Horticulture Report February 2022

Cunninghamia lanceolata (Chinese Fir) which is not a fir

The tree is a native of China and East Asia, and its height varies according to growing conditions, anywhere from 50 to 200 feet.

This tree was brought to the American South in the 1800’s and was previously used as timber for sailing masts and ship building.

It is hardy zones 7 to 9 and grows best in well drained soil, especially acidic clay. Sun is preferred.

In China, the roots, leaves and bark are used for pain relief.

My tree was purchased at the Scott Arboretum plant sale In a 3 gallon container and now, about 20 years later, is over 75 feet.

Hammamelis (Witch Hazel)

These larger, maintenance free shrubs should be planted in full sun for best blooming. They can be pruned just after blooming if you need to rein them in. They grow from 10-20 feet tall, depending on the cultivar.

They grow in zones 5-8, but the natives are the hardier.

Many of you may know of the medical product Witch Hazel which is a natural astringent made from the bark. The largest producer is in CT.

American witch hazel, Hamamelis virginiana, is native to the east coast from Canada to GA and blooms Oct-Dec. with yellow flowers.

Ozark witch hazel is native to Missouri and Arkansas and is smaller, at 10 Feet and has yellow and red flowers

Japanese witch hazel Hamamelis japonica blooms January to March with showy yellow and red blooms

Chinese witch hazel, H. Mollis, has yellow blooms from January to March

The most prized Hamamelis is a hybrid, H.x intermedia ‘Jelena’ with fragrant orange flower in the fall.

All Hamamelis need winter chill to flower, and should be watered and mulched in summer. Although not the preferred food for deer, it is best to use deer repellant on young, tender plants.