

Plant Profiles: HORT 2242 Landscape Plants II

Botanical Name: *Fothergilla gardenii*

Common Name: dwarf fothergilla, dwarf witch-alder

Family Name: Hamamelidaceae – witchhazel family

General Description: *Fothergilla gardenii* is native to southeastern United States where it grows naturally in acidic soils where the water table is close to the surface. It is a small, slow growing, deciduous shrub valued for its unique bottlebrush flowers and outstanding fall color. Flower and fall color is best when grown in full sun; however, since it requires moist soils, partial shade is preferred. The size, shape, flower and fall color of *Fothergilla gardenii* accents the landscape or perennial garden. However, in the Chicago area, chlorosis may occur in dry alkaline soils and rabbits can decimate the plant as it is a favored food. Karla Lynch, landscape architect and owner of Gardens for People, overcomes these limitations by placing dwarf fothergilla near downspouts and fencing young shrubs for the first few years in the landscape. This gives the plants time to get established and better ability to handle the onslaught of rabbits!

Zone: (4)5-8(9)

Resources Consulted:

Dirr, Michael A. *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants: Their Identification, Ornamental Characteristics, Culture, Propagation and Uses*. Champaign: Stipes, 2009. Print.

Creator: Julia Fitzpatrick-Cooper, Professor, College of DuPage

Creation Date: 2014

Keywords/Tags: Hamamelidaceae, *Fothergilla gardenii*, fothergilla, deciduous, shrub



Whole plant/Habit:

- Description: *Fothergilla gardenii* is a small, multi-stemmed mounded shrub.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: August 7, 2012
- Image File Name: dwarf_fothergilla_3484.png



Whole plant/Habit:

- Description: Dwarf fothergilla can be used as a single-specimen in the landscape or massed. It is a slow growing plant that seems to “just sit”, or barely grow, until it is established. If adequate moisture is supplied it will sucker and form a small colony.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: August 7, 2012
- Image File Name: dwarf_fothergilla_3490.png



Branch/Twig:

- Description: The zig-zag twigs are slender and covered with stellate hairs.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: August 7, 2012
- Image File Name: dwarf_fothergilla_3486.png



Bud:

- Description: The flower buds are ovoid or rounded, the vegetative buds are stalked. Both types of buds are pubescent.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: August 7, 2012
- Image File Name: dwarf_fothergilla_3485.png



Flower:

- Description: The most outstanding feature of dwarf fothergilla is the beautiful bottlebrush flowers that emerge in early spring. The flowers are apetalous (lack petals). It is the greenish-white stamens that create the show!
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: May 14, 2013
- Image File Name: dwarf_fothergilla_4644.png



Flower:

- Description: The fragrant flowers typically bloom prior to leaves forming but may also bloom just as the leaves are emerging.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: May 14, 2013
- Image File Name: dwarf_fothergilla_4645.png



Fruit:

- Description: The fading flowers are soon covered by the summer foliage. The fruit, which is a capsule, is insignificant.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: June 6, 2013
- Image File Name: dwarf_fothergilla_5214.png



Leaf:

- Description: Leaves are alternate, simple, and resemble *Hamamelis* (witchhazel) leaves with which *Fothergilla* is closely related. The newly formed leaves are covered with stellate hairs.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: May 14, 2013
- Image File Name: dwarf_fothergilla_4653.png



Leaf:

- Description: The leaves are an attractive blue-green during the growing season. The foliage adds a coarse to medium-coarse texture that complements any landscape or garden.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: August 7, 2012
- Image File Name: dwarf_fothergilla_3492.png



Leaf:

- Description: Fall color is a kaleidoscope mix of yellow, red, orange and purple. If grown in shade, fall color will be mostly yellow.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: October 27, 2012
- Image File Name: dwarf_fothergilla_7465.png

**Special ID feature(s):**

- Description: The bottlebrush spring flowers will be the best identification feature for dwarf fothergilla. When it is not in flower, the foliage and small stature will serve as identification tools.
- Image Source: Karren Wcisel, TreeTopics.com
- Image Date: May 14, 2013
- Image File Name: dwarf_fothergilla_4646.png