



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

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## 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

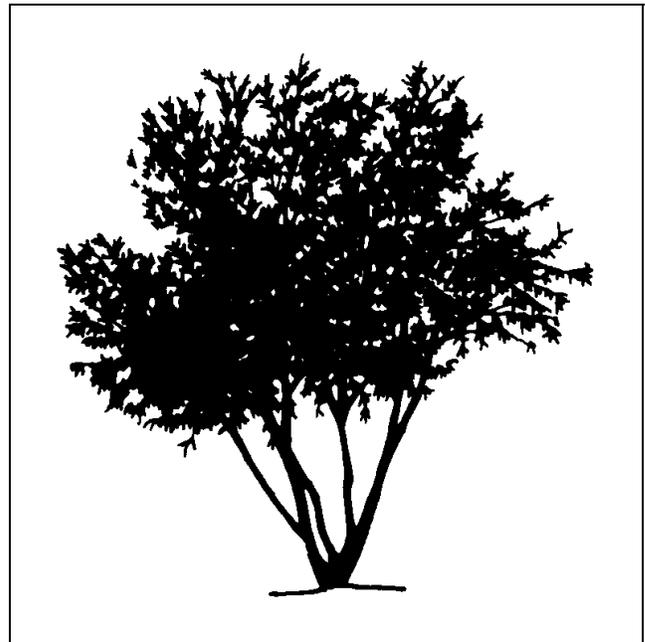


Figure 1. Mature Candlebrush.

## 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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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

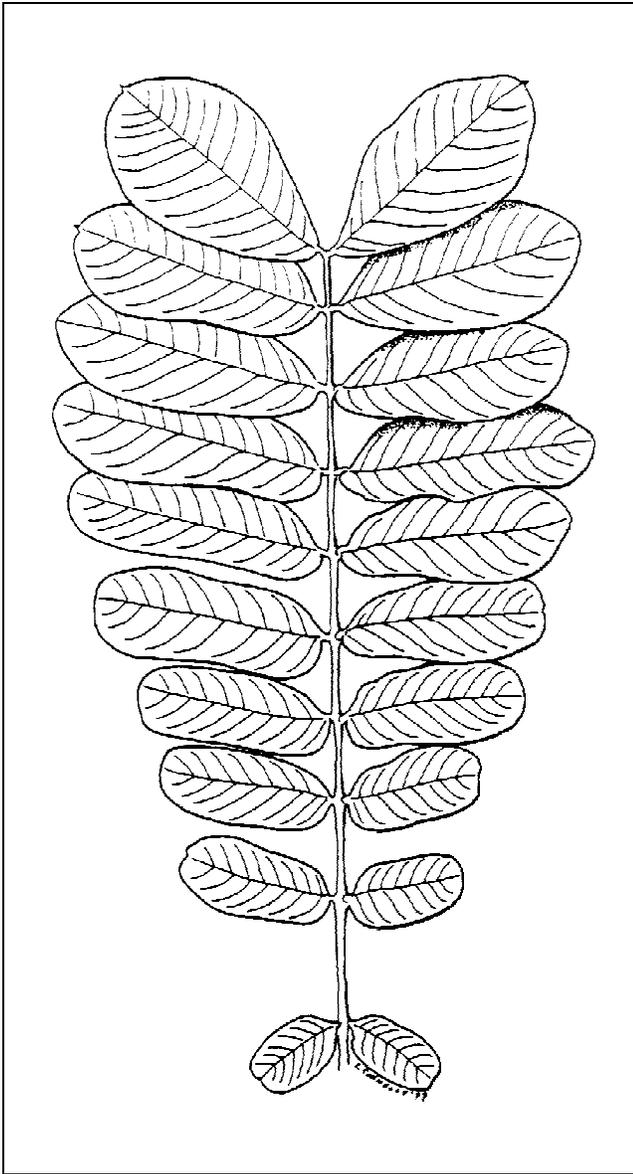
**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**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.