

NZ Myrtaceae Key - Online edition

Callistemon viminalis (Sol. ex Gaertn.) G. Don

Synonyms

Melaleuca viminalis (Sol. ex Gaertn.) Byrnes

Common Names

creek bottlebrush, drooping bottlebrush, red bottlebrush, weeping bottlebrush

Origin

Australia: along water courses particularly in eastern coastal regions of New South Wales and Queensland.

Cultivation

In New Zealand almost exclusively found in cultivation; only a few records of it self-establishing. Several cultivars of this species have been selected, including *Callistemon viminalis* 'Captain Cook', 'Hanna Ray', 'Little John' (a low-growing selection) and 'Wild River'.

Distribution

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

Distinguishing Features

- Leaves >3 mm wide.
- Leaf lateral veins obscure.
- Flowers at first in terminal spikes, but spike axes soon growing out into leafy shoots.
- Two rows of stamens fused into a ring, shed as a unit.
- Filaments red.

Habit

Small to large tree with pendulous branches, to 6 m tall.

Bark and Stem/Trunk

Bark dark and furrowed. Branchlets with hairs.

Leaves

Adult leaves alternate, linear to narrow-elliptic, 30–70 mm long, 3–7 mm wide; leaf blade flat, hairy when young, soon becoming hairless, leaf surfaces not puckered; margins entire, with one side straighter than the other; tips pointed; leaf bases becoming gradually narrower; leaf stalks absent.

Flowers

Flowers produced in cylindrical spikes 40–100 mm long, 30–60 mm diam., flowers \pm 5–7 mm in diam., stalks absent, petals 5, yellow-green to cream; sepals 5, tips free, hairy; stamens red, longer than petals, fused into a ring, shed as a unit, anthers yellow-green. Main flowering period: spring to early summer.

Fruit

Fruit dry, 3–4-locular, each fruit \pm 5–6 mm wide, cup-shaped with a wide opening.

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 viminalis is susceptible to myrtle rust (caused by *Austropuccinia psidii*).

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](#)
- [Australian Tropical Rainforest Plants \(*Melaleuca viminalis*\)](#)
- [CitSciHub \(*Melaleuca viminalis* 'Little John'\)](#)
- [CitSciHub \(*Melaleuca viminalis*\)](#)
- [GBIF](#)

- iNaturalist NZ (*Melaleuca viminalis*)
- [PlantNET: New South Wales Flora Online](#)
- [Plants of South Eastern New South Wales](#)

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