

Service Berry (fruiting in spring), Witch Hazel (fruiting in August), and Hobblebush (fruiting in Autumn) are all important food sources for birds and other wildlife. They can be seen throughout the park.

Service Berry is important for pollinators because its white blooms are one of the earliest spring flowers, providing a food source when few other options are available. Its name originates from the practice in colonial times of storing the bodies of those who died during the winter until the ground had thawed so that a grave could be dug. Because there were usually a number of individuals who had died that winter, the community would get together for one large “**service**” in the spring to bless and bury their dead. The service berry usually bloomed at the same time the service was held, hence the name. The tree is also sometimes called a shad bush, because it blooms when the shad begin to appear in streams as they return from the ocean to spawn. Its oval leaves are finely serrated. Its gray-brown bark has vertical dark stripes. Its blue berries are edible. Shown here is a cedar waxwing on a service berry.



In contrast, **Witch Hazel** is one of the last shrubs to bloom. Its yellow flowers appear in late fall while the capsules of fruit from the previous spring are still on the branches. When the capsules are mature, they “explode” throwing the seed as much as 30 feet. The name comes from the middle English word “wiche” meaning pliable. The branches which bend easily were used as divining rods. An extract of the leaves and bark is still used to make the salve “witch hazel” that you can buy in a pharmacy. Its distinctive leaves have a wavy edge and an uneven base. Shown here is a gray squirrel eating the seeds of the witch hazel.



The **Hobblebush** is easy to distinguish from the other two because its leaves are arranged across from each other on the twig. That arrangement is called “opposite” in contrast to the “alternate” leaves of the service berry and witch hazel. Notice how the branches bend over and root to the ground forming a network. If you try to walk through a thicket of hobblebush, you would be **hobbled** and tripped. Its white flowers form a flat-topped cluster that give way to red-black berries,

If you want to learn more about these shrubs, try going to these websites:

<https://gobotany.nativeplanttrust.org/species/amelanchier/canadensis/>

<https://gobotany.nativeplanttrust.org/species/hamamelis/virginiana/>

<https://gobotany.nativeplanttrust.org/species/viburnum/lantanoides>