

# *alahe`e* (Psydrax odorata)

RUBIACEAE, coffee family

Canthium odoratum (G. Forster) Seem

This species is native from the New Hebrides, New Caledonia and Micronesia east across the South Pacific to the Tuamotus and the Hawaiian Islands (Wagner et al. 1990:1119). This species is also commonly referred to as *walahe`e*. Another Hawaiian name is *`ōhe`e* (Pukui and Elbert 1986; Hillebrand 1888).

Summary statement of uses: The very hard wood of *alahe`e* was used in making weapons, wooden adzes, fishing tools (spears), and agricultural tools. An unknown part of the plant was also used in medicine.

*Alahe`e* wood was hard and durable and one of the primary woods used in making digging sticks, or *`ō`ō*, probably the foremost Hawaiian agricultural tool (Buck 1957a; Pukui and Elbert 1986). Handy and Handy (1972) state *alahe`e* wood was used in making short spears (*`o*)

According to Malo (1903), the very hard wood of *alahe`e* was used to make a type of adze to carve soft woods, such as *wiliwili*. According to Kamakau (1976), "Other adzes were made of *walahe`e* -- this is a wood. *Ka po`e kahiko* had a saying, 'The seashell is the adz at the shore, and, *walahe`e* the adz of the uplands.' 'O *ka pupu ko`i makai, `o ka walahe`e ko`i mauka*."

Wagner et al. (1990) reported that a black dye was produced from the leaves of this species. Pukui and Elbert (1986) note the use of this species in medicine.

The *alahe`e* tree is matched with *he`e*, the squid (Beckwith 1972)

*Alahe`e* (spelled as *walahe`e*), as well as other dryland forest trees *‘ahakea*, *‘iliahi* (as *‘aoa*), *kauila*, *naio*, *neneleau*, *‘ūlei*, and *wiliwili* are mentioned in the Hawaiian creation chant, *Kumulipo* (Beckwith 1972). The *alahe`e* tree is matched with *he`e*, the squid (Beckwith 1972)

Status at Auwahi: *Alahe`e* is a common small tree species of lower Auwahi (to 2800 feet elevation). Flowering trees attract large numbers of insects, especially introduced honeybees, to their strongly sweet scented flowers.