**Fatsia japonica**

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**Introduction**

The broad, deeply-lobed, dark green leaves and stiff stems of Fatsia create a bold landscape effect for any shady spot but it is especially well-suited for entranceways or container culture (Fig. 1). Upright stems bend and curve their way to about eight feet tall before falling horizontally under their own weight. New sprouts often originate toward the base of older stems keeping the plant busy to the ground. Upright clusters of showy, creamy white flowers in fall are followed in winter by shiny, black, inedible fruit. Fruits persist on the prominent stalks for several weeks. Plant three feet apart in a mass planting for a coarse-textured effect.

**General Information**

- **Scientific name:** *Fatsia japonica*
- **Pronunciation:** FAT-see-uh juh-PAW-nick-uh
- **Common name(s):** Fatsia
- **Family:** Araliaceae
- **Plant type:** shrub
- **USDA hardiness zones:** 8 through 11 (Fig. 2)
- **Planting month for zone 8:** year round
- **Planting month for zone 9:** year round
- **Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round
- **Origin:** not native to North America
- **Uses:** mass planting; specimen; container or above-ground planter; suitable for growing indoors; accent; foundation
- **Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

**Description**

- **Height:** 5 to 8 feet
- **Spread:** 3 to 10 feet
- **Plant habit:** upright; round
- **Plant density:** moderate
- **Growth rate:** moderate
- **Texture:** coarse
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: serrate
Leaf shape: star-shaped
Leaf venation: palmate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristic: fall flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: less than .5 inch
Fruit cover: fleshy
Fruit color: black
Fruit characteristic: attracts birds

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems
Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: very thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam;
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

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Invasive potential: not known to be invasive  
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

**Use and Management**

Although tough and leathery in appearance, the leaves of Japanese Fatsia cannot tolerate sunny locations. It can tolerate some filtered light but too much sun can burn the leaves and prolonged exposure will eventually kill the plant. As stems become tall and lanky, prune back to increase growth and leaf production on the bottom of the plant. Fatsia will grow in any soil that doesn’t become soggy. It also makes a nice house plant in a brightly lit area.

Propagation of Fatsia is from cuttings which root easily, or by seed which should be kept cool.

Fatsia can be occasionally bothered by scale or mealybugs.

**Pests and Diseases**

No diseases are of major concern.