

Dwarf Powderpuff - *Calliandra haematocephala*

General Information: An evergreen tropical plant native to the Americas and Asia, the powderpuff is named after its whimsical red or pink flowers. Other interesting features are the flower buds, which resemble raspberries, and the leaves, which close up at night or during drought. Besides their fascinating appearance, Calliandras enrich an outdoor display with their ability to attract hummingbirds. Fruit is pod shaped, 3 to 6 inches long. Not tolerant of salt.

Family: Leguminosae

Lighting: Enjoys a light and airy spot - 2000 Lux, if possible. Full sun if outdoors - it thrives as a landscape plant in Florida.

Temperature: Zones 9b - 11. Prefers winter temperatures between 59-64 degrees. Can be kept indoors year-round, if necessary, but best results are achieved placing the plant outdoors in warm weather. Will not withstand frost.

Watering: Keep soil evenly moist. Requires less water if kept in a cool location during winter. Likes high humidity. Will tolerate occasional drought.

Feeding: Use a liquid bonsai fertilizer every two weeks, spring-summer. May bloom several times during a season. A high phosphorous fertilizer will increase flower production.

Pruning and wiring: Prune during growth in spring and summer. When a shoot has developed 5-6 new leaves, prune back to 1-2. The plant may be wired, but older branches become brittle. It is best to wire only branches that are just beginning to lignify, in summer. Bark is thin and may easily be damaged.

Propagation: From seed or cuttings taken during the growing season.

Repotting: Every two years, in spring, using well-drained, somewhat sandy and slightly alkaline bonsai soil.

Pests and diseases: Aphids, caterpillars, mites.

Bibliography:

Florida Bonsai VI:2:25-26

Lesniewicz's "Bonsai in Your Home"

"Florida Landscape Plants" by Watkins and Sheehan

US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Fact Sheet ST-108

Compiled by Sabrina Caine and Thomas L. Zane