UF IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

ENH267

# *Calliandra haematocephala*: Powderpuff[1]

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson[2]

## Introduction

This large, multiple-trunked, low-branching, evergreen shrub has silky leaflets that are glossy copper when new, turning to a dark metallic green. The profuse, fragrant bloom is the main reason for its popularity, with big puffs, two to three inches across, of watermelon pink, deep red, or white silky stamens, produced during warm months.



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Calliandra haematocephala*: Powderpuff
Credits: Ed Gilman

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Calliandra haematocephala*
**Pronunciation:** kal-ee-AN-druh hee-mat-oh-SEFF-uh-luh
**Common name(s):** Powderpuff
**Family:** *Leguminosae*
**USDA hardiness zones:** 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)
**Origin:** not native to North America
**Invasive potential:** has been evaluated using the UF/IFAS Assessment of the Status of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas (Fox et al. 2005). This species is not documented in any undisturbed natural areas in Florida. Thus, it is not considered a problem species and may be used in Florida.
**Uses:** hedge; specimen; deck or patio; container or planter; trained as a standard; espalier; highway median
**Availability:** not native to North America



Figure 2. Range

## Description

**Height:** 12 to 15 feet
**Spread:** 10 to 15 feet
**Crown uniformity:** irregular
**Crown shape:** vase, round

1. This document is ENH267, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date November 1993. Revised March 2007. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the EDIS website at http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu.

2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville FL 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county's UF/IFAS Extension office.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A & M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.

**Crown density:** open
**Growth rate:** fast
**Texture:** fine

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)
**Leaf type:** bipinnately compound, even-pinnately compound
**Leaf margin:** entire
**Leaf shape:** oblong
**Leaf venation:** pinnate, parallel, bowed
**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen
**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches, less than 2 inches
**Leaf color:** green
**Fall color:** no color change
**Fall characteristic:** not showy



Figure 3. Foliage

## Flower

**Flower color:** pink, red
**Flower characteristics:** showy

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** pod or pod-like
**Fruit length:** 3 to 6 inches
**Fruit covering:** dry or hard
**Fruit color:** brown
**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns
**Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure
**Breakage:** resistant
**Current year twig color:** gray, green, brown
**Current year twig thickness:** thin, medium
**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

## Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun, partial sun or partial shade
**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained
**Drought tolerance:** high
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** unknown

## Other

**Roots:** not a problem
**Winter interest:** yes
**Outstanding tree:** no
**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** unknown
**Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases

# Use and Management

With rapid growth in sandy soils and full sun, powderpuff bush will respond favorably to regular watering while young but should require no special care once established, except an occasional pruning to keep it within bounds. Powderpuff bush may be used as a tall (5- to 6-foot) flowering hedge and is often seen as a small, flowering specimen tree with the lower branches pruned off. Powderpuff can grow to about 15-feet tall when pruned into a small tree. The long, arching branches form an attractive canopy suitable for patio or container plantings. Pinching the new growth increases branch number and produces more flowers on a more compact plant.

Although plants are damaged by freezing temperatures, they grow back from the base in the spring in USDA hardiness zone 9.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

The cultivar 'White' has snow-white flowers.

## Pests

While usually pest-free, powderpuff bush can be occasionally infested by mites, caterpillars, or other chewing insects.

## Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.

# Literature Cited

Fox, A.M., D.R. Gordon, J.A. Dusky, L. Tyson, and R.K. Stocker (2005). UF/IFAS Assessment of the Status of Non-Native Plants in Florida s Natural Areas. Cited from the Internet (November 3, 2006), http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/assessment.html