

# Mimosa pudica

## Hilahila, sensitive plant, sleeping grass

*Mimosa pudica* L.

Family: Fabaceae

**Description:** Tough, low-growing, creeping herb. Stems prickly, usually reddish, to 5 ft long. Leaves twice compound, a pair of secondary leaf stems, each 1.25 inches long with up to 26 pairs of leaflets, folds immediately when touched, leaflets 0.6 inches long by 0.1 inches wide. Inflorescences spherical, 0.4 inches diameter, lavender. Fruits short, curved, prickly pods, dark brown, in dense clusters. A plant is capable of producing as many as 675 seeds. *Mimosa* derived from the Greek *mimos*, mimic, because leaves of several in this genus will fold when touched, mimicking wilted leaves; *pudica*, bashful, for the same reason<sup>(5, 26, 70)</sup>.

**Distribution:** Originally from South America, now pantropical, occurs in dry to wet areas on Kaua'i, O'ahu, Lana'i, Maui, and Hawai'i. Common in lawns, roadsides, and pastures. First collected in 1864 or 1865 on O'ahu<sup>(26, 70)</sup>.

**Environmental impact:** Cattle avoid hilahila in grazing unless accustomed to it. Prickles can injure bulls' genitals, which can lead to infections that disable the animals.



**Management:** Very sensitive to picloram (0.25 lb/acre), sensitive to triclopyr (1lb/acre). Poor control with dicamba and 2,4-D. Soil-applied tebuthiuron effective. Seems to be controlled by intensive grazing management, under which cattle will kick the hilahila out of the way to get at the grass beneath. Hawaiian variety reportedly toxic to livestock<sup>(70)</sup>, although no actual cases of livestock poisoning have been recorded, probably because cattle do not graze it. In Western Samoa, cattle have been grazed on pure hilahila stands, but the toxicity of the Samoan ecotypes is unknown.