**Callicarpa japonica** Japanese Beautyberry

Edward F. Gilman

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**Introduction**

This species of *Callicarpa* is common in the trade in eastern and southern landscapes. Like other Beautyberries, purple berries are produced in abundance in late summer and fall and persist on the plant after leaves have fallen. The shrub forms the same cascading or weeping effect so common on other Beautyberries. It usually grows to about 6-feet-tall, but can reach 10 feet with a similar spread.

**General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Callicarpa japonica*

**Pronunciation:** kal-lick-AR-puh juh-PAW-nick-uh

**Common name(s):** Japanese beautyberry

**Family:** Verbenaceae

**Plant type:** shrub

**USDA hardiness zones:** 6 through 8 (Fig. 1)

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

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

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** foundation; border; mass planting; container or aboveground planter; naturalizing

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

**Description**

**Height:** 4 to 6 feet

**Spread:** 4 to 6 feet

**Plant habit:** round; spreading; vase shape

**Plant density:** open

**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:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** yellow

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

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1. This document is FPS92, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 1999. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the EDIS website at [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu).

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**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: 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: no special winter interest  
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding  
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive  
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

**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 well 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. Temperatures below zero often kill plants to the ground, but sprouts formed in the spring will flower and produce the showy fruit.

The cultivar ‘Leucocarpa’ has white fruit.