

Coffee

Coffea arabica L.

Madder or coffee family (Rubiaceae)

Post-Cook introduction

Coffee, the source of one of the world's most popular beverages, is an introduced shrub or sometimes a small tree scattered on moist lower mountain slopes and grown in plantations, mainly near Kona, Hawaii. Generally a compact shrub 5–10 ft (1.5–3 m) high, but if not pruned it becomes a small tree 12–15 ft (3.7–4.6 m) high and 3 inches (7.5 cm) in trunk diameter, evergreen with spreading foliage.

Bark light gray, thin, much fissured, becoming rough; inner bark whitish and tasteless. Twigs many from main axis, long slender, spreading and slightly drooping, green when young but changing to light brown, with paired long-pointed scales (stipules) $\frac{3}{16}$ inch (5 mm) long at nodes.

Leaves opposite, hairless, with leafstalks of $\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (6–13 mm). Blades elliptical, 3–7 inches (7.5–18 cm) long and $1\frac{1}{2}$ – $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches (4–7 cm) broad, long-pointed at apex and short-pointed at base, upper surface and edges often slightly wavy, a little thickened shiny dark green with sunken veins on upper surface: paler green beneath.

Flowers many, fragrant, several together on stalks of $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (3 mm) at leaf bases along twig, about $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches (3 cm) across the five long white corolla lobes. Calyx consists of five minute teeth on green tubular base (hypanthium) less than $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (3 mm) long; corolla white and showy, with narrow cylindrical tube $\frac{3}{8}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (10–13 mm) long and five widely spreading narrow pointed lobes $\frac{5}{8}$ inch (15 mm) long; stamens five, white, inserted in mouth of corolla tube; and pistil with two-celled inferior ovary and slender two-forked white style.

Berries elliptical, $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{5}{8}$ inch (13–15 mm) long, red, containing thin fleshy pulp and two (sometimes one) elliptical seeds $\frac{5}{16}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (8–13 mm) long, flattened on inner surface. There are about 1000 coffee beans to a pound (2208 to a kilo). In Hawaii, flowering is mainly in spring and the coffee harvest season from September to January with peak in November.

The wood is whitish, hard, heavy, and tough, seldom used.

Coffee is an important agricultural crop in many tropical regions. The seeds, which contain caffeine, are roasted and ground to produce the familiar drink. This species is the most widely grown of several and has many cultivated varieties. Elsewhere, classed as a honey plant, producing white honey with a characteristic flavor.

It is reported that coffee was introduced into the New World first to Surinam by the Dutch in 1714. The same year a tree was presented to King Louis XIV of France as a peace gesture during the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht. From that royal tree, seedlings were smuggled to Brazil in 1727. Nearly a century later, in 1813, coffee was first planted in Hawaii by Don Marin. In 1818, missionary Samuel Ruffles grew ornamental shrubs at Kona. Many plantations were established mainly between the years 1840 to 1856. Losses from insects and fungus disease caused abandonment of most plantations and replacement by sugar cane.

Coffee is still produced commercially in a narrow belt on the west side of the Island of Hawaii. Kona coffee, known for its unique flavor, is grown on many small farms in a narrow subtropical belt with high rainfall at 1200–2000 ft (366–610 m). A coffee mill is located near the seaside village of Napoopoo on Kealahou Bay. The annual Kona Coffee Festival in early November celebrates the coffee harvest season.

In Hawaii, coffee is naturalized locally on moist lower mountain slopes of the islands of Kauai, Oahu, and Hawaii.

Range

Native of Ethiopia but early introduced into Arabia (14th century) and extensively planted and escaping or naturalized through the tropics. In the New World, coffee is grown commercially from Mexico and Central America south to Brazil and through the West Indies including Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Planted also as a novelty or ornamental shrub in southern Florida and southern California.

Other common names

Kona coffee, Arabian coffee



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Fruiting twig (above), flowering twig (below), $\frac{2}{3}$ X (P.R. v. 1)