

## Frangipani

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Frangipani, *Plumeria* or temple tree are common names for a popular Florida Keys landscape tree. Frangipani originated in the New World Tropics, from the Caribbean islands and Central America. It is known worldwide as the flower used in making Hawaiian leis.

Frangipani trees grow to about 15 to 20 feet tall, making it a great patio or specimen tree due to its overall size, a wide variety of flower colors and fragrances.

In the Keys, popular Frangipani species include:

*Plumeria rubra*, the most common variety, is a deciduous tree with leaves growing to 18" inches in length. There are numerous flower colors ranging from rose color with yellow centers to a tricolor blossom of white, rose, and yellow.

*Plumeria alba* has white fragrant flowers and is characterized by narrow leaves that are rolled backwards at the margins.

*Plumeria obtusa* are usually white with a yellow center. The leaves are evergreen characterized by a very rounded tip.

In the Keys, you can plant your frangipani in the ground or a container. It needs to be grown in full sun or light shade in a well-drained soil. The frangipani has good salt tolerance, but may need protection from the North winter winds.

Frangipani responds well to regular super bloom fertilizer (10-30-10) applied in June, August, and October. Apply about 1 pound per inch of trunk diameter, distributing the fertilizer around the plant out two feet beyond the end of the branch tips.

Starting in July or August you might notice a large black and yellow caterpillar chewing your frangipani leaves. This is the Frangipani Caterpillar that turns into the Tetrio Sphinx moth (*Pseudosphinx tetrio*). One caterpillar can

devour three good sized leaves a day. Control the caterpillars by handpicking when they are small or by using spinosad or Bacillus thuringiensis (B.t.).

Towards the end of the rainy season, most Frangipanis become deciduous and drop their leaves. Check to see if the Frangipani rust (*Coleosporium plumierae*) is present. Look for yellow, powdery pustules forming on the underside of the leaves. Once a leaf has become infected with the rust fungus, there is nothing that can be done for that leaf. As long as the infected leaf is on the tree, it will infect the new leaves.

Frangipani rust control begins with raking up and disposing of all infected leaves into trash bags and disposed of with your household waste. If the leaves are remaining on the tree and the rust is prevalent throughout, then it is time to spray a copper fungicide every 10 days until the rust cycle stops.