



# Buttonbush

*Cephalanthus occidentalis*

This plant is an upright, many-branched shrub or small tree, usually about 10 feet tall but ranging from 4 to 50 feet. Leaves are lance-shaped, up to 6 inches long and are attached two to four at each node.

The unique flowers are arranged spherically, forming white balls about 1 inch in diameter. They are soon replaced by dark-brown fruiting bodies that persist for several months. In the winter, this bush is reduced to branches tipped by the dark brown balls.

## Distribution and habitat

Buttonbush is found in swamps, moist low-lying or irrigated areas and margins of streams throughout the state. Regions: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

## Toxic agent

The toxic agent has not been definitely established. However,

early work from Europe has suggested a glycoside principle may be involved. This bush is very unpalatable and consumption and poisoning are unlikely. Many overgrazed pastures will have untouched buttonbush along streams. Cattle are thought to be the only species affected.

## Livestock signs

Signs of poisoning are not well documented but may include:

- Vomiting
- Paralysis
- Muscle spasms

## Integrated management strategies

The plant is not palatable and, therefore, good grazing management should prevent any problems. Severe starvation conditions must be present for cattle to consume buttonbush.

