

**Fothergilla major**

Edward F. Gilman

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**Introduction**

This 6- to 10-feet tall shrub covers itself with soft, white flowers each spring before leaves emerge (Fig. 1). It appears to be covered with snow when in full bloom. Bright red, orange or yellow fall color bring the shrub back to life before leaves fall to the ground.

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**General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Fothergilla major*

**Pronunciation:** Faw-thur-GIL-luh MAY-jur

**Common name(s):** Large Fothergilla

**Family:** Hamamelidaceae

**Plant type:** shrub

**USDA hardiness zones:** 5 through 8A (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 7:** year round

**Planting month for zone 8:** year round

**Planting month for zone 9:** year round

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round

**Origin:** native to North America

**Uses:** accent; border; mass planting

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

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**Description**

**Height:** 6 to 10 feet

**Spread:** 6 to 10 feet

**Plant habit:** round

**Plant density:** dense

**Growth rate:** slow

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**Texture:** medium

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** dentate

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); obovate; orbiculate

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Figure 1. Large Fothergilla.

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**Figure 2.** Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf venation: pinnate  
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous  
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: red; yellow  
Fall characteristic: showy

**Flower**

Flower color: white  
Flower characteristic: pleasant fragrance; spring flowering

**Fruit**

Fruit shape: irregular  
Fruit length: less than .5 inch  
Fruit cover: dry or hard  
Fruit color: black  
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

**Trunk and Branches**

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

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** thin

**Culture**

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun  
Soil tolerances: acidic; loam; clay; sand;  
Drought tolerance: moderate  
Soil salt tolerances: unknown  
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  
Invasive potential: native plant that often reproduces into nearby landscapes  
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant
Use and Management

The rounded form and large size makes this most appropriate for planting in a larger yard, away from the house. Use it in a shrub border to spice up the yard in spring and fall. Plant it near the corner of a large commercial building and leave it unpruned to allow the natural rounded form to emerge. Clipping the plant can reduce flowering so locate it where it can grow to its natural size.

Fothergilla can be grown in any soil except those that are excessively drained. Plants suffer in extended drought, especially in full sun. A clayey soil that holds moisture but drains well is ideal.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are usually serious enough to be damaging.