



Expanding Tree Diversity in Hawai'i's Landscapes: Lonomea, Hawaiian soapberry, *Sapindus oahuensis*

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Native to mesic to dry forests in Hawai'i, lonomea (also known as āulu) is a medium-tall tree, growing up to 60 feet, with an open canopy about 35–40 feet in diameter and small flowers and fruits. A great native addition to the landscape, lonomea thrives in full to partial sun and can withstand dry and windy conditions. Lonomea can also tolerate compacted soils, making it suitable for urban areas.

Recommended Use in Landscapes

- Shade tree
- Street tree
- Specimen plant
- Native landscapes

Distribution

Endemic to the mesic to dry forests on Kaua'i and O'ahu at 200–2,000 feet in elevation.

Propagation Techniques

- Seeds are very easy to germinate.
- Obtain fresh, mature fruit (reddish brown and soft) and remove seed from fruit flesh. Inspect seed for holes and discard damaged seed. Do not damage the more pointed end of the seed, as this can break the root.

Cultural Requirements and Tolerance

- Full to partial sun
- Drought and wind tolerant
- Tolerates compacted and clay soils



Flower and Fruit Characteristics

- Small white flowers
- Fruits are oblong, leathery, and ½ to 1 inch long

Leaf Characteristics

- Smooth, thick, and papery
- Oval shape; tapers at apex
- Only species in *Sapindus* genus with simple leaves

Advantages for Use in Landscapes

- Great for xeriscapes
- Long-lived
- Easy to grow and maintain
- Native plant

Disadvantages for Use in Landscapes

- Pests include the black twig borer. Watch for them on the new shoots.
- Fruits tend to accumulate under the tree and can be messy.

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