

JAN 21 2022

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE STATE NATIVE TREE.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the 'ōhi'a lehua
2 (*metrosideros polymorpha*) holds historical and cultural
3 significance to the State. It is one of the most mentioned
4 plant in native Hawaiian mo'olelo (stories), mele (songs) and
5 'oli (chants). Its hardwood was commonly used for tools and
6 construction, and its blossoms and foliage were frequently used
7 in lei and for medicinal purposes. Its nectar is the food for
8 many indigenous species, such as the federally-endangered
9 'akohekohe (crested honeycreeper) and the 'ōpe'ape'a (Hawaiian
10 hoary bat), the State's only native land animal.

11 The legislature further finds that the 'ōhi'a lehua is key
12 to the State's ecology. This flowering evergreen is endemic to
13 the six largest islands of the State and is not found anywhere
14 else in the world. The 'ōhi'a lehua is the most common native
15 tree in the Hawaiian islands. This slow-growing native tree is
16 extremely adaptable and can be found at various altitudes and



1 within various ecosystems. Its forms range from short bushy
2 shrubs to one hundred-foot canopy trees. 'Ōhi'a lehua forests
3 are estimated to cover over 800,000 acres statewide and are
4 vital to protecting and conserving both Hawaii's watersheds and
5 native species. The role of the 'Ōhi'a lehua in Hawaii's natural
6 and cultural history, along with its enduring presence in
7 Hawaii's ecology, makes this tree essential to the State.

8 The legislature also finds that rapid 'Ōhi'a death (ROD)
9 threatens the existence of this native tree. ROD is a blight
10 caused by one of two fungal pathogens: *ceratocystis lukuohia*
11 (destroyer of 'Ōhi'a) and *ceratocystis huliohia* (disruptor of
12 'Ōhi'a). The *ceratocystis* fungi affect the vascular system of
13 the tree by preventing water from reaching its stems and leaves.
14 An infected 'Ōhi'a lehua tree may take over a year to display
15 symptoms, but usually dies within days to weeks once its leaves
16 turn yellow, then brown. Since its discovery in 2010, ROD has
17 decimated hundreds of thousands of 'Ōhi'a lehua plants. Both
18 pathogens have been found on Hawaii island and Kauai, while
19 cases of *ceratocystis huliohia* have been confirmed on Oahu and
20 Maui. According to the University of Hawaii's College of
21 Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, ongoing aerial surveys



1 in 2019 have detected the symptoms of ROD in over 175,000 acres
2 of state forest land.

3 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to designate the
4 'ōhi'a lehua as the official state native tree of Hawaii.

5 SECTION 2. Section 5-8, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
6 amended to read as follows:

7 "§5-8 State tree[~~-~~]; state native tree. (a) The kukui
8 tree, also known as the candlenut tree (Aleurites Moluccana), is
9 adopted, established, and designated as the official tree of the
10 State, to be effective so long as the legislature of the State
11 does not otherwise provide.

12 (b) The ohia lehua (Metrosideros Polymorpha) is adopted,
13 established, and designated as the official native tree of the
14 State, to be effective so long as the legislature of the State
15 does not otherwise provide."

16 SECTION 3. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
17 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.



1 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

2

INTRODUCED BY:





S.B. NO. 2520

Report Title:

State Native Tree; Ohia Lehua

Description:

Designates the ohia lehua (*metrosideros polymorpha*) as the official state native tree of Hawaii.

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