

Leaves, Limbs, Needles & Boughs

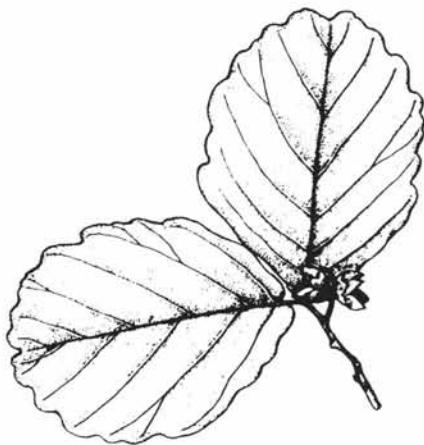
by Fred D. Opperman

Tree Trivia Question: What spruce was first discovered on Pikes Peak in 1862?

For this month, I've picked a tree that is native to Illinois and blooms in the fall. This in itself is very unusual. This is what you may call an understory tree or a forest tree.

Witch Hazel — *Hammamelis virginiana*.

Leaves: Alternate, simple, blades obovate, rounded or at times pointed at the tip. Up to six inches long, sometimes nearly half as wide, dark green and usually somewhat hairy on the upper surface. Paler on the lower side.



Bark: Light brown, and as tree gets older the bark is somewhat broken into small scales.

Twigs: Slender, flexible, brown, hairy at first but becoming smooth; leaf scars alternate, half-round with 3 bundle traces.



Flowers: Blooms from September to November, several in a cluster, each with 4 bright yellow petals up to 2/3 inch long.



Height: This is a small tree with a height of around 25 feet.

Wood: Hard, heavy, close grained, and light brown.

This is a tree to be naturalized along the forest edge and in shrub beds.

Trivia answer: The Blue Spruce.

Credit: **Forest Trees of Illinois**

Deer Problems?

Are you having problems with buck rubs on your trees? In my travels around the Chicago area, I have noticed that some courses really have problems with the buck deer rubbing and polishing their antlers on trees. This severely damages the trunk of the tree and if it is a small tree can kill it. In my own tree nursery I have this problem and hopefully this year I will be able to solve it. I purchased 4" plastic drain tile and cut it to 4' lengths and slit it length-wise (use a linoleum knife). I then slipped this over the tree trunk. You take a piece of 12" x 18" heavy plastic or vinyl to put around the tree trunk and then push the plastic tile over this and down. I can cover a tree in about 10 seconds with this method. I used the plastic/vinyl file or report folder cover to protect my trees and it worked really slick. If you have a Farm & Fleet store near you, they sell the 4" tile for 19 cents per foot.

Your trees need to be protected starting in early September for it is then that the bucks will start to do their rubbing, if not sooner. In removing the plastic tile from the trees, be sure to use the piece of plastic/vinyl to again protect the tree from the sharp edges of the plastic drain tile. The tree protectors should be removed by late March. Or they could be left on for your smaller trees to protect them from ball damage.

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