



Calliandra haematocephala Powderpuff¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

INTRODUCTION

This large, multiple trunked, low-branching, evergreen shrub has silky leaflets which are glossy copper when new, turning to a dark metallic green (Fig. 1). 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.

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

Uses: container or above-ground planter; espalier; hedge; 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: 12 to 15 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: round; vase shape

Crown density: open

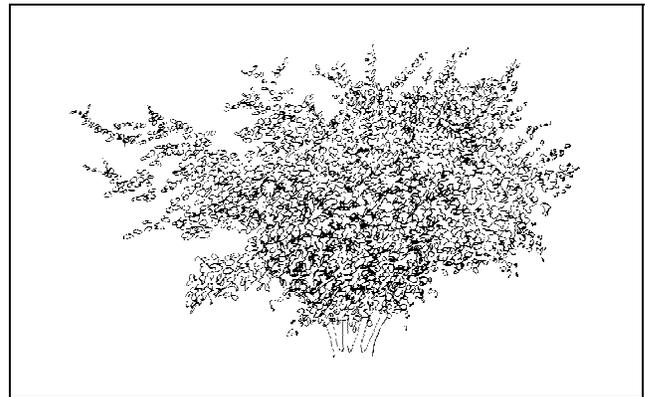


Figure 1. Middle-aged Powderpuff.

Growth rate: fast

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: bipinnately compound; even pinnately compound

Leaflet margin: entire

Leaflet shape: oblong

Leaflet venation: bowed; parallel; pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaflet blade length: 2 to 4 inches; less than 2 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: pink; red

Flower characteristics: pleasant fragrance; showy; year round flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: pod

Fruit length: 3 to 6 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; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown; green; gray

Current year twig thickness: medium; thin

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun

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

Drought tolerance: high

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: No entries found.

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

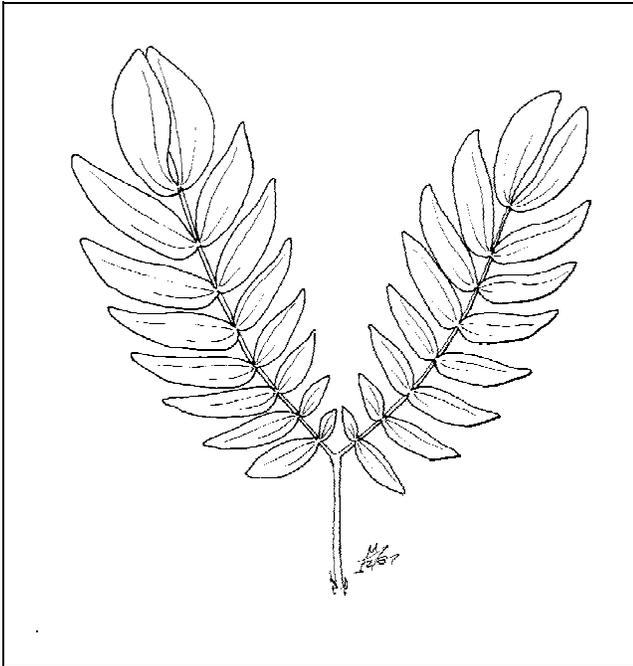


Figure 3. Foliage of Powderpuff.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.

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 (five to six-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.