

Callistemon spp.

The Bottlebrushes consist of a number of evergreen trees and shrubs, some of which are used in Florida landscapes. Of the many known species and varieties, four are suggested for use throughout Brevard County.

The **Weeping Bottlebrush** (*Callistemon viminalis*), which attains a height of 20 feet or more, is frequently used as a small tree in Brevard County. Leaves are small and thin and are arranged alternately along weeping branches. Flowers are usually deep red in color on terminal spikes that cascade downward on each branch.

The **upright Bottlebrush** (*Callistemon rigidus*) is also considered to be a small tree; it grows to about 15 feet in height. This tree is very similar to the Weeping Bottlebrush, although the growth habit is more dense with upright branches rather than weeping branches.

The **Red Cluster Bottlebrush** (*Callistemon sp.*) is used as a large shrub to 15 feet in height. Growth habit is considered dense from the ground up and flowering occurs more frequently than other varieties of Bottlebrush.

The **Dwarf Bottlebrush** (*Callistemon citrinus* ‘Little John’ or ‘Better John’) is a unique form of bottle brush that grows to only 3 feet in height with a 5 foot spread. Plants flower heaviest during spring and summer months with periodic flowering throughout the year. All bottlebrushes require good drainage and plenty of sunlight for proper growth and flower production. For the most part, bottlebrushes are considered cold hardy throughout Brevard County. They also have a fair salt tolerance and may be used in coastal areas with some protection from salt spray.

Planting:

Best growth can be expected when plants are set in a well-drained, improved soil in full or half-day sun. Plants or trees should be placed in the ground at soil level and mulch should be applied around the root area to keep soil moist. Water plants thoroughly every day for the first week. For the next two to four weeks, water at the rate of two to three thorough waterings per week.

Fertilizing

Bottlebrushes may be fertilized 2 to 4 times per year. Fertilize small trees every 3 months using **Sunniland 6-6-6** and apply 1/2 cup lightly over mulched root area. For larger trees, fertilize in March and September. Use 2 to 3 pounds of **Sunniland 6-6-6** or **Espoma Tree-Tone** and distribute lightly over the entire root area. Do not over fertilize; over fertilization can cause serious damage to the shallow roots of all bottlebrushes.

Plant Problems

Root Rot: A disease affecting the root system causing dieback and sometimes the death of the plant. Usually caused by overwatering.

Solution: Keep soil moist but not continually soggy and wet. There is no chemical control available once disease is present.

Leaf Spot: A fungus that affects the leaves causing small spots on them.

Solution: Spray with Liquid Copper fungicide per proper application rate.

