



Hazel Catkins

Corylus avellana

Temperament: Cold, drying
Common name: Lamb's Tails

What the Old Ones Said

Gerard wrote that hazel catkins are *cold and dry, and binding*, and that they “stay the lask.”

(*Lask* is an old word for looseness of the bowels.)

In country sayings, many catkins foretold many cradles – hazel long linked with fertility and new life.

The catkins are known as *lamb's tails*: the male flowers, appearing while winter still holds.

A Receipt for the Stillroom

To Fry the Tassels of Hazel, When Winter Begins to Loosen Its Grip

Ye Shall Need:

- Fresh hazel catkins, newly gathered
- 1 egg
- Cornflour, as much as shall make a thin batter
- A little oil, for frying
- Set honey, for drizzling

The Making Thereof:

1. Beat the egg and add cornflour slowly, until the batter be thin yet willing to cling.
2. Warm a pan with but a whisper of oil – enough to slick the bottom, not drown the offering.
3. Dip each catkin gently into the batter, coating it lightly, as one might cloak a friar in haste.
4. Lay them in the pan and fry until pale gold and lightly crisped.
5. Remove to a plate and drizzle with honey whilst still warm.
6. Eat whilst winter watches, slightly offended.

What We Use Her For

A seasonal sign more than a strong medicine.

Hazel catkins remind us that something may be active before it looks useful.

They have been taken as a light tea for winter colds and coughs, and as a simple food when the year is only just loosening.

A Small Charm for Hazel Catkins

When the tassels show themselves
before leaf or nut,
may I trust what has begun
without asking it to hurry.

Concerning Caution & Pollen:

Hazel catkins carry much golden dust and may trouble those with pollen sensitivities.

If thou art uncertain, taste first but a little, and wait a day before indulging further.

Let the body be consulted, for it is the oldest physician.

