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## Research Spotlight

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### Plant Spotlight: Witch Hazel

Latin Name: *Hamamelis virginiana*

Witch Hazel is a deciduous, upright tree, that grows in part-shade to shade environments. It can be found in Zone 3-8 and is useful for food for wildlife and possesses medicinal uses for humans (Bryant, n.d.). The bark is a smooth gray to gray-brown. Witch Hazel has small tree or shrub-like branches and grows up to twenty feet tall (Seller, Jensen, Niemiera, & Peterson, 2021). The Morton Arboretum states, “Common witch-hazel is a large shrub with a picturesque irregular branching habit that naturally grows along woodland edges (n.d.).



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Witch Hazel is one of the most important plants to Northeastern Indigenous people for the treatment of superficial wounds and inflammatory skin conditions (Trueb, 2014). Witch hazel is found in a wide range of cosmetic products and over-the-counter remedies and drug products (Engels & Brinckmann, 2017). The over-the-counter preparation is described as a colorless distillate prepared from recently cut and partially dried dormant twigs (Engels & Brinkmann, 2017). Common uses are linked to anti-inflammatory actions for topical use on the skin. Engels & Brinkmann cite relief for hemorrhoids, and temporary relief of burning and itching (2017), Fulcher states using it to address varicose veins, eczema, psoriasis, acne, and hot inflamed

conditions of the skin (L. Fulcher, personal communication, July 20, 2021).

Because of its astringent properties, Witch Hazel is a common remedy for varicose veins, minor cuts and abrasions or insect bites, most likely

sults, and to understand how the plant was processed. Often, studies will talk about the plant material being used, but will fail to elaborate on the plant preparation. Without complete information, we cannot be sure how to reproduce those same results.

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due to the tannins in the leaves and bark. But, is important to note that the distillate, which is most commonly found over-the-counter, does not contain active tannins (Engels & Brinkmann, 2017). For these preparations, it is most likely the alcohol providing the astringent effect.

Documented studies support the traditional use of Witch Hazel as a topical anti-inflammatory. However, it is important to carefully read the research on the formula used to achieve these re-



Jennifer is an AIA volunteer member of the Research Committee and contributes quarterly to *Aromatics in Action's* research column on behalf of the AIA research committee. Her love of research and science comes from her studies in her Master of Science in Aromatherapy from the American College of Healthcare Sciences. She currently resides in NE Ohio with her two children. She is a small business owner of two holistic businesses, Heaven & Earth Aromatherapy and Women, Yoga & The Moon. Her passion is teaching holistic and yoga education, writing, and creating well-researched and gorgeous smelling aromatherapy products. Learn more at [www.heavenandeartharomatherapy.com](http://www.heavenandeartharomatherapy.com) & [www.womenyogamoon.com](http://www.womenyogamoon.com)

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