsule, often with persistent sepals, covered in gray tomentum. Mature fruit is persistent for one year then dehisces to release shiny black seeds.

One of our few truly autumn flowering plants, about the time of leaf-drop.

Shade-tolerant, frequents rocky forests and ravines where there is ample water.

Scattered in Yarmouth Co. Common in Kings and Lunenburg counties, becoming infrequent eastward. So far absent from Cape Breton.

NS to ON and MN, south to TX and FL. Not known from PE.