

# Ōpuhe

*Urera glabra* (Hook. & Arn.) Wedd.

Nettle family (Urticaceae)

Native species (endemic)

Medium-sized native evergreen tree on the island of Hawaii or a shrub or small tree on the other islands, with slightly milky or watery sap, elliptical wavy toothed leaves, and very numerous tiny flowers along twigs partly back of leaves, male and female on different trees. To 35 ft (10.7 m) high, with straight trunk 1 ft (0.3 m) in diameter and long stout branches. Bark gray, smooth, very fibrous.

Leaves alternate, with leafstalks of 1¼–2 inches (3–5 cm). Blades oblong or narrowly elliptical, 6–14 inches (15–36 cm) long and 1½–4¾ inches (4–12 cm) wide, long-pointed at apex, blunt at base, finely wavy toothed in upper part, thin or thick and slightly fleshy, usually palmately three-veined at base, with 12–15 parallel straight sunken veins on each side, beneath pale and often hairy along veins. Microscopic mineral growths (cystoliths) like crystals are present.

Flower clusters (cymes) at base of leaves or back of leaves, about 2–3 inches (5–7.5 cm) in diameter, much forked regularly by two. Flowers male and female on different plants (dioecious), very numerous, without corolla. Male flowers 8–20 almost stalkless in rounded balls, each about ⅛ inch (3 mm) in diameter, composed of pale reddish to whitish 4–5 lobed calyx and five stamens. Female flowers with 3–4-toothed calyx bordered by a cup and pistil with ovary and yellow stigma.

Fruits rounded, about ⅛ inch (3 mm) in diameter, with enlarged fleshy orange yellow calyx enclosing one seed (achene), elliptical and rough, with yellow stigma.

The wood is soft and lightweight. The fibrous bark was used by the Hawaiians for fish nets and at times for their tapa cloth.

Widespread in moist forests through the islands, as a tree at 500–5500 ft (152–1676 m) altitude on the island of Hawaii and as a shrub or small tree on the other islands.

## **Special areas**

Volcanoes, Kipuka Puaula, Wahiawa

## **Range**

Hawaiian Islands only

## **Other common names**

hōpue, hona

## **Botanical synonym**

*Urea sandwicensis* Wedd.

Treated here as a single variable species, though also separated as two. Another, *Urera kaalae* Wawra, Kaala urera, is a small tree of the Waianae Range of Oahu, with palmately veined heart-shaped leaves, possibly or almost extinct.



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Twig with leaves and female flowers, and fruit clusters (lower right), 1 X.