



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

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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

Acknowledgements

The authors thank Amanda Birnbaum for the many photographs she contributed to this publication.

