



# *Cassia alata* Candlebrush<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

This large, spreading shrub from Argentina, very tender to frost, produces from late summer to fall, large spikes of golden-yellow flowers, opening from bottom to top (Fig. 1). Flower spikes look like golden candles when covered with unopened flower buds. Reaching a height of 10 to 15 feet with an equal spread, Candlebrush makes an attractive specimen shrub or small tree if it is properly trained.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Cassia alata*

**Pronunciation:** KASS-ee-uh uh-LAY-tuh

**Common name(s):** Candlebrush

**Family:** *Leguminosae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; trainable as a standard; specimen

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

## DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 10 to 15 feet

**Spread:** 10 to 15 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette

**Crown shape:** oval

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** coarse

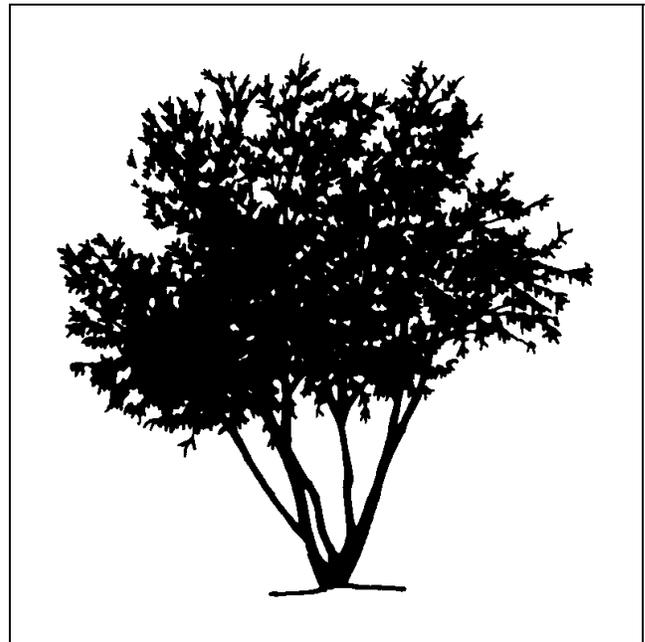


Figure 1. Mature Candlebrush.

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** even pinnately compound

**Leaflet margin:** entire

**Leaflet shape:** oblong; obovate

**Leaflet venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaflet blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

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2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

### Flower

**Flower color:** yellow

**Flower characteristics:** fall flowering; summer flowering; very showy

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** pod

**Fruit length:** 6 to 12 inches

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; not particularly showy; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure

**Breakage:** susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is weak and tends to break

**Current year twig color:** green

**Current year twig thickness:** medium; thick

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

### Other

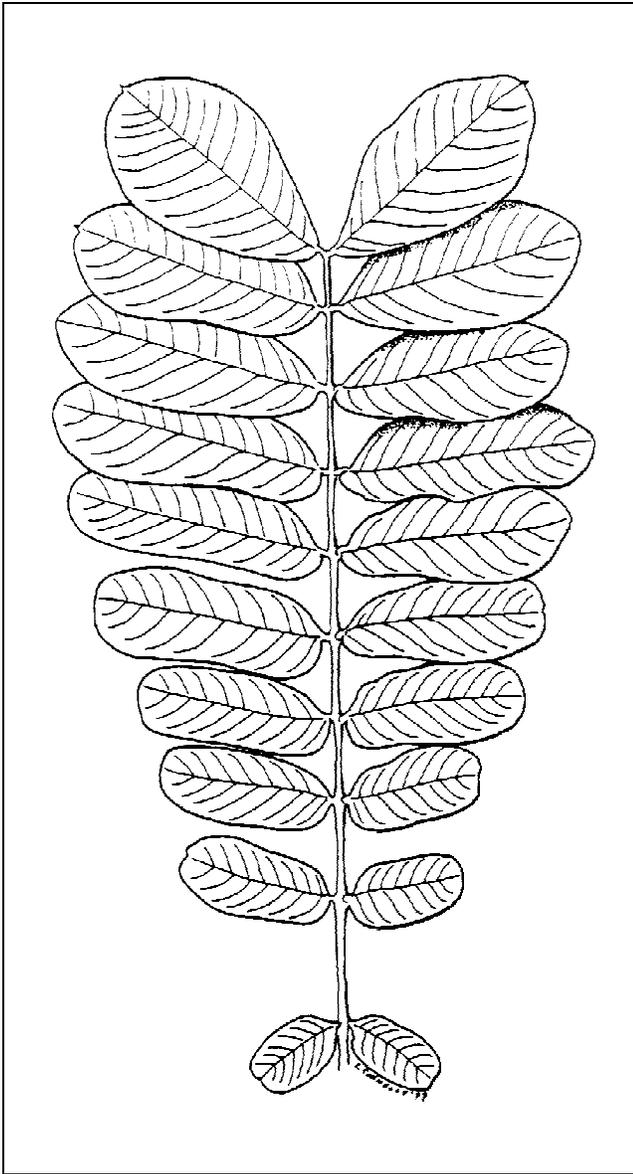
**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests



**Figure 3.** Foliage of Candlebrush.

### **Pests**

Caterpillars can cause a problem for Candlebrush, eating the foliage and flower buds.

### **Diseases**

No diseases are of major concern.

### **USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Candlebrush grows rapidly in full sun on a wide range of soils. Pinching new growth increases branching, creating a fuller canopy which produces more flowers. Candlebrush produces the nicest flower display next year when it is pruned back hard in the spring. It makes a beautiful accent in a shrub border or planted as a specimen in a ground cover. Locate it near the patio or by an entryway for a stunning fall accent plant.

Propagation is by cuttings or seed, blooming the first year from seed.