

# Caring for your 'ālula



## Mahalo!

'Ālula (*Brighamia insignis*) are endemic to Ni'ihau and Kaua'i, but since 2020 this species is extinct in the wild. By maintaining this plant you are helping to preserve the species, with hopes that it can one day be outplanted to form a new wild population.

## Sun and water

'Ālula need some attention but are not difficult to care for. The plants can be kept in pots with at least five holes in the bottom or in the ground. They can handle dry as well as moist (but not swampy) conditions, and full sun to partial shade. Well-draining soil, e.g. with mixed in black cinder, will help manage the moisture level. They enjoy being watered on the leaves daily. If the stem feels soft when squeezed they are rotting inside; reduce watering immediately. The love wind.



## Pests

'Ālula are sensitive to several pests. Red spider mites in particular can kill even large plants. The mites can be recognized as tiny red specks or at later stages of infestation, from silk webs that they spin between the leaves.

The best method to keep these pests off is by spraying the entire plant with a Neem oil solution every other week preemptively, or more frequently if an infestation has been detected. Neem oil solution is only effective when it directly hits the mites, so be sure to cover every square inch of the plant when spraying by lifting up each leaf.

Occasionally, mealy bug infestations can become a problem, which can be recognized from the fresh leaves becoming strongly curled with white bugs inside. Mealy bugs can also be treated with a Neem oil solution; be sure that the solution reaches into every crevice by opening the curled up leaves by hand. The natural defense of the plant against predators is to drop all the leaves and start anew; if this happens spray frequently and make sure the plant has sufficient water to overcome this period of stress.

The other main threat is snails and slugs. African landsnails can eat an entire 'ālula overnight; use snail and slug bait if your plant is in an area where these might occur. If your plant has snail damage on the stem, reduce watering to avoid rot until the area is healed.



## Neem oil solution recipe

Prepare only as much as you will use today. Use cold pressed pure Neem oil. Per 1 gallon of warm water, add 1 tablespoon neem oil and 1 teaspoon of soft dish soap. Mix and spray generously.

## Propagation

By following these simple steps your 'ālula will live for over ten years and grow several feet tall. For flowers to produce seed, they need to be hand pollinated. We do not know what their natural pollinators were but they are likely extinct. To hand pollinate, simply use a small brush and bring the powdery pollen that is at the base of the flower to the tip of the stamen. You can self-pollinate the flowers or when you have multiple flowers and plants the genetic diversity will improve if you move pollen between flowers. Once pollinated, over the next few weeks the base of the flower will swell up and eventually burst open with tiny seeds pouring out. Try growing your own - they are easy to germinate when the seeds are fresh!

