

Maua, xylosma

Xylosma hawaiiense Seem.

Flacourtiaceae (Flacourtiaceae)

Native species (endemic)

Handsome small deciduous native tree mostly of dry forests, with shiny broadly elliptical leaves, edges straight or finely wavy toothed, and small greenish or reddish flowers, male and female on different trees. To 60 ft (18 m) tall and 1½ ft (0.5 m) in trunk diameter, usually smaller and often only 15 ft (4.6 m) high, with spreading rounded crown of slightly drooping branches. Bark gray, smoothish, sometimes warty, becoming thick, rough, and furrowed into small scaly plates. Inner bark light yellow or orange within green outermost layer, bitter. Twigs hairless, dark red and slightly angled when young, becoming gray brown with raised dots and raised half-round leaf scars. End bud ⅛ inch (3 mm) long, rounded, brown, scaly.

Leaves alternate in two rows, hairless, the young leaves reddish, bronze green, or copper-colored with red veins. Leafstalks slender, ⅜–¾ inch (1–2 cm) long, dark red. Blades broadly elliptical, 2–4 inches (5–10 cm) long and 1¼–3 inches (3–7.5 cm) wide, slightly thickened, apex short-pointed, blunt, rounded, or slightly notched, base rounded to short-pointed, edges straight or finely wavy toothed, above shiny dark green, beneath slightly shiny green.

Flower clusters (racemes) at bases of new leaves or back of leaves, ½–1 inch (13–25 mm) long, unbranched. Flowers mostly male and female on different trees (dioecious), several, greenish or reddish, about ¼ inch (6 mm) long and broad, without petals, on slender pinkish stalks. Male flowers with cuplike calyx of 4–5 rounded finely hairy or hairless sepals less than ⅛ inch (3 mm) long and above a disk many threadlike spreading stamens ¼ inch (6 mm) long with dotlike anthers, sometimes with pistil. Female flowers with 4–5 sepals and pistil composed of elliptical 1-celled ovary, sometimes a short style, and 2–4 flattened stigmas.

Fruit (berry) rounded or elliptical, about ½ inch (13 mm) long, bluish, blackish, or reddish, slightly shiny, with calyx at base and stigmas at apex, slightly fleshy or nearly dry, bitter, astringent, and not edible. Seeds one or two, elliptical, about ¼ inch (6 mm) long, brown.

Wood is reddish brown with light and dark banding resembling growth rings, heavy, hard, brash, but easily worked.

Widely distributed and common locally in dry forests through the islands, especially on leeward sides, at 800–4500 ft (244–1372 m) elevation. Windswept and stunted where exposed. Found on a‘ā (rough) lava fields.

Borer insects attack and kill the branches.

Special areas

Kokee, Volcanoes, Kipuka Puaulu

Champion

Height 58 ft (17.7 m), c.b.h. 5.1 ft (1.6 m), spread 43 ft (13.1 m). Hoomau Ranch, Honomalino, Hawaii (1968).

Range

Hawaiian Islands only

Botanical synonym

Drypetes forbesii Sherff.



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Fruiting twig (left), twig with male flowers (upper right), twig with female flowers (lower right), 1 X