

# *Fothergilla major* Large Fothergilla, Mountain Witchalder<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

These 6- to 10-foot-tall shrub covers itself with soft, white flowers each spring before leaves emerge. 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.



Figure 1. Full Form—*Fothergilla major*: Large fothergilla, mountain witchalder.

Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 2. Leaf—*Fothergilla major*: Large fothergilla, mountain witchalder.

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Figure 3. Leaf, Fall Color—*Fothergilla major*: Large fothergilla, mountain witchalder.

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Figure 4. Flower—*Fothergilla major*: Large fothergilla, mountain witchalder.

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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 (Figure 5)



Figure 5. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**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

**Invasive potential:** native plant that often reproduces into nearby landscapes

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

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

## Description

**Height:** 6 to 10 feet

**Spread:** 6 to 10 feet

**Plant habit:** round

**Plant density:** dense

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** medium

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** dentate

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

**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

**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.