



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## *Euonymus americana*<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

Bursting Heart is a loose, spreading shrub that grows 7 to 8 feet in height. This shrub's most revealing characteristic is its green stems. These distinctive stems are covered with 1- to 3-inch-long, lanceolate leaves. The dark green, deciduous foliage of *Euonymus americana* changes to a showy, bright red color in the fall. This plant has 1/2-inch-wide, reddish-green flowers that occur from May until June. The showy fruits are scarlet capsules that crack open in the fall to display their scarlet seeds, and a plant in heavy fruit is lovely. The Bursting-Heart is excellent for naturalizing and gives a stunning effect when massed in front of water. It can be used as a specimen or foundation plant and creates a nice border or hedge.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Euonymus americana*

**Pronunciation:** yoo-AW-nim-us uh-mair-rick-KAY-nuh

**Common name(s):** Bursting-Heart, Strawberry-Bush

**Family:** Celastraceae

**Plant type:** shrub

**USDA hardiness zones:** 6 through 9 (Fig. 1)

**Planting month for zone 7:** year round

**Planting month for zone 8:** year round

**Planting month for zone 9:** year round

**Origin:** native to Florida

**Uses:** specimen; foundation; border; mass planting

**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

### Description

**Height:** 7 to 8 feet

**Spread:** 6 to 8 feet

**Plant habit:** spreading; round

**Plant density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** medium

#### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** serrate

**Leaf shape:** lanceolate

**Leaf venation:** unknown

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** red

**Fall characteristic:** showy

#### Flower

**Flower color:** reddish- green

**Flower characteristic:** spring flowering

#### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** oval

**Fruit length:** 1 to 3 inches

**Fruit cover:** dry or hard

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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Fruit color:** red  
**Fruit characteristic:** attracts birds

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy  
**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:** not known to be invasive  
**Pest resistance:** very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

**Use and Management**

*Euonymus americana* will tolerate different types of well-drained soils but does not tolerate drought well; water and mulch this plant in hot, dry environments. It requires a site that receives partial shade and will withstand heavy pruning. Bursting-Heart transplants well when balled and burlapped.

Propagate the Bursting-Heart using seeds or cuttings. The seeds should be cold stratified for 1 to 3 months, and cuttings can be taken anytime the plant is in leaf.

**Pests and Diseases**

*Bursting-heart is extremely susceptible to Euonymus scale and crown gall. Both of these problems are of considerable importance, therefore some feel this plant is not garden worthy.*