Callicarpa dichotoma Purple Beautyberry

Edward F. Gilman

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-AH-ruh dye-KAWT-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

Figure 1. Purple beautyberry.

Description
Height: 3 to 4 feet
Spread: 3 to 5 feet
Plant habit: round; weeping
Plant density: moderate
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: medium

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.
**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

**Flower**
- **Flower color:** lavender
- **Flower characteristic:** summer flowering; spring flowering

**Fruit**
- **Fruit shape:** round
- **Fruit length:** less than .5 inch
- **Fruit cover:** fleshy
- **Fruit color:** purple
- **Fruit characteristic:** persists on the plant

**Trunk and Branches**
- **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.