

Bird Friendly Native Plant of the Month

FEBRUARY 2016

NC NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

REEDY CREEK NATURE PRESERVE



Gray Catbird with *Callicarpa americana*

Photos by Will Stuart

Callicarpa americana Beautyberry

Love that Fruit!!

The glossy clusters of purple, pink or white fruit hugging the stems of a Beautyberry shrub will certainly draw attention during fall from your neighbors and wildlife. The yellow fall leaves offer lovely color. Beautyberry can be massed in an attractive mixed border or featured in a woodland garden. Companions include Blueberries, native Hollies, Shining Fetterbush, Wax Myrtle and Leucothoe. Plant with fall blooming perennials like Goldenrod, Perennial Sunflowers and Asters for an autumn extravaganza.

Landscape Needs

Beautyberry is very easy to grow as a clump forming shrub with an informal appearance. It can grow to

6 feet tall and spread to 6 feet wide and is adaptable to various soil types. It will tolerate some shade, however, the more sun it receives the more fruit you can expect in the fall. Prune

Is it native or Asian Beautyberry?

Be careful when purchasing Beautyberry plants—you will often find *C. japonica* or *C. bodinieri* instead of *C. americana*. The larger fruit of American Beautyberry hugs the branches at leaf axils as seen above, instead of smaller berries on stalks. Research indicates native birds do not eat the Asian fruits. *C. americana* has larger leaves and a looser habit. Check the label for the correct Latin name.

the oldest stems each winter, or cut the entire shrub to 12" to regenerate the next spring. Once established it is drought tolerant.

According to folk wisdom the oils in Beautyberry leaves were used to repel flies and mosquitos. Which may explain why Beautyberry is frequently resistant to deer grazing in the home garden.

Feeding the Birds

If you plant Beautyberry in your landscape you may attract a wide variety of birds to the fruit including thrushes, wrens, mockingbirds and towhees to name a few. The flowers are found in tiny clumps and because they are so small attract equally small but interesting pollinators.

Choose Beautyberry!

If you like having berries for your birds, Beautyberry is an excellent substitute for commonly used exotics:

- *Euonymus alatus*, Burning Bush
- *Mahonia bealei*, Leatherleaf Mahonia
- *Nandina domestica*, Sacred Bamboo

Bird Friendly Native Plant of the Month is a joint effort of the NC Native Plant Society and Audubon North Carolina.

