

## Brushbox

*Tristania conferta* R. Br.

Myrtle family (Myrtaceae)

Post-Cook introduction

Large evergreen tree related to *Eucalyptus*, introduced in forest plantations. Planted as an ornamental and for shade. Differs from *Eucalyptus* by the leaves, which are crowded at ends of twigs, and the very numerous stamens united in five groups.

To 60 ft (18 m) high with straight trunk 1½ ft (0.5 m) in diameter or larger, with narrow rounded crown of dense foliage. Bark gray brown, becoming rough, thick, slightly scaly with long fissures. Inner bark light brown, fibrous, slightly bitter. Twigs light green and with tiny pressed hairs when young, turning brown and shedding outer layer, with rings of raised half-round leaf scars. End buds light green, with rounded overlapping scales. Leaves mostly 4–5 at enlarged nodes though borne singly (alternate), gray hairy when young, becoming hairless. Leafstalks slender, light green, ½–1 inch (13–25 mm) long, flattened. Blades elliptical or narrowly ovate, 2½–6 inches (6–15 cm) long and 1–2½ inches (2.5–6 cm) wide, long-pointed at apex, short-pointed at base, slightly thick and leathery, above dull green with light yellow midvein and very fine side veins, beneath dull light green.

Flowers 3–7 clustered at end of short flattened unbranched stalk ½–1 inch (13–25 mm) long at leaf bases and back of leaves, white, fragrant, about 1 inch (2.5 cm) across. Basal cup (hypanthium) conical, ¼ inch (6 mm) long and broad, light green, hairy, bearing five pointed green calyx lobes, five rounded white petals about ½ inch (13 mm) long, short-stalked and hairy, and very numerous short threadlike white stamens united in five columns ¾ inch (10 mm) long; pistil with half inferior three-celled ovary and threadlike style.

Fruits (seed capsules) 1–7 clustered at end of flattened stalk on twig back of leaves, cup-shaped, ¾–5⁄8 inch (1–1.5 cm) in diameter, light green to brown, opening at flattened apex, hard, three-celled. Seeds many, light brown, less than ¼ inch (3 mm) long, narrow.

Sapwood pale brown and heartwood pinkish to grayish brown. Wood heavy (sp. gr. 0.61), with fine texture and mildly interlocked grain but little figure. It has a relatively large shrinkage in drying and tends to warp in

seasoning. It is not subject to severe growth stress problems in manufacturing as are certain eucalypts. Wood grown in Hawaii is moderately resistant to decay and termites. Wood from Australia is classed as very resistant to both. In Hawaii, it has been used for pallets, flooring, and pulp chips, generally mixed indiscriminately with the wood of *Eucalyptus saligna*. Elsewhere, used for construction, shipbuilding, bridges, railway crossties, and mallets. A sizable amount of flooring of this species has been imported to Hawaii from Australia.

Planted in moist areas of Hawaii in forest plantations and as a handsome shade tree. The Division of Forestry has planted more than 396,000 trees in the forest reserves on all islands, but mostly on Oahu and Hawaii. Oahu has 1.1 million board feet of timber and Hawaii 1.3 million. Trees may be seen at Waahila Ridge State Park (St. Louis Heights) and Keaiwa Heiau State Park (Aiea Heights). Also planted for shade in the Fort Street Mall in downtown Honolulu. Grown also in southern California and Florida.

### **Special areas**

Wahiawa, Aiea, Tantalus

### **Champion**

Height 60 ft (18.3 m), c.b.h. 12.9 ft (3.9 m), Spread 47 ft (14.3 m). Ulupalakua Ranch Co., Ulupalakua, Maui (1968).

### **Range**

Native of east coast of Australia

### **Other common names**

Brisbane-box, vinegartree

### **Botanical synonym**

*Lophostemon confertus* (R. Br.) P. G. Wilson & J. J. Waterhouse

Wilson and Waterhouse (1982) concluded that *Tristania* was a heterogeneous assemblage and divided it into five genera.



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Twig with flowers and fruits, 1X.