

Kanawao

Broussaisia arguta Gaud.

Saxifrage family (Saxifragaceae)

Native species (endemic)

Kanawao is one of the most common shrubs in the understory of Hawaii's rain forests, sometimes a small tree. This handsome plant is recognized by the large narrowly elliptical or obovate leaves with finely toothed edges and many long curved side veins, paired or three at a node and by the large clusters of many small round bluish or dark red berries with narrow ring at tip.

An evergreen shrub of 5–10 ft (1.5–3 m) or small tree to 20 ft (6 m). Bark gray brown, smoothish, slightly fissured. Inner bark pinkish, astringent. Twigs stout, slightly succulent, hairy when young, with large raised half-round leaf-scars.

Leaves two or three at a node (opposite or whorled), with stout fleshy leafstalk $\frac{3}{4}$ –2 inches (2–5 cm) long, grooved above and enlarged at base. Blades large, narrowly elliptical or obovate, 4–10 inches (10–25 cm) long and $1\frac{1}{2}$ – $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches (4–9 cm) wide, long- or short-pointed at both ends, often widest beyond middle, slightly thick and leathery, with finely toothed edges, upper surface shiny dark green and hairless with veins often sunken, lower surface light green with raised veins finely hairy.

Flower clusters (corymbs) terminal and erect, broad, flattened or rounded, 2– $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches (5–11 cm) long and broad, with many short-stalked small flowers, male and female on different plants (dioecious). Male flowers about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (13 mm) long and broad, composed of short calyx with five pointed lobes, corolla of five spreading petals almost $\frac{3}{8}$ inch (10 mm) long, white or tinged with blue or pink, 10 spreading stamens nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (13 mm) long, and small nonfunctioning pistil. Female flowers about $\frac{3}{8}$ inch (10 mm) long, composed of basal cup (hypanthium) bearing 5-lobed calyx $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (3 mm) long, five petals $\frac{1}{16}$ inch (1.5 mm) long, and pistil with inferior five-celled ovary, short style, and five rounded stigmas.

Fruit (berry) round, $\frac{3}{8}$ inch (10 mm) in diameter, bluish or dark red, fleshy. Seeds many, elliptical, minute.

Common and widespread in wet forests at low and middle altitudes of 1000–6000 ft (305–1829 m) through the Hawaiian Islands.

Special areas

Haleakala, Volcanoes.

Range

Hawaii only

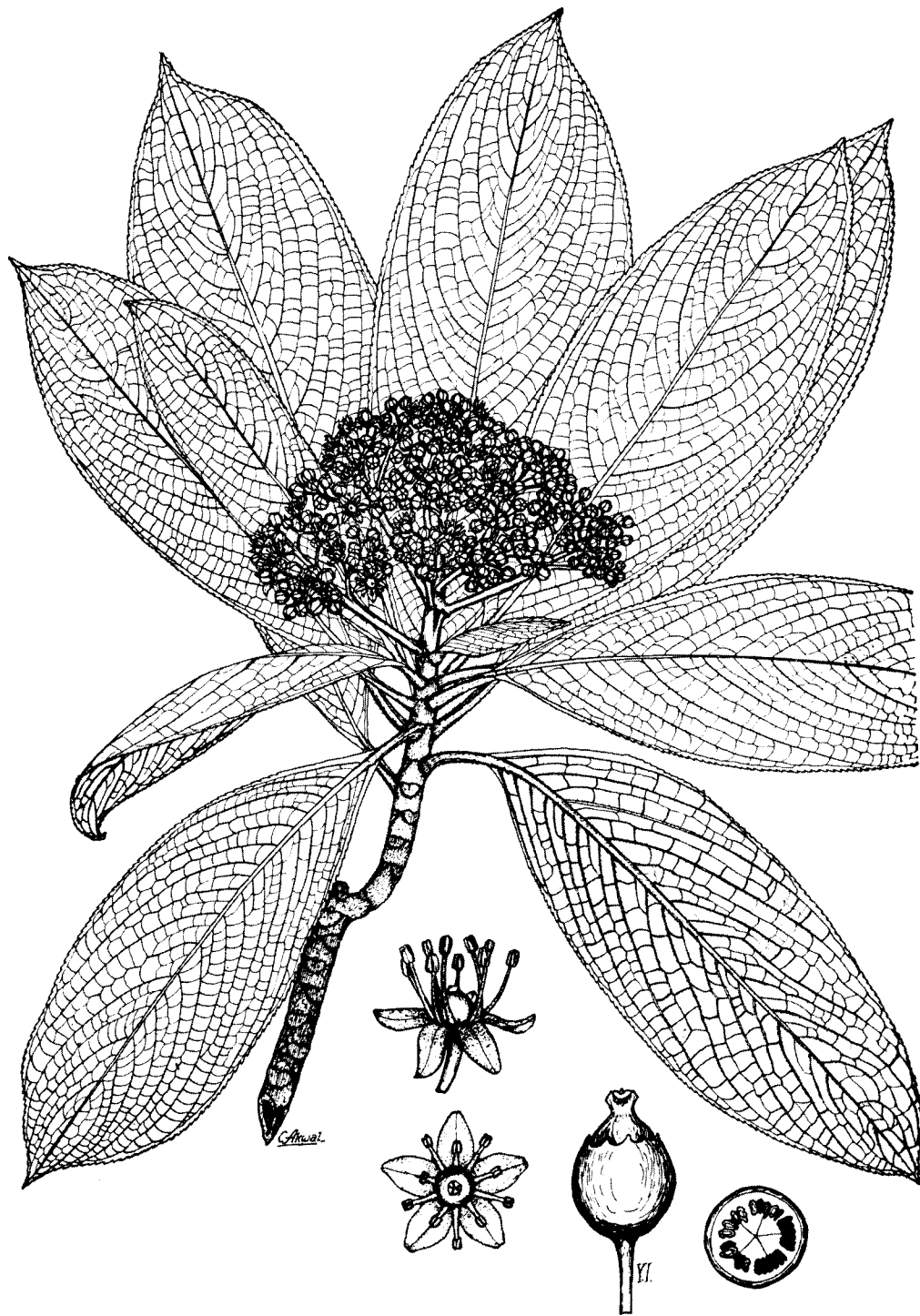
Other common names

pu'aha'nui, kanawau, kupuwao, pi'ohi'a, akiahala, nawao

Botanical synonyms

Broussaisia pellucida Gaud., *B. arguta* var. *pellucida* (Gaud.) Fosberg.

The genus *Broussaisia* with only one species is confined to Hawaii. The name honors Francois Joseph Victor Broussais (1772–1838), French medical doctor and physiologist. This species is also the only native Hawaiian example of its family, though several others have been introduced as ornamentals. Two varieties differing in leaf arrangement and flower color originally named as separate species have been distinguished.



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Twig with male flowers, 1/4 X (Degener).