Various foods/plants that sustained the Hawaiian people


Culturally, the most important food for Native Hawaiians. Said to be the "number one sibling" and the embodiment of Kane (creator).
For some varieties we can use whole plant.
Serves as food as well as medicine.

Kalo - food
- The leaf (lu'au) can be used for wrapping of food (laulau). Source of vitamins A, B, and C.
- Tuber or corn are steamed and pounded to make poi/pa'ai, (staple)
- Foods - laulau, lu'au, kulolo, poi, pa'ai
- Must clean leaf before use, to clean off fine needles to prevent irritation of mouth and throat.

Kalo - medicinal
- Removes swelling from insect bites, helps with infection of wounds, help to cast broken bones, and if used with other plants can help with diarrhea.

ʻUlu - Breadfruit
- Another very important food for Native Hawaiians
- Provided sustenance in times kalo could not
- Multipurpose plant
- Takes about 5 - 7 years to fruit

ʻUlu - food
- Very starchy (carbohydrates), and good source of vitamins A and B, as well as calcium.
- No fat!
### 'Ulu - other uses
- Sticky sap used to make a type of chewing gum, helped catch birds, and glue or caulking
- Light-weight wood used to make canoes, drums, surfboards and homes
- Sap heals skin scratches, scrapes, and chapped skin (wind burn)
- Leaf buds help with mouth sores
- Bark used to make a low grade tapa (cloth)
- Dried male flowers used to make mosquito repellant

### 'Awa - Kava
- Sacred plant used in ceremonies, as a sedative and to help open communication channels to the divine
- Takes 2 - 3 years to reach full potency
- Linked to Laka (Pele’s younger sister)

### 'Awa - medicinal
- Respiratory problems - asthma
- Sooth restless children during teething
- Ease headaches and menstrual cramps
- Achy muscles, chills, colds, displaced womb, urinary tract problems, diabetes and rheumatism

### Noni
- Usually used for medicinal purposes
- Plant has fruit year-round
- Pungent odor derogates use
- If used, unpleasant taste is usually followed by chaser (food or liquid)
- Found all over South Pacific and Australia

### Noni - medicinal
- Treats: heart trouble, diabetes, high blood pressure, skin cancer
- Young, unripe noni used for deep cuts and on broken bones
- Eating fruit aids aging ailments like rheumatism, arthritis, as well as tuberculosis and cancer
- Juice of fruit is said to help with 'uku (lice, fleas)

### Noni - other uses
- Red and yellow dyes come from the tree (bark and root, respectively)
- Fruit was eaten in times of scarcity
- In modern times, has been added with garlic to enhance immune system
- Kino lau (earthy body) of the God Ku
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'Olena - turmeric</th>
<th>'Olena - medicinal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- No bigger than an adult thumb, member of ginger family</td>
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<td>- Rarely found today in Hawai‘i</td>
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<td>- Used in places like India to make curry</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Yellow and orange dye made from plant used on tapa (cloth-like paper)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Extracted juice from pounded root helps clear sinus congestion and ear aches</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Treats tuberculosis, bronchitis, colds, asthma</td>
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<td>- Taken as a diuretic</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Stops bleeding</td>
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<td>- Added to bowl of water and sprinkled with ti leaf to purify a space</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kukui - spurge</th>
<th>Kukui - medicinal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Considered the body form of Kamapua‘a</td>
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<td>- Symbol of enlightenment, protection and peace</td>
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<td>- Silvery-green color is used to represent the island of Molokai in lei</td>
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<td>- Originally used only for oil</td>
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<td>- Flowers were chewed and given to children needing to heal sores in mouth or on tongue, sap too was used</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Sap used for chapped lips, cold sores and sunburn</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Kukui and noni together help treat joint problems, wounds, deep bruises and are applied with heat (hot rocks)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Mashed roasted nut used for constipation and high blood-pressure</td>
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<tr>
<th>Kukui - other uses</th>
<th>Mai'a - Banana</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Oil: lamps; fishermen spit it on water surface to see below; varnish; to preserve nets</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Inner bark: red dye and 'olona cordage (ropes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Black soot from nut roasting used for tattoo, and painting on canoes and tapa</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Wood used in canoe building</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Body form of Kanaloa - God of Healing</td>
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<td>- Symbols of bad luck in dreams and for fishing</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Not really a tree but a giant herb! (grass family; wheat, barley)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- To harvest, the whole trunk is cut down</td>
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<td>- Kapu (forbidden) to women until the 1800s</td>
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### Mai‘a - food
- Good source of potassium, vitamins A, C and some B
- Inner heart of trunk can be cooked
- Grows well
- Green bananas can be boiled in skin to replace starch in a meal
- Requires shallow hole, sufficient drainage and lots of water

### Mai‘a - medicinal
- Ripe fruit used for asthma
- Vitamin rich nectar from sap or flower bud is used to strengthen babies
- Bud juice helps stomach problems for all ages
- The peel of a ripe banana is pounded and applied (inside-out) onto wounds, has an antibiotic property against bacteria

### Mai‘a - other uses
- Leaves: house roof, umbrellas, rain hats, truce flag, bowl covers, sandals, clothing...
- Leaf sheath: water runways, plant containers
- Leaf sheath fibers: thatching, string lei
- Trunk: canoe rollers, mulch; in imu helps trap moisture to create steam; if dried can be used as a splint on a fractured limb

### ‘Awapuhi Kuahiwi - ginger
- Body of Kane (one of many, kalo is another)
- All ‘awapuhi have a pleasant fragrance
- Originated in India, it was introduced/distributed to Polynesia

### ‘Awapuhi Kuahiwi - medicinal
- Spicy smelling roots were dried and pounded as medicine
- With noni, it was used to dress sprains
- Cooked and softened root packed in tooth to treat toothaches and cavities
- Ground and strained root material was ingested to help with stomach aches

### ‘Awapuhi Kuahiwi - other uses
- Fragrant stalks were added to imu to enhance flavor to pork or fish
- Commonly used as a shampoo and conditioner!
- Flower heads have a juicy and sudsy liquid that adds shine and softness to hair
**Hau**

- Said to be the sister of the goddess Hina
- So prized, had to seek permission of chief to cut
- Used as wind breaks
- Leaves are heart shaped with a smooth, leathery surface
- Essential plant for all people; ocean, land, craftsmen, farmer

**Hau - medicinal**

- Sap is used as a mild laxative for babies and young children
- Flower buds are used as a laxative for older children and adults
- Flower buds were chewed and eaten for sore throat
- Soaking bark of stems produced a slime used to alleviate congestion
- Lubricant qualities of the inner bark useful with the passage of childbirth and enemas

**Hau - other uses**

- Very light wood, useful for the canoe iako (outriggers)
- Wood used as an adze handle
- Piled branches signaled a fishing kapu
- Used as floats for fishing nets
- Used for cording material; lashing, sewing tapa, woven as a strainer
- Used to start making fire with kukui wood

**Ki - Ti plant**

- Sacred to the God of the ocean, Lono and to the Goddess of hula, Laka
- Said to be the inspiration of the kahili (royal feather standard)
- Worn to protect from evil spirits and to bring in good

**Ki - medicinal**

- Used as a wrap to steam herbs
- Placed over entire body to break a fever
- Leaves were used to relieve headaches
- Wrapping warm stones in leaves and placing on body alleviated sore muscles
- Drink made from boiled green leaves aided in nerve and muscle relaxation
- Steam from boiled young shoots and leaves made an effective decongestant

**Ki - other uses**

- Used as fans, food storage wraps, lures on hukilau nets, roof thatching, plates, skirts ...
- Makes a powerful liquor called okolehao,
- Children used many leaves together as sleds to slide down hillsides
- Leaves used as whistles
- Older plants have a thick, white, sweet root that was an emergency food source during famine
All information was gathered from the website: http://www.canoeplants.com/
Hawaiian Ethnobotany Online database from the Bishop Museum is another detailed resource. http://www2.bishopmuseum.org/ethnobotanydb/index.asp
These websites have all the necessary information to begin researching the various plants that came over with the original Polynesian voyagers to Hawai‘i; how the plant was used then; and how it’s used today.