Callicarpa japonica Japanese Beautyberry[1]

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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 (Figure 4)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

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 1. Full Form—*Callicarpa japonica*: Japanese Beautyberry
Credits: UF/IFAS

Figure 2. Leaf—*Callicarpa japonica*: Japanese Beautyberry
Credits: UF/IFAS

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

Figure 4. Shaded area represents potential planting range.
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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

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

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.