

LANDSCAPE DESIGNS NURSERY

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Calycanthus for Southern Wisconsin Gardens

Calycanthus is from the Greek word, *kalyx* - meaning calyx, and -*anthos* flower. A calyx is the outer set of segments that envelop the base of the flowers. In a rose, for example, it is the leavy green at the outer base of the petals.

They may have begun their evolution about 550 million years ago.

Calycanthaceae is a family of 5 species of which there are 3

Calycanthus, 2 in North America and 1 in Eastern China.

Foliage and form: All are deciduous thicket shrubs maturing in the 10-15' high and wide range. Its glossy yellow green 4-6" x 2-3" aromatic foliage is simple and born opposite on medium density woody aromatic stems. Each stem lives about 10-20 years. Rejuvenate or renewal pruning is recommended. However, they are tolerant of abusive pruning. Autumn foliage is typically a clear golden-yellow



Soil: *Calycanthus* enjoys well drained soils to moderate clay soils with some even tolerating very moist to flooding conditions, particularly in the spring. Coarse loamy sand to medium loams, are preferred, avoiding only very heavy non-draining wet clays.

Lighting: While very shade tolerant, they will bloom better in light to medium shade.

Mulching: is not required.

Flowers: perfect monocious, 2-4" diameter with numerous overlapping tight spiraling tepals in maroon red to dark reddish brown, yellow, & creamy white that are born in the leaf axils in May & June and sporadically thereafter. Flowers are usually allspice-ripe strawberry fragrant on all *Calycanthus floridus* forms, especially in the evening. The hybrids with *Calycanthus chinensis* vary in the amount of fragrance with some having the odor of fermenting fruit. Flowers are born on new and older wood. Once the flowers are pollinated by beetles, they typically lose their fragrance. If properly cut*, fresh flowering stems may be used in arrangements. (* cut stems a second time while under water before immediately positioning them in vase full of fresh water.) All fragrant plant parts may be used as potpourri.

Fruit: primitive appearing irregularly pear or fig-shaped leathery aromatic (like the rest of the plant) capsule 2-2½" long with numerous seeds ripening in September and later. Little wildlife value. Non edible.

Winter: Little if any protection is required. Recommend first season, especially in winter, to be protected from vermin.

Fertilization: They all respond to good quality slow-release fertilizers. Best fertilized in the autumn.

Planting: Nearly any time the soil is workable in the Spring to early November.

Propagation: Division, cuttings and seed*. Cultivars will typically only come true from division or cuttings. Division best is March as soon as the earth thaws. (* Seed grown plants are typically not true to their parent.)

Pest and diseases: Almost none. Very resistant. Deer typically don't browse on *Calycanthus*.

Hardiness: All of the following are hardy in Zone 4b - 5a and higher.

Calycanthus floridus - Our Native Carolina Allspice, Common Sweetshrub, Strawberry Shrub, Bubby Blossom, Sweet Bubby, Sweet Bettie, Spicebush, etc. are encountered vernaculars. Shrub as described above, growing to about 10' high and 12' wide. Native to southeastern USA. Introduced into American horticulture about 1726

'Athens' (aka 'Katherine') was selected for its tremendous fragrance, 1-1½" wide yellow flowers and lustrous

dark green foliage. It has a tighter growth habit than the species in the 8' high x 10' wide range.

'Edith Wilder' introduced in 1919, has deep brown-maroon-red flowers and excellent sweet fragrance. Leaves are matte dark green and rounder than the species. Growing to about 10' x 10'. Excellent autumn yellow foliage color.

'Michael Lindsey' is more compact growing in the 8' x 10' range with very fruity fragrance and reddish brown 1-1½" diameter flowers. Dark green foliage is bullate and extremely lustrous, but without fragrance. Excellent yellow to golden-yellow autumn foliage.

'Purpureus' as per the species but with purplish darker green foliage with dark maroon lightly fragrant 1-1½" flowers. Autumn color is usually more colorful than the species.

'Simply Scentsational' is a recent introduction by Proven Winners that is very floriferous, with deliciously fragrant dark red flowers of melon, banana and strawberry. 6-8' high x 4-7' wide.

Calycanthus hybrids result from cross of *Calycanthus floridus* and *Calycanthus chinensis*.

'Aphrodite' has large 3-6" red-burgundy flowers for much of the late spring and summer. The flowers are usually with melon & strawberry fragrance. Large 3-6" x 1-3" glossy green foliage. Growing a bit small than other current hybrids at 8-10' high and 6-8' wide.

'Hartlage Wine' commemorates Richard Hartlage for his hybrid in 1991. While the flowers are not fragrant, they are red-maroon and 3-3½" in diameter. Very floriferous during much of the late Spring into Summer. Shiny dark green leaves. Grows 10-15' high and wide. (*Calycanthus x ralstonii* 'Hartlage Wine')

'Solar Flare' is nicely fragrant with 2½" rich reddish-maroon flowers with yellow centers. Lustrous green foliage on a 9-10 high and wide plant.

'Venus' was developed by Dr. Tom Ranney at NCSU. 'Venus' has cream-yellow buds that open to fragrant white 2" flowers with maroon centers in late spring to summer. Some spotting on the petals & sepals (tepals). Lustrous dark green foliage. Growing to about 12' high and wide.