Expanding Tree Diversity in Hawai‘i’s Landscapes: Hong Kong Orchid Tree, *Bauhinia blakeana*

John Edward Montoya¹ and Richard Criley¹
¹Department of Tropical Plant and Soil Sciences

The striking color and fragrance of the Hong Kong orchid tree make it a great addition to the landscape. The small to medium semi-evergreen tree grows up to 40 feet tall, with a spread of 20–25 feet, and its fallen flowers cover the ground in a beautiful pink carpet. The Hong Kong orchid was discovered in China. It was a chance hybrid between two species, *Bauhinia purpurea* and *B. variegata*, making it sterile. (Taxonomists have since removed the × preceding the species name). It was named for the wife of the governor of Hong Kong.

**Recommended Use in Landscapes**
- Street or shade tree
- As an accent or a screen
- Garden specimen

**Distribution**
- Originally from Hong Kong, now one of the most popular flowering trees in the world

**Propagation Techniques**
- Cuttings from softwood and semi-hardwood
- Air-layering

**Cultural Requirements and Tolerance**
- Pruning required to prevent dense branching
- Planting with a barrier to the tradewinds allows for a lush crown
- Heat and wind tolerant
- Moderately drought tolerant
**Flower and Fruit Characteristics**
- Flowers fragrant and a showy bright purple color
- Flowers throughout the year, more heavily during winter months
- No fruit produced

**Leaf Characteristics**
- Ovate to hoof-shaped or bi-lobed
- 3–5 inches long
- Alternate

**Advantages for Use in Landscapes**
- Does not produce messy fruits
- Root system is not intrusive
- Weed Risk Assessment score: -7

**Disadvantages for Use in Landscapes**
- Susceptible to the Chinese rose beetle, although it does not cause significant damage
- Requires supplemental watering until established
- High level of pruning required; when pruned it puts out multiple shoots that then need to be thinned out

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