

# STOP THE INVASION- REPORT THIS PEST

## Australian Cheesewood

Maui County Priority Pest for Maui:

**Australian cheesewood (*Pittosporum undulatum*)**, aka Victorian box and Sweet Pittosporum, is a fast growing evergreen tree that is often planted in gardens for its aromatic white flowers. It has become a naturalized pest in Hawai'i, Jamaica, South Africa, New Zealand and other Pacific and Atlantic Islands.

### Identification

**Height-** 15' to 45'

**Flower-** 5 petal white flowers (3/4" - 1" long) Strong citrus aroma

**Fruit-** Orange fruit capsules (.6" long); contains shiny black seeds

**Leaves-** Shiny leaves 2-6" long; distinct wavy edge; alternate growth arrangement



Wavy edged leaves



Flower detail



Seed pod

**Impacts:** This tree is considered the most threatening invasive plant in the Blue & John Crow Mountains of Jamaica, where it outcompetes native plants in the tropical montane forest. This tree has aggressive growth rates, with up to 5,000 seedlings per m<sup>2</sup> in infested areas. The seeds that are eaten and distributed far distances by birds.

**Dispersal Mechanism:** Australian cheesewood is spread by humans who use the plant in landscaping. It readily escapes the garden and is further spread by fruit eating birds.

### Don't mistake Australian cheesewood for these look-alikes:



**Ho'awa:** There are 10 endemic pittosporum in Hawai'i, found in a variety of habitats, but usually associated with predominantly native forests. Australian cheesewood can be differentiated by its undulating edged leaves.

Left: Ho'awa; Right: Cape pittosporum

**Cape pittosporum (*Pittosporum viridiflorum*):** This tree is native to South Africa, and is also cultivated in Hawai'i for garden plantings. This tree also has fragrant, orange scented flowers and orange seedpods, but does not have the undulating leaf margins. This tree may be a pest also, according to the Hawaii Weed Risk Assessment. On the island of Maui it is removed by MISC.



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