

# Expanding Tree Diversity in Hawai'i's Landscapes: Tanjong tree, Bullet Wood, *Mimusops elengi*

## Introduction

If ever a tree were to be described as nondescript – meaning it has green leaves and looks like a tree – it might be the tanjong. It is a slow-growing, broad-leaved evergreen with a rounded crown when full grown, although young trees are pyramidal in shape. At maturity it can reach 60 ft with a spread of about 30 ft, but this takes many years. It is not a common tree in Hawai'i. Its hard, reddish wood has many uses beyond timber.

## Recommended Use in Landscape

- Shade tree
- Street tree
- Residential use
- Parks

## Distribution

- Native to Myanmar, India, Sri Lanka

## Propagation Techniques

- Seed

## Cultural Requirements and Tolerances

- Normal well-drained soils
- Moderately tolerant to salinity
- Growth is slow in xeriscape settings
- Needs only occasional pruning

## Flower and Fruit Characteristics

- The fragrant flowers are small, creamy white, star shaped, and arranged in clusters.
- Flowering occurs in the spring.
- Fruits are oval, pointed, about 1 to 1½ inches long. The flesh is red-orange at maturity. It is edible, though astringent.
- Each fruit contains one or two seeds.



**Figure 1.** A 50-year old *Mimusops elengi* in Ala Moana Park

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### Leaf Characteristics

- Leaves are thick, oval, dark green, up to 5 inches long and 2 inches wide. The leaf margin is somewhat wavy.
- Leaf arrangement is alternate.

### Advantages for Use in Landscapes

- Dense crown
- Flowers can be used in lei – but many are required
- Can be pruned to many forms
- Not rated for invasiveness, but unlikely to be invasive due to its slow growth

### Disadvantages for Use in Landscapes

- Slow-growing
- The heavy crop of fruits can contribute numerous lumpy seeds, so the tree should not be planted over a sidewalk.



**Figure 2.** Young fruit and foliage of the *Mimosa elengi*



**Figure 3.** Leaf of the *Mimosa elengi*



**Figure 4.** Fruit of the *Mimosa elengi*



**Figure 5.** Fragrant flowers appear in late spring