

Frangipani

Plumeria

rubra

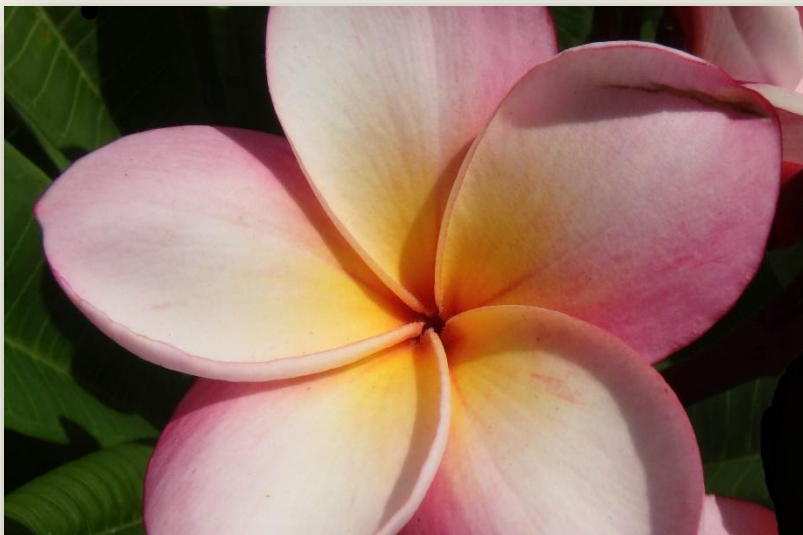


We doubt that there is another flower more evocative of tropical paradise than the Frangipani (*Plumeria* spp.). *Plumeria rubra*, that glorious, sweetly scented and colourful small tree has its origins in Mexico, Central America, Colombia and Venezuela, but is a much-prized garden plant throughout warmer regions of the world, and conspicuous in many tropical holiday destinations. Where would Tahiti, Samoa, Bali, Fiji, Tonga, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, be without Frangipani? How would Hawaii manage without Frangipani flowers for leis?



Worldwide there are about 12 species of *Plumeria*, and more than 300 varieties. Most originate from Central and South America and from the Caribbean. In Sydney, we probably see a mix of species and varieties, with flowers varying in colour from white, to yellow and pink. The most commonly grown species appears to be *Plumeria rubra*. The plants grow like candelabra, with single trunks, then multiple branches of similar length topped by a spreading canopy.

However, for all their beauty, Frangipani have a dark secret. Flowers are pollinated at night by Sphinx moths attracted to the fragrant perfume, but no nectar is produced to reward the moths, which then must set off again in a futile search for nectar in other flowers. Frangipani (*Plumeria*) belongs to the Apocynaceae, a mostly tropical family of shrubs, trees, vines and succulent plants, many of which have white milky sap, and most are poisonous.



Frangipanis are easy to grow from cuttings. Take branches

which can be quite large, even up to 2 metres long; leave them on a bench until the cut ends are quite dry and sealed (this may take a week or two), then plant upright in well-drained potting mix using a stake if necessary to secure the cutting in an upright position.

Staples, G. W. and D. R. Herbst. 2005. A Tropical Garden Flora: Plants cultivated in the Hawaiian Islands and other tropical places. Bishop Museum Press, Honolulu, Hawai'i.

Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocynaceae>

Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plumeria>

Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plumeria_rubra

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