Warm Day

Cold Day

On warm days in early spring witch hazel petals unfurl (like a party blower), but on cold days they roll up for protection.

* Actual size of unfurled petal is about ¾ inch.

While **witch hazel** is a fascinating name, its origin has nothing to do with the characters who ride on brooms. It probably comes from the old English word *wyche*, meaning “to bend.” Dowsers used witch hazel branches as a “witching stick” to uncover precious metal or underground water springs. They believed that the branches would bend towards the ground upon discovering these treasures.

Witch hazel also has been used for medicinal purposes for centuries. Native Americans used the bark and twigs to treat anything from colds to insect bites. Since the 1850s several companies have specialized in producing witch hazel extract, which you can find today in numerous lotions, toothpastes, and soaps.

See if any products you have at home list witch hazel as an ingredient. You might be surprised how many you can find!
Did you know?

At the Arnold Arboretum, we like to claim that you can find a shrub or tree in bloom here every month of the year. Most years this is true, thanks to our many witch hazels.

Can you find the four different witch hazels marked on the map along Meadow Road?

1. Arnold Promise witch hazel
   *Hamamelis x intermedia* ‘Arnold Promise’

2. Jelena witch hazel
   *Hamamelis x intermedia* ‘Jelena’

3. Chinese witch hazel
   *Hamamelis mollis*

4. Vernal witch hazel
   *Hamamelis vernalis*

**Letterboxing!**

Letterboxing is a fun way to explore witch hazels in the woods of the Arboretum. For more information on letterboxing, and to find other letterboxes in the Arboretum, go to www.letterboxing.org.

*Be careful; winter weather conditions are variable!*

To find the letterbox, follow these directions:
Walk down Meadow Road to ③ on the map above.
Continue to the bench, check the label of the tree directly behind it. It should read:
   585-88°F, *Acer palmatum*.

Looking west into the woods a path runs along the base of the hills.
Follow the path for 108 steps until you reach the witch hazel *Hamamelis x intermedia* ‘Jelena’ with a an accession number 462-65*A.
Circle around that to the back of the trunk and look for the letterbox.
Follow the directions inside the box and leave everything as you found it.