

# *Calycanthus floridus* Carolina Allspice, Sweetshrub<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman, Ryan W. Klein, and Gail Hansen<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

Sweetshrub could be used more as an ornamental in moist locations. 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. Full Form—*Calycanthus floridus*: Carolina Allspice, Sweetshrub

Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

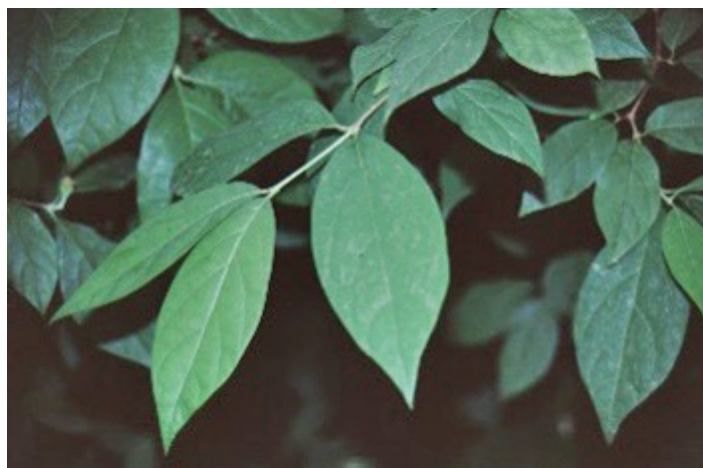


Figure 2. Leaf—*Calycanthus floridus*: Carolina Allspice, Sweetshrub

Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 3. Leaf, Fall Color—*Calycanthus floridus*: Carolina Allspice, Sweetshrub

Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

1. This document is FPS95, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 1999. Revised March 2023. Visit the EDIS website at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> for the currently supported version of this publication.

2. Edward F. Gilman, professor emeritus; Ryan W. Klein, assistant professor; and Gail Hansen, professor; Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.



Figure 4. Flower—*Calycanthus floridus*: Carolina Allspice, Sweetshrub  
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Calycanthus floridus*

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

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

**Family:** *Calycanthaceae*

**Plant type:** shrub

**USDA hardiness zones:** 5B through 10A (Figure 5)



Figure 5. Shaded area represents potential planting range.  
Credits: undefined

**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:** not known to be invasive

**Uses:** screen; espalier; specimen

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

## 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

## 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

**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.