

Witch Hazel



Witch-Hazel by Franz Eugen Köhler in 1897

Herb: Witch Hazel

Botanical name: *Hamamelis virginiana*

Family name: Hamamelidaceae family

Description and Background: Witch hazel is a golden-star flower shrub or small tree that blooms in cold weather. There are many interpretations of the name witch hazel's branches for dowsing, also called "water witching." Yet another idea is that it stems from the Middle English word *wicke*, meaning "lively," which describes how the stems become alive and move when water is detected below. The energetics are cooling and drying (Harder, 2021, paras. 6-18).

Parts used: Bark, twigs, leaves, and buds.

Properties: Anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, astringent, and hemostatic.

Uses: Great for skin irritations like hemorrhoids, itching, and burning. It can also be used for minor bleeding, eye inflammation, mucous membrane inflammation, vaginal dryness after menopause, varicose veins, hemorrhoids, bruises, insect bites, minor burns, acne, sensitive scalp, and other skin irritation (WebMD, n.d., para. 3).

Preparations and Dose: To make tea add 1 Tablespoon of the dried leaves or green buds per 1 cup of hot water. Steep and enjoy 1-3 cups daily. You can also make witch hazel oil by adding bark and twigs to half a jar. Cover with a carrier oil and set in a cool dark place for 4-6 weeks, shaking daily. When done, strain, and store in glass. A tincture can be made similarly, except with 80-100 proof vodka instead of carrier oil. Then use up to 1-3 mL at a time up to 3 times daily. You can also make a poultice and apply directly on the skin (Harder, 2021, paras. 19-25).

Cautions & Contraindications: In some people, witch hazel might cause stomach upset when taken by mouth. Large doses might cause liver problems, otherwise witch hazel is safe. (WebMD, n.d., paras. 8-10).

Childbearing Uses: Witch hazel can be used on pads to make padcicles by using liquid witch hazel usually bought in a store and spreading it on a pad and putting those in the freezer. It can also be used for varicose veins on your vulva, inflammation or swelling in pregnancy, and vaginal dryness after menopause. (WebMD, n.d.)

Resources

Harder, C. F. (2021, February 4). *The folklore and medicine of witch hazel*. Chestnut School of Herbal Medicine.

<https://chestnutherbs.com/the-folklore-and-medicine-of-witch-hazel/>

Kohler, F. (1897). *Witch-Hazel* [Illustration]. Wikipedia.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Witch-hazel>

WebMD. (n.d.). *Witch hazel: Overview, uses, side effects, precautions, interactions, dosing and reviews*.

<https://www.webmd.com/vitamins/ai/ingredientmono-227/witch-hazel#:~:text=Some%20people%20apply%20witch%20hazel,scalp%2C%20and%20other%20skin%20irritations.>