

## Primavera, goldtree

*Roseodendron donnell-smithii* (Rose) Miranda

Bignonia family (Bignoniaceae)

Post-Cook introduction

Primavera is a large deciduous tree, introduced as an ornamental for its showy masses of large bell-shaped golden yellow flowers when leafless in spring. A poor seeder in Hawaii, it has been tested sparingly as a forest plantation tree. It is recognized also by the large paired, palmately compound leaves with mostly seven leaflets and the very long, narrow cigarlike seed capsules.

A large tree 60 ft (18 m) or more in height and 3 ft (0.9 m) in trunk diameter, where native to 115 ft (35 m) high and 2–3 ft (0.6–0.9 m), with rounded or spreading crown. Bark light or whitish gray, smoothish or becoming rough, thick, furrowed, and slightly shaggy. Inner bark whitish or pale brown. Twigs stout, with small mealy whitish star-shaped hairs when young and large raised leaf scars.

Leaves opposite, palmately compound (digitate), large, 8–20 inches (10–51 cm) long, with long stalk of 5–10 inches (13–25 cm) enlarged at ends and mostly seven (–five), longstalked leaflets. Blades ovate or elliptical, 2–10 inches (5–25 cm) long and  $\frac{3}{4}$ –5 inches (2–13 cm) wide, longpointed at apex, rounded or slightly notched at base, often wavy-toothed on edges, thin, upper surface dull green, lower surface paler, becoming nearly hairless except on veins beneath.

Flower clusters (panicles) to 8 inches (20 cm) long at ends of stout leafless twigs, widely branched and spreading, hairy. Flowers, many, crowded, spreading, short-stalked, about 2 inches (5 cm) long, composed of deeply two-lobed thin hairy calyx  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch (15 mm) long; bright yellow bell-shaped finely hairy corolla about 2 inches (5 cm) long with broad tube and 5 rounded slightly unequal spreading lobes  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches (4 cm) across; four stamens in two pairs within tube and attached near base, also one tiny sterile; and pistil with conical hairy ovary, slender style, and two stigmas.

Fruits (seed capsules) very long and narrow, cigarlike, 12–16 inches (30–40 cm) long, about 1 inch (2.5 cm) in diameter, rough, finely hairy, with 10–12 longitudinal ridges, flattened, two-celled, splitting lengthwise in two parts. Seeds many, flattened, bordered by circular papery wing  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch (2 cm) long.

The wood is light yellow or whitish, lightweight, of medium to rather coarse texture, straight to wavy grain. Resembles satinwood and was sometimes called white mahogany. It is fairly strong, lightweight (sp. gr. 0.45), easy to work when straight grained, finishes smoothly, but is not resistant to decay. Wood with rippled or roey figure slices poorly and is very difficult to dry flat as veneer.

Known in international commerce as primavera, the wood is used especially for veneering, cabinetwork, furniture, and flooring. Locally, it serves also for general construction. It is exported from Guatemala and Mexico to the United States.

Introduced to Hawaii many years ago as an ornamental street tree, this species has been tried sparingly in the forests. The Division of Forestry has planted only 1200 trees in the forest reserves, mostly on Oahu and Maui. It has great potential as both a timber tree and a beautiful flowering plant. Goldtree is quite common around Honolulu. It can be found at the former Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association Experiment Station on Keeaumoku Street, the park at the foot of Makiki Heights Drive, at Queen's Hospital, and in front of the Department of Education Building. The tree will grow to about 3000 ft (914 m) elevation.

### **Champion**

Height 87 ft (26.5 m), c.b.h. 10.9 ft (3.3 m), spread 79 ft (24.1 m). State Forestry Arboretum, Hilo, Hawaii (1968).

### **Range**

Native of southern Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, but introduced in other tropical areas. An uncommon ornamental in Puerto Rico.

### **Botanical synonyms**

*Tabebuia donnell-smithii* Rose, *Cybistax donnell-smithii* (Rose) Seibert

The drawing by the botanical artist Charles Edward Faxon (1846–1918), is from the original publication (1892) by Joseph Nelson Rose (1862–1928), botanist at the Smithsonian Institution. The current generic name means Rose's tree. The specific name honors the discoverer, John Donnell Smith (1829–1928), botanist and ship captain from Baltimore, MD.



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Two fruits and seed (left), flower cluster, and leaf,  $\frac{2}{3}$  X;  
opened flower (lower right), enlarged (Rose).