

## Lapalapa

*Cheirodendron platyphyllum* (Hook. & Arn.) Seem.

Ginseng or aralia family (Araliaceae)

Native species (endemic)

Lapalapa is an aromatic small evergreen tree scattered in wet forests of mountains of Oahu and Kauai. It is distinguished by paired large compound leaves with three broad half-round leaflets wider than long, sometimes with few teeth on edges, continuously trembling on their long slender stalks. Crushed foliage and bark have an odor like that of carrot or oil and a spicy or turpentine taste.

A small tree to 26 ft (8 m) high and 8 inches (20 cm) in trunk diameter, with rounded open crown, hairless throughout. Bark gray, smoothish; inner bark greenish, slightly spicy, aromatic. Twigs stout, enlarged and ringed at nodes, with raised half-round leaf-scars, purplish, becoming brownish, weak, and brittle.

Leaves opposite, 4–8 inches (10–20 cm) long, with very slender purplish or greenish leafstalks 2–4 inches (5–10 cm) long, slightly flattened, enlarged and slightly clasping at base. Leaflets three, spreading on slender flattened stalks of 1¼–2 inches (3–5 cm). Blades half-round or broadly ovate, wider than long, 1½–3¼ inches (4–8 cm) long and 2–4 inches (5–10 cm) wide, rounded with abrupt narrow point at apex, nearly straight at base, edges often with few small teeth, slightly thickened, upper surface shiny green with many fine straight side veins, lower surface dull light green.

Flower clusters (panicles) terminal, 4–6 inches (10–15 cm) long, with many slender forking purplish branches and many flowers spreading on short equal stalks (umbels). Flowers ¼ inch (6 mm) long, purplish, composed of cuplike base (hypanthium) ⅛ inch (3 mm) long, calyx of five tiny teeth, five narrow spreading petals ⅛ inch (3 mm) long and shedding early, five short stamens, and pistil with inferior five-celled ovary and five-dotlike stigmas (parts sometimes in fours).

Fruits (berries) round, about ¼ inch (6 mm) in diameter, shiny purplish black, with ring of calyx and stigmas at apex, with spicy flesh, five-angled when dry. Seeds (nutlets) five or fewer, more than ⅛ inch (3 mm) long, brown.

Soft whitish wood will burn when freshly cut. No other uses are reported. It is quite likely that the tree had

uses similar to those of 'olapa (*C. trigynum*). The leaves and bark were probably used to make a bluish dye, and poles were probably cut from the tree because it is soft and easily cut.

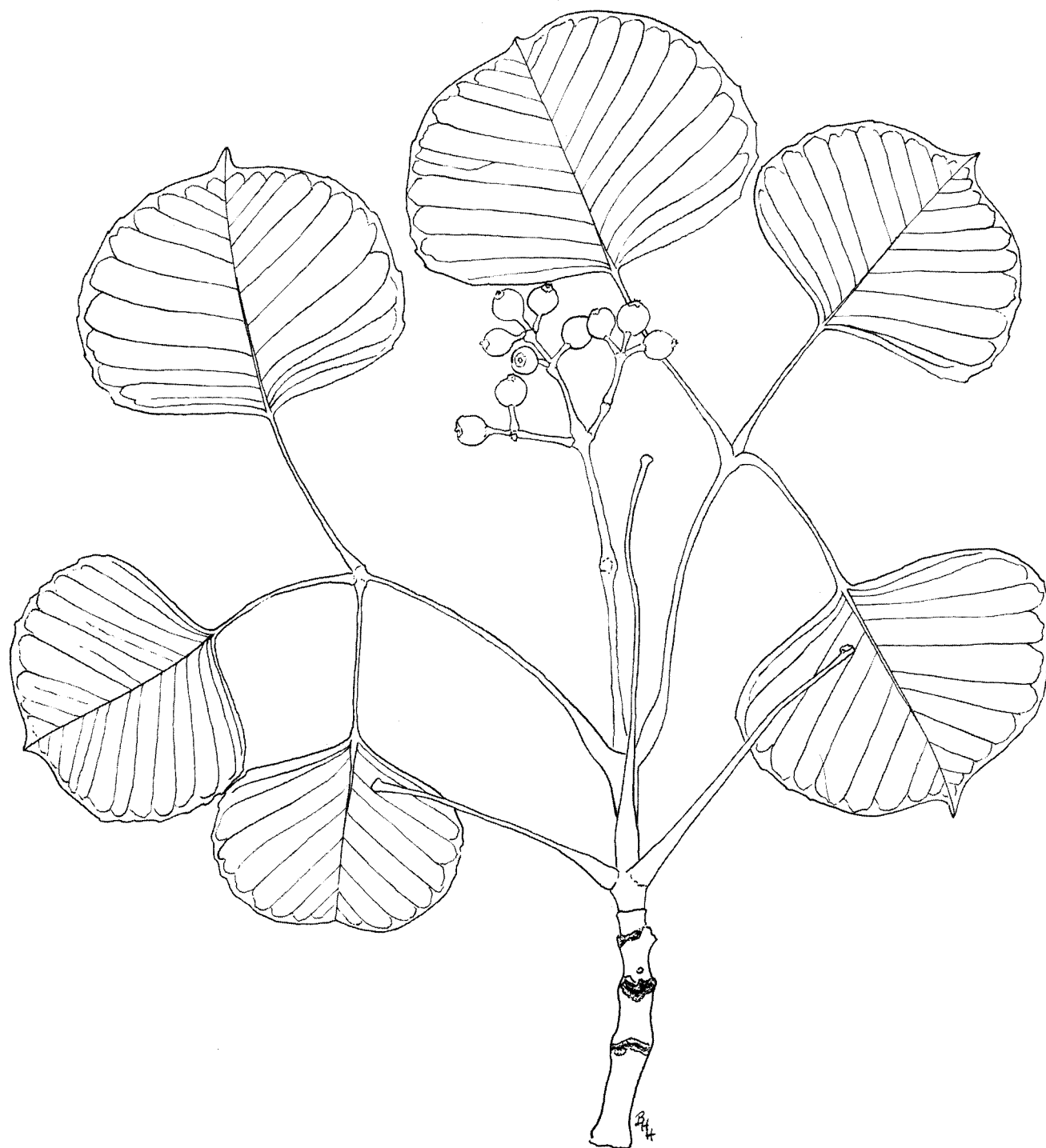
Common in wet forests and swamps at middle altitudes of 2200–5000 ft (671–1524 m) on Kauai and Oahu. On Oahu confined to summit ridges of Koolau Range and swamp on top of Mt. Kaala.

### **Range**

Oahu and Kauai only

### **Botanical synonym (or variety)**

*Cheirodendron kauaiense* Krajina



**Lapalapa**

*Cheirodendron platyphyllum* (Hook. & Arn.) Seem.  
Twig with leaves and fruits,  $\frac{2}{3}$  X.