

# *Callicarpa americana* American Beautyberry<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

This rapidly-growing North American native forms a rather loosely-arranged, rounded shrub, five to eight feet tall and equally wide. Branches form long arches bending toward the ground and lend almost a weeping habit to older, established shrubs. The coarse, fuzzy, light green, deciduous leaves are combined with small, lavender-pink blossoms densely clustered in leaf axils from June through August. A profusion of very showy, 1/3-inch-diameter, clustered berries follow, densely packed and encircling the woody stems. These shiny purple-blue fruits are quite attractive to birds and, if not completely devoured, will persist on the stems for several weeks after the leaves drop.



Figure 1. Fruit—*Callicarpa Americana*: American Beautyberry  
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 2. Fruit—*Callicarpa Americana*: American Beautyberry  
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 3. Fruit—*Callicarpa Americana*: American Beautyberry  
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

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## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Callicarpa americana*

**Pronunciation:** kal-lick-AR-puh uh-mair-rick-KAY-nuh

**Common name(s):** American beautyberry, American mulberry

**Family:** Lamiaceae

**Plant type:** shrub

**USDA hardiness zones:** 7 through 11 (Figure 4)

**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

**Invasive potential:** may self-seed each year

**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



Figure 4. Shaded area represents potential planting range.  
Credits: undefined

## Description

**Height:** 3 to 8 feet

**Spread:** 4 to 8 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:** 4 to 8 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** yellow

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** lavender

**Flower characteristic:** spring flowering

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** less than 1/2 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:** 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:** may self-seed each year

**Pest resistance:** no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

## Use and Management

Its ease of maintenance and popularity with birds makes American beautyberry especially useful for the naturalized garden where it blends in well with pines, oaks, and darker leaved shrubs. Appearing best when massed together, American beautyberry can also be used as a screen or specimen. Allow plenty of room for this large, sprawling shrub unless regular pruning can be provided to control its size. The thinning-type pruning method works best for beautyberry since regular shearing removes flowers and developing fruits.

American beautyberry is relatively maintenance free and grows easily in full sun or light, dappled shade on a variety of soils. Old wood should be pruned heavily in late fall to early spring since flowers and fruit are produced on new growth.

*Callicarpus americana* var. *lactea* has white berries and attractive foliage. The cultivar 'Russell Montgomery' has especially nice white berries.

Propagation is by seed or softwood cuttings.

## Pests and Diseases

No pests are of major concern. Caterpillars may occasionally chew the leaves.

No diseases are of major concern.