

`akoko (*Chamaecyse celastroides*)

EUPHORBIACEAE, spurge family



Chamaecyse celastroides (Boiss.) Croizat and Degener
var. *lorifolia* (Gray) Degener and Degener

This species is endemic to main Hawaiian Islands including Nihoa; the variety *lorifolia* is a tree form of the genus restricted to Maui and rare on Lānaʻi (Wagner et al. 1990). Other Hawaiian names for this species are *koko*, *`ēkoko*, and *kōkōmālei* (Pukui and Elbert 1986). Hillebrand (1888) states that the name "*koko*" or "*akoko*" means 'blood' and was given to native species of this genus in reference to the milksap, which flows from broken or bruised parts.

Summary statement of uses: The wood of *`akoko* was used as firewood; the leaves medicinally; and the latex used as an ingredient in canoe paint.

Referring to *Chamaecyse multiformis*, Pukui and Elbert (1986) stated, "Buds and leaves of one species were chewed for debility." Hillebrand (1888) states the wood of the tree form found on the islands of Hawaiʻi and Maui Nui, and especially common at Auwahi, were "much used" as firewood. Chun (1994:203, 207) noted that this species was used as medicine. Forbes notes (1919) from southern Haleakalā records that Hawaiians of the region used *`akoko* as a laxative.

Buck (1957f:258) wrote that one of the ingredients of canoe paint was "the juice of certain *Euphorbia* plants", the former name of the native Hawaiian species.

Status at Auwahi: *`Akoko* of Auwahi formed substantial groves along ridgelines in the 1970s. However, the species has declined rapidly in the last two decades and now only scattered tree individuals of this species are to be found.