**Common Name:**
Japanese Fatsia

**Scientific Name:**
*Fatsia japonica*

**Order:** Apiales

**Family:** Araliaceae

**Description**
Japanese fatsia (also known as paperplant) is a tender, evergreen shrub with large, fan-shaped leaves and spreading branches, like those of a tree. They are lobbed and average 7-9 lobes deep. Most are a glossy, dark green color, but some varieties are variegated. Fatsia shrubs are moist and acidic. They are sometimes described as “ivy on hormones.” Fatsia branches are few, spiny, prickly and fairly coarse. The petioles which hold the leaves up and out are quite tall. The weight of the leaves may cause the plant to lean to one side or another. The terminal buds are conical in shape and bigger than the lateral buds. Fatsia leaves alternate and grow horizontally from the stems. There is a variety of leaflets: lance-shaped, toothed, and short-stalked, however, they are all still green in color with prickles beneath. White flowers more often appear in large terminal clusters in late fall. Fatsia also produces fruits. These fruits appear in November to March and are black, fleshy, and about 8 mm across.

**Growth Habit**
Japanese fatsia shrubs grow best in partial to full shade. Depending on the growing conditions, Fatsia can grow approximately 8 to 12 inches. Fatsia favors the shade, therefore they will grow quicker and happier in shaded areas. Growth will be slower in full sun and dry soil. The plant needs weekly watering, and more often in extreme heat.

**Hardiness Zone(s)**
Japanese fatsia is very adaptable. They are found in the Southeastern United States and tropical areas. Fatsia also has a good cold tolerance. Many are grown throughout most areas in South Carolina with an exception to the mountainous areas that range lower than 10°F. The hardiness zones for fatsia are 8-10. Fatsia is also rated Zone 7 if it is planted in a protected area with well supportive and isolated, or mulched, roots to protect the plant from freezes.

**Culture**
Japanese fatsia shrubs favor slightly acid, compost-rich soils. They grow and live best in soils that do not dry out. Stems that begin to take up too much space or that become top-heavy may be cut to enhance more branching. They could also get stalked for support instead. These shrubs do best when in a protected area. They love the northern environment. This plant responds well to fertilizers which are used to help it look and feel its best.
**Diseases & Insects**
Fatsia plants do not have many problems or deaths from diseases and insects. A few pests are scale, aphids, mealybugs and spider mites. Any of these pests can be controlled with horticultural oil sprays. Pests come during certain seasons or for reasons. For example, spider mites usually occur when plants are grown in an overly dry or sunny environment. Some insects can be beneficial. Pollination causes insects, including beneficial parasitic and predaceous wasps, to reduce the population of many harmful insects. If the fatsia becomes crowded, has poor air circulation, or frequent overhead irrigation it may begin to have bacterial and fungal leaf spots. The best solution is to remove any of these leaves once they become heavily spotted to improve the growing conditions. Phytophthora root rot may infect the plant if it is not well-drained.

**Landscape Value**
Japanese fatsia is a large plant. They fit better outside, but can also be used for indoor home décor. In colder areas this plant may be grown as a houseplant. Fatsia is well suited to shaded gardens where a tropical look is favored. While it can grow quite large, it can fit into smaller areas by pruning. Pruning consists of removing older, large stems each year. This is good for the plant’s health along with allowing it to fit into different areas.

**References**


This document was authored by Maggie Beard, Department of Agricultural Sciences, Louisiana Tech University, April 2015.