



Kauai White Hibiscus



Hibiscus waimeae A. Heller

Common names: Kauai white hibiscus, kokio keokeo, kokio kea, kokio-keokeo, white Kauai hibiscus

Native habitat: Hawaii (Kauai)

Characteristics

Kauai white hibiscus is a small, evergreen tree with gray bark, growing to 24–30 feet high. Its light green, broadly ovate (nearly round) leaves are 2–7 inches long and 1–5 inches wide, with blunt-toothed edges and downy undersides. The strongly fragrant flowers have a light pink staminal column and are produced singly, near the branch ends. The flowers last only one day, opening with white petals in the morning and often turning pinkish in the afternoon.

Landscape uses

Kauai white hibiscus may be grown as a single specimen, in groups for mass plantings and screens, or pruned to a hedge. It also can be grown as a large container plant. Its large size, medium-textured foliage, and attractive flowers make it a useful landscape plant. It is used in mauka (upland) sites.

Culture

Kauai white hibiscus is commonly found in Waimea Canyon at 2000–3000 feet elevation. It grows best under filtered shade in moist, well drained soils, but it will tolerate full sun and dry conditions with adequate maintenance. Periodic pruning is required to maintain size and promote flowering. There may be some problems



with Chinese rose beetles, thrips, and aphids. Stink bugs may cause bud drop.

Propagation

Terminal or stem cuttings 4–6 inches long can be rooted with rooting hormones under mist. It may also be started from seeds, but seedlings may not be true to type. It can be grafted and air-layered.

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