

*Callicarpa americana*

[Synonyms : *Callicarpa americana* var. *alba*, *Callicarpa americana* var. *lactea*]

**FRENCH MULBERRY** is a deciduous shrub. Native to south-eastern North America and to the Caribbean, it has small, blue (or pink or white) flowers.

It is also known as American beautyberry, Beautyberry, Bermuda mulberry, Dwarf mulberry, *Krásnoplodka americká* (Czech), and Mexican mulberry.

*Americana* means ‘of or from America (North or South)’.

The North American Alabama Indian tribe added various parts of French mulberry to a steam bath to treat malarial fever and rheumatism. Decoctions were taken internally by the Koasati Indians for some stomach disorders, by the Choctaw Indians for treating wind, dizziness and dysentery, and by the Seminole Indians for fluid retention. The latter also used the plant to ease itchy skin.

French mulberry is believed to have been introduced to Britain by the English naturalist, Mark Catesby (c.1679-1749).

The violet or blue (rarely white) berry-like fruit are eaten raw locally.

Birds are said to enjoy the berries although authorities have noted that in some areas the fruit clusters often rot away untouched.

Medicinally, the leaves or root bark have been used by local herbalists as a remedy for fluid retention. The shrub has also been used for treating skin cancer, stomach upsets and dysentery – and wind has been dissipated by drinking a tea made from the fruit and roots.