



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Callicarpa americana*¹

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Introduction

This rapidly-growing North American native forms a rather loosely-arranged, rounded shrub, five to eight feet tall and equally wide (Fig. 1). Branches form long arches bending toward the ground and lend almost a weeping habit to older, established shrubs. The coarse, fuzzy, light green, deciduous leaves are combined with small, lavender-pink blossoms densely clustered in leaf axils from June through August. A profusion of very showy, 1/3-inch-diameter, clustered berries follow, densely packed and encircling the woody stems. These shiny purple-blue fruits are quite attractive to birds and, if not completely devoured, will persist on the stems for several weeks after the leaves drop.

General Information

Scientific name: *Callicarpa americana*

Pronunciation: kal-lick-AR-puh uh-mair-rick-KAY-nuh

Common name(s): American Beautyberry, American Mulberry

Family: *Verbenaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 7 through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: native to Florida

Uses: foundation; border; mass planting; container or above-ground planter; naturalizing

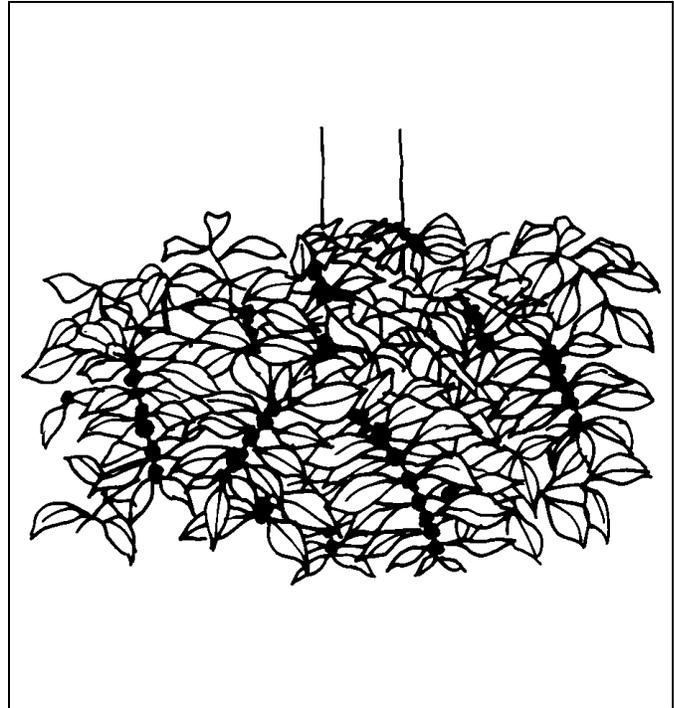


Figure 1. American Beautyberry.

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 3 to 8 feet

Spread: 4 to 8 feet

Plant habit: round; spreading; vase shape

Plant density: open

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: fragrant

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: yellow

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: lavender

Flower characteristic: spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit cover: fleshy

Fruit color: purple

Fruit characteristic: persists on the plant; attracts birds

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: poor

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: may self-seed each year

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Its ease of maintenance and popularity with birds makes American Beauty-Berry especially useful for the naturalized garden where it blends in well with pines, oaks, and darker-leaved shrubs. Appearing best when massed together, American Beauty-Berry can also be used as a screen or specimen. Allow plenty of room for this large, sprawling shrub unless regular pruning can be provided to control its size. The thinning-type pruning method works best for Beauty-Berry since regular shearing removes flowers and developing fruits.

American Beauty-Berry is relatively maintenance free and grows easily in full sun or light, dappled shade on a variety of soils. Old wood should be pruned heavily in late fall to early spring since flowers and fruit are produced on new growth.

Callicarpus americana var. *lactea* has white berries and attractive foliage. The cultivar 'Russell Montgomery' has especially nice white berries.

Propagation is by seed or softwood cuttings.

No pests are of major concern. Caterpillars may occasionally chew the leaves.

Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.



Figure 3. Fruit of American Beautyberry