

Expanding Tree Diversity in Hawai'i's Landscapes

Tree Fuchsia, *Schotia brachypetala*

Native from South Africa to Zimbabwe, this slow-growing tree can attain heights of 35 to 45 feet, but in cultivation it is mostly under 25 feet, with a dense, slightly weeping crown of about 20 feet in diameter.

The flowers are rich in nectar and somewhat resemble those of the fuchsia shrub. Joseph Rock introduced it to Hawai'i before 1920 from Southern California.



Figure 1. *Schotia brachypetala* in Ala Moana Park, Honolulu

Recommended Use in Landscape

- Shade tree
- Park tree
- Residences
- Median strip
- Large planters

Distribution

- South Africa across the Transvaal and up into Zimbabwe and Mozambique in dry savannas and along streams in semi-desert areas.

Propagation Techniques

- Seed
- Air layers

Cultural Requirements and Tolerances

- Full sun
- Drought tolerant when established
- Can be deciduous in response to prolonged drought
- Adapted to various soil types but requires good drainage
- Moderate salt tolerance
- Said to respond to high potash fertilizer

Flower and Fruit Characteristics

- Spring-blooming, showy but not dense
- Flowers born in clusters on old wood
- Claret-red sepals comprise the showy part as petals are reduced in size. Stamens extend beyond calyx.
- Fruit is a flat, elongate, woody, brown pod up to 5 inches long, containing 2-3 seeds, with a yellow aril at one end.

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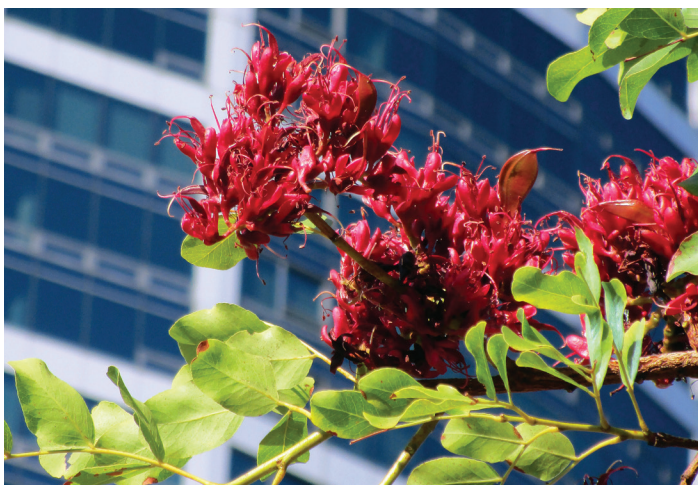


Figure 2. Flowers and young seed pods

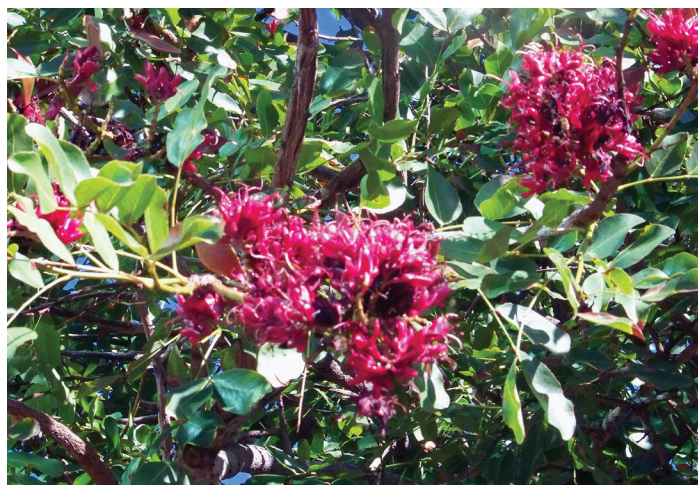


Figure 4. Nectar-feeding birds are attracted to *Schotia*

Leaf Characteristics

- Leaves are pinnately compound, with 3 - 10 pairs of ovate to obovate leaflets 0.25 to 2.5 inches long alternately arranged on the rachis.
- New leaves slightly rose-colored before turning dark green and have a leathery texture.
- Sometimes deciduous



Figure 3. Leaves are evenly pinnately compound

Advantages of Use in Landscapes

- Attractive flowering tree
- Compact small tree
- Good shade tree
- Attractive to nectar-sipping birds
- HPWRA score of 0

Disadvantages of Use in Landscapes

- Needs judicious pruning and training when young to establish a strong central leader
- Somewhat messy when flowers fall
- Some leaf scorch noted



Figure 5. A related species, *S. afra*, would be another good addition to Hawai'i's landscapes.