



Cassia bicapsularis Butterfly Bush¹

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INTRODUCTION

While other trees are preparing for winter, Butterfly Bush is just waking up (Fig. 1). This sprawling, semi-evergreen shrub, reaching a height of 8 to 10 feet with an equal spread, produces blossoms in fall that resemble golden butterflies. Bright yellow flowers appear at a time of year when little else is in bloom. This plant has a place in any sunny landscape.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Cassia bicapsularis*

Pronunciation: KASS-ee-uh bye-kap-soo-LAIR-iss

Common name(s): Butterfly Bush

Family: *Leguminosae*

USDA hardiness zones: 9 through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; specimen

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

DESCRIPTION

Height: 8 to 12 feet

Spread: 8 to 10 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: round; vase shape

Crown density: open

Growth rate: medium

Texture: fine

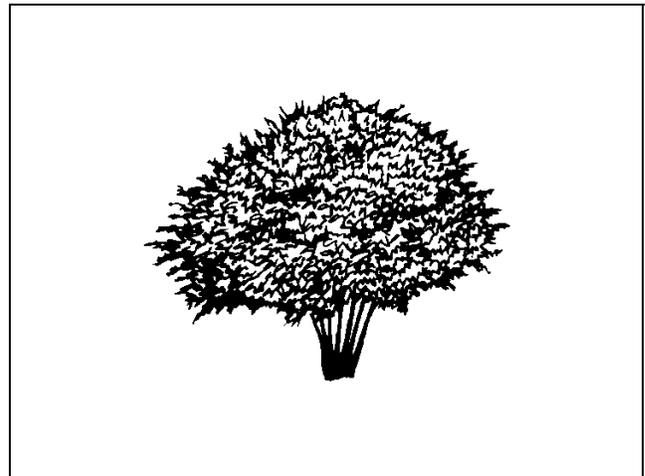


Figure 1. Mature Butterfly Bush.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: even pinnately compound

Leaflet margin: entire

Leaflet shape: obovate; ovate

Leaflet venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: semievergreen

Leaflet blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow

Flower characteristics: fall flowering; very showy

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Fruit

Fruit shape: pod

Fruit length: 3 to 6 inches; 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure

Breakage: susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is weak and tends to break

Current year twig color: brown; green

Current year twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

When knocked down by frost, the stems should be cut off at ground level and vigorous sprouts will emerge in spring. Butterfly Bush benefits from frequent pinching of the young shoot tips during the growing season up to the beginning of September; this encourages branching and increases the number of

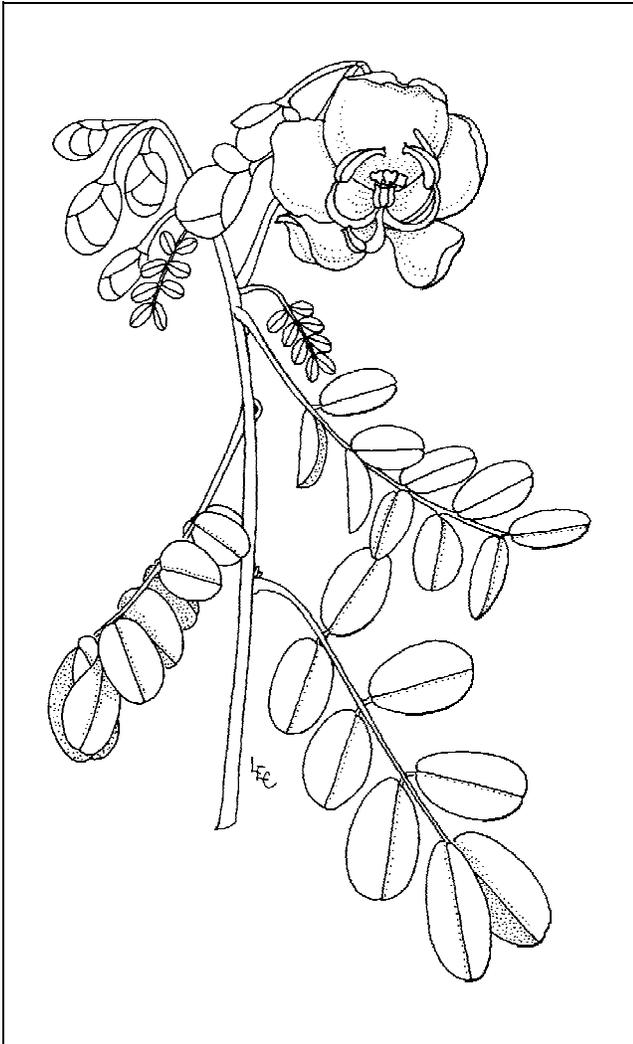


Figure 3. Foliage of Butterfly Bush.

flowers. Appropriate training can produce a very small specimen tree which looks nice growing in a low ground cover. Trees often fall over and will require staking to hold them upright. For this reason, it is easiest to place it in a shrub border among other shrubs which will help hold it erect. Well worth the effort to stake a specimen tree, if needed, since the tree is simply stunning in flower.

Tolerant of many soil conditions, Butterfly Bush needs full sun for best growth and flowering, and needs little care once established. Plant it and forget about it, except for occasional watering during drought. A good plant for highway median or roadside specimen or cluster planting.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

Pests

Foliage and flower buds are often eaten by caterpillars in the fall, but these can be easily picked off by hand. Cassia is otherwise seldom plagued by insect pests or diseases. Damaged or stressed cassia can be infested with trunk borers.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.