Bottlebrush
Callistemon rigidus

Introduction
This stiff, upright shrub is characterized by red flower spikes that are shaped like bottle brushes. Flowers are 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. Callistemon citrinus is a dwarf variety.

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
Planting month for zone 9: 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)
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
Growth rate: moderate Fruit cover: dry or hard
Texture: fine Fruit color: brown

Foliage
Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; typically multi-
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 characteristic: persists on the plant

Trunk and Branches
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, multitrunk 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 shrubbery 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.

by Edward F. Gilman