

Calliandra calothyrsus

Fabaceae (Mimosaceae)

Central America**COMMON NAME:** English: Calliandra.**DESCRIPTION:** A large multi-stemmed shrub, 4–6 m.

LEAVES: Compound, similar to those of *Acacia* spp., shed in a long dry season. **FLOWERS:** Showy red 'brushes' of numerous long shiny stamens, very many on the stalk. **FRUIT:** A pod which breaks open, each half curling back.

ECOLOGY: Brought to Kenya in 1980. It has done well on a variety of soils, including slightly acidic ones, 1,500–2,000 m. It does not tolerate waterlogging or alkaline conditions. Agroclimatic Zones I–IV.

USES: Firewood, poles, fodder (leaves, twigs), bee forage, shade, ornamental, nitrogen-fixing, soil conservation and improvement, windbreaks.

PROPAGATION: Seedlings. Direct sowing could work well if sufficient quantities of seed were available, but seed is normally in short supply.

SEED: Collection has to be timely—just when the pods mature but before they split open. Once they split the seed disperses. About 19,000 seeds per kg. Germination is good and completed after about 25 days.

treatment: Immerse seed in hot water, allow to cool and soak for 24 hours.

storage: Seed can be stored for long periods (1–2 years).

MANAGEMENT: Very fast growing on good sites; lopping, coppices well.

REMARKS: Although the shrub coppices well, stand vigour declines with time. Beetles attack flowers, reducing seed production. High tannin content reduces palatability as a fodder. Wood is often attacked by ants. *Calliandra* is a large tropical genus of up to 200 small tree and shrubby species well represented in tropical America, Madagascar

and India. *C. gilbertii* is found in North Eastern Province (e.g. near El Wak) of Kenya in *Acacia–Commiphora–Delonix* bushland. It is a much-branched shrub to 2.5 m with creamy white flowers.

FURTHER READING: <http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org/Sites/TreeDBS/AFT/AFT.htm>; Albrecht, 1993; Fichtl and Adi, 1994; Jensen, 1999; Katende et al., 1995; Mbuya et al., 1994; National Academy of Sciences, 1979, 1980; Noad and Birnie, 1989.

