

Fothergilla major

Mountain witch alder, large witch alder



Fothergilla major (large witch alder) is found in the wild in the undergrowth of forests of *Quercus rubra* in eastern North America. Unlike its sibling *Fothergilla gardenii*, *Fothergilla major* is a plant of drier soils, such as slopes and rocky open woodland. In warmer regions, the shrub actually grows on the north slopes of mountains however. The genus *Fothergilla* was named by the botanist Linnaeus after the English physician John Fothergill. This shrub displays a rounded, wide to broadly upright habit, varying from one to three metres tall and the same in width. *Fothergilla major* does not tend to send out many suckers.

The white, sweetly-scented flowers appear in April and May as the leaves emerge. The rounded to egg-shaped and obovate leaf reveals a similarity with the Hamamelis family. The slightly undulating leaf is dark green to blue green on top with a paler, somewhat hairy underside. In addition to the beautiful flowers, the autumn colour is also of great decorative value, in various shades of yellow, orange and red. Very reliable for autumn colour but this is dependent on the particular microclimate. *Fothergilla major* has slightly hairy twigs which are thicker than those of *Fothergilla gardenii*.

Fothergilla major is mostly found in gardens and not often used in public spaces. However, when planted in small to large groups, the shrub is also of added value all year round in defined borders in parks or on street corners, peaking in the spring and autumn. The large witch alder prefers sun or partial shade: it will grow well in heavy shade too but will not flower anywhere near as profusely. Peat, sand and loamy soils are all suitable provided water can drain freely away from the roots. Based on its natural habitat, *Fothergilla major* is a potential candidate for roof gardens.

SEASONAL COLOURS



TYPES OF PLANTING

Tree types: solitary shrubs | **Topiary on stem:** multi-stem umbrella

USE

Location: park, central reservation, in containers, large garden, small garden, cemetery | **Pavement:** none

CHARACTERISTICS

Crown shape: rounded | **Crown structure:** semi-open | **Height:** 1 - 3 m | **Width:** 1 - 3 m | **Winter hardiness zone:** 5A - 8B

ASPECTS

Wind: intolerant to wind | **Soil:** peaty, sand, loamy soil | **Nutrient level:** low in nutrients, moderately rich in nutrients, rich in nutrients | **Soil moisture level:** dry, moist | **Light requirements:** sun, partial shade | **pH range:** acidic | **Host plant/forage plant:** bees

PLANTKENMERKEN

Flowers: spikes, striking, standing, strongly scented, spicy scented | **Flower colour:** white | **Flowering period:** April - May | **Leaf colour:** blue-green, dark green, underside grey-green, underside pale green | **Leaves:** deciduous, orbicular, ovate, obovate, slightly hairy, underside hairy, dentate | **Autumn colour:** yellow-orange, orange-red, red, violet | **Fruits:** no fruit | **Bark colour:** grey | **Bark:** smooth | **Twig colour:** brown, grey-brown | **Twigs:** hairy | **Root system:** shallow, slightly branched,