



Expanding Tree Diversity in Hawai'i's Landscapes: Shaving-Brush Tree, *Pseudobombax ellipticum*

John Edward Montoya¹ and Richard Criley¹
¹Department of Tropical Plant and Soil Sciences

The shaving-brush tree erupts with reddish-pink flowers in the spring before the deciduous leaves appear. There is also a variety with white flowers. When flowering ends, translucent red foliage breaks bud and creates another spectacular display. The bark, with its smooth texture and whitish-green stripes, serves as a year-round focus and is also attractive at night. The medium-sized, fast-growing tree reaches up to 35 feet tall, with a dense, spreading canopy of the same diameter.

Recommended Use in Landscapes

- Xeriscapes
- Coastal areas
- Specimen tree
- Street tree
- Public areas

Distribution

- Mexico and Central America
- Dry, deciduous lowland forest and woodland

Propagation Techniques

- Seeds
- Cuttings
- Air-layering

Cultural Requirements and Tolerance

- Drought, wind, and moderately salt tolerant
- Light shade to full sun
- Fertile, well-drained soil; fertilize annually

Flower and Fruit Characteristics

- Large, reddish-pink or white brush-like flowers



- Leathery fruits
- Blooms in spring

Leaf Characteristics

- Palmately compound, 3–6 leaflets
- Rich green color, light green veins
- Smooth, thin leaves with a sturdy petiole

Advantages for Use in Landscapes

- Attractive bark
- Showy flowers
- Seeds seldom set; no messy fruits
- Weed Risk Assessment score: -2
- New leaves are an attractive red color
- Attractive branching

Disadvantages for Use in Landscapes

- Flowers can be messy
- Limited availability

Acknowledgements

The authors thank Amanda Birnbaum for the many photographs she contributed to this publication.

