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# How to Grow Beautyberry Shrubs



*Callicarpa americana*, native beautyberry.

Photo Credit: James Ebanks

Botanical Name: *Callicarpa* a spp.

Plant Type: Shrubs and Bushes

Sun Exposure: Part Sun

Soil pH: Acidic, Slightly Acidic to Neutral

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# Planting, Growing, and Pruning Beautyberries

By [Andy Wilcox](#)

Last Updated: February 13, 2025




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A graceful shrub with berries so brightly colored that they seem out of this world, beauty-

berries are also loved by birds. Learn how to plant, grow, and care for beautyberries.

## About Beautyberry

Beautyberries are a group of shrubs with arching branches, attractive foliage, and clusters of colorful berries held along the stems.

The American beautyberry, *Callicarpa americana*, is native and found in the wild from Texas east to the coast as far north as Maryland. The genus *Callicarpa* has members native to Asia, Australia, and the Americas, with some species considered invasive in the US.

Beautyberry shrubs typically reach 3 to 5 feet tall, although some cultivars can get as tall as 9 feet with proper conditions. It grows in moist soil, commonly along woodland edges. The fruit is technically a drupe and is edible. Most beautyberries are generally hardy in USDA Zones 5 to 11. American beautyberry fruits are edible and are used to make jellies and flavored syrups.

## ADVERTISEMENT

In mild climates, the berries may remain (if the birds leave you any) on the stem into early winter, providing gorgeous color. Stems with berries make long-lasting and attractive additions to cut flower bouquets. The berries are favored as food by many songbirds, including robins, towhees, finches, and northern bobwhites.

Beautyberries are fantastic for massed plantings and can easily be propagated from softwood cuttings from June into early autumn. The berries can also be harvested and sown in fall in a prepared bed, imitating natural dispersion, with excellent germination results come spring.



*American Beautyberry (Callicarpa americana) in Caddo Lake State Park in East Texas. Credit: Warren Price*

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## PLANTING

Beautyberries enjoy full sun to partial sun, needing a minimum of several hours daily. They commonly grow on the edge of woodlands and do well in similar locations in the yard. They grow well in most soil types, except very sandy soils low in fertility.

### When To Plant Beautyberry

Like other shrubs, beautyberries can be planted in either spring or fall, depending on your region. Northern gardeners will have better success with spring plantings to allow roots to establish prior to cold weather.

Southern gardeners can utilize fall planting,

## How To Plant Beautyberry

Plant beautyberry shrubs like other perennials. Choose a spot where they'll have room to expand. They can attain a large size.

### ADVERTISEMENT

1. Dig a hole at least twice as wide as the root ball and about as deep as the container. The hole should look like a shallow bowl with sloping sides, not a well.
2. Loosen the soil in the bottom of the hole.
3. Remove the beautyberry from its container. If the shrub doesn't want to come loose, water it, lay it on its side, and roll the container back and forth, applying enough pressure to deform the plastic

container. It should pop free.

4. If there are circling, girdling roots, you'll need to cut them. Loosen up rootbound plants by scoring the edges of the root-ball with your garden trowel or even breaking them up with your hands.
5. Test fit the shrub in the hole, ensuring the plant will sit with its container soil level with the new ground. Adjust the depth of the hole as necessary.
6. Plant the shrub and backfill the hole with the soil you removed. Pause part way and water well, then continue adding soil. Firm the soil around the roots to avoid air pockets.
7. Make a slight dish edge around the plant to keep water from running away.
8. Water the beautyberry again, taking time to let water soak into the soil.
9. Mulch underneath to keep weeds down and keep the soil moist.

## **GROWING**

Beautyberries don't need much attention given a suitable site for their needs. They are not bothered by many pests or problems. A little annual pruning will keep them looking their best. During the first year, water regularly unless sufficient rain falls. Once established, beautyberries are somewhat drought tolerant.

## When to Prune Beautyberries

Pruning should be done in late winter before the new growth begins to bud out.

Beautyberries bloom on new wood, so pruning in spring can lead to reduced flower and fruiting. Prune for shaping and removing damaged branches.

If you are in the northern portions of their range, you can cut them down to about a foot above the ground to remove winter-damaged branches.

## Types

- 'Welch's Pink' is a smaller variety, topping out about 4 feet tall and wide. It has bubblegum pink fruits and tolerates dry and wet sites.
- 'Dearly Clam' is a hybrid tailor-made for



The foliage is a burgundy violet all season long, with glowing magenta berries in fall.

## HARVESTING

- Harvest the stems for decoration at any time.
- Berries can be harvested after turning purple. Watch the birds—they'll beat you to the berries.
- Remove the berries from the stems and clean. Most recipes use the juice gathered from the berries for jellies and syrups.

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- No significant problems.

## WIT AND WISDOM

- Beautyberry was used by the native American peoples to treat fevers and rheumatism. The roots were used to treat stomach aches and dysentery.
- Some people find the crushed leaves of beautyberry to be an effective mosquito repellent.

### SHRUBS AND TREES

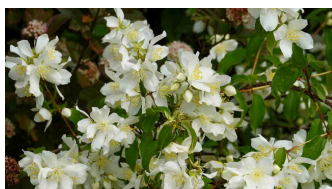
## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Andy Wilcox



Andy Wilcox is a flower farmer and master gardener with a passion for soil health, small producers, forestry, and horticulture. [Read More from Andy Wilcox](#)

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## COMMENTS

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**Vicki Glasscock (not verified)** 2 months ago

We are so lucky in Florida as they are considered weeds. I'm glad they are getting the recognition they deserve. I will say being 'blessed' by the birds after a beautyberry binge is not fun!

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**REPLY**

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**Joyce (not verified)** 2 months ago

They are beautiful. Did not realize they were edible.

**REPLY**

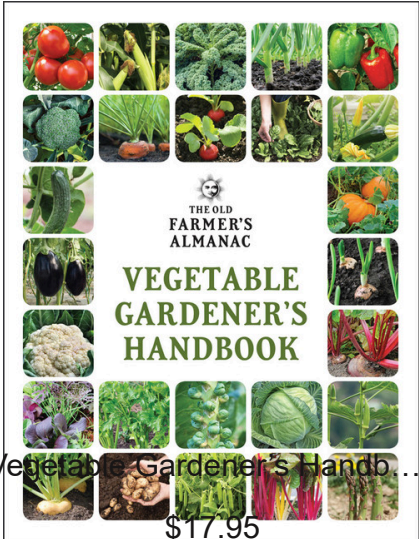
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**Anne (not verified)** 1 year ago

Wonderful Beauty Berries !!! great for the birds!!

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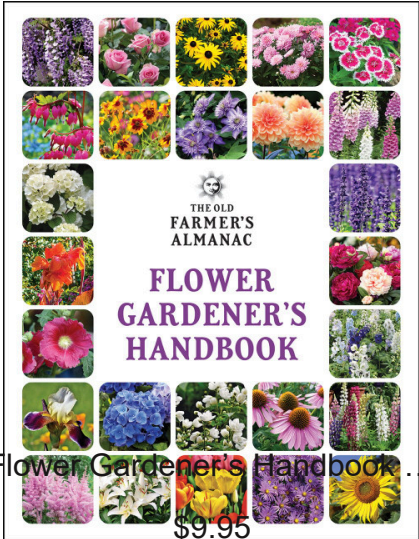
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