**Plumeria alba: White Frangipani**

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

### Introduction

Frangipani is well-known for its intensely fragrant, lovely, spiral-shaped blooms which appear at branch tips June through November. The tree itself is rather unusual in appearance; the 20-inch-long, coarse, deciduous leaves clustered only at the tips of the rough, blunt, sausage-like, thick, grey-green branches. Branches are upright and rather crowded on the trunk forming a vase or umbrella shape with age. They are rather soft and brittle and can break but are usually sturdy unless they are mechanically hit or disturbed. A milky sap is exuded from the branches when they are bruised or punctured.

### General Information

**Scientific name:** Plumeria alba  
**Pronunciation:** ploo-MEER-ee uh AL-buh  
**Common name(s):** White Frangipani  
**Family:** Apocynaceae  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)  
**Origin:** not native to North America  
**Invasive potential:** little invasive potential  
**Uses:** tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); deck or patio; specimen; container or planter; street without sidewalk; parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; highway median  
**Availability:** not native to North America

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**Description**

**Height:** 20 to 25 feet  
**Spread:** 20 to 25 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical  
**Crown shape:** round, vase  
**Crown density:** open  
**Growth rate:** slow  
**Texture:** coarse

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** entire  
**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval), obovate  
**Leaf venation:** brachidodrome, pinnate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous  
**Leaf blade length:** 12 to 18 inches, 8 to 12 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** red  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

![Figure 3. Foliage](image)

**Flower**

**Flower color:** white/cream/gray  
**Flower characteristics:** very showy

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** elongated  
**Fruit length:** 6 to 12 inches  
**Fruit covering:** dry or hard  
**Fruit color:** brown  
**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns  
**Pruning requirement:** needed for strong structure  
**Breakage:** susceptible to breakage  
**Current year twig color:** brown, green  
**Current year twig thickness:** very thick  
**Wood specific gravity:** unknown

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** full sun, partial sun or partial shade

**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; well-drained  
**Drought tolerance:** high  
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

**Other**

**Roots:** not a problem  
**Winter interest:** yes  
**Outstanding tree:** yes  
**Ozone sensitivity:** unknown  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** unknown  
**Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases

**Use and Management**

Frangipani is very susceptible to freezing temperatures and should be adequately protected or planted only in areas which do not freeze in the winter. Plants will grow quickly in full sun on a variety of well-drained soils and are fairly drought- and salt-tolerant. Reaching a height of 20 to 25 feet with an equal spread, Frangipani works well as a freestanding specimen, a patio tree, or as part of a shrubbery border. It displays well in a front yard as an attention-getter by the entrance. It can be grown with a single trunk or branched low to the ground into a multi-trunked specimen. Single-trunk specimens could be planted as median or street trees on 15 to 20-foot-centers.

*Plumeria alba* has white flowers with yellow centers while *Plumeria rubra* produces red-toned flowers. *Plumeria obtusa* has white blooms centered in yellow and is variable in form and color. There are many other selections of Frangipani which display a variety of flower colors. They are widely grown in Hawaii where they are used in flower arrangements and in leis.

Propagation is by cuttings. Large hardwood cuttings should be allowed to dry several days while leafy tip cuttings should be planted immediately. The plants flower at an early age.

**Pests**

Some common pests of this tree are scales, frangipani caterpillar, and nematodes.

**Diseases**

No diseases are of major concern. Root rot can infect plants planted in soils with poor drainage. Rust disease occasionally infects foliage.
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