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Red Plants for Hawai'i Landscapes

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This publication focuses on plants having red as their key color. In the color wheel (see Wong 2006), red is opposite to (and therefore the "complement" of) green, which is the dominant color in landscapes because it is the color of most foliage. The plants selected for illustration here can create exciting variation when juxtaposed with green in landscapes of tropical and subtropical regions. Lots of red can be used in landscapes because equal amounts of red will balance equal amounts of green.

Many plants that can exist in a tropical or subtropical environment do not necessarily give the feeling of a "tropical" theme. Examples, in my opinion, are plumerias, bougainvilleas, rainbow shower trees, ixoras, and hibiscuses.

Groups of plants that I believe provide more of a tropical look are palms, heliconias, gingers, bamboos, ferns, bromeliads, birds of paradise, tī, orchids, members of the Araceae and Marantacea families, certain aquatic plants, some tropical vines such as the passion flowers, and large ficus trees with aerial roots. Specific plants for this purpose include *Ficus pseudopalma*, *Ludovia lancifolia*, *Osmuxylon lineare*, *Piper magnificum* (not yet assessed for invasive potential; alternate name *Piper pseudolindenii*), and *Begonia nelumbifolia* (New Guinea impatiens). Monocotyledons in particular lend a primordial flavor.

The plants with red coloration shown here are just a few of the possibilities. Their selection is based on my personal aesthetic preference and is intended to give you a start in developing your own list of plants to provide red highlights to a landscape.

Before I introduce a new plant species into my garden or landscape, I want to know that it is not invasive in Hawai'i. Some plants have the ability to escape from their original planting area and spread into disturbed or natural areas. Invasive plant species can establish populations that survive without human help and can expand into nearby and in some cases even distant areas. These plants can outcompete native and agricultural species, causing negative impacts.

Luckily for plant enthusiasts in Hawai'i, scientists have developed a screening tool, the Hawaii-Pacific Weed Risk Assessment system (HPWRA), which can predict a plant species' potential to become invasive in Hawai'i or other Pacific Islands. The HPWRA system uses a series of 49 questions about a plant species' geographic origin, biology, ecology, undesirable traits, and pest status elsewhere to predict whether it has the potential to become invasive. Based on the score, the species is rated low risk, "evaluate" (needs more information), or high risk. Species rated high risk have characteristics that may allow them

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to cause economic or environmental harm to Hawai‘i. Although using the HPWRA system is not legally binding, its use allows us to make planting decisions that assist in developing a sustainable Hawai‘i. Over 1,000 species have been assessed. If you are curious about the invasive potential of a plant, you can contact the Weed Risk Assessment Specialists at hpwra@yahoo.com and request an assessment or complete list of assessed species. You can also access the ratings at www.plantpono.org. Several of the species in this publication have been screened, and their rating is given by their name.

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Aechmea bracteata

Aechmea compacta

Alpinia purpurata **(assessed "Evaluate" in 2002)**

Alpinia purpurata **'Tahitian'**

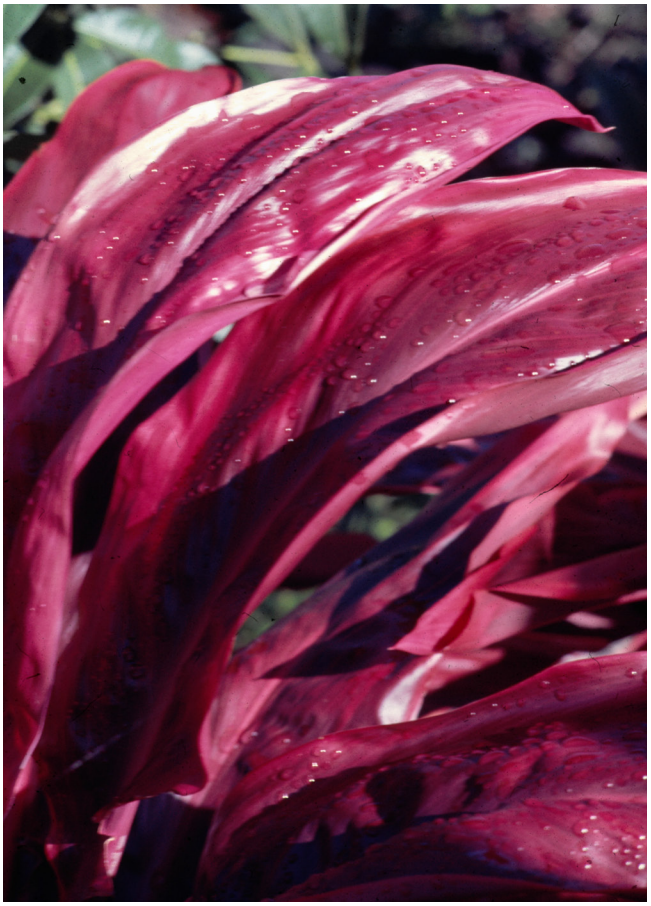
Anthurium andreanum **‘Madame Butterfly’**

Ardisia crispa **(not assessed in Hawai‘i, but considered an environmental weed in Australia. According to *A Tropical Garden Flora, Ardisia crenata* is one of two widely planted *Ardisia*s in Hawai‘i and has been misidentified as *Ardisia crispa. Ardisia crenata* is invasive and should not be planted.**

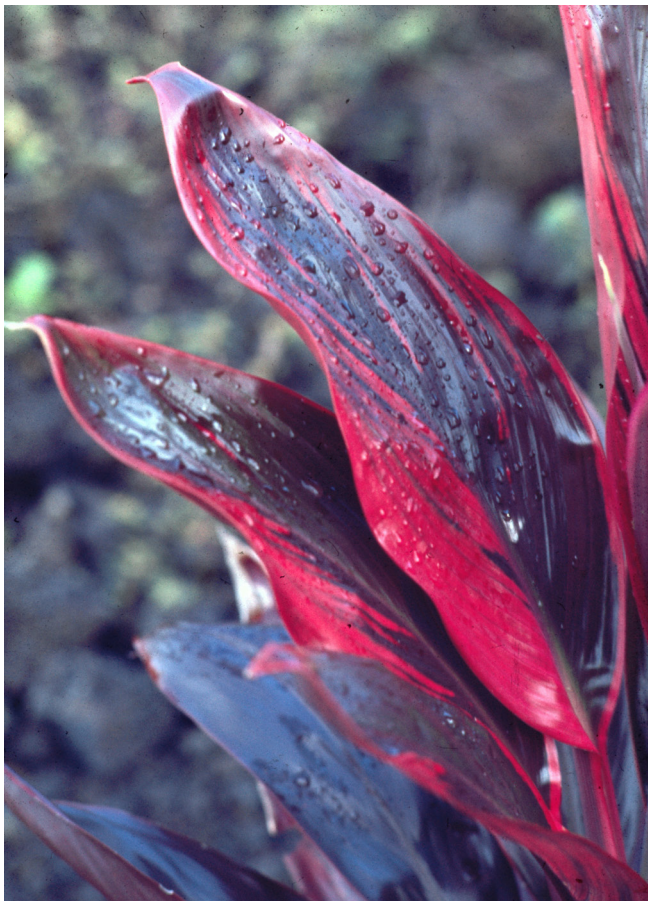
Anthurium andreanum **‘Obake’**

Clerodendron splendens

***Cordyline fruticosa* 'Heather's Spray'**



***Cordyline fruticosa* 'Johnny Noble'**



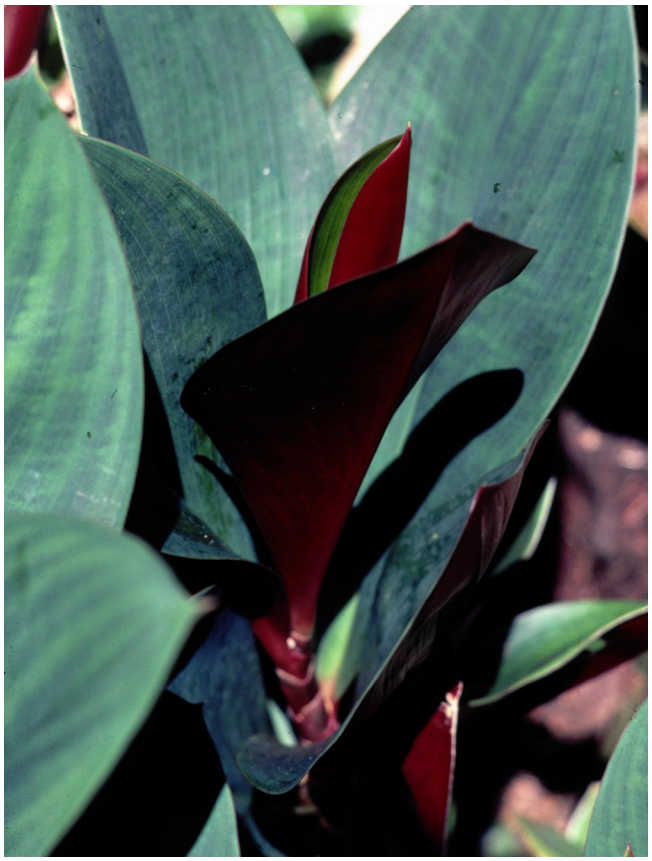
***Cordyline fruticosa* 'Kalama'**

***Cordyline fruticosa* 'Kilauea Iki'**

Costus barbatus

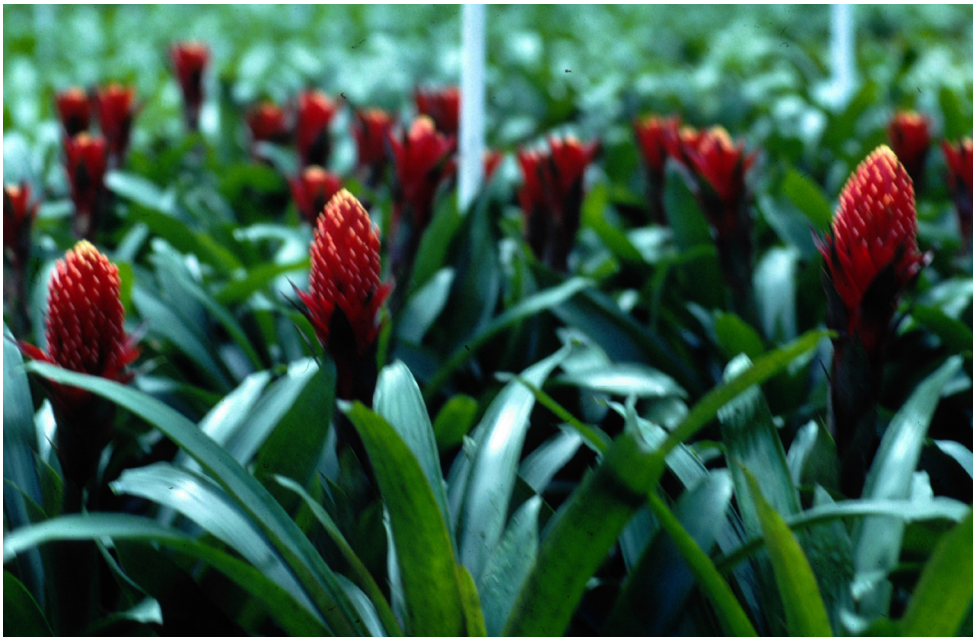
***Cordyline fruticosa* ‘Mahealani’**

***Cordyline fruticosa* ‘Norman Kawauchi’**



Costus erythrophyllus

Cyrtostachys renda **(rated "Evaluate")**



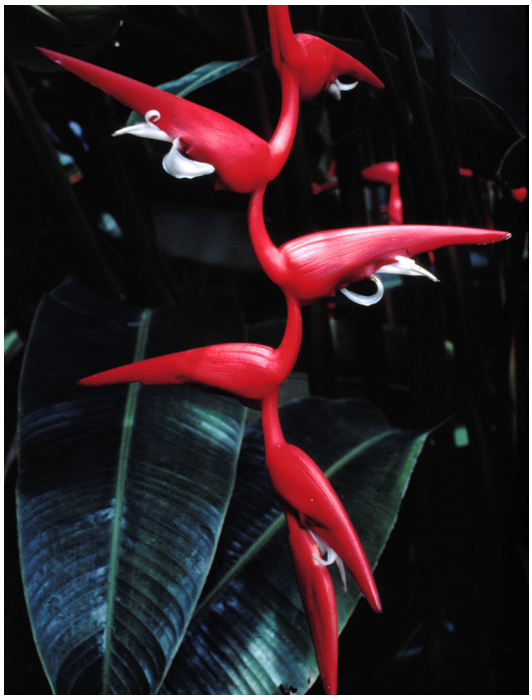
Guzmania **'Torch'**

***Heliconia angusta* 'Holiday'**

***Heliconia caribaea* 'Black Magic' (while this cultivar has not been assessed, the species is low risk)**

Guzmania lingulata

***Heliconia caribaea* 'Purpurea'**



***Heliconia pendula* 'Red Waxy'**

***Heliconia psittacorum* 'Black Cherry'**

***Heliconia psittacorum* 'Lady Di'**

Heliconia psittacorum **'Red Square'**

Heliconia psittacorum **'St. Vincent Red'**

***Heliconia psittacorum* x *H. spathocircinatta* 'BB Red'**

***Ipomoea horsfalliae* (low risk)**

***Impatiens hawkeri* 'New Guinea'**

***Neoregelia* 'Scarlet Charlotte'**

Warszewiczia coccinea