Callicarpa japonica Japanese Beautyberry

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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 (Fig. 1)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Origin: not native to North America

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

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
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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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

Archival copy: for current recommendations see http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu or your local extension office.
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Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

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.