

Calycanthus floridus Carolina Allspice, Sweetshrub¹

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Introduction

Sweetshrub could be used more as an ornamental in moist locations (Fig. 1). The flowers are borne in midspring and have maroon to brown, strap-like petals and a fragrance similar to that of strawberries. They are borne somewhat inside of the outer layer of foliage so they are often obscured from view. They were used in years past to freshen the smell in the top several drawers of a set of dresser drawers. Occasionally, they are used in potpourris. The leaves and fruits are aromatic when crushed. Several trunks form from the base of the plant and sprouts often grow from roots forming many trunks.



Figure 1. Sweetshrub

General Information

Scientific name: *Calycanthus floridus*

Pronunciation: kal-lick-KANTH-us FLOR-rid-us

Common name(s): sweetshrub, strawberry-bush, Carolina allspice

Family: *Calycanthaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 5B through 10A (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: screen; espalier; specimen

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

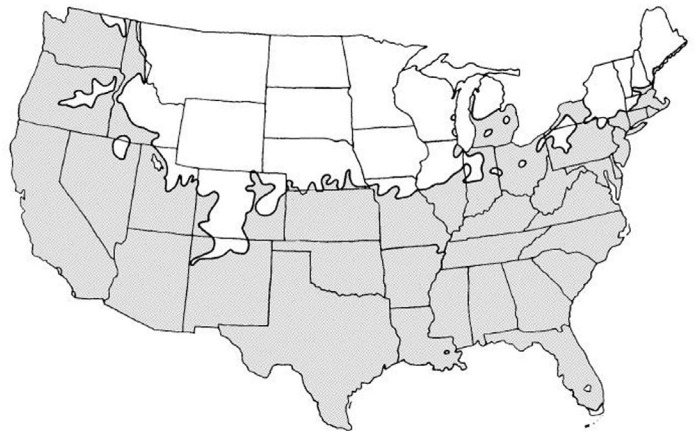


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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Description

Height: 6 to 9 feet
Spread: 6 to 12 feet
Plant habit: round; oval
Plant density: open
Growth rate: slow
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
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: showy



Figure 3. Foliage of sweetshrub

Flower

Flower color: red
Flower characteristic: pleasant fragrance; spring flowering; summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: irregular
Fruit length: 3 to 6 inches
Fruit cover: dry or hard
Fruit color: green
Fruit characteristic: persists on the plant

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; typically multitrunked or clumping stems; can be trained to grow with a short, single trunk
Current year stem/twig color: reddish
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun; plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: occasionally wet; acidic; slightly alkaline; clay; sand; loam
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: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

The upright, oval shape and attractive foliage make sweetshrub an excellent candidate for the back of a shrub border or for use as a screen. It can be sheared or thinned, depending on the desired use. Pruning and training the plant to several, upright stems can create an attractive specimen plant. A height of 9 feet and spread of 12 feet can be expected. The plant grows in sun or shade but is taller in shade. Sweetshrub transplants easily and prefers a moist soil. It is an endangered plant in Florida.

Cultivars: ‘Athens’ suckers from the base, has white flowers and yellow fall color; and ‘Michael Lindsey’ has wonderful fragrance and beautiful, shiny leaves.

Pests and Diseases

Bacterial crown gall causes warty-looking growths on the stems near the soil line. There is no practical control measure for this problem. Destroy infected plants and avoid planting in contaminated soil.

Powdery mildews of different genera cause a white coating on the leaves.