At the Arnold Arboretum, you can find a shrub or tree in bloom here every month of the year; in the winter, that is mostly thanks to our witch-hazels. Their flowers add splashes of yellow, red, pink, orange, even purple to the landscape. They also add fragrance ensuring that the few pollinators around on a warm winter day will be enticed to visit them.

While witch-hazel is a fascinating name, its origin has nothing to do with the characters who ride on brooms. The name was used in England under Henry VIII to describe the plant used for water-witching or divining where the dowser holds a forked stick to find underground water. Early plant collectors arriving in this country used the word witch-hazel to name the plant that Linnaeus called Hamamelis in 1742.

Hamamelis x intermedia ‘Arnold Promise’ can be found around the corner of the Visitor Center on your right as you leave the building. The Arnold Arboretum staff travel around the world to ensure plants are collected from the wild. Expeditions to Japan in 1892 and China in 1907 resulted in witch-hazels from the two countries being planted here, in close proximity to one other. In 1928, propagated seeds from the Chinese witch-hazel showed that it had received pollen from a neighboring Japanese plant. This accidental cross was so successful that the name Hamamelis x intermedia was introduced and used for all crosses between Chinese and Japanese witch-hazels. The seedling planted beside the Visitor Center was deemed “best of all in flower” and, in 1963, was registered as the cultivar ‘Arnold Promise’. It is now one of the most popular witch-hazels and will be the 2024 Arbor Day Seedling, given to members enrolled at the ‘Arbor Day’ level and above. To learn more or to become a member visit our website.
Highlights of the *Hamamelis* Collection

1. *Hamamelis x intermedia* ‘Arnold Promise’
2. *Hamamelis japonica* forma *flavopurpurascens*
3. *Hamamelis mollis*
4. *Hamamelis mollis* ‘Iwado’
5. *Hamamelis x intermedia* ‘Tsukuba no Kurenai’
6. *Hamamelis x intermedia* ‘Ruby Glow’
7. *Hamamelis* ‘Brevipetala’
8. *Hamamelis virginiana*
9. *Hamamelis vernalis*
10. *Hamamelis mollis* ‘Princeton Gold’
11. *Hamamelis mollis* ‘Wisley Supreme’
12. *Hamamelis ovalis*