

# *Senna alata*: Candlebrush<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman, Dennis G. Watson, Ryan W. Klein, and Deborah R. Hilbert<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

This large, spreading shrub from Argentina, produces large spikes of golden-yellow flowers that open from bottom to top. Flower spikes look like golden candles when covered with unopened flower buds. Reaching a height of 10 to 15 feet with an equal spread, candlebrush makes an attractive specimen shrub or small tree if it is properly trained.



Figure 1. Mature *Senna alata*: Candlebrush  
Credits: Stephen Brown, UF/IFAS

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Senna alata*

**Pronunciation:** Sen-nuh uh-LAY-tuh

**Common name(s):** Candlebrush, candlestick plant

**Family:** *Fabaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10A through 11 (Figure 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Invasive potential:** caution, may be recommended but manage to prevent escape (North, Central, South)

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

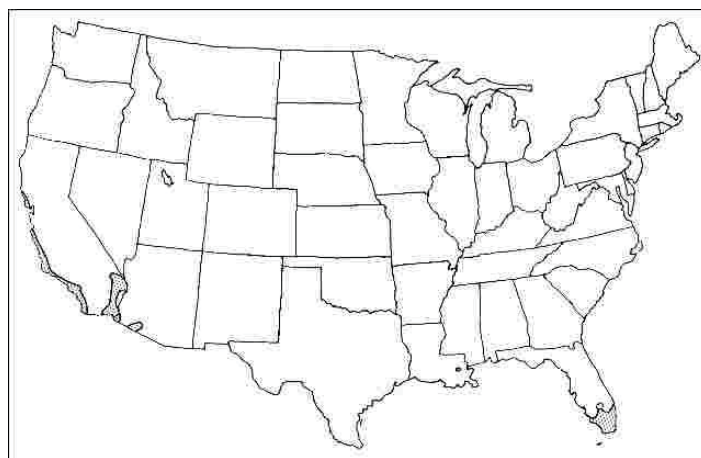


Figure 2. Range.  
Credits: UF/IFAS

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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor emeritus; Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering; Ryan W. Klein, assistant professor, arboriculture; and Deborah R. Hilbert, Gulf Coast Research and Education Center; Department of Environmental Horticulture; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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## Description

**Height:** 10 to 15 feet

**Spread:** 10 to 15 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular

**Crown shape:** oval

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** coarse

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Figure 3)

**Leaf type:** even-pinnately compound

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** obovate, oblong

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

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

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy



Figure 3. Foliage of *Senna alata*: Candlebrush  
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## Flower

**Flower color:** yellow

**Flower characteristics:** very showy



Figure 4. Flower of *Senna alata*: Candlebrush  
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## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** pod or pod-like

**Fruit length:** 6 to 12 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 don't droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns

**Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure

**Breakage:** susceptible to breakage

**Current year twig color:** green

**Current year twig thickness:** thick, medium

**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

## Culture

**Light requirement:** full sun

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

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** unknown

## Other

**Roots:** not a problem

**Winter interest:** no

**Outstanding tree:** no

**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** unknown

**Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases

## Use and Management

Candlebrush grows rapidly in full sun on a wide range of soils. Pinching new growth increases branching, creating a fuller canopy which produces more flowers. Candlebrush produces the nicest flower display when it is pruned back hard in the spring prior. It makes a beautiful accent in a shrub border or planted as a specimen in a ground cover. Locate it near the patio or by an entryway for a stunning fall accent plant. It should be used with caution due to its potential invasiveness.

Propagation is by cuttings or seed, blooming the first year from seed.

## Pests

Caterpillars can cause a problem for candlebrush, eating the foliage and flower buds.

## Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.