Plant of the Month - April

Callicarpa pedunculata

Pronunciation: cal-ee-CARP-a ped-unk-you-LART-a

Derivation: Callicarpa, from the Greek callos — beauty, carpos — fruit, a reference to the beauty of the fruit; pedunculata, flower with *peduncles. Many of the 140 or so species of Callicarpa in other parts of the world are known by the common name, “Beauty Berry”. The genus was described by Linnaeus (1753) from a North American species.

Habit

Flowers

Fruits

There are 7 species found in Australia, 2 of these endemic, C. brevistyla (Northern Territory) and C. thozetii (North Queensland). C. pedunculata was collected in Queensland (and later named) by Robert Brown when he accompanied Lieutenant Matthew Flinders on his circumnavigation of the continent from 1801 to 1803.

Description: Callicarpa pedunculata is an arching shrub to 2 m tall with densely hairy stems. It is widespread along rainforest margins and creek banks from northern Qld to Port Macquarie in NSW.

Leaves to 130 mm x 60 mm are opposite, *ovate, soft green and velvety with toothed margins. Their lower surface is more densely hairy.

Flowers are about 4 mm across and pink or mauve. Flowering times vary according to different sources from July to September or October/November. I have photographed flowers only in late April and fruits in all months from March to June.

Fruits in spectacular bunches of bright purple globular berries. each 3 mm in diameter are eaten by birds but are too astringent for human consumption.

*peduncle = stork of a flower cluster

*ovate = egg shaped (in two dimensions), broader near the stem

A couple of years ago I saw this Callicarpa Hybrid on sale for £25.99 in a Garden Centre in Kent, England.