

Melaleuca polandii Gold Tipped Bottlebrush

With golden tipped scarlet stamens and bright green leaves, what could be more appropriate for Christmas than the Gold Tipped Bottlebrush, *Melaleuca polandii*, or as it is also known, *Callistemon polandii*? In recent years, this attractive shrub has become a popular garden plant, and in spite of its fairly restricted tropical origin in heathlands on peat and sand in the vicinity of Cooktown and Cape Flattery in north-eastern Queensland, it seems to be surprisingly resilient in much cooler areas of Australia.



Melaleuca polandii (as *Callistemon polandii*) was named by the botanist F.M. Bailey in honour of the Reverend Wilhelm Poland, a German missionary at the Bloomfield River Mission (now Wujal Wujal), who had collected the original specimen. The actual specimen is listed in *Australasia's Virtual Herbarium* as having been collected at the *Broomfield* (sic) *Mission Station*, in January, 1902 and is now held in the Queensland Herbarium.

Melaleuca or *Callistemon*?

In 2006, botanist Lyndley Craven considered that the differences between species of *Melaleuca* and *Callistemon* were insufficient to justify maintaining the two generic names. *Melaleuca* had been described before *Callistemon*, and so in taxonomic terms *Melaleuca* had to take precedence over *Callistemon*. He then transferred all the species previously known as *Callistemon* into *Melaleuca*. However, this decision has

been very controversial and not all botanists are in agreement. The genus *Callistemon* has been retained by the state herbaria of NSW, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia; state/territory herbaria of Queensland, Tasmania, Northern Territory and the ACT include all *Callistemon* as *Melaleuca* species.

The most obvious difference between the two putative taxa is the arrangement of the stamens. In *Callistemon*, the stamens are simple and unbranched. In *Melaleuca*, stamens are fused together into bundles at the base, but free above, so look as if they are branching.

Australasian Virtual Herbarium: <https://avh.ala.org.au/occurrences/fc5e7d76-f937-4423-a0a9-704b961d5ece>,



Stamens of *Melaleuca* are fused together at the base, free above, so look as if they are branched.



Stamens of *Callistemon* are simple and unbranched

accessed 28th November 2018.

L. Craven (2006) New Combinations in *Melaleuca* for Australian Species of *Callistemon* (Myrtaceae). *Novon* 16 468-475

F. Udovicic, R. D. Spencer (2012) New combinations in *Callistemon* (Myrtaceae). *Muelleria* 30(1): 23–25.

Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melaleuca_polandii#cite_ref-Brophy_1-0

Alison Downing, Brian Atwell
Kevin Downing, Roger Hiller

Department of Biological Sciences



MACQUARIE
University
SYDNEY · AUSTRALIA

