

DWARF WITCH ALDER

Fothergilla gardenii L.

Synonym: *Fothergilla parvifolia* Kearney

Family: Hamamelidaceae (witch hazel)

FNAI Ranks: G4/S1

Legal Status: US—none FL—Endangered

Wetland Status: US—FACW FL—FACW



Gill Nelson

Field Description: Much branched, colonial **shrub** usually less than 3 feet tall, with hairy **twigs**. **Leaves** deciduous, alternate, 1 - 2.5 inches long and 0.5 - 1 inch wide, with conspicuous parallel lateral veins and clusters of star-shaped hairs on the under surface; **leaf margins** wavy with rounded teeth on the margins above the middle. Leaves turn yellow, orange, or red in the fall. **Flowers** fragrant, in dense “bottlebrush” spikes at the tips of bare twigs; **male flowers** (see photo) consist of showy white stamens; **female flowers** are inconspicuous.

Similar Species: Witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) is a large shrub with similarly shaped though much larger and fully toothed leaves; witch hazel occurs in moist, upland hardwood forests.

Related Rare Species: None in FL.

Dwarf witch alder

Fothergilla gardenii

Habitat: Sunny, wet edges of baygalls, shrub swamps, and pitcherplant bogs; shrubby transition zones into wet flatwoods.

Best Survey Season: Flowers in early March; leaves distinctive throughout growing season and turning bright colors in the fall.

Range-wide Distribution: FL, AL, GA, MS, NC, SC, VA.

Conservation Status: Historically known from 3 Panhandle counties; only one population has been seen recently, in Blackwater River State Forest.

Protection & Management: Allow prescribed fire to burn into wetlands; avoid placing firebreaks in wetland ecotones. Avoid changes in hydrology and upland land use that affect seepage flow into bogs and baygalls.

References: Coile 2000, Godfrey 1988, Foote and Jones 1989, Joiner 1998, Kral 1983, Nelson 1996, Tobe et al. 1998, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.

