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Plumeria Identification – Why is it so hard to do?

I remember my first plumeria bloom – it looked nothing like the photo! How is that possible? Surely it was mislabeled!

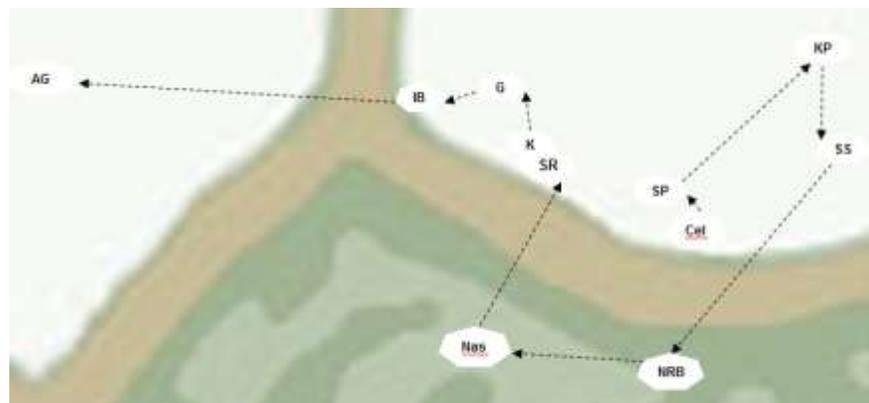
Once you appreciate how plumeria flowers reflect their growing environment, you'll understand how difficult it is to identify the variety based on a photo. Unlike almost any other cultivated flower, everything affects the color, size and shape of the bloom. Amount of sunlight, types of fertilizer, heat, humidity, length of the day, maturity of the plant, and so on – each affects the flower's appearance, and often drastically.

One additional factor: the flower's color and size is dependent of the health of the root system. Well established trees produce significantly larger and more colorful blooms than cuttings or new plants. With some varieties, the blooms are utterly and completely different on a newly rooted plant when compared to a mature tree.

To make identification even more challenging, every single seedling is genetically different from the parent. Plant the 20+ seeds in a pod, and they will all bloom and grow differently.

A flower picture is simply not enough information to identify the name of a variety. If you post a photo for ID, you'll be asked the growth habit, fragrance, bud color plus a description of the leaves. Do you know the source of your plant – certain varieties are very common in Southern California, others are common in Florida.

Let's take a look at some examples of the distinguishing features of common varieties. At least a third of the grove is currently unidentified. If you recognize one, please let us know!



- **Celadine:** loved by lei makers because of her very consistent flowers - the proportion of yellow to white changes only slightly with sunlight and heat. Flip a leaf over and look at the back – Celadine and her seedlings always have a double line around the edge.
- **Nebel's Rainbow:** even though this tree was initially mislabeled, we were able to identify her by the large, thick, flat yellow red blooms, hefty branches, and unfortunate

tendency to black tip in cold weather.

- **Sunstar:** not all the trees in the grove are known, and are actually 'No ID'. This lovely tree, which we hope to correctly identify someday, has long twisted yellow petals, standard growth habit, and pendulous inflos.
- **Krystyna's Pink:** yes, she's a lovely yellow, not pink. Until we discover her real name, she's a No ID.
- **Scott Pratt:** the red black flowers are easy to identify, but it's the bronze, upward pointing leaves that confirm its identification.
- **Kimo:** a classic chameleon, this flower ranges from almost white to yellow to orange to red, then solid, mottled, streaked and everything in between. Its petal shape changes between rounded and elongated. Only the ginger lime fragrance stays the same.
- **Super Round:** come back next year, and the flowers on this young tree will be twice as large and the colors brighter. Come back in 2 years, and it will bloom even better. Plumeria vigor is all about a good root system. Note the very round, shiny leaves.
- **Gina:** always easy to identify by her orange leaf stems, round glossy leaves, thick petals and faint scent. Her brilliantly colored blooms range from a rainbow to deep red.
- **Irma Bryan:** take a look at the center of her red blooms. See the notch at the base of the petals? That's how we verified that this is truly Irma B.
- **Nassau:** in addition to its propeller shaped red blooms, the narrow, knobby branches make this one easy to confirm.
- **Aztec Gold:** originally from Florida, this tall vigorous tree with large, peach scented yellow blooms is easily identified, but the fuzzy pubescent new growth is distinctive. Since Aztec Gold has been around for many years, we believe there are several genetically similar trees with this name, and they all produce identical flowers.

There are already 5000+ named plumeria varieties, including hundreds registered with the Plumeria Society of America, and the number grows every year with the addition of uncountable new seedlings. Is your unidentified plumeria a named variety, or a similar but slightly different offspring?

Please don't break off branches! Some plumeria are difficult to grow, and damaged trees die when uncaring visitors snap pieces off. An abused tree is sad sight, especially when plumeria are readily available in stores or from friends.

Take your time and stroll through the rest of our grove, and enjoy the many blooms. As more trees are planted, mature and bloom, this walking tour and other, more in-depth tours will be expanded. Enjoy!