



Naio

Myoporum sandwicense A. Gray.

Common names: naio, false sandalwood, bastard sandalwood, naeo, ngaio

Native habitat: Hawaii (probably on all of the main islands); Cook Islands

Characteristics

Naio is a many-branched evergreen shrub or small tree with dark gray, grooved bark, growing to 3–15 ft high. No selections have been made. Its form is highly variable, and botanists have recognized a number of subdivisions within the species. Its stem growth habit varies from erect to prostrate. The alternate, leathery leaves, 2 to 6 inches long, are narrow-oblong, pointed, thick, and mostly entire and smooth. Its bellshaped flowers are small ($\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long), slightly fragrant, and may be white, white with purplish-pink splotches, or pink. Flowers are produced in spring and summer in clusters of five to eight along the twigs. Its rounded fruits are fleshy, greenish-white to purplish, about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in diameter, and have ribs when dry.

Culture

Naio has a very large natural range, from coastal strand areas to high, dry sites in the Hawaiian mountains, and it thus will grow under a wide range of environmental conditions. It grows best in full sun with good soil drainage, and it has very good drought, wind, and salt tolerance. It has a moderate to fast growth rate when established. Because naio does not flush out readily, it should be pruned or shaped only when growing vigorously. Naio has few pest or disease problems.



Landscape uses

Naio is very suitable for the landscape plantings, due to its attractive, medium-textured foliage. It can make a good specimen shrub or informal hedge plant and with time may be trained to become a small garden tree. Naio should be appropriate for xeriscapes and coastal plantings, and it makes an excellent potted specimen plant.

Propagation

Naio can be started from seeds or cuttings. Fresh, mature, cleaned seeds should be used. Seeds take about 18 months to germinate. Seedlings are somewhat slow growing in the initial stage.

Additional notes

The hard, dark-yellow-green wood was used by Hawaiians for the main timbers of houses. The scented wood was substituted for sandalwood when that ran out.

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*Replaces Instant Information/Ornamentals and Flowers Series no. 19.