

Series: You might not care, but it's a good thing somebody did!

Episode 1 - Promise of spring

February 25, 2016 - I was returning home from CPC after a sales meeting in blinding snow (perhaps many of you remember pushing snow and salting for about 30 hours). Just as I entered my yard, there, in blazing glory, was my witch-hazel. No amount of snow could hide its welcoming show of spring.



Today is March 9th and it shows no sign of relenting; it is sixty again today and, I do believe, my witch-hazel is declaring victory!

It was 1928. Plant propagator William Judd (of Viburnum fame) was collecting seeds from the base of a Chinese witch-hazel. Only seven

of the seedlings survived; they appeared to have attributes of both the Chinese (*Hamamelis mollis*) and Japanese witch-hazels (*H. japonica*). Only one of these showed any promise. This natural hybrid would eventually become known as *Hamamelis x intermedia* (1945).

This seedling differed from its parents, in that, it maintained a tight vase-shaped form eventually reaching 15 to 20' in height and spread. It took 50 plus years to reach this size and it still going strong. Blooming as early as mid-February in Michigan, it bears inch long, clear-yellow, fragrant petals which can last for a number of weeks some years. Even when it is done blooming, it's not done. The bloom of this variety like many witch-hazels has a reddish calyx (a cupped after-bloom) which gives color until its leaves appear. And, as with many witch-hazels, its fall colors are varied and long-lasting.

Nearly fifty years later, this promising seedling is recognized "as one of the finest shrubs to originate on the grounds" of Arnold Arboretum. It was registered September 13, 1963 carrying the name of the arboretum's benefactor, James Arnold. Since then, it has been known as *Hamamelis x intermedia 'Arnold Promise'*.

"...as Donald Wyman put it so well - "an old friend, known for its performance, counted on because it has been there a long time, and not considered unusual for these reasons." But the 'Arnold Promise' is special. Its promise is the promise of spring." - Weaver, Jr., Richard E. "Hamamelis 'Arnold Promise.'" *Arnoldia* 41 (1) 1981: 30-31



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