

AMERICAN BEAUTYBERRY

Callicarpa americana

By Helen Hamilton, *President of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS*

A truly spectacular shrub of early fall. Also called French mulberry, beautyberry is a multi-stemmed shrub six feet tall with unusual colored fruit. In late summer the fuzzy pink flowers attract pollinators. By September, glistening deep rose-pink berries encircle the nodes, where two leaves also emerge. There is a white-berried albino, variety *alba*.

Birds love this plant, and so do homeowners who want a space-filling, fast-growing colorful shrub. Mockingbirds will sit on the plant and eat the berries one at a time. The berries are edible for human consumption, but don't have much flavor. They are delicious when made into jelly.

Beautyberry prefers sun and soil a little moist, and flowers on new growth. It can be pruned to about a foot tall in late winter just before the leaves appear. This will make it much fuller, reduce the shrub height, and produce more berries.



The roots, leaves and branches of the American beautyberry were used by Native American tribes for various medicinal purposes. Parts of the plant were prepared for treatment of rheumatism, stomachaches, dysentery, and colic, among other ailments.

The long-lasting fruits of beautyberry provide food for birds and animals well into the winter months when other food sources are unavailable. ❖