



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## *Callistemon rigidus*<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

This stiff, upright shrub is characterized by red flower spikes that are shaped like bottle brushes (Fig. 1). Flowers are comprised of red, showy stamens each approximately 1 inch long. The flowers, with their showy stamens, encircle the stem and form 4-inch-long, cylindrical spikes that appear in the spring and summer. The persistent fruits are hard seed capsules that occur in tight clusters around the stem. The stiff, narrow leaves of this shrub are sharply pointed and fragrant when crushed. Bottlebrush grows from 5 to 15 feet tall. *C. seboldii* is another hardy Bottlebrush, surviving temperatures of 9 degrees F.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** *Callistemon rigidus*

**Pronunciation:** kal-liss-STEE-mun RIDGE-jid-us

**Common name(s):** Erect Bottlebrush, Stiff Bottlebrush

**Family:** *Myrtaceae*

**Plant type:** shrub

**USDA hardiness zones:** 9 through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 9:** year round

**Planting month for zone 10 and 11:** year round

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** reclamation plant; trained as a standard; hedge; near a deck or patio; specimen; screen; foundation; border; attracts butterflies; attracts hummingbirds; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size)



Figure 1. Erect Bottlebrush.

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

### Description

**Height:** 5 to 15 feet

**Spread:** 6 to 10 feet

**Plant habit:** spreading; upright

**Plant density:** moderate

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-93, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1999. Please visit the EDIS web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Growth rate:** moderate

**Texture:** fine

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** ciliate

**Leaf shape:** linear

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

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

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** red

**Flower characteristic:** spring flowering; winter flowering

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** less than .5 inch

**Fruit cover:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristic:** persists on the plant

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

**Current year stem/twig color:** reddish

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** medium

**Culture**

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

**Soil tolerances:** acidic; alkaline; sand; loam;

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Soil salt tolerances:** moderate

**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

## Other

**Roots:** usually not a problem

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

**Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

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

## Use and Management

Bottlebrush can be trained to grow into a small, multi-trunk tree by removing lower branches and foliage. It makes a nice specimen trained in this fashion. Planted 10 to 15 feet apart it makes a thick screen provided there is enough room for the plant to spread laterally. Allow at least 10 feet for the tree to spread. It can add fine-textured color to an informal shrubby border and forms a good, tall hedge or wind break. This plant will also function well as a specimen planted near the patio or deck and is suited for containerizing.

Bottlebrush requires a full sun position in the landscape and well-drained soils. It is heat and drought tolerant but will not tolerate overwatering. Bottlebrush is known to be difficult to transplant as a large specimen. Transplant this plant from containers when it is small. Regular fertilization on Bottlebrush will help maintain thick, vigorous growth and maintain green foliage color.

Propagate this plant using seeds or cuttings.

## Pests and Diseases

A serious stem disease often disfigures *Callistemon* species causing a witches broom. Roots also rot when the tree is planted in a soil that is not well drained. Mites may be troublesome in hot, dry locations.

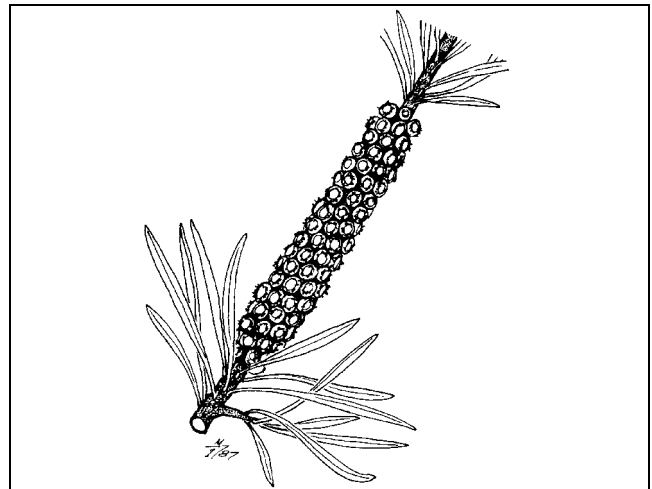


Figure 3. Fruit of Erect Bottlebrush