

Kōlea lau-li'i

Myrsine sandwicensis A. DC.

Myrsine family (Myrsinaceae)

Native species (endemic)

This handsome much branched, spreading evergreen shrub or small tree, with small many crowded dark green spoon-shaped leaves whitish beneath, is found in wet forests at middle to moderately high altitudes through the islands though absent from Kauai. A shrub or sometimes small tree 13–25 ft (4–7 m) high. Twigs slender, light green tinged with pink when young, finely hairy, with two lines below each leaf, turning gray, with raised half-round leaf-scars.

Leaves alternate, very numerous and crowded, spoon-shaped (obovate), $\frac{5}{8}$ –1 inch (15–25 mm) long and $\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{3}{8}$ inch (6–10 mm) wide, thick and leathery, hairless, rounded and slightly notched at apex, widest beyond middle and tapering to base and short leafstalk of $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (3 mm), edges turned under, with gland-dots visible under a lens, upper surface shiny green or dark green without visible side veins, lower surface whitish green. Youngest leaves pinkish tinged. Leaves on small plants larger, to 1½ inches (40 mm) long and $\frac{5}{8}$ inch (15 mm) wide.

Flowers scattered at leaf bases, 2–8 together on slender stalks of $\frac{1}{8}$ – $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (3–6 mm), $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (3 mm) long and wide, composed of calyx of 5–7 minute lobes, 5–7 narrow yellowish or reddish petals with reddish gland dots, 5–7 short stamens inserted on corolla opposite the lobes, and pistil with round ovary and dot stigma.

Fruits (drupes) round, $\frac{3}{16}$ – $\frac{5}{16}$ inch (5–8 mm) in diameter, purplish black with gland-dots, with calyx at base and stigma at apex. Seed single, round.

The wood of *M. sandwicensis* is similar to that of *M. lessertiana* A. DC.

Common and widespread through the islands except Kauai, in wet forests at middle to high altitudes of 1,000–4,800 ft (305–1,463 m).

Special area

Volcanoes

Range

Oahu, Molokai, Lanai, Maui, and Hawaii only

Other common names

kōlea, Hawaiian rapanea

Botanical synonyms

Suttonia sandwicensis (A. DC.) Mez, *Rapanea sandwicensis* (A. DC.) Deg. & Hosaka

The pinkish young leaf shoots are sometimes used effectively in leis.



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Twig with fruits, ½ X; flower (lower left), 3 X (Degener).