

# Caring for your Lonomea



Lonomea (*Sapindus oahuensis*) is a truly special tree. The species is endemic to the islands of Kaua'i and O'ahu; found nowhere else in the world. By growing this tree you are helping to preserve the native Hawaiian ecosystems. Originally, Lonomea was the Kaua'i name for this tree, on O'ahu it was called āulu or kaulu, but most people call it lonomea now.

Lonomea are among the unsung heroes of the Hawaiian low-elevation ecosystems. While they can grow up to 45 ft tall, they are usually half that high and they make for excellent shade trees in landscaping, helping to prevent growth of fire-prone invasive plants like guinea grass and koa haole.

Lonomea grow best in full or partial sun. The plants are ready to be outplanted when they are 1–3 ft tall. Water them daily for the first two weeks to help them establish, and then water weekly during the first year or during prolonged periods of drought. After a year the tree will not require any maintenance; the roots will grow deep fast and find a stable source of water. Depending on the availability of water, they will grow a few feet per year, primarily during the wet season, until they reach their final height. They require very little maintenance, even trimming is rarely necessary. Once the plant gets about 4 feet tall, it starts to develop its attractive larger leaves.

## Pests

Pests are generally not an issue, you may see some insect damage to the leaves or shoot tip but growth will continue. Spray with neem oil or use ant bait to control ants and sucking insects like green scale.

## Cultural uses

The seeds can be used for a very special lei, and the wood is a valuable hardwood that has many purposes. You can also feel great growing one of the most 'local' trees there is in your yard!



Find more caresheets at:  
<https://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/rubinfofd/#plants>



## Propagation

To grow new plants from seed, peel the fleshy seed coat off and test for viability by placing the seeds in a cup of water. Seeds that sink are ready to be planted. Place the seeds about 1/2 inch deep in moist soil; they will come up after a month or two. If you remove the hard seed coat, you will have higher germination success and faster growth. See detailed instructions on how to remove the seed coat in this Mālama Learning Center video:



<https://vimeo.com/762795394>

