

American Beautyberry - *Callicarpa Americana*

A Texas native, the American Beautyberry is primarily used as an under story woody shrub. Found in woods, moist thickets, wet slopes, and low rich bottomlands, at the edges of swamps in the Piney Woods, Post Oak Woods, Blackland woodlands, and coastal woodlands. The beautyberry can grow in moist well-drained sand, loam, clay; acid or calcareous soils. The beautyberry has no pest or disease problems to speak of. It needs plenty of space to spread its long, arching branches, thus it doesn't take hedging well. Consequently, don't not prune it much, it's better to leave space for the branches to bend naturally. The plant does best in moist soil, dappled shade to part shade.



It will usually grow three to four feet, but can reach as high as six to eight feet, therefore plant the shrub five to seven feet apart. Small white to pink flowers bloom from May to July, preceding the fruits. However, the American beautyberry looks its best in the late summer/ fall when clusters of glossy violet berries grow in the leaf axils from August through November. Branches laden with dark purple berries look spectacular in the fall and are a delight to birds.

The fruits cause the branches to bow even more, and if the berries aren't eaten by birds, they will stay colorful until spring. Beautyberry plants are reputed to bear even more fruits if several are planted together. The variety, 'Lactea' has white fruits, but doesn't hold up in the winter and occasionally will get brown spots on the berries.



The foliage is not the beautyberry's best attribute: somewhat large (4-6" long), light green, coarse texture, and deciduous. They sometimes tend to drop in droughty summers. If the leaves don't drop in the summer, they'll turn yellow in the fall, but that's part of the beautyberry's eminence. This shrub can be used anywhere in the state, but farther west it needs more frequent watering. As more and more consumers and landscapers are looking for drought tolerant, pest resistant plants, American beautyberry should rise to the forefront of flowering shrubs for shady areas.

Propagation of this 'beauty' can be from seed (stratified), or hardwood cuttings.