

Calliandra surinamensis: Pink Powderpuff¹

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Introduction

This large, multiple-trunked, low-branching, evergreen shrub has silky leaflets that are glossy copper when new, turning to a dark metallic green. The main reason for its popularity is the profuse, fragrant blooms produced during the warm months. Its blossoms are big puffs, two to three inches across, with watermelon pink and white silky stamens.

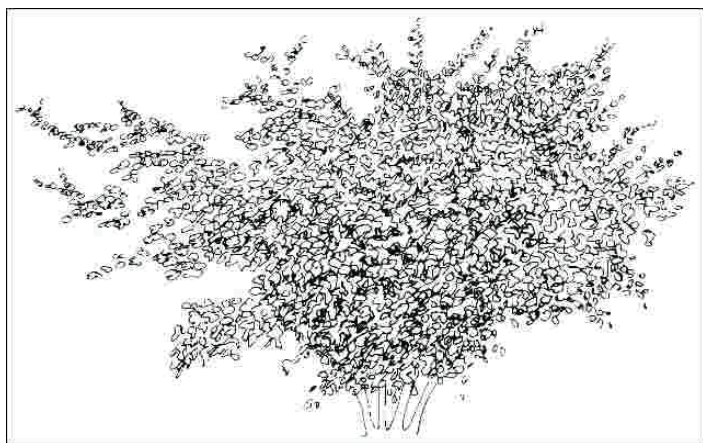


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Calliandra surinamensis*: Pink Powderpuff

General Information

Scientific name: *Calliandra surinamensis*

Pronunciation: kal-ee-AN-druh ser-ih-nuh-MEN-sis

Common name(s): Pink powderpuff

Family: *Leguminosae*

USDA hardiness zones: 9A through 11 (Figure 2)

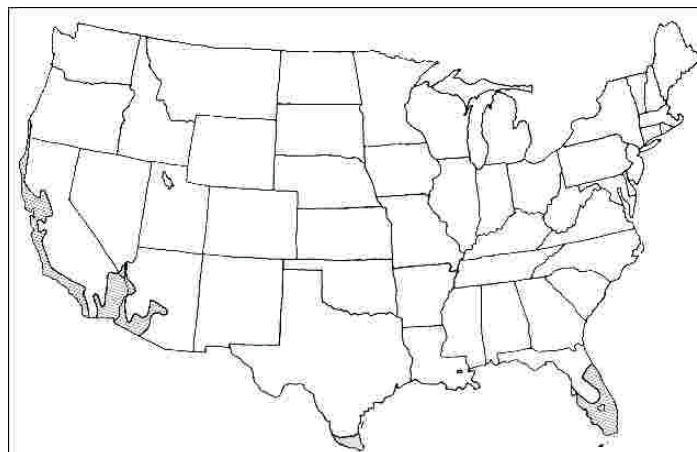


Figure 2. Range

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: not assessed/incomplete assessment

Uses: hedge; specimen; deck or patio; container or planter; trained as a standard; espalier; highway median

Description

Height: 12 to 15 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

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Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: vase, round

Crown density: open

Growth rate: fast

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Figure 3)

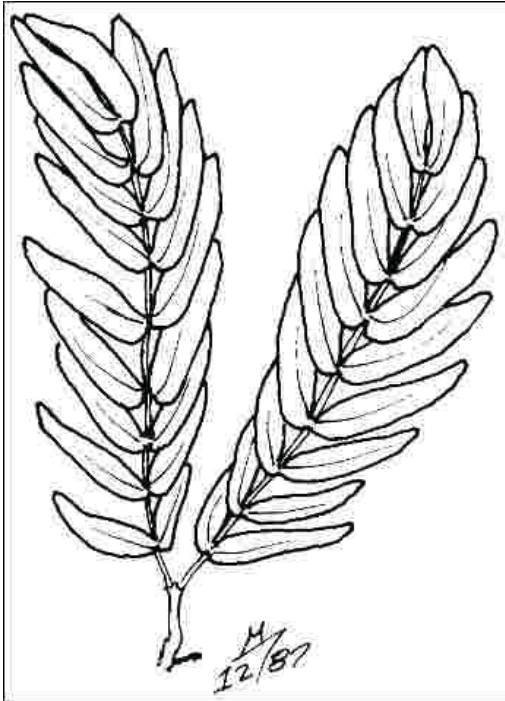


Figure 3. Foliage

Leaf type: bipinnately compound, even-pinnately compound

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: oblong

Leaf venation: parallel, bowed, pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches, 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: pink

Flower characteristics: showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: pod or pod-like

Fruit length: 3 to 6 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: green, gray, brown

Current year twig thickness: thin, medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; acidic; slightly alkaline; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: unknown

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: yes

Outstanding tree: no

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

Use and Management

With rapid growth in sandy soils and full sun, powderpuff bush will respond favorably to regular watering while young but should require no special care once established, except an occasional pruning to keep it within bounds. Pinching new growth increases the number of branches and enhances flower display. Powderpuff bush may be used as a tall (5- to 6-foot) flowering hedge and is often seen as a small, flowering specimen tree with the lower branches pruned off. Powderpuff can grow to about 15-feet tall when pruned into a small tree. The long, arching branches form an attractive canopy suitable for patio or container plantings.

Although plants are damaged by freezing temperatures, they grow back from the base in the spring in USDA hardiness zone 9.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

Pests

While usually pest free, powderpuff bush can be occasionally infested by mites, caterpillars, or other chewing insects.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.