

Caryopteris × *clandonensis* A. Simmonds ex A. Rehder

Bluebeard

Other Common Names: Blue Mist, Blue Spirea, Hybrid Bluebeard.

Family: *Verbenaceae*.

Cold Hardiness: Hardiness is dramatically affected by the intended use of the species and the individual clone selected due to its hybrid origin; plants are used as weak shrubs or subshrubs in USDA zones 8 (7b) to 9, herbaceous perennials in USDA zones 5 to 7, and as summer annuals in colder zones.

Foliage: Mostly deciduous; opposite; simple; ovate to narrowly ovate; 1 0 to 2 0 long; tips acute; nearly entire to coarsely serrate; base rounded; the pinnate veins are impressed above and raised beneath; leaves are somewhat pubescent above and more densely so beneath; upper surfaces more or less blue-green, silvery to light green beneath; no fall color; petioles are 1/4 0 to 1/2 0 long, reddish becoming green, and pubescent.

Flower: Short umbel-like clusters bearing about twenty tiny tubular five-lobed flowers; perfect; flowering is mostly from mid- to late summer into fall, but plants can be induced to bloom much earlier if greenhouse grown prior to transplanting to the landscape; flowers are largely bright blue to violet-blue in color, but a white and pale pink form have been reported; fragrant; flowering is effective for an extended time period.

Fruit: Not particularly ornamental; tiny capsules with a more or less persistent calyx.

Stem / Bark: Stems — medium in thickness; squarish in cross-section; initially green strongly flushed red, later green and eventually brown; whitish pubescence is present on new growth; each new pair of leaves originates perpendicular to the previous pair around the stem; Buds — foliose; tiny, 1/16 0 long; green; pubescent; Bark — brown with lighter colored ridges on the fissures; only developing in areas where the stems are cold hardy.

Habit: Bluebeard is typically a 2 N to 3 N tall rounded mound as a shrub, and more in the 1 1/2 N to 2 N range as a herbaceous perennial or annual; plants are rather open in habit unless periodically pruned; the overall texture is medium.

Cultural Requirements: Easily grown in sunny to mostly sunny locations with moderately well drained soils; best treated as a herbaceous perennial or subshrub even if the stems survive the winter to maintain a full dense canopy; avoid heavy nitrogen fertilization as growth may become rank.

Pathological Problems: None of particular consequence as long as the soils are well drained.

Ornamental Assets: Late season fragrant blue to blue-violet flowers are the sales pitch for this plant.

Limitations & Liabilities: Too short-lived and with insufficiently cold hardy twigs to function as a good shrub, but this does not hinder use as an annual or perennial as flowering occurs on new growth.

Landscape Utilization: Massing in low maintenance areas; plants can be inserted as a component in a mixed annual or perennial border or in containers for blue highlights; cut flower gardens.

Other Comments: This species is under-utilized in our region for summer and autumn color; perhaps it is more effective as an annual than as a perennial.

Native Habitat: A hybrid species between *Caryopteris incana* × *Caryopteris mongholica* A.A. von Bunge.

Related Taxa: Numerous cultivars have been selected for their darker blue to blue-violet flowers including 'Dark Knight', 'Heavenly Blue', 'Kew Blue', and 'Longwood Blue'; a packet of seed of *C. × clandonensis* yielded the typical blue flowering plants and a couple of pale pink flowering forms for us at the TAMU Horticulture Gardens; this pink flowering form is currently under evaluation.

Caryopteris incana (C.P. Thunberg) F.A.W. Miquel

Common Bluebeard

(*Caryopteris mastacanthus*, *Caryopteris sinensis*, *Caryopteris tangutica*)

- C *Caryopteris incana* is more open and taller in habit, 3N to 4N(5N), compared to *C. × clandonensis*; the leaf margins tend to be longer, 2O to 3Q, and are consistently serrated or nearly shallowly lobed; however, due to the hybrid origin of *C. × clandonensis* its identification characteristics tend to overlap those of *C. incana*.
- C The fragrant violet-blue flowers are the primary attraction and as with *C. × clandonensis* tend to occur later in the season than on most shrubs; return bloom can be encouraged by light shearing as initial flowering subsides; it is about a USDA zone less cold hardy for various purposes than *C. × clandonensis*.

References: Dirr, 1998; Flint, 1997; Krüssmann, 1984; Wyman, 1969.

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