
Wildflower Spot – March 2019
John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

CORALBERRY

Symphoricarpos orbiculatus

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The fruit of Coralberry is its most outstanding ornamental attribute. From fall throughout the winter, long, cascading branches carry clusters of brilliant reddish-purple berries, eaten primarily by robins and bobwhite quail. Coralberry loses its leaves in the winter, but the berries persist for many months.

This shrub is dense and low-growing and can be used as an informal hedge or for erosion control on slopes. Coralberry forms extensive colonies and spreads by rooting at the nodes where it touches the ground. This plant is drought-tolerant and will adapt to full sun or part shade, moist to dry conditions, and a loamy or rocky soil; it is a good choice for xeriscape and woodland gardens.

Coralberry is a member of the honeysuckle family and produces small pink-white flowers bloom June to July which attract bees, wasps, and flies. These insects suck nectar from the flowers, although some of the bees also collect pollen.

Songbirds, ground birds, small mammals, and browsers use this plant for food, cover, and nesting sites, because of its dense branching habit and abundant leaves.



Another common name of *Symphoricarpos orbiculatus* is Buckbrush, because the shrub is a favorite food plant of white-tailed deer and is often heavily browsed. Where deer are not a significant problem in garden areas this native shrub is a good alternative to Japanese barberry and cotoneasters.

Found all over Virginia, Coralberry ranges from Connecticut south to Louisiana and west to Michigan and Colorado. ❖

Photo: Coralberry (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*) taken by Phillip Merritt
For more information about native plants visit www.vnps.org.