

Kochia Fire Brush

Kochia is native to southern and eastern Russia, Europe and Asia. It is now naturalized across the northern half of the United States and spreading south-westwards. It is found in many other areas of the world. Kochia is a major source of pollen.

Kochia is an erect annual with many-branched stems. The branching is usually from the base. The branches are 1 to 2m long, and the bush grows from 50 to 150cm in height. The main stem is often tinged with red. The plant has a deep taproot, up to 5m. The 2- to 5cm-long narrow leaves are stalkless, pubescent to nearly glabrous, lance-like in shape with hairy margins, and often turning red to purple in autumn. Seedlings emerge in spring and have thick leaves, dull-green above and with magenta undersides. Kochia flowers in midsummer. The inconspicuous green flowers lack petals and are borne in clusters at the ends of branches and bases of leaves, and each flower is surrounded by a cluster of long hairs. Kochia may be called "Burning Bush" for its reddish-purple colour. Kochia usually flowers in late summer but there is great variation in the flowering time of different populations. The brown flattened seeds are approximately 1 to 2mm long and grooved on each side. Like many other species of the *Chenopodiaceae*, Kochia becomes a tumbleweed when mature.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that asthma, allergic rhinitis and allergic conjunctivitis are common following exposure to pollen from Kochia; however, few specific studies have been reported to date.

