Introduction

Perhaps the most beautiful Beautyberry, this species of Callicarpa has smaller leaves than either the more common American Beautyberry or Japanese Beautyberry (Fig. 1). Leaves are produced closer together on the stem forming a smaller, more compact shrub. Like other Beautyberries, purple berries are produced in abundance in late summer and fall and persist on the plant after leaves have fallen. Berries appear consistently each year. The shrub forms the same cascading or weeping effect so common on other Beautyberries.

General Information

Scientific name: Callicarpa dichotoma
Pronunciation: kal-lick-AR-puh dye-CAW-t oh-muh
Common name(s): Purple Beautyberry
Family: Verbenaceae
Plant type: shrub
USDA hardiness zones: 5B through 8 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 7: year round
Planting month for zone 8: year round
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: container or above-ground planter; specimen; foundation; mass planting; cascading down a wall; accent
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 3 to 4 feet
Spread: 3 to 5 feet

Figure 1. Purple Beautyberry.

Plant habit: round; weeping
Plant density: moderate
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite
Leaf type: simple  
Leaf margin: serrate  
Leaf shape: obovate  
Leaf venation: pinnate  
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous  
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches  
Leaf color: green  
Fall color: yellow  
Fall characteristic: not showy

Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems  
Current year stem/twig color: reddish  
Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

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: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers  
Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more  
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive  
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests
Use and Management

Plants can be massed together spaced 4 to 5 feet apart forming a nice border or divider. Thick growth discourages people from walking through the plant making it well suited for controlling pedestrian traffic. Branches will droop over a wall if planted on top making it ideally suited for raised planters or containers. Whereas the native American Beautyberry grows too large for many residential landscapes, this plant remains small and in scale with many yards.

Locate in the full sun or partial shade for best form and dense growth. Soils from acid to slightly alkaline should support this plant with little irrigation except in extended drought.

Pests and Diseases

The plant has not been widely available so all potential problems are not known. Problems may be similar to the native Beautyberry.