



Wiliwili



Plant Botanical Name:

Erythrina sandwicensis

Erythrina sandwicensis is known as Wiliwili in Hawaii, which means twisted, and refers to its seedpods that twist open to reveal bright red seeds. *Erythrina sandwicensis* naturally grows to about 45 feet tall and equal width, although in cultivation it is generally smaller. It is one of the few deciduous native Hawaiian trees, losing its leaves during the summer to conserve water and putting out new leaves in the fall. The Wiliwili typically blooms after its leaves appear, although flowering can vary from the summer through November. This species is strongly linked to Hawaiian culture through legends and proverbs. One legend refers to the different appearances of this species in the transformation of three sisters into Wiliwili trees. Indigenous Hawaiians used the very light wood for canoe outriggers and fish net floats and the red seeds in flower leis. Like many endemic Hawaiian plants, the Wiliwili is threatened, with the status of "At Risk." *Photo credit: National Tropical Botanical Garden*

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