

Fatsia - Growing Guide

Growing Fatsia

Fatsias are evergreen natives of coastal woodland in Japan, Korea and Taiwan. They develop into large, attractive, architectural or ornamental shrubs and are widely used in municipal plantings, or in shady courtyards in an urban context, because of their ability to tolerate atmosphere pollution. They also make sturdy ornamental plants in large containers.

Fatsia japonica flowers in the autumn when there is not much out to compete with it except, perhaps, the first mahonias. The flowers are creamy white with five petals borne in arching and branching long stalked umbels. The flowers are followed by a mass of rounded black fruits in the place of each individual umbel.

In a woodland garden with dappled shade *F. japonica* may become many stemmed and eventually reach a height of 12-15ft perhaps with a spread of 8-10ft. That will however take a significant time. *F. japonica* is really a dense evergreen shrub with attractive glossy dark green leaves which can be 2ft long and have seven to eleven lobes. In a woodland context it may start to spread by suckering but that usually only happens when its main stems reach a height where light can penetrate down to the bare earth around the base of the plant.

The recently introduced *Fatsia polycarpa* from Taiwan looks, from a distance, very similar to *F. japonica*. Our 12ft tall 20 year old plant at Caerhays has a similar spread but it flowers, with us, in January. The leaves, when you get closer, are longer stalked, less glossy, and with more graceful and finely cut lobes. I had thought it was a bit 'dumbing down' to include this plant in the garden at Caerhays even if it was a new introduction. Today it stands out proudly in flower after Christmas and is very well worth its place. The 'Beast' in March 2018 did not even make a single mark on its leaves.

We sometimes offer yellow or white variegated forms of *Fatsia japonica* including *F. japonica* 'Spiders Web'. The latter is slow growing and needs shade to thrive and keep its speckled or spotted leaf variegation.

Fatsias can be propagated from cuttings but they do take up a lot of room on the mist bench. Seed can be an easier option when sown in a warm environment in spring to encourage germination. They grow well in moist but well drained soils and their huge leaves need some protection from the wind for best results.



F. japonica



F. japonica



F. japonica 'Spider's Web'



F. japonica 'Spider's Web'



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F. japonica 'Spider's Web'



F. japonica 'Spider's Web'



F. japonica 'Variegata'



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F. japonica 'Variegata'



F. polycarpa



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