

## *Senna alata*

Candlebush, Candlestick Senna, Christmas Candle,

## Fabaceae

Flower Display: B



Florida Everglades, Miami-Dade County

Late September



Fort Myers, Florida

Whenever I see *S. alata* in Florida, it is usually a broken, bushy shrub. When I see it in Central America or the Caribbean, it is often a small tree with a trunk diameter that approaches 4 inches. Therefore, it is capable of being a small, beautiful, yet delicate tree. The upright racemes resemble thick yellow candles. Individual blossoms open a few at a time from the base upwards. Green winged fruits blacken on the tree, drop, and litter the ground with their seeds. In its native grounds, it is a tree that is worth the effort. Elsewhere, it is a potential weed. It is not a plant you'll want to give to your gardening friends, unless they need exercise by weeding. In Central America *S. alata* is most often seen flowering along roadsides and in pastures. I've also seen it as an effective street tree doing well without fertilizer or irrigation. It often flowers at different times in different locations. Propagation is from seed. It flowers in its second year. At the end of its blooming period it becomes quite shabby.



Guacimo, Costa Rica

Late October

Fort Myers, Florida

Mid November



**Leaves:** Even-pinnate, alternate, dull green and rough to 2 ½ feet long, 6-14 pairs of oblong to obovate opposite leaflets

**Flowers:** Bright orange-yellow, about ¾ inches across, 5 petals, on upright racemes

**Fruits:** Pods, angled, to 8 inches long with 4 crinkly wings

Cont. from front page

Prune it heavily at that time to induce a compact growth. In Florida, treat it as a short-lived, beautiful, but promiscuous garden guest. Most will not survive in good condition for more than three years.

***Senna alata***

**Incorrect:** *Cassia alata*, *C. reticulata*, *S. bracteata*

**Origin:** Southern North America, Brazil

**Zone:** 9a – 12b, 20°F minimum

**Growth Rate:** Medium

**Flowering Month(s):** April - November

**Flowering Days:** Not Known

**Leaf Persistence:** Evergreen

**Messiness:** Medium

**Salt Tolerance:** Medium

**Drought Tolerance:** High

**Nutritional Requirements:** Medium

**Typical Dimension:** 25' x 30'

(Costa Rica)

**Uses:** Container, Garden, Patio, Streetscape.

Not Recommended in Florida