

Calothamnus - Care Guide

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One-sided bottlebrush

This plant is a native to Western Australia and is a popular plant in Australian gardens. We are still trying it out at Burncoose but it appears that it is, very probably, a conservatory plant except, perhaps, in the warmest and mildest West Country gardens, where it should be grown in the same hot, sunny, but sheltered locations as callistemon (bottlebrush). One must remember that some species and varieties of callistemon are not hardy enough for anything but the conservatory and, it may well be, that *C. quadrifidus* comes into this category.

It is an evergreen shrub with an upright habit that grows, in Australia, to 4-8ft in height in maturity with a similar branching spread. It has needle-like (even pine-like) leaves which are grey-green or green and about an inch long. The leaves are unusually hairy giving the foliage a soft appearance.

As you would expect from the common name of this plant its showy and long lasting flowers are clustered in one-sided spikes in spring and summer. The 'spikes' are made up of clusters of brightly coloured stamens fused together in bundles. The woody fruit capsules stay on the tree for many years as they do on some leptospermum species.

Like all plants which thrive in hot dry conditions this plant needs drainage in its potting compost in a greenhouse and must not be allowed to get waterlogged over winter. It flowers on the old wood so any serious pruning will reduce its flowering potential.

Until we know more about growing this plant we are going to treat it like a tender melaleuca and keep it firmly under glass.

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