**Media summary**

The Chinese witch-hazel (*Hamamelis mollis*) is a popular ornamental plant with scented yellow flowers appearing in winter. Its fruits act as drying squeeze catapults, which forcibly eject their seeds several meters away. A complex interplay of desiccation-driven fruit movements and seed detachment facilitates the rapid release. The acceleration of the seeds during launch exceeds 2,000 *g*, and a maximum velocity of 12 m/s is achieved. Additionally, a very high spin of up to 430 Hz is put on the seeds, which presumably stabilizes its flight and facilitates effective dispersal.