

Hello Trees Resource Sheet

What to look for outdoors in March

Hazel catkins: and hazel's secret second flower



Have a magnifying glass and a piece of wool or string in your pocket.



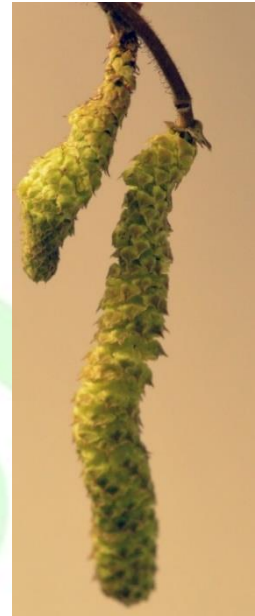
Lots of hazel catkins

You can't have missed the floppy yellow catkins on at least one tree on the edge of every field!

In the last 2 months they have gone from small, hard, mauve sausage-shapes to long dangly yellow swingers.

They are **hazel** catkins and the yellow is the colour of the pollen that is swelling up to their surface.

Soon the pollen will burst out and be carried away by the wind.



Hazel catkins



Where will the pollen be carried?

Where is the flower that needs to catch the pollen in order for seeds to grow?

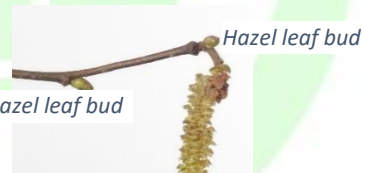


Can you see another kind of flower on the hazel stems?



Clues: it is very small, we can only see part of it and it looks like something else. I call it 'hazel's secret flower'.

No, not the tiny green pointed-egg shape. Those are leaf buds.



Hazel leaf bud

Hazel leaf bud

Can you see something else that is the same shape, size and colour as a leaf bud but has teeny tiny red tentacles sticking out of the point?

Those red bits are all that can be seen of the other flowers of the hazel tree. Plant scientists, botanists, call the part of the flower that collects the pollen the '**stigma**'. Each stigma is held up on the tip of a tiny '**style**'.



It is said that the red stigmas only come out a few days after pollen of the same tree has been shed.



Can you see the pollen sitting on the surface of the catkins? Or has it blown away? Or is it still developing?

Are the red stigmas out only on trees where the pollen has been shed from the catkins?



Female hazel flower

Do let us know what you see.

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These dangly hazel catkins are amazing when you look up close. Children have been fascinated and loved hazel catkins for centuries. They call them 'lambs' tails'.



What colours can you see? Yellow? Red? Brown?

Can you see that the catkin is a cluster of lots of tiny tiny bobbles?



A catkin is really a cluster of flowers. Each tiny tiny bobble is a flower!

Sometimes you can see if pollen has been caught on the sticky red stigmas.



Use your magnifying glass and look for one with the red stigma tentacles splayed outwards and covered in microscopic yellow powder.



I wonder whether your hazel flower will grow into a hazel nut, the seed of the hazel tree.

Hazel nuts develop singly, as a pair, or as a cluster of up to 4 nuts.



Tie a piece of wool or string next to your pollinated hazel flower and see in autumn how many nuts grow from it.



Pair of hazel nuts



Hazel dormouse

Hazel nuts are an important food for the dormouse, sometimes called the 'hazel dormouse'.

In the Hello Trees books, a dormouse is our guide to the story of trees through the seasons.

For more about the hazel dormouse, see 'The hazel dormouse' <http://hellotrees.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/hazel-dormouse-4-7.pdf>.



It is fun to make a note of what you saw and did today and what you think it might be worth looking for next.