

Plant of the Week

Callistemon and *Melaleuca* Bottlebrushes, Paperbarks and Honey Myrtles



Crimson Bottlebrush
Callistemon citrinus

There often seems to be some confusion about *Callistemon* (Bottlebrushes) and *Melaleuca* (Honey Myrtles and Paperbarks). How do you tell them apart?

Both belong to the **Myrtaceae**, a family comprising trees, shrubs and mallees. All have simple, aromatic leaves dotted with oil glands that are usually easily seen if you hold a leaf up to the light. There are two main groups within the **Myrtaceae**: the first comprises mostly rainforest trees that have succulent fruits; the second group, found in drier environments, has woody fruits (capsules). *Callistemon* and *Melaleuca* belong in the latter group. Many genera also have numerous, conspicuous stamens, as do *Callistemon* and *Melaleuca*. Australia has about 1,400 species of Myrtaceae in ~ 70 genera, but you can also find Myrtaceae in tropical and temperate parts of the world, particularly South America and Malesia, so you can see this family has a particularly southern hemisphere distribution.



Red Flowering Paperbark
Melaleuca hypericifolia

How do you tell *Callistemon* from *Melaleuca*? If you look closely at the 'flowers' you will see that each 'brush' consists of many small, individual flowers with relatively inconspicuous sepals and petals. Now, here's the difference. Both have an abundance of long, showy stamens; those of the *Melaleuca* are fused into five bundles or 'claws', those of *Callistemon* are attached only at the base.

Just now you can see many species and varieties of red Bottlebrushes (*Callistemon*) flowering on campus. The **Green Flowered Bottlebrush** (*Callistemon pinifolius*) and **Red Flowering Paperbark** (*Melaleuca hypericifolia*) can be seen outside student housing in Waterloo Road. The pristine white **Snow-in-Summer** (*Melaleuca lineariifolia*) is flowering along the creek near Research Park Drive and also just near the Gym.



Snow-in-Summer
Melaleuca lineariifolia



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Green Flowered Bottlebrush
Callistemon pinifolius