

## American Beautyberry

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### *Callicarpa americana*

- **Recommended Use:** Ornamental, wildlife habitat, bird attractor
- **Exposure:** Full sun to partial shade
- **Size:** Moderate sized shrub. Approximately 6 feet by 6 feet.
- **Habit:** Open and flowing
- **Growth:** Rapid
- **Maintenance Category:** Low
- **Water Use:** Average
- **Highlights:** Native shrub; spectacular fall fruit color; attracts birds, bees and butterflies.



Beautyberry fruit ripen into clusters of vivid colors that bring songbirds and wildlife into landscapes.

### Summary

The American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) is a moderate-to-large-size native perennial shrub that grows throughout the state of Louisiana. They are often found in forested areas but are grown as specimen plants in the landscape. While sometimes considered an understory plant, American beautyberry needs full sun or dappled shade to thrive. American beautyberry is adapted to many soils and is able to thrive in moist and drier areas but prefers acidic soils. The lime green opposite-leaved foliage provides an excellent contrast to the vibrant and eye-catching fruit that surrounds the stem at leaf nodes. The late summer onset of fruit is often a deep purple but is available in a variety of attractive colors of white, pink, burgundy and more. These plants sometimes show up as volunteers because birds, especially songbirds, absolutely love the large clusters of berries and help to spread the seed. As a result, these are the perfect plants for someone interested in attracting wildlife to the landscape while offering a marvelous pop of color in the fall. American beautyberry is a very low-maintenance landscape plant, only needing light thinning if desired. Sheering will remove flowers and fruit. Overgrown plants can be reset pruned. Try planting many together to create an attractive native screen or hedge.

### Requirements

- Prefers full sun; however, it can do quite well as an understory plant in partial sun.
- Fall and winter are the best time to plant because it allows root establishment before the spring growth period.
- American beautyberry is well adapted to many soil conditions. It thrives in well-drained soils but tolerates heavy soils.
- Applying a balanced fertilizer in early springtime will accelerate growth. Do not fertilize in the fall or winter. See comment on cypress.



Most often found in purple, beautyberry fruit can range from dark burgundy to pink and even white with nearly every color in between.

### Growth Habit

- Inconspicuous spherical flower clusters in pink or white appear at leaf axils in late spring/early summer and give way to spectacular berries.
- Naturally growing in a loose arching form, the beautyberry can be trained to a uniform shrub with effort.
- In winter, the shrub drops its leaves and the smooth bark is visible.

### Care and Maintenance

- Ensure proper soil moisture during establishment. Mulch helps regulate soil moisture and reduces weed pressure.
- Little to no maintenance pruning is required; however, canes can be thinned to prevent a “leggy” appearance or habit and to keep the bush dense.
- American beautyberry has been identified as an alternate host for the crape myrtle bark scale. If the scale is present, contact your AgCenter extension agent for control methods, or cut to ground to rejuvenate.
- New plants can be easily propagated by cuttings or by seed.



*These inconspicuous summer flowers attract pollinators; however, the plant is often sought after for its ripened fruit.*

For more information on American beautyberry and other Louisiana Super Plants, contact your local LSU AgCenter Extension Office or visit [LSUAgCenter.com/SuperPlants](http://LSUAgCenter.com/SuperPlants).



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