

Gunpowder-tree

Trema orientalis (L.) Blume

Elm family (Ulmaceae)

Post-Cook introduction

Medium-sized introduced evergreen weedy tree, recognized by the narrowly ovate unequal-sided very long-pointed leaves with finely toothed edges and three main veins from base, spreading in two rows on long slender twigs. To 60 ft (18 m) high and 2 ft (0.6 m) in trunk diameter. Bark light gray grown, smoothish, finely fissured. Inner bark pink, soft and fibrous, bitter. Twigs long, slender, unbranched, spreading, light green, finely hairy, turning brown.

Leaves borne singly (alternate) in two rows with slender leafstalks $\frac{3}{8}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ inch (1–2 cm) long, finely hairy. Blades narrowly ovate, $2\frac{1}{2}$ –4 inches (6–10 cm) long and $\frac{3}{4}$ – $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch (2–3 cm), wide, very long-pointed at apex, base slightly notched with sides unequal, edges finely toothed, thin, with three main veins from base. Upper surface light green, slightly shiny, slightly rough, with veins sunken, lower surface dull and paler, soft hairy, with prominent light yellow veins.

Flower clusters (cymes) at leaf bases, branched, $\frac{3}{8}$ –2 inches (1–5 cm) long and broad. Flowers many, nearly stalkless, light green, $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (3 mm) long, male and female. Female flowers composed of 5 tiny sepals and pistil with one-celled ovary and two whitish hairy spreading styles.

Fruits (drupes) round, nearly $\frac{3}{16}$ inch (5 mm) in diameter, pink to black, fleshy. Seed single, round, brown, more than $\frac{1}{16}$ inch (1.5 mm) long.

Wood pale brown or buff, sapwood not distinct from heartwood. It is lightweight (sp. gr. 0.40), easy to work, and not resistant to decay or termites (Reyes 1938). The wood has not been used in Hawaii. It is said to make good charcoal for gunpowder, thus the common name.

A weed tree of rapid growth, extending into forest openings in moist lowland areas in Hawaii. It is particularly common in the vicinity of Hilo airport.

Champion

Height 72 ft (21.9 m), c.b.h. 20.5 ft (6.2 m), spread 108 ft (32.9 m). Pepeekeo, Hawaii (1968).

Range

Native from southeastern Asia through Malaysia

Other common names

charcoal tree; banahl (N. Marianas); elodechoel (Palau)

Trema cannabina Lour. (*T. amboinensis* (Willd.) Blume) is a related native species, a small tree to 30 ft (9 m) high with smaller hairy black fruits about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (3 mm) long, only slightly fleshy. Elsewhere, a fiber for fish nets has been made from the bark and medicine from other parts. In Hawaii, uncommon in lowland areas, recorded from the five largest islands. Native and more common in other Pacific Islands, such as Samoa, Fiji, and Tahiti, and southeastern Asia to China and India.



Gunpowder-tree
Trema orientalis (L.) Blume
Twig with flowers and fruits, 1 X.