

“Favorite Flowers of the Chesapeake Master Gardeners”

American Beautyberry by Cliff Winter

Callicarpa americana

Common name: Beautyberry

Family Verbenaceae

April showers bring May flowers, but that is just the first stage of the American Beautyberry bush. Although charming and attractive to bees and butterflies, the flowers are not the main attraction, that comes later.



The Beautyberry is a native bush of the Vervain family (*Verbenaceae*). The Beautyberry was also an important bush to our Native Americans. All parts of the bush were used by Alabama, Choctaw, Creek, Koasati, Seminole, and other Native American tribes. Roots, leaves, berries, and stems were used as the base for various teas and decoctions. Root and leaf teas were used in sweat baths for rheumatism, fevers, and malaria. Root tea was used for dysentery and stomach aches. The root and berries were used for colic and as a treatment for a wide variety of common ailments. It was also used in ceremonies. The bark from the stems and the roots were used to treat itchy skin.



The plants and berries are also attractive to a variety of wildlife. Lots of birds dine on the fresh berries and seeds, including over forty songbirds, and even the raisins are consumed. Beautyberries are an important food source for many birds, such as bobwhite quail, robins, cardinals, catbirds, finches, mockingbirds, thrashers, and towhees. Other animals that eat the fruit include armadillos, raccoons, opossums, squirrels, gray foxes, and some rodents so you may need to plan well on location when planting.

I chose this plant while walking through the Master Gardener’s nursery. I wanted something spectacular for my yard and after *Googling* it, I decided to purchase two of them for their color and low maintenance. The plant is generally pest and disease free and easy to grow in zones 6-10. Exposure is full to partial sun. It grows to a height of 10 ft and can spread to 6 ft. Propagation is by seed in the fall or spring, or by softwood cutting in the spring.

Though it may not have any special meanings or memories now, but I am sure that it will bring me and my family future pleasure and memories just like the *April Showers bring us May Flowers* every spring to wake us up from a sometimes dreary winter.

References/Photos:

1. <https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/2901/2901-1033/2901-1033.html>
2. <https://garden.org/ideas/view/wildflowers/147/All-About-American-Beautyberry>
3. <https://www.gardenia.net/plants/plant-family/callicarpa -- beautyberries>

