

Bottlebrush Buckeye

A Native Plant Standout for Pollinators and People

Bottlebrush Buckeye (*Aesculus parviflora*) is a fantastic deer resistant native shrub, that blooms in the summer when few other shrubs flower. Loved by pollinators, the Bottlebrush Buckeyes are large shrubs, growing to 8 to 12 feet high and 12 to 15 feet wide, with 12 to 30 inch long fluffy white flower clusters during early or late July, depending on the cultivar. The flowers give way to glossy inedible, pear-shaped nuts (buckeyes) encased in husks. The attractive, coarse-textured, dark green compound leaves turn rich buttery yellow in the fall. Note however, that the leaves and nuts are poisonous to humans, livestock and (possibly) deer.

Bottlebrush Buckeye is useful as an understory planting in woodland gardens, as a specimen plant, or in a shrub border and is easily grown in average, medium moisture, well-drained soils in part shade to full shade. In our region it also grows well in full sun if given adequate moisture. Pruning is usually unnecessary and generally it is not bothered by pests or disease. Plants will spread by suckering but are not considered to be invasive. They should be given a lot of space.

The species is native to northern Florida, Alabama and Georgia. It blooms in early July and holds its flowers upright. *Aesculus parviflora* var. 'serotina' is native to Alabama. 'Rogers', the only known cultivar of var. serotina, grows larger, blooms later and tends to produce a more floriferous bloom of longer and more drooping inflorescences than the species. The photograph in this article is of var. serotina that has been growing in moist shade for a few years.

Credit: Tricia D., Rutgers Master Gardener of Hunterdon County

