Beautyberry  
*Callicarpa americana*

This rapidly-growing North American native forms a rather loosely-arranged, rounded shrub, five to eight feet tall and equally wide. Branches form long arches bending toward the ground and lend almost a weeping habit to older, established shrubs. The coarse, fuzzy, light green, deciduous leaves are combined with small, lavender-pink blossoms densely clustered in leaf axils from June through August. A profusion of very showy, 1/3-inch-diameter, clustered berries follow, densely packed and encircling the woody stems. These shiny purple-blue fruits are quite attractive to birds and, if not completely devoured, will persist on the stems for several weeks after the leaves drop.

**General Information**

Pronunciation: kal-lick-AR-puh uh-mair-rick-KAY-nuh  
Common name(s): American Beautyberry, American Mulberry  
Family: Verbenaceae  
Plant type: shrub  
USDA hardiness zones: 7 through 11 (Fig. 2)  
Planting month for zone 9: year round  
Origin: native to Florida  
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: 3 to 8 feet  
Spread: 4 to 8 feet  
Plant habit: round; spreading; vase shape  
Plant density: open  
Growth rate: moderate  
Fruit cover: fleshy  
Texture: medium  
Fruit color: purple

**Foliage**

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite  
Leaf type: simple  
Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; typically multi-  
Leaf margin: serrate  
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: not showy

**Flower**
Flower color: lavender
Flower characteristic: spring flowering

**Fruit**
Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: less than .5 inch
Fruit characteristic: persists on the plant; attracts birds

**Trunk and Branches**
trunked or clumping stems
Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

**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
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: may self-seed each year
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

**Use and Management**
Its ease of maintenance and popularity with birds makes American Beauty-Berry especially useful for the naturalized garden where it blends in well with pines, oaks, and darker leaved shrubs. Appearing best when massed together, American Beauty-Berry can also be used as a screen or specimen. Allow plenty of room for this large, sprawling shrub unless regular pruning can be provided to control its size. The thinning-type pruning method works best for Beauty-Berry since regular shearing removes flowers and developing fruits. American Beauty-Berry is relatively maintenance free and grows easily in full sun or light, dappled shade on a variety of soils. Old wood should be pruned heavily in late fall to early spring since flowers and fruit are produced on new growth. Callicarpus americana var. lactea has white berries and attractive foliage. The cultivar ‘Russell Montgomery’ has especially nice white berries. Propagation is by seed or softwood cuttings. No pests are of major concern. Caterpillars may occasionally chew the leaves.

**Pests and Diseases**
No diseases are of major concern.

*by Edward F. Gilman*