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Callistemon citrinus: Red Bottlebrush[1]

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https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/

Introduction

The common name "bottlebrush", perfectly describes this evergreen plant's bright red flower spikes. Hummingbirds love the flowers, and the plant is hardier than most bottlebrushes. The flowers are followed by small, woody capsules that look like bead bracelets on the bark, and which last for years. Offered as a shrub, bottlebrush can be trained as a tree to 15-feet or espaliered as a quick wall cover. It makes a nice screen or tall unclipped hedge. Pruning to develop several trunks and removing some lower branches can create a fine small specimen tree.

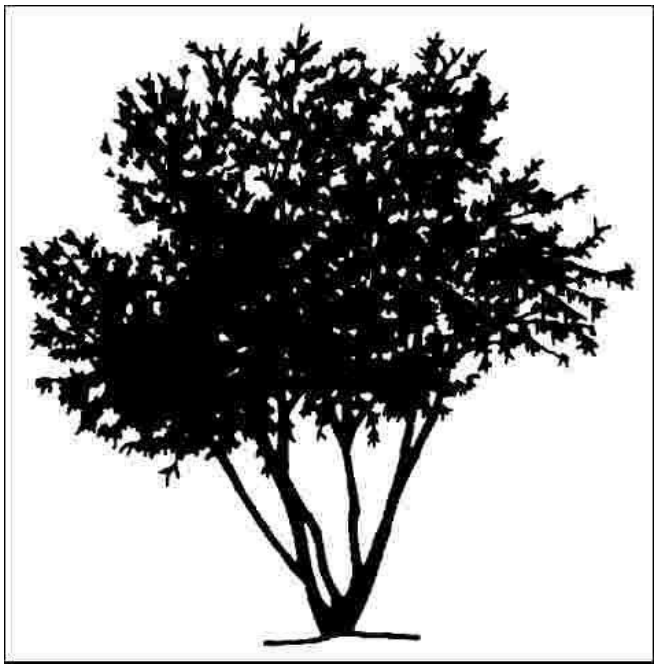


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Callistemon citrinus*: Red Bottlebrush

General Information

Scientific name: *Callistemon citrinus*

Pronunciation: kal-liss-STEE-mawn sih-TRY-nus

Common name(s): Red bottlebrush, lemon bottlebrush

Family: *Myrtaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 9A 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; parking lot island < 100 sq. ft.; parking lot island 100-200 sq. ft.; parking lot island > 200 sq. ft.; tree lawn 3–4 feet wide; tree lawn 4–6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft. wide; street without sidewalk; espalier; screen; specimen; container or planter; deck or patio; highway median

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

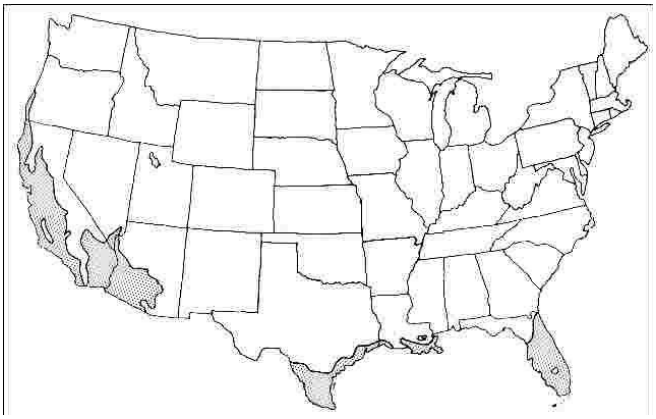


Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 10- to 15-feet

Spread: 10- to 15-feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: upright/erect, round

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: lanceolate, linear

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2-inches, 2- to 4-inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: red

Flower characteristics: very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than .5-inch

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: gray

Current year twig thickness: medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: no

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: resistant

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

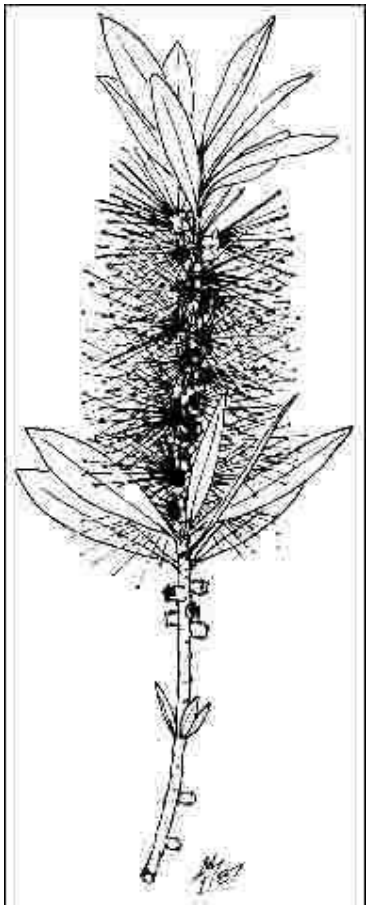


Figure 3. Foliage

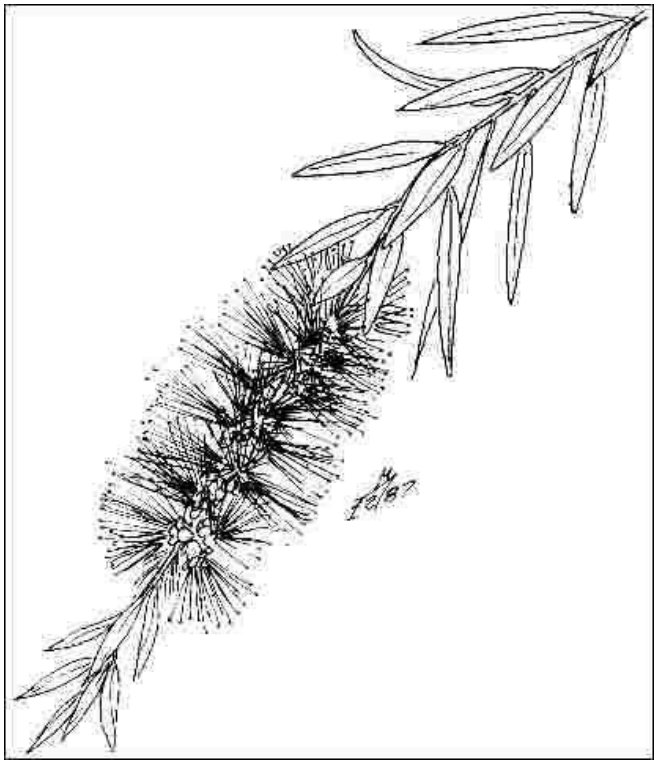


Figure 4. Flower

Use and Management

A good choice for a spot offering full sun, it will adapt to a variety of soils. Very drought-tolerant once established, bottlebrush tolerates any soil except very poor, alkaline, or poorly drained. Fertilize regularly to maintain good flower color and dark green foliage. Suckers from the trunk need to be removed periodically to maintain tree form.

Propagation is usually from cuttings, as it is variable when grown from seed.

Pests

No particular insect pests are listed for Callistemon.

Diseases

If the soil is too moist, root and crown-attacking fungus diseases can be a problem. Prevention is your best hope—keep the plant on the dry side with low fertility and good air circulation.

A twig gall, formed in response to a fungus (*Sphaeropsis tumefacens*), can disfigure the tree.

Chlorosis, a systemic condition that causes new leaves to turn yellow, can be corrected with treatment of the soil using iron sulfate or iron chelate.

Literature Cited

University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. 2018. "Assessment of Non-native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas" (https://assessment.ifas.ufl.edu, 4/29/2019) Gainesville, FL, 32611-4000, USA.

[1] This document is ENH269, one of a series of the UF/IFAS Department of Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date November 1993. Revised March 2007. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the Ask IFAS website at https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu for the currently supported version of this publication. © UF/IFAS. This publication is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 *To learn more about creating and maintaining attractive landscapes that protect Florida's water and natural resources, visit ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/.*

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