

Leucaena leucocephala

Koa haole, ekoa

Leucaena leucocephala
(Lam.) de Wit

Family: Fabaceae

Description: Erect, woody shrub to 20 ft tall. Leaves bi-pinnately compound, up to 8 pairs of secondary leaf stems, each with up to 21 pairs of leaflets, leaflets 0.5 inches long. Flower head spherical, hard when green, matures into a fuzzy, creamy white, pom-pom type head. Flat green pods emerge from the flower heads, 7 inches long by 0.8 inches wide, becoming dark brown when mature. Dark brown seeds used in making *lei*. A great deal of interest in this nitrogen-fixing plant in developing countries as forage for cattle, feed for chickens, green manure for cropping, and firewood. *Leucanthus* means white flowered; *leucocephalus*, white headed, both names referring to its inflorescence^(5, 70).

Distribution: Native to tropical America. Common throughout Hawai'i and Midway in dry to moist areas. First collected on O'ahu and Kaua'i in 1837⁽⁷⁰⁾.

Environmental impact: Can be toxic to horses because of mimosine content, which cattle can tolerate somewhat⁽²⁹⁾. Forms dense stands in dry to mesic pastures and forests. Becomes too tall in pastures for live-



stock to reach the leaves. At times severely defoliated by an accidentally introduced psyllid, *Heteropsylla cubana*.

Management: Good forage in dry pastures but its toxicity somewhat of a problem and it grows out of reach of livestock and shades out the understory. Sensitive to foliar-applied triclopyr. Susceptible to soil-applied tebuthiuron at 2 lb/acre⁽⁴⁸⁾ and to cut-surface applications of picloram. Dicamba ineffective in cut-surface applications. Triclopyr ester applied basal bark and stump bark effective; 2,4-D in diesel and sometimes diesel alone effective in basal bark treatments. Goats will control koa haole (An Peischel).