

NZ Myrtaceae Key - Online edition

Callistemon citrinus (Curtis) Skeels

Synonyms

Melaleuca citrina (Curtis) Dum.Cours.

Common Names

crimson bottlebrush, honey myrtle, lemon bottlebrush

Origin

Australia: swampy areas in south-eastern coastal regions.

Cultivation

In New Zealand almost exclusively found in cultivation; only a few records of it self-establishing. *Callistemon citrinus* 'Splendens' is a well-known selection of this species.

Distribution

Scattered records from mainly urban areas in the North Island, and a few, mainly cultivated plants, in the South Island of New Zealand.

Distinguishing Features

- Leaves >3 mm wide.
- Leaf lateral veins obvious.
- Crushed leaves lightly lemon-scented.
- Flowers at first in terminal spikes, but spike axes soon growing out into leafy shoots.
- Stamens free.
- Filaments pink to red to purple.

Habit

Variable shrub or small tree to 4 m tall.

Bark and Stem/Trunk

Bark hard, young bark smooth, grey, becoming fissured with age, then deeper parts tinted pink. Young branchlets sometimes red.

Leaves

Adult leaves alternate, narrow-oblongate or narrow-elliptic, 45–85 mm long, 5–25 mm wide; leaf blade flat, hairy when young, soon becoming hairless; leaf surfaces not puckered; margins entire; tips pointed, sometimes spiky; leaf bases becoming gradually narrower; leaf stalks absent or very short (≤ 1 mm).

Flowers

Flowers produced in cylindrical spikes, flowers ± 5 –7 mm in diam.; flower stalks absent; petals 5, yellow-green to cream; sepals 5, tips free, hairy; stamens bright red, longer than petals, anthers dark red. Main flowering period: late spring to early summer.

Fruit

Fruit dry, 3–4-locular, each fruit ± 4 –7 mm wide.

Similar Species

Callistemon citrinus, *C. salignus* and *C. viminalis* are similar, but *C. citrinus* differs in that the leaves possess obvious lateral veins and are lightly lemon-scented when crushed, coupled with flowers that are generally pink, to red to purple and possess free stamens, as opposed to leaves that have obvious lateral veins but are not lemon-scented coupled with mostly cream-white to yellow flowers with free stamens in *C. salignus*, and unscented leaves without obvious lateral veins coupled with red flowers and stamens fused into a ring in *C. viminalis*.

Notes

Callistemon is a genus of about 50 species endemic to Australia. Some consider *Callistemon* to be better placed in *Melaleuca*. We follow the Australian Plant Census (APC) by recognising them as separate genera.

External Links

- [Australia's Flora: Growing Native Plants](#)
- [CitSciHub](#)
- [Flora of New Zealand Online \(*Melaleuca citrina*\)](#)
- [GBIF](#)
- [iNaturalist NZ \(*Melaleuca citrina*\)](#)
- [NZPCN \(*Melaleuca citrina*\)](#)
- [PlantNET: New South Wales Flora Online](#)

- Plants of South Eastern New South Wales
- VicFlora: Flora of Victoria

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