

## Expanding Tree Diversity in Hawai'i's Landscapes

# Buttercup tree, *Rosa amarillo*: *Cochlospermum vitifolium*

This showy flowering tree is native to Mexico through Central America into northern South America. A rapid grower, it reaches about 50 ft in height with a rounded crown about 20 ft in diameter, but tends to be sparsely branched. The stout trunk has attractive gray bark. A double-flowered form from Puerto Rico is more widely grown than the single form.



**Figure 1.** The buttercup yellow flowers contribute the name for this flowering tree.

### Recommended Use in Landscape

- Accent tree
- Park tree

### Distribution

- Mexico to northern South America in seasonally dry habitats

### Propagation Techniques

- Cuttings and air layers
- Root suckers
- Seed

### Cultural Requirements and Tolerances

- Tolerates wide range of soil types with good drainage.
- Should have full sun.
- Adaptable to dry soils and tolerant of several months without water once established.
- Needs pruning to develop a good shape.
- Stake young plants while root system develops.



**Figure 2.** The double form is also known as Flore Pleno.

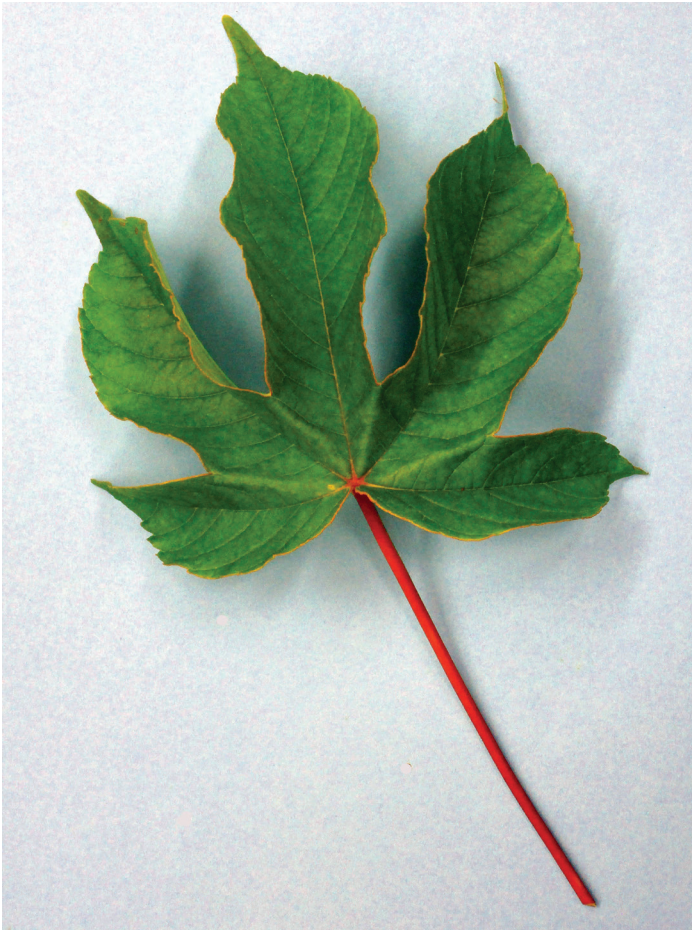
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### **Flower and Fruit Characteristics**

- Flowers are borne terminally in medium clusters, typically when the plant is leafless, especially if water has been withheld, making for an unusually showy floral display. The single-flowered form is about 3 to 4 inches in diameter, while double flowers are up to 5 inches in diameter. In Hawai'i, flowers are borne from January to April.
- Seed pods about the size of an egg are sometimes found on the single form. Seeds are curved like tiny shells and dispersed in a mass of silky white fibers.

### **Leaf Characteristics**

- The coarse-textured leaves are deeply cut, with 5 to 7 palmate lobes with serrated edges. Leaves are 4 to 12 inches wide with a 4 to 8 inch petiole.

### **Advantages of Use in Landscapes**

- Unusual and showy
- Flowers early in the year
- HPWRA: -4 (Low risk of invasiveness)

### **Disadvantages of Use in Landscapes**

- Soft-wooded branches tend to break off in high winds, so plant in a sheltered location.
- Fallen flowers can be messy and slippery, so avoid planting over a sidewalk.
- Cuttings and air layers tend to develop shallow root systems.
- Surface roots can produce suckers if damaged by lawn mowers or weed whackers.