

## Olomea

*Perrottetia sandwicensis* Gray

Bittersweet family (Celastraceae)

Native species (endemic)

This species, widespread in wet forests through the Hawaiian Islands, is the only native species of its family. It is an evergreen shrub or small tree to 23 ft (7 m) high, with finely toothed pinkish tinged elliptical leaves. The bark is gray, smoothish to finely fissured; inner bark gray, slightly bitter. Branches sometimes long and drooping. Twigs green or reddish, hairless or nearly so, ending in small hairy buds of 1/8 inch (3 mm), composed of tiny pointed scales or stipules that fall early.

Leaves alternate, with slender pinkish leafstalks of 3/8–1 1/4 inches (1–4 cm). Blades elliptical or ovate, 2–5 inches (5–13 cm) long and 1–3 inches (2.5–7.5 cm) wide, short- to long-pointed at apex, blunt or rounded at base, finely toothed on edges, thin, becoming hairless, upper surface slightly shiny green with pinkish midrib and curved side veins, light green beneath.

Flower clusters (panicles) at leaf bases, 1 1/2–4 inches (4–10 cm) long, much branched. Flowers many, very small, of one or both sexes (polygamo-dioecious), shortstalked, 1/16 inch (1.5 mm) long and broad, greenish red, composed of five pointed reddish tinged sepals; five orange green pointed petals; five stamens from a disk, alternate with petals, much longer and spreading widely (short in female flowers); and pistil with two-celled ovary and short two-forked style.

Fruit (berry) round and slightly flattened, 3/16 inch (5 mm) in diameter, bright red, juicy, with sepals at base and black style at apex. Seeds 2–4, 1/16 inch (1.5 mm) long, rounded, shiny green, smooth, sticky.

The wood is described as golden brown with reddish tint, moderately hard, and straight grained.

Hawaiians made fire by friction by rotating a piece of this hard wood on a piece of the soft wood of hau (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*).

The trees are attractive in October and November, bearing numerous clusters of drooping red berries.

Fairly common in moist wet forests at 1000–6000 ft (305–1829 m) altitude, throughout the islands.

### **Special areas**

Kokee, Haleakala, Volcanoes

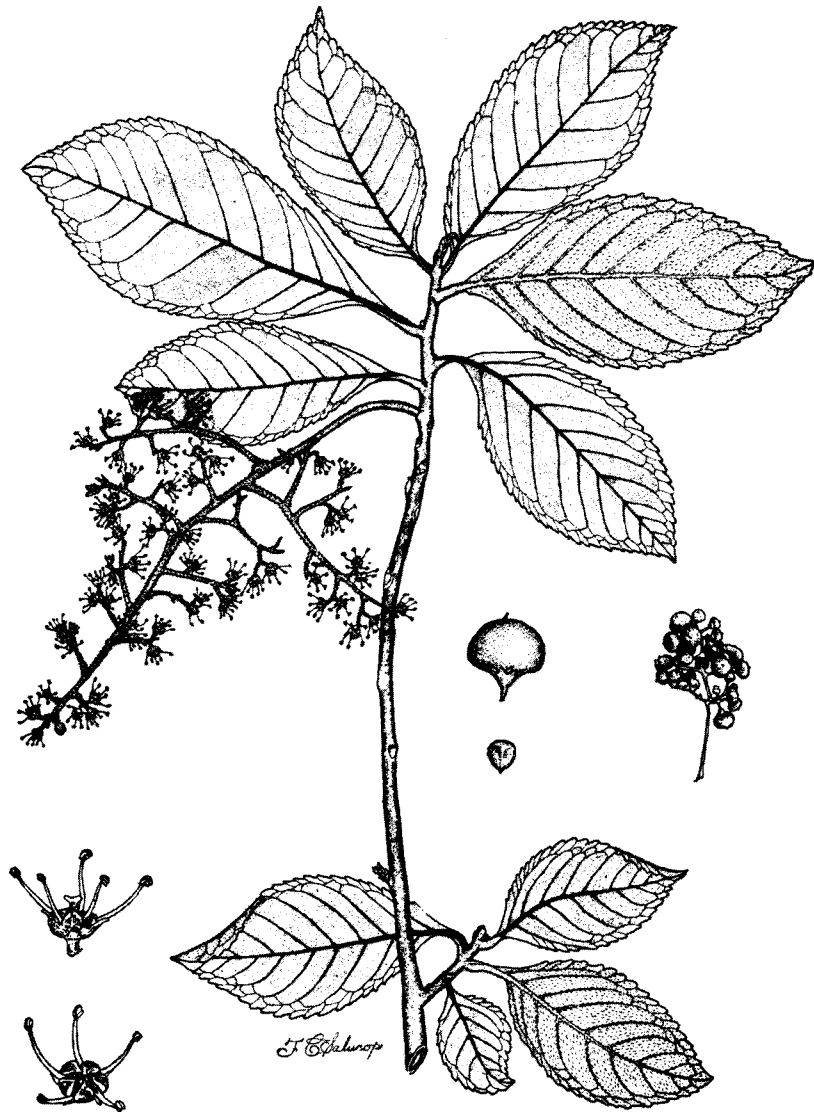
### **Range**

Hawaii only

### **Other common names**

waimea, pua'a olomea

This genus honors George Samuel Perrottet (1793–1870), Swiss-born French botanical explorer, and contains about 15 species scattered from tropical America to Asia.



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Flowering twig, ½ X; flowers (lower left),  
2 X; fruit, 2 X, seed, 4 X, and cluster of  
fruits (right), ½ X (Degener)