

Calycanthus floridus 'Athens'

Carolina allspice 'Athens'



This easy to grow shrub has many names and all of them say something about the beautiful perfume of the flowers: Sazaníkù, strawberry shrub, or even pineapple shrub. They really smell like a few types of fruit: strawberry, apple, and even melon. Sweetshrub is native to much of the eastern USA and even though one species is called

sinocalycanthus chinensis (= of China), recent molecular data indicates that it is more accurately suited for the genus *calycanthus* i.e. American group of *calycanthus*. The first plants were discovered, described, and depicted by Mark Catesby with the help of Professor of Botany at Oxford University William Sherard, and introduced in a book *Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands*, then without its current name *calycanthus*.



Its epithet *floridus* is often erroneously connected to Florida but it means floriferous. Still, in respect of its origin either translation could be considered acceptable because the state's name etymology has a lot to do with flowers. From 1513, when the Spanish first landed there during their Easter

celebration known as Pascua Florida – The Feast of Flowers, the state was simply called Florida.



Athens is a unique sweetshrub variety selected by the State Botanical Garden at the University of Georgia, USA. It has mint green, 4-5 across, fully double flowers which come out usually from mid May until late June in CE climate. They are strongly scented releasing a tropical fruit perfume. Deciduous leaves are large, 14-16 cm long, broadly elliptic to ovate, acuminate, bright green and glossy, changing to yellow in autumn. Athens sweetshrub grows moderately reaching almost 2m wide and tall in maturity which may take some 15-20 years.

The whole plant contains fragrant oils in all its parts. On the other hand, it also contains

calycanthine, a toxin structurally similar to strychnine, therefore it is dangerous to animals, mostly ruminants. Humans would be endangered only if large doses of the plant were consumed or if calycanthine was isolated in its concentrated form. In the past dried bark was used in place of cinnamon without any side effects.

Sweetshrub comes from North American moist woodlands so it will require a moist (not wet) place in your garden, too. And preferably full sun for best results. We recommend spring pruning of young plants once or twice after planting to achieve a compact shape with regular habit, which the plant then holds without further care. Hardy to about -29 °C (USDA zone 5).

