

Cephalanthus occidentalis

Buttonbush

Tried and True
Native Plant Selections
for the Mid-Atlantic



Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia
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Native* Buttonbush, a wildlife favorite, is so common it is often overlooked. However, those who frequent sites along ponds and rivers likely recognize its sweet-scented, one-inch flower heads—suggestive of round pincushions when in bloom in summer. The Virginia Native Plant Society honored Buttonbush as Wildflower of the Year in 2022.

Shrub	Flowers, ** Shrub with Fruit, Seed Heads***
Height: 6–12 feet	
Spread: 6–10 feet	
Bloom Color: Creamy white	
Characteristics	
Deciduous shrub with rounded, irregular form	
Mostly opposite, ovate, glossy, medium green leaves	
Round heads of densely-packed, fragrant, tubular flowers w/ long exserted styles early to midsummer	
Seed heads of pyramid-shaped nutlets mature from pinkish-red to brown and persist into winter	
Inconsequential yellow autumn foliage	
Attributes	
Tolerates floods (up to 36"); intolerant of drought	
No serious pests or diseases	
Deer occasionally severely damage	
Attractive winter silhouette	
Attracts bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, songbirds, waterfowl; larval host for Hydrangea and Titan sphinxes and Beautiful Wood-nymph moth	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for
<u>Soil Requirements</u> : Average to rich	<u>Berberis thunbergii</u> - Japanese Barberry
<u>Light Requirements</u> : Sun, Partial Shade, Shade (but needs sun to flower)	<u>Buddleia davidii</u> and hybrids - Butterfly Bush
<u>Water Requirements</u> : Moist, Wet	<u>Ligustrum japonicum</u> & <u>L. sinense</u> - Privets
Fast-growing and can be heavily pruned to control height and spread	<u>Nandina domestica</u> - Nandina
Reshape in spring and remove any dead growth	*It is mostly frequent-to-common throughout the Mid-Atlantic Region except in some of the northern counties of PA.
Use in shrub borders, rain gardens, or naturalized	**Pollinators pictured are a two-spotted bumble bee (top) and a European honey bee (middle).
<u>Hardiness</u> : USDA Zones 5–9	*** Seed heads mid-July and early January (bottom, far right).

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