COMMON
BUTTONBUSH
*Cephalanthus occidentalis* L.

Plant Symbol = CEOC2

*Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program*

**Uses**
Buttonbush is an obligate wetland shrub suitable for wetland restoration, created wetlands, and riparian zones. It has exceptional wildlife benefits. The seed is eaten by eight species of waterfowl and the twigs by three species of mammals.

**Status**
Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant’s current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

**Description**
Buttonbush is a large, multi-stemmed shrub that grows to a mature height of twelve feet. It has opposite, entire leaves 2-6 inches long and 1-3 inches wide. They are glabrous and green above. The flowers occur in dense, round, 1 inch diameter clusters which bloom from June to September. The seed matures in the round clusters that resemble those of the sycamore tree. This plant spreads by seed dispersal and resulting seedling establishment.

**Adaptation and Distribution**
The natural range of this shrub is from Florida to Mexico and north to Nova Scotia and Ontario. Buttonbush is best adapted to shorelines and swamps with saturated soil and full sunlight. It will tolerate water depths up to three feet. Flowering is poor in the shade or in dry soils.

For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Website.

**Establishment**
One year old seedlings or rooted cuttings can be established at a two foot spacing for erosion control, or a wider spacing for wetland mitigation or habitat development. Controlling competition during the first growing season is the biggest establishment challenge. Scalp the existing vegetation from a two foot diameter area on which the seedling is being established. Unrooted cuttings can be established by pushing cuttings into the soil one foot apart for erosion control or wider for mitigation or habitat development.

**Management**
Buttonbush may be fertilized with a slow release fertilizer to enhance flowering and seed production. Plants on areas with fluctuating water levels may need debris cleared out of the canopy.

**Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)**

‘Keystone’ (composite from PA, WV, NY) was released by the Big Flats, NY Plant Materials Center.

**Prepared By & Species Coordinator:**
USDA NRCS Northeast Plant Materials Program

Edited: 01Feb2002 JLK; 01jun06 jsp

For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site - [http://plants.usda.gov](http://plants.usda.gov) - or the Plant Materials Program Web site - [http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov](http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information should contact us at: (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-2600 (text) or (202) 720-6567 (TDD).

information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Read about Civil Rights at the Natural Resources Conservation Service.