

Buttonbush

Cephalanthus occidentalis



Cephalanthus occidentalis popularly known as Buttonbush is a species of flowering plant in the coffee family, Rubiaceae. The plant is native to Central Valley in California, and to eastern and southern North America. It occurs from Nova Scotia to Ontario, south through Florida, and west to the eastern Great Plains with scattered populations in New Mexico, Arizona, California, and northern Mexico. Common names include **Common buttonbush, Button Willow, Honey Bells, Button ball, globe-flower, riverbush, Eastern buttonbush, Pincusion flower and buckbrush**. Genus name comes from the Greek words kephale meaning head and anthos meaning flower in reference to the flower heads. *Cephalanthus occidentalis* is possibly poisonous to livestock as it contains glucosides, including cephalanthine. It is not very appetizing to livestock although native bees are attracted to the showy tubular flowers.

Plant Description

Buttonbush is a deciduous, warm-season, tall wetland shrub or small tree with an open-rounded habit that normally grows about 1–3 m (3.3–9.8 ft.) in height, but can reach 6 m (18 feet) in height at maturity. The plant is found growing in openings in floodplain forests, vernal pools in wooded areas, wet thickets, shrubby swamps, wet depressions in black soil prairies, marshes, bogs, ditches, seeps, seasonal wetlands, sloughs, mangrove, pocosin,

riparian zones and borders of rivers, streams and small lakes, sinkhole ponds, river bottoms, and low, wet woods.



The plant prefers medium to wet moisture levels. It is intolerant of dry soils. It grows well in sandy, loamy or alluvial soils with sand or silt surfaces. It prefers acidic to neutral soils. It is intolerant of alkalinity. It grows more abundantly with increased water and light levels. This plant is easy to grow as long as it's planted near a stream or water source. It is often used in wetland revegetation project in the Central Valley. The root system is branching and woody. Lower stems are up to 4 inches diameter. Main stems are typically multiple from base, often forming colonies from root suckers, and have a rounded but irregular crown. Stem bases are swollen. Branches are usually green when young but turn brown at maturity. Young twigs are green or reddish in color, 4-sided with elongated lenticels, and turn dark reddish-brown to gray-brown and scaly upon maturation. Bark is thin, gray to brown, later with flattened ridges and deep grooves.



Traditional uses and benefits of Buttonbush

- Button bush was often used medicinally by native North American Indian tribes who used it to treat a range of ailments.
- It is little used in modern herbalism.
- Tea made from the bark is astringent, emetic, febrifuge and tonic.
- Strong decoction has been used to treat diarrhea and dysentery, stomach complaints, hemorrhages etc.
- It has been used as a wash for eye inflammations.
- Decoction of either the roots or the fruits has been used as a laxative to treat constipation.
- Leaves are astringent, diaphoretic, diuretic and tonic.
- Tea has been used to check menstrual flow and to treat fevers, kidney stones, pleurisy etc.
- The plant has a folk reputation for relieving malaria.
- Inner bark has been chewed in the treatment of toothaches.
- Decoctions of the bark were used as washes for sore eyes, antidiarrheal agents, anti-inflammation and rheumatism medications, skin astringents, headache and fever relievers, and venereal disease remedies.

- Roots were used for muscle inflammation and as blood medicines.
- Bark of common buttonbush was traditionally used for making laxatives, and for curing skin, bronchial, and venereal diseases.
- Strong decoction of tree bark is taken as a medicine for dysentery.
- Decoction of roots is taken for hemorrhages.
- Decoction of leaves is taken for rheumatism.
- Decoction of roots taken for menstruation sickness: yellow eyes and skin, weakness and shaking head.
- Bark has been used with much success in intermittent and remittent fevers.
- Inner bark of the root is often employed in coughs.

