

Beautyberry - *Callicarpa*

Shrub Profile

By: James Robbins



There are two shrubs that come to mind that have almost unparalleled beauty when it comes to a fruit display in the fall. The two shrubs are the deciduous hollies (*Ilex verticillata* and *I. decidua*) and the beautyberries (*Callicarpa*).

The genus *Callicarpa* consists of several species, all of which have exceptional fruit displays in the fall. The typical fruit color of beautyberry is an intense, almost neon, metallic purple. Many fencerows in Arkansas are dotted with the native American beautyberry, *Callicarpa americana*. This native deciduous shrub is typically irregular in habit and 6' tall x 7' wide. Occasionally you can find the white fruited form, 'Lactea.'

For more refined landscapes, take a look at the purple beautyberry (*Callicarpa dichotoma*). It is a graceful small shrub with slender leaves and branches. The typical size is 4' tall by 4' wide.

In Arkansas, purple beautyberry flowers in late June and early July. The delicate pink flowers are born in the axils of the leaves. While the flowers are not as striking as a dogwood, they are still an asset in the garden. Flowers are followed by the small (1/5" diameter) berry (technically a drupe).

The intense metallic purple fruits really become dramatic in mid-September and will hold that color until early December. The intensity of the color will fade with sun exposure, so you may notice the tops "bleaching" before the lower sides of the fruits. Many folks collect the fruit covered branches and use them in dried arrangements. Once you have seen the fruits of beautyberry, you will never forget the color and intensity.

Beautyberry is not plagued by any significant disease or insect problems and will grow well in either full sun or light shade. Occasionally the plant has a faint pink or yellowish fall color.

Another Asiatic species that is appearing more frequently in U.S. garden centers is *C. bodinieri*, the Bodinier beautyberry. This shrub also has the striking purple fruits, but the plant is typically larger. The cultivar 'Profusion' is noted as a very fruitful form.



Common Name: beautyberry
Varieties to look for: 'Lactea'
Flower Color: light pink
Blooming period: late June
Type: deciduous shrub
Size: medium; 6' tall x 7' wide
Exposure: shade to sun
Soil: amend with organic matter
Watering: moist best
When to prune: early spring
Suggested use: component of woodland garden, natural area

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