

Calliandra surinamensis - Growing Guide

Growing Calliandra Surinamensis

When we first acquired *Calliandra surinamensis* the presumption was that it was definitely a conservatory or greenhouse plant. However, after it survived the 2018 'Best from the East' unscathed outside we have been happy to revise our opinion. While it is definitely a greenhouse shrub or small tree in colder parts of the country it is also a useful and unusual addition to the shrub border in south coast or western gardens and is definitely worth trying in the shelter of city gardens.

C. surinamensis has pairs of pinnate pale green leaves which are both attractive and unusual in UK horticulture. Each pair of leaves is up to 4in long and each is subdivided into pairs of lance shaped leaflets. The flowers appear in mid-summer and are fluffy balls of yellow green with conspicuous deep red stamens.

This South American plant can grow up to 10ft in height in a sheltered spot in full sun. In the greenhouse it requires some shading because its foliage can scorch under glass. Here it may well grow out of control eventually so hard pruning will be required but *C. surinamensis* does not appear to mind.

This species grows mainly in dry forest margins in the wild and, at a time when we are experiencing hotter summers, it is certainly a new one to try in the garden. It likes a well-drained but fertile soil. In the greenhouse it will prosper with a monthly liquid feed and grows best in a loam based potting compost.

In the greenhouse it can be prone to red spider mite attacks so growing it in a large pot which can be moved outside is sensible. Summer cuttings root easily with bottom heat and the seeds should be sown when temperatures increase in April.

[We have, as yet, no flower pictures but nice foliage ones. Asia has a large plant.]

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