

Bottlebrush Buckeye

Aesculus parviflora *

Date Planted:

Germinated:

Transplanted:



8'-12' x 8' x 12'

Zone: 4 - 8

Bottlebrush Buckeye is a large suckering shrub in the horse chestnut family. It flowers in July providing prodigious amounts of nectar for bees and butterflies. Though native to the southeastern U.S., it's hardy in zones 4-8. It grows in semi-shade or an edge of the woods situation and likes moisture in its youth. Fall color is a brilliant yellow.

Buckeyes are very easy to grow. The seeds, which look like orange horsechestnuts, must be planted as soon as they ripen or they will shrivel up and die. Within a few days of planting, or just placed warm environment, they will send out a radicle (first root). Within a month they *may* also send up a one-inch shoot. Not sending up a shoot in the fall is *no* indication of a seed's ability to grow in the spring, so don't worry if you don't see a shoot now.

Instructions:

1. Moisten planting medium in a big tub and fill a deepish - 7" or so pot with medium. Push a few seeds down about 1 - 1.5 " and make sure they are covered with the medium. I use Miracle Grow Moisture Control potting soil (blue bag) just because it is available.
2. Cover with plastic wrap to keep medium from drying out too fast and LABEL the pot with plant name and planting date.
3. Place pot on a surface above the floor in a cool place (garage, basement, back room, cold frame, e.g.) and just let it sit there until the spring. It doesn't need any light. I keep mine on a rack in my messy garage, 40-50 degrees. I have no idea what would happen if they were kept in a warmer place - (maybe germinate faster?) or if they were planted outside in the ground where they would freeze (would have to be in a **very protected metal mesh cage**, or the squirrels will eat them overnight), but you could experiment.
4. Check the pots about once a month or so, just to make sure the soil has not totally dried out. If it feels a bit dry, give it some water, but not too much, maybe 3/4 of a cup.

In about March the seeds will begin to sprout. Once they do, they will need light, so remove the plastic and put them near a window, under lights if you want to (just make sure the lights are only about 3" from the top of the plant), or in a greenhouse if you have access to one. Turn the pot to promote balanced growth.

That's all for now. Will send more instructions as needed in February and reminders to check the moisture levels in the pots before then.

*Parviflora means small flowered, I guess in comparison to *aesculus hippocastemum*, horse chestnut. Bottlebrush buckeyes have large flower panicles, but the individual florets that cover them are tiny and wispy compared to those of horse chestnuts.

