

Callistemon salignus, White Bottlebrush¹

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Caution: At the time of this writing, the Florida Division of Plant Industry (FDPI) has not yet classified this species as being invasive (altering native plant communities), but this could change at any time as its behavior is being closely monitored given its close relation to the genus *Melaleuca*, of which *Melaleuca quinquenervia* and other *Callistemon* spp. are category I invasives. The possession, transport, and/or cultivation of category I invasives are strictly prohibited in Florida.

Family

Myrtaceae, myrtle family

Genus

Callistemon comes from two Greek words: *callos*, which means “beautiful,” and *stemon*, or “having stamens,” in reference to the upright position of the flowers.

Species

The species name *salignus* is derived from the Latin word *salix*, which means “willow.” The term *salignus* translates to “like a willow tree” and refers to the leaves having a similar appearance to that of the willow tree.

Common Name

White bottlebrush, willow bottlebrush

The name “bottlebrush” refers to the cylindrical arrangement of flowers, with the aggregation of their finely



Figure 1. *Callistemon salignus*, White Bottlebrush

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textured stamens reminiscent of a standard bottlebrush. This particular species has the name “white bottlebrush” because its flowers range from white to a creamy whitish-green in tone, and its bark is a papery white. The name “willow bottlebrush” comes from the similarity in leaf shape to that of the willow tree.

1. This document is FOR292, one of a series of the School of Forest Resources and Conservation, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date July 2012. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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Description

Native to Australia, this evergreen tree grows best in places where full sun and no frost are the norm. It is drought resistant and can reach heights of 16–40 feet. Leaves of the white bottlebrush are narrow, simple, and alternately arranged with smooth leaf margins. The bark is white and has a peeling, papery texture. The showy stamens of the flowers are generally white with a hint of yellow or pink. Flowers are arranged in clusters around the branches in a cylindrical pattern. Each flower produces a spherical, woody fruit that is held along the branch where the flowers once were, and may persist for months or even years before releasing seeds.

Allergen

Although the pollen does not travel far, it is highly allergenic.

Storm Tolerance

White bottlebrush has a medium-to-low wind resistance.

Applications

Horticultural

Caution: *While this species has not yet been classified as invasive (alters native plant communities), it is being monitored for invasive tendencies and its status could change at any time. Its close relationship to the genus *Melaleuca* raises concerns that it could behave similarly to *Melaleuca quinquenervia* and other *Callistemon* spp. that are currently considered category I invasive species. Possession, transport, and cultivation of category I invasives are strictly prohibited in Florida.*

That said, this species has use as an ornamental tree that produces moderate shade along a street, median, or yard. The unique flowering structure is eye-catching and this species can also be pruned for use as a decorative hedge. Its tolerance of many different soil types and droughty conditions makes it easy to care for after it's been established. It does best in locations with ample sun and little to no frost.

Additional References

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