Callistemon viminalis
Weeping Bottlebrush

INTRODUCTION

This popular evergreen tree has a dense, multitrunked, low-branching, pendulous growth habit and a moderate growth rate (Fig. 1). Mature specimens can reach 25 to 30 feet tall in 30-years but most trees are seen 15 to 20 feet high and wide. The narrow, light green, three to four-inch-long leaves tend to grow only at the ends of the long, hanging branches, creating a weeping effect. The cylindrical, bright scarlet blooms, three to five inches long and one-inch wide, are composed of multiple, long, bristlelike stamens. These blooms appear in great abundance March through July, less so throughout the year. The flowers are followed by persistent woody capsules which are not noticed unless you are close to the tree.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: Callistemon viminalis
Pronunciation: kal-liss-STEEN-mawn
vim-min-NAY-liss
Common name(s): Weeping Bottlebrush
Family: Myrtaceae
USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: container or above-ground planter; hedge; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (> 6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; screen; specimen; residential street tree

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 20 feet
Spread: 15 to 20 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette
Crown shape: round; weeping
Crown density: open
Growth rate: medium
Texture: fine
Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: lanceolate; linear
Leaf venation: parallel
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches; less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: red
Flower characteristics: spring flowering; summer flowering; very showy (Fig. 3)

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: < .5 inch
Fruit covering: dry or hard
Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: 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; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: gray
Current year twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained
Drought tolerance: high
Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate
Callistemon viminalis -- Weeping Bottlebrush

Figure 3. Flower of Weeping Bottlebrush.

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  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** not known to be susceptible  
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Weeping Bottlebrushes should be grown in full sun, preferably on moist, well-drained soil. Although they can tolerate some drought, best flowering and growth is obtained with ample moisture and regular fertilization. Be sure the soil drains well as roots often rot in wet soil. The brittle wood of Weeping Bottlebrush may make it unsuitable for windy areas but this is usually not a problem in most locations. They are not suitable for street tree planting due to the weeping growth habit, but will make nice plantings along streets in wide medians. Lower branches can be removed so cars can fit beneath in parking lots where they grow well in the restricted soil space. Occasional pruning of pendulous branches will be required for vehicle clearance. One of the best uses is for lawn specimens, or screens on large properties, with a regular maintenance program.

The cultivar ‘Red Cascade’ has large red flowers in spring and fall. *Callistemon citrinis* and *Callistemon rigidus* are hardy in the southern part of USDA hardiness zone 8b.

**Propagation** is by seeds or cuttings.

**Pests**

Mites and witches broom can be troublesome.

**Diseases**

Root rot in wet soil, and canker. A twig gall, formed in response to a fungus (*Sphaeropsis tumefacens*), can disfigure the tree. The tree is often short-lived due to disease.