

## Kleinhovia

*Kleinhovia hospita* (guest tree syn. *Kleinhovia serrata* Blanco, *Grewia meyeniana* Walp.) is an evergreen, tropical tree native to Indonesia, Malaysia and other parts of tropical Asia and the Pacific. It is monotypic, being the only species in the genus *Kleinhovia*.

*Kleinhovia hospita* is an evergreen, bushy tree growing up to 20 m high, with a dense rounded crown and upright pink sprays of flowers and fruits. Leaves are simple and alternate; stipules are ensiform to linear, about 8 mm long; petioles are 2.5–30 cm long; the leaf-blade is ovate to heart-shaped, glabrous on both sides, with the apex pointed. Secondary veins occur in 6-8 pairs, palmately nerved.

The flowers of *K. hospita* are terminal, in loose panicles protruding from the crown; flowers are about 5 mm wide, coloured pale pink; pedicels are 2–10 mm long; bracteoles are lanceolate, 2–4 mm long, pubescent; gynandrophores are 4–7 mm long, pubescent; there are 5 sepals, linear lanceolate, 6–8 mm long, pink, tomentose; 5 petals, inconspicuous, the upper one being yellow; 15 stamens, monadelphous, 8–15 mm long, staminal tube broadly campanulate, adnate to gynandrophore, 5-lobed, each lobe having 3 anthers and alternating with staminodes; the anthers are sessile and extrorse; pistil occur with a 5-celled, pilose ovary, one style and a capitate, with a 5-lobed stigma. *K. hospita* flowers throughout the year.

Fruit production starts early, often in the third year after planting. The fruit of *K. hospita* are rounded, 5-lobed, thin-walled, membranous capsules, 2–2.5 cm in diameter, loculicidally dehiscent, each locule having 1–2 seeds. The seeds are globose, whitish, warty and exalbuminous.[2] The fruits are more conspicuous than the flowers because of their abundance and size.

*Kleinhovia*'s range includes Bangladesh, Christmas Island, Peninsular Malaysia, Vietnam, Hainan, Taiwan, the Ryukyu Islands, Caroline Islands, Lesser Sunda Islands, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga, Samoan Islands, and Society Islands.[1]

It has been introduced to the Comoro Islands, Pakistan, Puerto Rico, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Windward Islands.[1]

*Kleinhovia hospita* is used as a traditional medicine in parts of Peninsular Malaysia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea to treat scabies.[citation needed] The bark and leaves used as hairwash for lice, while the juice of the leaves are used as an eyewash.[citation needed] Young leaves are eaten as a vegetable. Bast fibres are used for making ropes used for tying or for tethering livestock.[3]

The wood of *K. hospita* shows a pinkish buff and is moderately fine in texture, soft, light, easy to season, work and finish. Its energy value is about 19000 kJ/kg. The leaves and bark contain cyanogenic compounds that are assumed to help to kill ectoparasites such as lice. Extracts of the leaves have shown anti-tumour activity against sarcoma in mice. A number of fatty acids with a cyclopropenylic ring (scopoletin, kaempferol, and quercetin) have been isolated from the leaves.[2]

*Kleinhovia hospita* is used for ornamental purposes: the attractiveness of the pink panicles accounts for its spread as an ornamental.

The tree bark of *Kleinhovia hospita* has a good potential as a reinforcement for Fiber Reinforced Composite because of its high mechanical strength.[4]

Tree in Kolkata, West Bengal, India.

Colour plate by Francisco Manuel Blanco

Immature efflorescence in Hyderabad, India

