

'Ohawai, haha, tree clermontia

Clermontia arborescens (Mann) Hillebr.

Bellflower family (Campanulaceae)

Native species (endemic)

Clermontia is a distinctive genus of about 21 species of shrubs and small trees confined to Hawaii. Several are classed as rare. Only a few species reach tree size, and one example will serve for recognition of the group. These plants have few branches, like candelabras, and milky sap. They bear many long narrow leaves at the ends of stout branches. The few large flowers borne on stalks at leaf bases have an irregular curved tubular corolla deeply split to base, varying from green to white or yellowish to purplish. The fruits are large yellow or orange berries 1 inch (2.5 cm) or more in diameter, edible but insipid.

Tree clermontia, one of the largest in size and in flower size, is a tree recorded at 15–25 ft (4.6–7.6 m) tall with a trunk to 8 inches (20 cm) in diameter, or rarely a shrub, hairless or nearly so throughout. Bark gray, smooth to slightly scaly. Twigs stout, light gray, with many large rounded leaf-scars diagonally arranged below the leaves. White sap or latex flowing abundantly from cuts, almost tasteless.

Leaves many, alternate but crowded together near ends of branches, large, spreading on slender leafstalks of 1¼–2½ inches (3–6 cm). Blades oblong, 5–7 inches (12–18 cm) long and 2¼–2 inches (3–5 cm) wide, often slightly long-pointed at both ends, wavy toothed on edges, thick and leathery, shiny dark green above, pale beneath.

Flowers 1–2 at leaf base on stalks of about 1 inch (2.5 cm) from fleshy stalk of about ⅜ inch (1 cm), 2½–3¼ inches (6–8 cm) long, large and fleshy, hairless, consisting of bell-shaped base (hypanthium) ¾ inch (2 cm) long ending in fleshy calyx of five short blunt lobes; fleshy corolla 2–2¾ inches (5–7 cm) long, greenish or whitish with reddish purple tinge, irregular and much curved, deeply five-lobed and deeply split to base; stamens five, separate from corolla, purplish or violet, in column 2½ inches (6 cm) long, united by the long anthers; and pistil with inferior two-celled ovary, numerous ovules, and long style.

Fruit (berry) rounded, 1–1½ inches (2.5–4 cm) in diameter, yellow, with five long ridges and grooves, and with calyx at apex, two-celled. Seeds many, about ⅓ inch (1 mm) long, rounded but flattened, shiny yellow or brown.

The yellow berries are sometimes eaten by birds and humans.

One of the most common species of the genus, in understory of wet forests at 1700–6000 ft (518–1829 m) elevation.

Range

Molokai, Lanai, and Maui

Other common name

'oha.



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Flowering twig, $\frac{2}{3}$ X.