

Calycanthus floridus

[Synonyms : *Butneria florida*, *Calycanthus sterilis*]

CAROLINA ALLSPICE is a deciduous shrub. Native to south-western and south-eastern North America, it has sweet spicy-scented, dark reddish-brown or reddish-purple flowers. It is also known as Allspice, Carolina pimento, Carolina shrub, Common sweet-shrub, Eastern sweetshrub, Hairy allspice, *Kalykant kvetnatý* (Slovak), Pineapple shrub, *Sazaník květnatý* (Czech), Strawberry shrub, Sweet Betsy, Sweet Betty, Sweet bubbies, Sweet bush, Sweet-scented shrub, and Sweetshrub.

Warning – the plant can be poisonous, especially the seeds. It may be poisonous for cattle. *Floridus* means ‘flowering abundantly’.

Some of the North American Indians used the aromatic bark as a spice.

For the Cherokee Indian tribe the shrub not only provided a perfume but also, in its seeds, a wolf poison.

It was introduced to Britain in 1726 by the English naturalist, Mark Catesby (c.1679-1749) when he returned from his second visit to North America where he travelled widely.

However it would appear to have begun to gain popularity there only after the introduction of a further plant (this time by Peter Collinson (1694-1768)) in 1757.

It has also been employed in the past to adulterate allspice (*Pimenta dioica*) or cinnamon (*Cinnamomum verum*).

The Cherokee Indian tribe included the shrub among its range of medicinal ingredients. The roots were used to cause vomiting and to treat some urinary and bladder ailments, and the bark provided remedies for various eye problems, and for treating children’s sores.

Medicinally, Carolina allspice has been used as a substitute for cinnamon (*Cinnamomum verum*). Herbalists have used it locally to treat fever.