Discovery Garden

featured plant for October

American Beautyberry

Callicarpa americana

The genus name, *Callicarpa*, comes from the Greek *callos* (beauty) and *carpos* (fruit). Other common names include French mulberry, sourbush, bunchberry, and purple beauty-berry.

American Beautyberry is native to North America and grows in zones 6–10 as far west as Texas. It thrives in full sun to partial shade and can tolerate many soil conditions, but prefers moist, rich soil.

This fast-growing perennial shrub typically reaches three to five feet tall and equally as wide, with slim drooping branches. Its young leaves are often covered with wool-like hairs, which later become smooth, especially on their upper surface.

Starting in late spring or early summer, clusters of tiny pink, white, or lavender flowers appear along the stems, between the leaves. By September, the flowers give way to clusters of plump purple berries that fully encircle the stems. The ripe fruits have a high moisture content and are an important food source for a wide variety of wildlife, including squirrels, raccoons, white-tailed deer, and birds.

Fun Facts:

- More than 40 species of song-birds are known to eat the ripened fruit.
- Sweet but astringent, the fruit is edible for humans in small amounts and is even sometimes used to make jelly or wine.
- Freshly-crushed leaves have traditionally been used to keep biting flies and mosquitoes away from livestock.

Growing Size:
Typically 3-5 feet tall, (but can reach 9 feet tall) and 3-5 feet wide.

Best Viewing Months:
Blooms: June–August
Fruits: September–October

Pollinators:
Bees and Small Butterflies

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The Discovery Garden is tended by the Northeast Tennessee Master Gardeners Association and area volunteers.