

## Chinese Witch-hazel (*Hamamelis mollis*) – Narrated by Peter Del Tredici

My name is Peter Del Tredici. I've worked here at the Arboretum for 35 years. I retired in 2014, and I'm currently the Emeritus Senior Research Scientist.

So, in 1994, I was in charge of the living collections. I was Director of the Living Collections, which means I was in charge of all the issues relating to the grounds, where things get planted, when things get removed, all the issues about work assignments in the Arboretum.

And in the fall of that year, in September, I was lucky enough to go on a trip with the North America-China Plant Exploration Consortium, known as NACPEC, to a mountain in central China, known as Wudang Shan, with a group of, I believe it was four other scientists from other botanic gardens in the United States, plus a group of collaborators from China who knew actually the area well and acted as our guides.

It was a hike. We were very wet. We call this site where we were "Hubei horticultural heaven," because we found the paperbark maple there, we found the *Stewartia sinensis* growing there, and we found this beautiful witch-hazel growing there as well. It was pretty spectacular. So the weather, the fact that we were soaking wet, that didn't really bother us that much.

This species is called the Chinese witch-hazel and that's *Hamamelis mollis*, and it's called "mollis," that means soft. And if you actually go up and you rub the leaf a little bit, you'll see that it's covered with these very fine hairs. It's very soft to the touch, a little bit like velvet, almost. It's actually a spectacular plant.

But this was a seedling that I dug up on that hike, and to see this thing 25 years later... From my perspective, these plants are like my kids. So, it's like my kid is grown up and is now a big success. That's a way I tend to view it.

Going on a collecting trip is extremely exciting because I'm used to seeing these plants grown in the Arnold Arboretum and other gardens, and you see them in people's yards, so you sort of get used to them as cultivated plants and you think of them in those terms.

But when you actually see a species growing in the wild, it's a very different experience. Plants don't look anything the way they do when they're cultivated at the Arboretum, or in your yard. And to actually be able to see these plants growing in the wild and understand where they come from, that is really special.