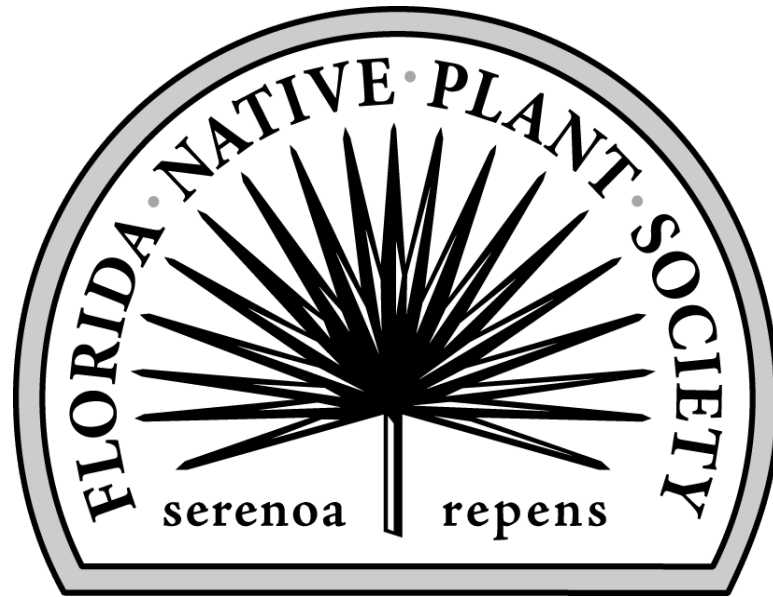


Florida Native Plant Society



Native Plant Owners Manual

Callicarpa americana - Beautyberry

Mark Hutchinson

For Your Information

All date and seasonal references are applicable to the eastern panhandle of Hernando County where the plants portrayed in this presentation grow, and this manual was created. This area happens to be a cold spot in central Florida due to the Brooksville Ridge and approximates a Hardiness Zone of 8a or 8b, average annual low temperatures ranging between 10 and 20 °F.

Please note that any reference to medicinal or culinary use of plants or plant parts should in no way be considered an endorsement by the Florida Native Plant Society of any sort of experimentation or consumptive use.

Please do not attempt to rescue any native plants without first reviewing the [FNPS Policy on Transplanting Native Plants](#)

Feedback is welcome: mhutchinson10@tampabay.rr.com

A close-up photograph of an American Beautyberry plant. The image shows several clusters of small, round, vibrant purple berries hanging from woody stems. The berries are densely packed in some clusters. Large, green, ovate leaves with serrated edges are interspersed among the berry clusters. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting more foliage. The lighting is bright, highlighting the glossy texture of the berries and the veins on the leaves.

American Beautyberry

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*Callicarpa
americana*

American Beautyberry, beautyberry, French mulberry

Callicarpa (kal - ee - KAR - puh)

From the Latin '*calli-*,' meaning beautiful, and '*carpa*,' derived from fruit or body

americana (a - mer - ih - KAY - na)

Latin meaning "of the Americas"



Biological and Genetic Relationships

Callicarpa americana L. - american beautyberry

└ *Callicarpa* L. - beautyberry

└ Verbenaceae (verbena family)

└ Lamiaceae (mint family)

└ Lentibulariaceae (bladderwort family)

└ Orobanchaceae (broomrape family)

└ Bignoniaceae (trumpet creeper family)

└ Scrophulariaceae (figwort family)

└ Calceolariaceae (slipper flowers)

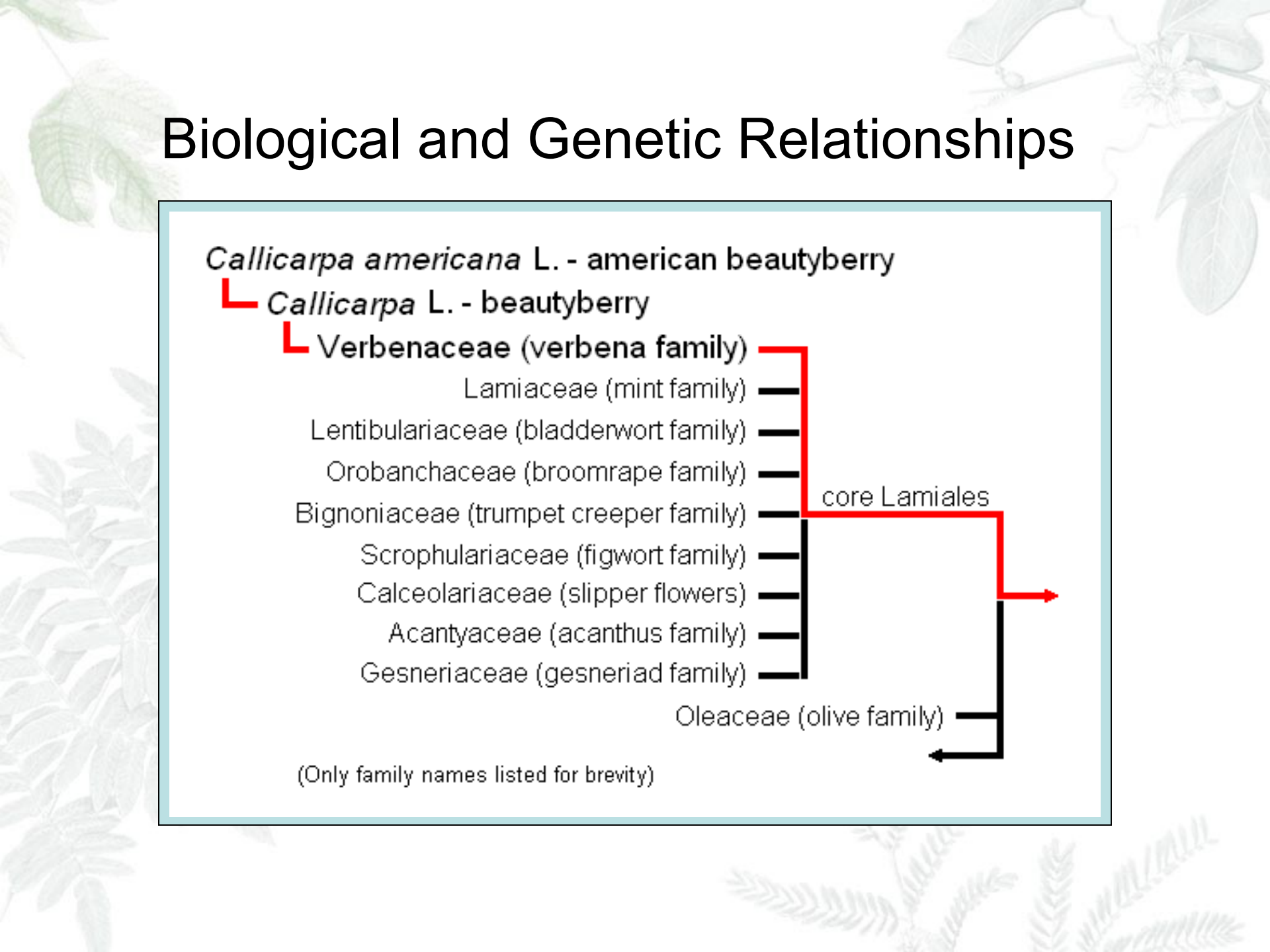
└ Acanthaceae (acanthus family)

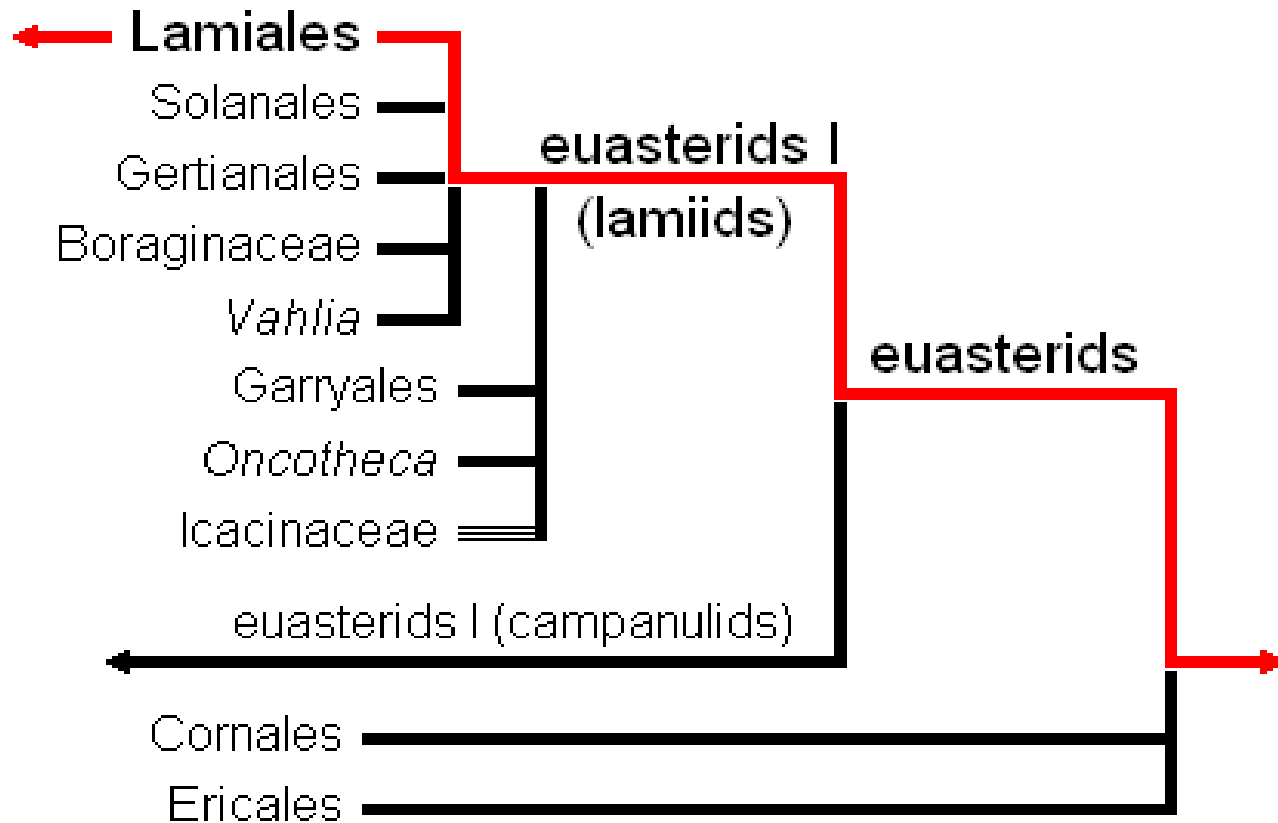
└ Gesneriaceae (gesneriad family)

└ Oleaceae (olive family)

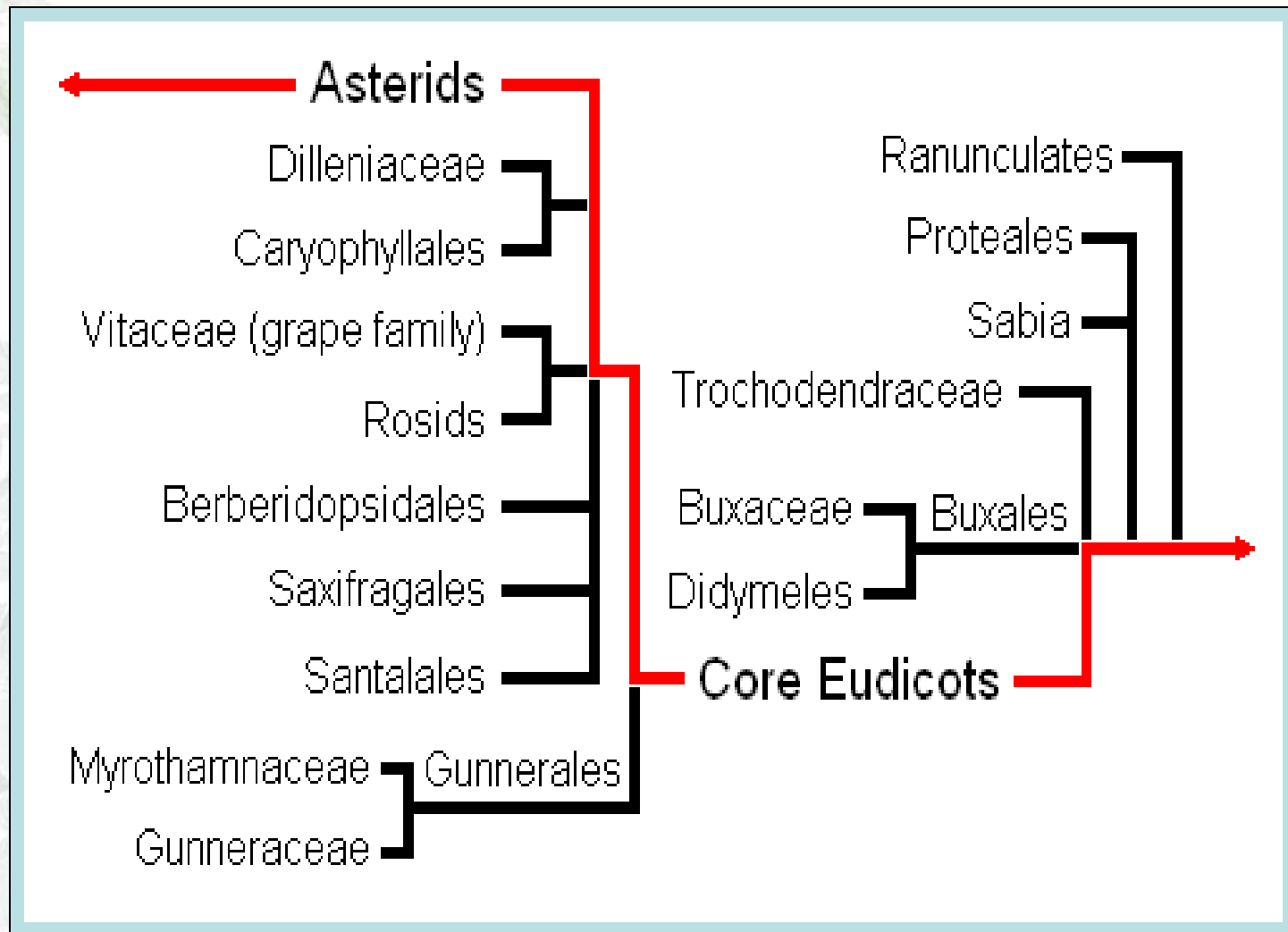
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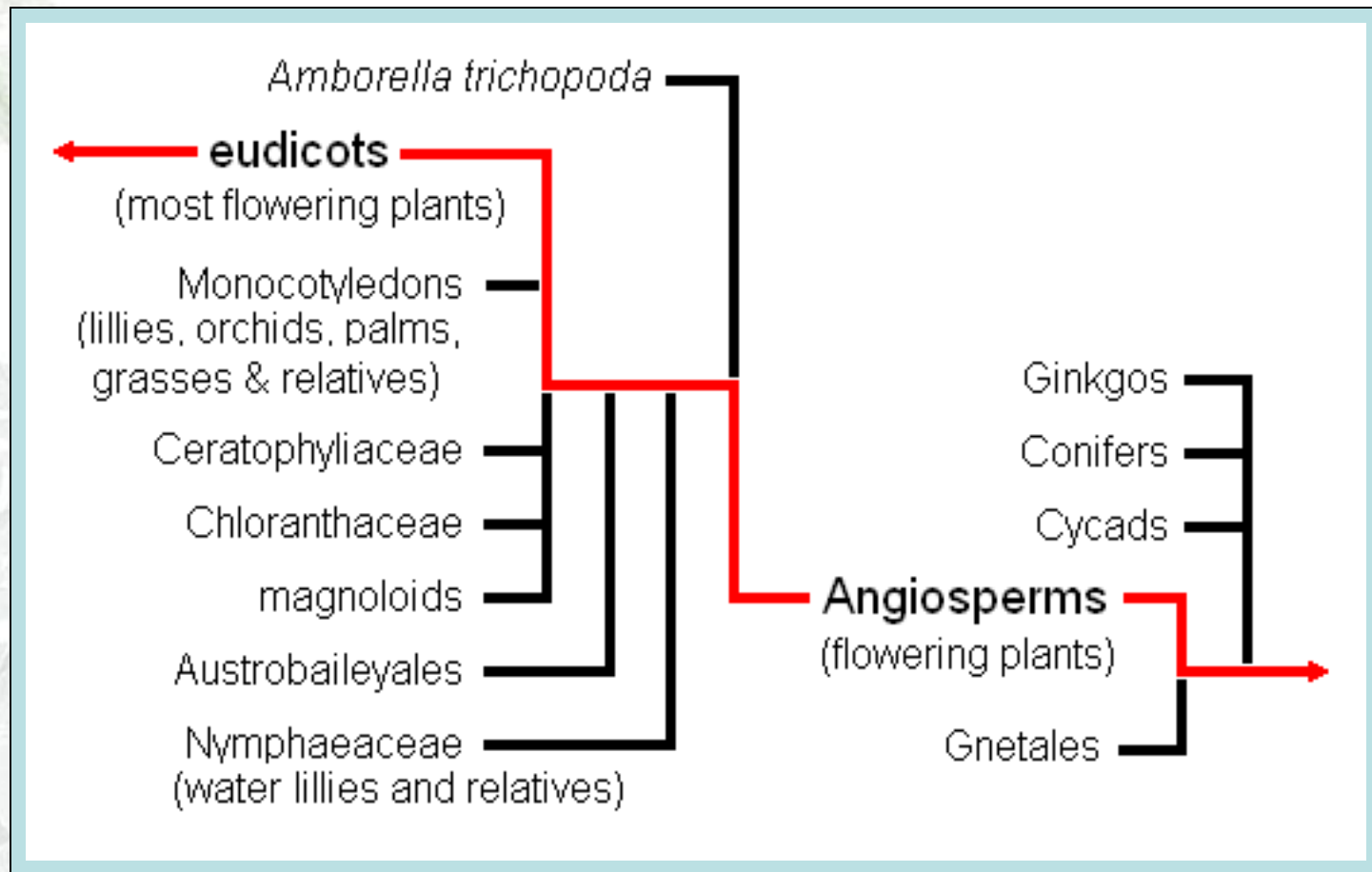
(Only family names listed for brevity)





(Individual species and genus denoted by italics)





There is still more to go, follow this link to explore more of the University of Arizona's [Tree of Life](#).



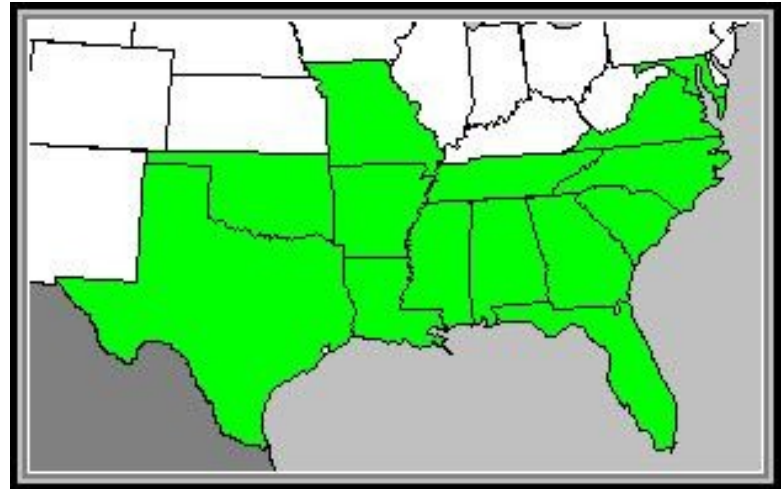
- The United States Department of Agriculture, NRCS lists a total of seven species of the genus *Callicarpa* L. throughout the United States.

- The USDA identifies only the species *americana* of the genus *Callicarpa* as occurring in and native to Florida.

**R.K.Godfrey Herbarium (FSU)
#172001 Franklin Co., 5/23/1985**

Species Distribution in the United States

Beautyberry, native to North America, is endemic to the southeastern United States. Its growing range extends from the eastern half of Texas, north to the southern counties of Missouri, then east to the shores of the Chesapeake Bay in Virginia and Maryland. Then south along the eastern seaboard to Florida.



(For specific distribution within any of the shaded areas go to the USDA link provided on the reference page, and click the shaded area of interest.)

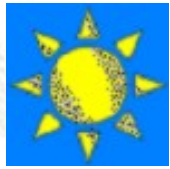
Species Distribution within Florida



(*vouchered – indicates that a fully documented dried specimen has been deposited in an approved herbarium)

- *Callicarpa americana*, a perennial deciduous shrub, to small tree, is *vouchered in all sixty-seven counties in Florida.
- Beautyberry prefers well-drained understory areas of open woodlands, and dry hammocks.

Growing Conditions



to



- Beautyberry prefers broken to partial shade

- *Callicarpa americana* favors sandy well-drained soil and is salt tolerant
- Strongly acidic to neutral Soil – 4.8 to 7.0 pH
- Very good drought tolerance, also likes wet soil
- Hardiness: USDA Zone 6a: to $-23.3\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($-10\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$) to USDA Zone 11: above $4.5\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($40\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$)
- Flowering occurs in Spring and early Summer
- Seeds form in late Summer and Fall
- Height: 4 - 8 foot (1.2 – 2.4 meters)

Plant Structure and Life Cycle



Emerging between March and May, the plant displays green to yellowish green, coarse toothed, opposing leaves. Beautyberry will grow to at least twelve to fourteen inches before extending arched branches. As the plant continues to mature, clusters called cymes form at the junction of the leaf and stem – or leaf axils.



The cymes develop into lilac-colored flower clusters, attracting butterflies. The colorful berries that follow are one of the reasons that this plant is an ideal landscape candidate for the right understory conditions.





The root system of *Callicarpa americana* falls somewhere between the tap and fibrous types. It is quite well branched, making it an aid in erosion control.

Native Americans, including the Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole used both the roots and berries of Beautyberry for medicinal purposes. A decoction of the roots was used in a sweatbath to relieve the symptoms of rheumatism and malarial fever.

The seeds of Beautyberry are held in tightly packed clusters of drupes clinging to the same leaf axils that the flowers occupied. These eye-catching fruit vary from shades of magenta to violet and provide food for wildlife come wintertime.





Seed Collection and Propagation

To collect seeds, allow unblemished fruit to ripen. Squeeze the seeds from the fruit, then clean and dry. Scarification, or scratching of the seeds is usually not necessary. Store the seeds at room temperature and plant in late winter or early spring.

Softwood and semi-hardwood cuttings from young wood can be treated with root hormone and placed in a growing medium. The whole cutting should be kept moist with a plastic tent for an extended period of time – say ten days to two weeks before removing the cover permanently.

Maintenance and Care



Freezes are common in most of *Callicarpa americana*'s growing range. In its northern most range, Beautyberry will die back completely following a hard freeze.

Come Spring, and signs of first growth, the plant should be examined closely, dead stems and branches should be cut back to solid woody stem.

Presentation References

- Biological and genetic relationships

University of Arizona [Tree of Life](#)

- North American distribution

[USDA](#) - Natural Resource Conservation Service

- Florida distribution

[Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants](#)

- Herbarium specimen

[FSU Robert K Godfrey Herbarium](#)

- Habitat, Wildlife value, & Propagation

U.S. Army [Corps of Engineers](#)

Presentation References (cont.)

- Growing conditions & general information

[Floridata](#): *Callicarpa americana*

[University of Michigan](#)

- Native American Ethnobotany

[University of Michigan](#)

- FNPS – Plants in your area

[FNPS.org](#) This Link will take you to a map of Florida. Click your county on the map to see if Beautyberry can be found there.

- [Florida Plants](#) by zone and habitat, use your county name or zip-code to see native habitat classifications and appropriate plants.

- For more in-depth study:

Native Florida Plants: Low Maintenance Landscaping and Gardening. Robert G. Haehle and Joan Brookwell. 2004 (revised edition). Taylor Trade Publishing. ISBN 1589790510.

Florida Plants for Wildlife: A Selection Guide to Native Trees and Shrubs. Craig N. Huegel. 1995. Orlando: Florida Native Plant Society. ISBN 1885258046.

Grafting, Budding, Cutting, Layering & Other Ways of Propagating Fruit Plants in Florida. 1995. Gainesville: Institute of Food & Agricultural Science. ISBN 0916287092.