

## *Callistemon citrinus* Red Bottlebrush<sup>1</sup>

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

### INTRODUCTION

The common name, "bottlebrush", perfectly describes this evergreen plant's bright red flower spikes (Fig. 1). 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.

### 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:** 9 through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; espalier; 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; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree

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

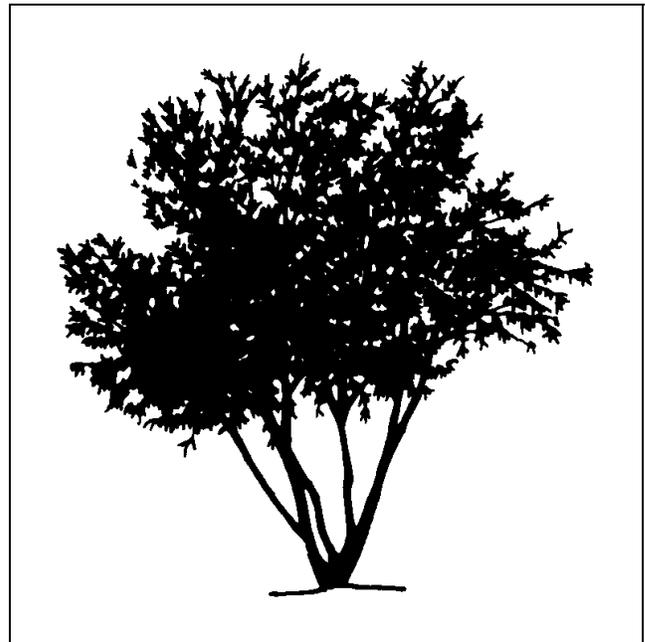


Figure 1. Middle-aged Red Bottlebrush.

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 10 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; upright

**Crown density:** moderate

**Growth rate:** medium

**Texture:** fine

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-110, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**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:** 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

**Fruit**

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

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

**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; no thorns
- Pruning requirement:** needs little pruning to develop a 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; acidic; well-drained
- Drought tolerance:** high
- Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

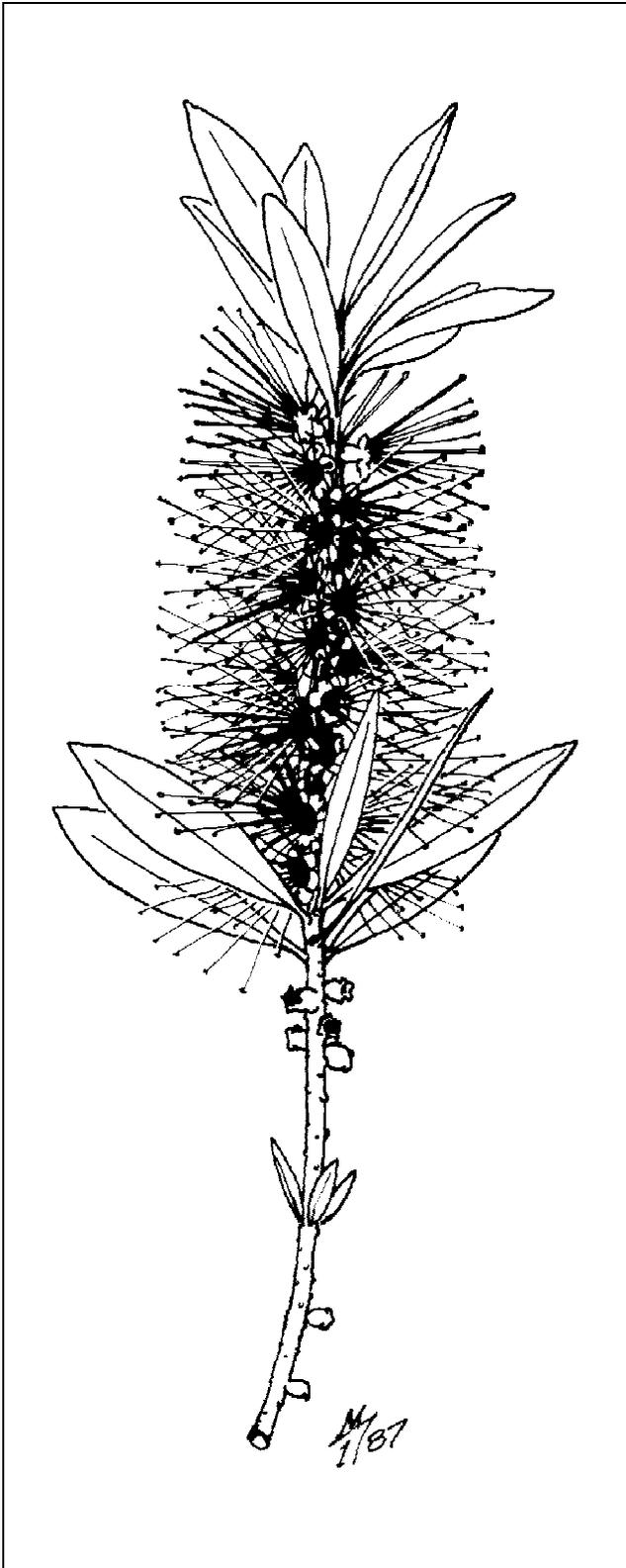


Figure 3. Foliage of Red Bottlebrush.

**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

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 which causes new leaves to turn yellow, can be corrected with treatment of the soil using iron sulfate or iron chelate.

### Other

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

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest