Fothergilla gardenii is a moisture-loving, acid soil-requiring compact small shrub with multi-season interests. Dwarf Fothergilla displays showy white-green flowers in mid-spring and vibrant late autumn foliage. It is often utilized as a specimen, group planting, or facer shrub.

FEATURES

Form

- small deciduous shrub
- maturing slowly at 3’ tall x 3’ wide
- upright rounded growth habit, becoming globular with age
- slow growth rate

Culture

- full sun to full shade
- needs moist, rich, well-drained, acid soil that is irrigated during dry periods of summer for best performance
- propagated primarily by rooted stem cuttings
- few disease or pest problems, but very subject to decline and death under alkaline soil and drought stress conditions
- moderately available in container form
- tolerant of wet sites, but not tolerant of dry conditions, partially due to the shallow root system

Foliage

- medium to dark green (occasionally blue-green) and resembling a Witchhazel leaf
- alternate, broadly obovate, with crenate margins on the upper half
- veins impressed (sunken), with the short petiole somewhat fuzzy
- autumn color a vibrant mixture of yellow-orange-pink-scarlet on the same plant at the same time
- coloring in Oct. to early Nov. and often showy, especially when placed in full to partial sun

Flowers

- white, apetalous (no petals), with the showy portions being the white filaments (to 1” long each) that expand from the emerging light green oval inflorescences
- appearing in late Apr. or early May as the leaves start to emerge and very showy, effective for 1-2 weeks

Fruits

- small olive-brown capsules, noticeable but not showy

Twigs

- light tan and zigzag, becoming gray on branches
- lightly pubescent twigs are terminated by very pubescent buds, most of which are ovoid floral buds

Trunk

- not applicable

USAGE

Function

- foundation, facer, mass planting, seasonal interest, or specimen shrub
- good in combination with Azaleas and Rhododendrons

Texture

- medium texture in foliage and when bare
- thick density in foliage and when bare

Assets

- showy white apetalous (no petals) flowers
- brilliant mixture of autumn colors
- compact form
- wet site tolerant

Liabilities

- slow growth
- not drought tolerant

Habitat

- Zones 5 to 8
- Native to Southeastern U.S.

SELECTIONS

Alternates

- companion shrubs for shady spots (Buxus, Kalmia, Leucothoe, Pieris, Rhododendron [including Azaleas], etc.) - most of these require moist, well-drained, acidic soils

Cultivars – Variants – Related species

- F. gardenii ‘Blue Mist’ - foliage is a distinctive blue-green, with best summer foliage color achieved in partial to full shade, but overall vigor and autumn color is inferior to the species
- F. gardenii ‘Mt. Airy’ (‘Mount Airy’) - more vigorous and upright in growth habit (to 4’ x 3’) but also more leggy and suckering than the species form, with more abundant flowers and even better autumn color than the species form, becoming more common in the nursery trade

Fothergilla major - Large Fothergilla

Also a native shrub for the residential or commercial landscape. Similar in form to F. gardenii, but larger, with the same flowers and great autumn foliage