

Plant of the Month - April

by Allan Carr

Callicarpa pedunculata

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

Velvet Leaf
LAMIACEAE

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 = stalk 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.

