

Data compiled by Mr. Scott Rauvers. Founder of the [Solar Institute](#) , [Mightyz](#) and [In2itivetech.com](#)

Note: I put this information together on the fly as I am in preparation mode in case of future food shortages. The following pages list wild plants that are edible on the Hawaiian Islands. Many of my friends are moving to Molokai an island that is already self-sufficient.

Edible

Munroidendron – Scientific Name: *Munroidendron racemosum* Endemic, Endangered: Kaua'i



Popolo (americanum) Popolo (americanum) black berries



Edible Ferns in Hawaii. There are two main ferns that are used as a vegetable in Hawaii. One is introduced and one is native. The introduced fern is the popular warabi and the native fern is known as hoio.



ALOE VERA

Preparing Aloe vera to eat takes only a few minutes, and once prepared can be stored in your refrigerator up to a week.

1. Cut a leaf from the plant at the stem with scissors or kitchen knife and rinse under cold, running water
2. Trim the ends of the leaf by cutting off its base and tip by approximately an inch (how much to trim will be determined by the size and length of the leaf)
3. Slice the serrated edges off along the entire spine of the leaf.
4. Cut the leaf into halves or thirds, again depending on its length
5. Soak in a bowl of water for ten minutes and thoroughly rinse
6. Filet the sections length-wise and scrape or scoop out only the clear gel with a butter knife or spoon. **Do not squeeze out the gel as it can release the aloin latex with it**
7. This resulting gel can be consumed raw, juiced, or used in any number of creative ways (check out our [Aloe Vera smoothie recipe](#))

Flickr *Diospyros sandwicensis* | Lama or Ēlama Ebenaceae (

Bright orange fruit



The dwarf variety of 'Ōhelo grows at higher altitudes and is reasonably plentiful in Hawaii Volcano National Park. It is a relative of the cranberry, but, as opposed to the swamp-loving cranberry, grows in lava crevices and in well drained volcanic soil. The berries are edible and vary from tart to quite sweet and contain multiple seeds.

Red berries



Cordia subcordata, also known as the Mareer, Kerosene wood, Glueberry, Tou and Kou tree, is shown here in Kapiolani Park, Oahu. Its fruit are apparently edible

Flowers are orange



Common Name: Jackfruit Tree Latin Name: *Artocarpus heterophyllus* Family: Fig Family (Moraceae)

Location:



Latin Name: *Cordyline fruticosa* Family: Asparagus family (Asparagaceae) – edible roots



Latin Name: *Asterogyne spicata* Family: Palm (Arecaceae) – dark red ovoid fruits that are edible



Latin Name: *Morinda citrifolia* Family: Citrus/coffee family (Rubiaceae)



Seaweeds should be soaked overnight before eating

Limu wawae'iolo
(*Codium edule*) **DARK GREEN**



Limu manauea
(*Gracilaria coronopifolia*)

-
- Light brown



Green in color



Limu 'ele'ele
(Enteromorpha prolifera)

Tan color



Limu kohu
(Asparagopsis taxiformis)

Black



Pink flowers



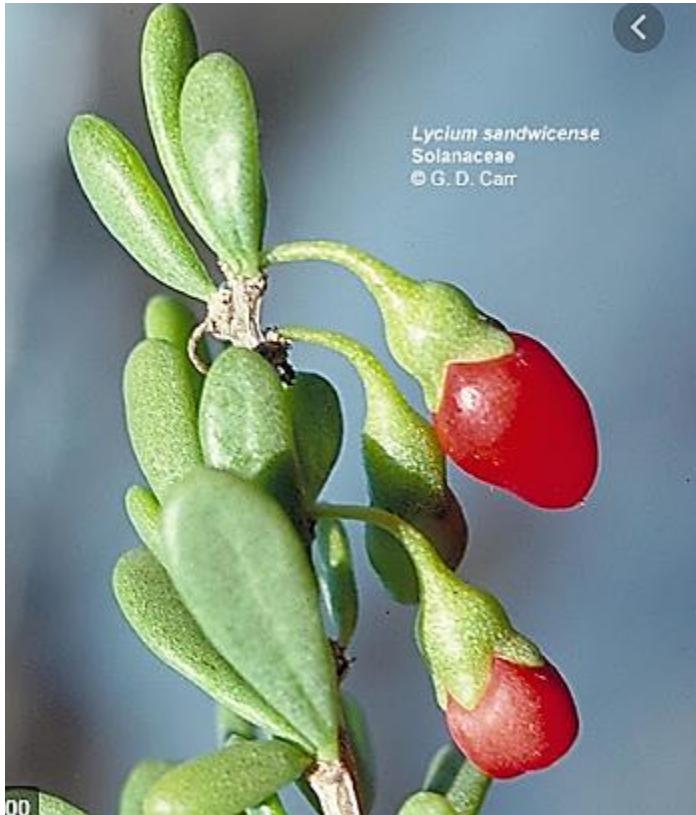
ʻĀKULIKULI
SEA PURSLANE
(*Sesuvium portulacastrum*)

White flowers fruits are edible



NAUPAKA KAHAKAI
BEACH NAUPAKA
(*Scaevola sericea*)

Red berries



‘ÔHELO KAI
(*Lycium sandwicense*)

The durian, often called the King of Fruit, – The edible fleshy part is the aril that surrounds the seed and is enclosed in a hard thorny rind. The seeds are also roasted and eaten.



Shampoo ginger (*Zingiber zerumbet*) has edible roots



Breadfruit Breadfruit tastes good –

Pandanus – Common names include pandan (/ˈpændən/), screw palm, and screw pine.



Sweet potato flower – violet interior



Wild sweet potato



Seaweed red in color – This edible red seaweed, called “long ogo”



Guava – fruit is red



This guava is lemon colored



Psidium cattleianum is closely related to common guava, *P. guajava*, a species favored in Hawaii for its edible fruit, – fruit is red



Aleurites moluccana – Kukui





Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Aleurites moluccana*

Synonyms: *Aleurites javanica*, *Aleurites triloba*

Common Names: Kukui, Indian Walnut, Candlenut, Kuikui

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial, Evergreen

Growth Habit: Tree

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized Polynesian canoe plant is native to Malaysia and to other, more western parts of Polynesia.

Flower Color: Creamy white

Height: Up to 65 (20 m) tall, but usually half that

Description: The plants are monoecious, with both male and female flowers on the same plant. The flowers are in convex, stellate-hairy terminal clusters. The individual flowers have 5 hairy, round-tipped petals. The female flowers are followed by rounded, 2 1/3 inch (6 cm) long, 1 to 2-seeded nuts with a slightly fuzzy, olive-green rind covering a hard black or brown shell and white kernels. The leaves have 0, 3, 5, or 7 point-tipped lobes and are pale to medium green, hairy, alternate, and variably shaped. The young leaves are paler and hairier than the mature leaves. The bark is smooth and dark gray in color. The young branches are hairy. The trees are spreading and appear a light silvery green color from a distance.

Here in Hawaii, Kukui grows in low to middle elevation, moist to mesic (moderately wet) areas.

Because of its cultural history and many uses, Kukui has been named the state tree of Hawaii.

Special Characteristics

Canoe Plant – Ancient Polynesians brought this useful plant with them to Hawaii. They extracted oil from the oily nut meats to use as lamp oil and as a linseed-like drying oil. The whole, shelled nuts were skewered on coconut leaf midribs and burned as a light source. The unshelled nuts with their glossy, polished, black, brown, and rarely white shells were used to make attractive leis, which are still being made today. The nuts were roasted and used as a flavoring in cooking. Soot from the charred nuts was used for tattooing. The inner bark was used to make a red-brown dye for tapa. The plants were also used for a variety of medicinal and other purposes and as a source of wood and fiber.

Edible – The roasted nuts have an oily, nutty flavor and can be eaten in small amounts. A mixture of the crushed, roasted nuts, known as 'inamona, is used as a flavoring to sprinkle on other foods. The raw nuts are a laxative.

Poisonous – The plants are poisonous.

Ananas bracteatus – Red Pineapple





Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Ananas bracteatus*

Common Names: Red Pineapple, Wild Pineapple

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial

Growth Habit: Herb/Forb

Hawaii Native Status: Cultivated. This ornamental garden plant is native to Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay.

Flower Color: Violet. The more conspicuous inflorescences are red or reddish pink.

Height: Up to 4 feet (1.2 m) tall

Description: The small, violet–purple flowers emerge from between spiny, red or pink bracts on egg-shaped inflorescences. The inflorescences are followed by brownish pink to scarlet, leafy-topped, compound pineapple fruits. The leaves are long, linear, arching, solid dark green or variegated with white, pink, red, or yellow, and edged with sharp spines that curve up toward the leaf tips.

Here in Hawaii, Red Pineapple is grown in tropical gardens and is used as a security hedge because of its spiny leaves.

The similar False Pineapple (*Pseudananas sagenarius*) has spines at the base of the leaves that curve downward toward the base of the plant. Pineapple (*Ananas comosus*) has much less colorful inflorescences and larger fruit.

Special Characteristics

Edible – The ripe fruit is edible, but it is smaller and less fleshy than commercial pineapples.

Canna indica – Indian Shot –orange flowers



Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Canna indica*

Synonyms: *Canna coccinea*, *C. edulis*

Common Names: Indian Shot, Edible Canna, Wild Canna, African Arrowroot, Ali'ipoe, Li'ipoe, Poloka

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial

Growth Habit: Herb/Forb

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized ornamental garden plant, starch crop, and seed jewelry plant is native to the tropical Americas.

Flower Color: Red, Orange, Yellow

Height: To 5 feet (1.5 m) tall

Description: The flowers are enclosed in small, whitish green, membranous bracts and have 3 petals and 2 or 3 staminodes (petal-like stamens). The petals and staminodes are typically spotted with red. The lip-like lowest staminode (the labellum) is narrow and gracefully recurved. The flowers are followed by egg-shaped, 3-valved, minutely warty seed capsules containing very hard, round, dark brown to black, shot-like seeds. The leaves are green, hairless, alternate, spirally arranged, oblong to narrowly egg-shaped, and up to 2 feet (60 cm) long. The stems emerge from underground tuberous rhizomes and are unbranched.

The dark, shiny seeds can be drilled and used as beads in seed jewelry or strung into leis. The seeds are also used in hula rattles. Cultivated varieties have much larger and showier flowers than do the wild-types.

Here in Hawaii, Indian Shot grows in disturbed wet to mesic (moderately wet) forests at low elevations.

Special Characteristics

Edible – The starchy tuberous rhizomes are edible if cooked. Like arrowroot starch, the powdered tubers can be used to thicken sauces and improve the texture of some prepared foods.



Cocoloba uvifera – Sea Grape



Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Cocoloba uvifera*

Synonym: *Polygonum uvifera*

Common Names: Sea Grape, Seagrape

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial, Evergreen

Growth Habit: Tree, Shrub

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized seaside ornamental plant is native to Florida, Mexico, Central America, western South America, and the Caribbean.

Flower Color: Cream to greenish white

Flowering Season: Year-round

Height: To 25 feet (7.6 m) tall

Description: The plants are dioecious (male and female flowers on separate plants). The small, white flowers are on slender, terminal and lateral flower spikes. The female flowers are followed by pendent clusters of round, grape-like, green ripening to purple-red fruits. The leaves are green when mature, sometimes coppery when young, leathery, hairless to almost hairless, often red-veined at the base, alternate, and round to kidney-shaped. The plants branch low to the ground and have unusually thick trunks. The bark is smooth, peeling, and grayish to mottled with patches of white, gray, and light brown. The cut bark oozes astringent, tannin-rich, red sap that has been used as a dye and for medicinal purposes.

Here in Hawaii, Sea Grape grows in coastal areas and is very salt-tolerant.

Special Characteristics

Edible – The ripe, tart to sweet, purple-red fruits are edible raw and can also be made into jelly or wine. The fruits each contain a single hard seed. The flowers contain abundant nectar for honeybees, and the resulting Sea Grape honey is pale-colored and spicy.

Fragrant – The flowers are lightly fragrant.



Cocos nucifera – Coconut Palm





Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Cocos nucifera*

Common Names: Coconut Palm, Niu

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial, Evergreen

Growth Habit: Tree

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized Polynesian canoe plant is originally native to Malesia and Australasia.

Flower Color: Yellowish green, Creamy yellow

Flowering Season: Year-round

Height: Up to 100 feet (30 m) tall, but usually less

Description: The tiny, yellowish or greenish flowers are in inflorescences that emerge from the leaf axils. Each inflorescence is enveloped by a large, lanceolate spathe. The smaller male flowers are at the tip of the inflorescence, while the larger female flowers are at the base. The female flowers are followed by large, up to 1 foot (30 cm) or more long, single seeded fruits (drupes) known as coconuts. The coconuts have a thick, fibrous husk surrounding a hard, brown, woody shell that contains milky water and a lining of white meat. The leaves are in a tuft at the top of the plant and are pinnate with green, linear-lanceolate leaflets. The old leaves are shed and don't form a skirt at the base of the leaves. The single trunks have a thickened base and are gray-brown, ringed with scars from fallen leaf bases, unbranched, and often gracefully curved. These long-lived palms can live for up to a century.

Here in Hawaii, Coconut Palms grow in coastal areas, often close to the ocean's edge since these palms are salt tolerant and the buoyant fruits can be dispersed by ocean current. This is by far the most common palm species in Hawaii.

Beware of walking under a Coconut Palm with large, yellow or bronze coconuts because falling coconuts can cause serious head injuries.

Special Characteristics

Canoe Plant – Coconut Palms were brought here to Hawaii by the ancient Polynesians in their canoes. This is one of the World's most useful plants since almost every part of the Coconut Palm can serve some useful purpose. Hawaiians used the coconuts for food and as an emergency source of drinking water. Oil from the meat was used as a cosmetic on the skin and hair. Coconut shells were used for spoons, cups, bowls, and other containers. The fibrous husks were made into cordage and used to make nets and lashing. The leaves were used for roofing thatch and plaited to make baskets, fans, and other goods. The leaf midribs were used to skewer Kukui nuts to make candles. The trunks were used for house construction and used to make wooden items like drums and canoes. Various parts of the plant were also used for medicinal purposes.

Edible – The white, oily, delicious coconut meat is edible either raw or cooked. Coconuts are ripe for eating when they turn yellow or bronze and fall to the ground. Fallen wood-brown and gray coconuts are too old for eating. Drinkable coconut water is obtained from the large, green coconuts. The dried coconut meat is known as copra, and it is crushed and pressed to obtain coconut oil, and the remaining residue is used in animal feed. Coconut meat, coconut oil, and coconut milk (a mix of coconut water and coconut meat) are used in numerous commercial food products, and they are especially popular in tropical desserts. Coconut oil is also used in many cosmetics, especially soaps and moisturizers. The growing tip of the palm, located at the base of the leaves, can be harvested (killing the plant) to produce the expensive vegetable delicacy known as "heart of palm". Sugary sap from the inflorescences can be used to make an alcoholic beverage.

Fragrant – The flowers are fragrant, but they are found high in the tree. Oil from the fruit has a delightful coconut scent.

Coffea arabica – Coffee – berries are red





Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Coffea arabica*

Common Name: Coffee, Arabian Coffee, Arabica Coffee, Kona Coffee

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial, Evergreen

Growth Habit: Tree, Shrub

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized food and beverage plant is native to Ethiopia and parts of Sudan and Kenya.

Flower Color: White

Flowering Season: Mainly in the spring. The fruit is harvested from September to January, but the peak time is in November.

Height: Up to 15 feet (4.5 m) tall

Description: The starlike flowers are in dense clusters of up to 10 at the leaf axils. The individual flowers are white, tubular, up to 1/2 inch (1.3 cm) long, and usually 5-lobed. The flowers are followed by fleshy, red, egg-shaped to ellipsoid, up to 2/3 inch (1.6 cm) long fruits that usually contain 2 large seeds commonly known as coffee beans. The leaves have rippled, undulating margins and parallel, pinnate veins and are glossy dark green above, light green below, hairless, opposite, and oblong-elliptic to narrowly egg-shaped with a pointed, tapering tip. The bark is thin, light gray, and becomes fissured with age. The plants have an upright growth form and spreading, often somewhat drooping branches.

Here in Hawaii, Coffee is commercially cultivated in coffee plantations on the mountain slopes, but it also grows wild in the lightly shady understory of wet to mesic (moderately wet) forests at lower elevations. The wild plants are propagated by bird and animal-dispersed seeds.

Special Characteristics

Edible – The edible roasted coffee beans (seeds) are used to make coffee and other coffee-based beverages and used as a flavoring for other foods like deserts, candies, and liqueurs. The also edible slightly sweet, red, fleshy outer layer of the fruit is removed and the coffee bean inside is roasted and then ground and brewed. Coffee beans contain caffeine, a mild stimulant that is also used for medicinal purposes like the treatment of headaches. The flowers are visited by honeybees and produce sweet, light-colored honey.

Fragrant – The flowers are fragrant.

Coprosma ernodeoides – 'Aiakanene – berries are deep black





Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Coprosma ernodeoides*

Common Names: 'Aiakanene, Kukaenene, Punene, Black-fruited Coprosma, Nene Berry, Nene Bush
Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial

Growth Habit: Shrub

Hawaii Native Status: Native (endemic)

Flower Color: Whitish green to yellowish green

Height: Up to only 8 inches (20 cm) tall, but trailing up to 10 feet (3 m) long

Description: These plants are dioecious. The male and female flowers are tubular with 4, curling, pointed lobes. The male flowers have 4 stamens, while the female flowers have a long, fuzzy, white, two-branched pistil. The female flowers are followed by up to 1/2 inch (13 mm) wide, shiny black berries. The leaves densely line the branches and are small, stiff, opposite, narrow, and bright green in color. Most of the branches are prostrate, but a few of the shorter branches are upright. Unlike many other members of the genus *Coprosma* (Copro is from the Greek word for dung), this plant does not have foul-smelling foliage or fruit.

'Aiakanene is found growing in sunny, open, upland areas, and it is a common colonist of higher elevation lava flows and cinder fields. The berries are a favorite food of the endangered Hawaiian goose, the Nene (*Branta sandvicensis*).

Special Characteristics

Edible – The ripe berries are edible, but they are flavorless and were used by the Hawaiians as a laxative, so they are not the best for eating.

Cordia subcordata – Kou – flowers are bright orange





Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Cordia subcordata*

Common Name: Kou

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial, Evergreen

Growth Habit: Tree

Hawaii Native Status: Native (indigenous), but it was also introduced here by the ancient Polynesians.

Flower Color: Orange

Height: Up to 35 feet (10.7 m) tall, but usually less

Description: The flowers are in small clusters that are partly hidden by the leaves. The individual flowers are funnel-shaped, 1 to 2 inches (2.5 to 5 cm) across, and have 5 to 7 irregular, heavily wrinkled lobes. The flowers are followed by clusters of round to egg-shaped, point-tipped, 1 inch (2.5 cm) long, green ripening to hard, dry, blackish brown fruits containing 4 white seeds. The leaves have rippled margins, prominent pale veins, and are large, green, leathery, smooth and shiny above, hairy on the veins below, alternate, and oval to egg-shaped. The trees are small, upright, and have a rounded, spreading crown and flaky, grooved, grayish bark.

Here in Hawaii, Kou grows in coastal areas and in other sunny low elevation areas.

The very similar Geiger Tree (*Cordia sebestena*) has fleshy white fruit, red-orange flowers, and matte, rough textured leaves.

Special Characteristics

Canoe Plant – Although a few Kou already existed here, the ancient Polynesians brought the seeds to Hawaii in their canoes. The soft, durable, attractive, banded, fine-grained wood was used to make food bowls, dishes, and utensils because it would not flavor the food like some other types of wood. The old leaves were used to make brown dye. The colorful flowers were used in leis even though they are not fragrant. The seeds were eaten when other foods were scarce.

Edible – The white seeds are edible but flavorless.

Cordyline fruticosa – Ti – leaves / berries are bright red







Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Cordyline fruticosa*

Synonyms: *Convallaria fruticosa*, *Cordyline terminalis*, *Dracaena terminalis*

Common Names: Ti, Tiplant, Ti Plant, Ki, Hawaiian Good Luck Plant

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial, Evergreen

Growth Habit: Tree, Shrub, Subshrub

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized Polynesian canoe plant and ornamental garden plant is native to parts of tropical Asia, Micronesia, and Australia.

Flower Color: White, Pink, Lavender

Flowering Season: Spring

Height: Up to 10 feet (3 m) tall or more

Description: The numerous small, 6-lobed flowers are in branched, drooping panicles. The flowers are sometimes followed by small, rounded, shiny, red fruit. Ti plants with green leaves rarely produce fruit and are instead usually propagated by stem cuttings. The leaves are smooth, hairless, lanceolate to oblong-elliptic in shape, up to 2 feet (0.6 m) long, alternate, and bright green, red, blackish red, reddish purple, pink, brown, or variegated with yellow, cream, or a combination of colors. The leaves are spirally arranged into a fanlike shape at the stem tips. The stems are slender, upright, usually unbranched, and ringed with leaf scars.

Here in Hawaii, Ti grows wild in wet to mesic (moderately wet) areas at low to middle elevations. Ti is widely cultivated in Hawaiian gardens because it has attractive, often colorful foliage, is used in Hawaiian cooking, and is believed to bring good luck. The leaves can be used in tropical flower arrangements.

Special Characteristics

Canoe Plant – Ti was originally brought here to Hawaii by the ancient Polynesians in their canoes. Parts of the plants were used for various medicinal purposes. The large, flexible, long-lasting leaves were used as food wrappers, plates, cups, table coverings, rain capes, thatch, clothes, hula skirts, sandals, and braided into leis. The leaves were also used for various cultural, ceremonial, and religious purposes. The roots (actually tuber-like rhizomes) were baked and eaten or fermented into alcohol.

Edible – Ti leaves are used as food wrappers for cooking food in an imu, a Hawaiian underground pit oven used to cook food for luaus (Hawaiian feasts). The sweet, starchy underground rhizomes can be baked and eaten.

Fragrant – The flowers are fragrant.



Dioscorea bulbifera – Air Yam – fruit is silver color





Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Dioscorea bulbifera*

Synonym: *Dioscorea latifolia*

Common Names: Air Yam, Air Potato, Bitter Yam, Aerial Yam, Potato Yam, Hoi, Pi`oi

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial

Growth Habit: Vine, Herb/Forb

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized Polynesian canoe plant and weed is native to Africa, Asia, and Australia.

Flower Color: Pale green (female), White aging to purple (male)

Flowering Season: Late summer, Early fall

Height: Climbing up to 100 feet (30 m) tall

Description: The plants are dioecious with male and female flowers on separate plants, however these plants rarely bloom. When present, the tiny flowers are in slender, pendent spikes or panicles at the leaf axils. The female flowers are followed by seed capsules that are only winged on the basal side. The leaves are large, green, hairless, untoothed, alternate, palmately veined from the leaf base, long-petioled, and broadly heart-shaped. The slender, twining, hairless, green to purple-flecked stems climb to the left (clockwise), are round to slightly angled in cross section, and have no spines. Rounded, up to 5 inch (13 cm) in diameter, potato-like bulbils (aerial tubers) are formed on the stems at the leaf axils. The plants sometimes also have small underground tubers. Even when the plants are not producing seeds, they can be propagated by both the bulbils and tubers. Here in Hawaii, Air Yam grows in disturbed mesic (moderately wet) forests at lower elevations.

The similar Uhi or Water Yam (*Dioscorea alata*) has opposite leaves and stems that climb to the right (counterclockwise), while Pi`a or Fiveleaf Yam (*D. pentaphylla*) has compound leaves with 3 to 5 leaflets.

Special Characteristics

Canoe Plant – Ancient Polynesians carried this plant to Hawaii in their canoes. They called it Hoi or Pi'oi and its poisonous if not properly prepared bulbils were eaten only in times of famine.

Edible – The bulbils are poisonous, but they can become edible if well-rinsed in running water, boiled, and properly prepared by someone experienced with them. There are also more edible cultivated varieties. The other two yam species found here in Hawaii are not poisonous and are much better choices for eating.

Fragrant – The male flowers are fragrant.

Poisonous – The very bitter underground tubers and the improperly prepared bulbils are poisonous.

Emilia sonchifolia – Lilac Tasselflower – bright pink flowers





Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Emilia sonchifolia*

Common Names: Lilac Tasselflower, Cupid's Shaving Brush, Flora's Paintbrush, Emilia

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Annual

Growth Habit: Herb/Forb

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized weed and food plant is native to south Asia and the western Pacific.

Flower Color: Lavender pink, Lilac

Height: Up to 2 feet (0.6 m) tall

Description: The flower heads are small, narrowly urn-shaped to bell-shaped, and have light pink to lavender disks and no rays. The flowers are followed by seed heads with white, fluffy, wind-borne seeds. The leaves are green, alternate, and mainly found on the stems. The lower leaves have narrowly winged petioles and fine, blunt teeth or deep, rounded, pinnate lobes and are larger and broadly triangular, rounded, or egg-shaped. The upper leaves clasp the stems and are smaller, sessile, and sometimes coarsely toothed. The stems are weak, erect, branched, and hairless to sparsely hairy.

Here in Hawaii, Lilac Tasseflower grows in sunny, open, grassy, disturbed areas at lower elevations.

The similar Florida Tasseflower (*Emilia fosbergii*) has red to darker pink flowers and hairy lower stems, while Scarlet Tasseflower (*Emilia coccinea*) has larger, showier, orange-red flowers and hairy lower stems.

Special Characteristics

Edible – The young leaves (those before the plant flowers) are edible either raw or cooked.

Etilingera elatior – Torch Ginger – deep red



Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Etilingera elatior*

Synonyms: *Nicolaia elatior*, *Phaeomeria magnifica*

Common Names: Torch Ginger, Torch-ginger, Philippine Waxflower

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial

Growth Habit: Herb/Forb

Hawaii Native Status: Cultivated, but it can appear to be growing wild. This ornamental garden plant is native to parts of Southeast Asia.

Flower Color: Red, Pink, White (rare)

Height: Up to 20 feet (6 m) tall

Description: The large, torch-like, up to 5 foot (1.5 m) tall flower stalks emerge from fleshy underground rhizomes. The inflorescences have waxy, red to pink, white-edged bracts and are pinecone-shaped with a skirt of larger bracts. The individual flowers emerge from between the colorful bracts and have a dark red labellum (lip petal) with a bright yellow margin. The flowers are followed by green to reddish fruit. The leaf blades are green, hairless, lanceolate in shape, and up to 32 inches (81 cm) long. The pseudostems (formed by the leaf sheaths) emerge from underground rhizomes and are tall and arching.

Torch Ginger is one of the tallest, if not the tallest ginger found here in Hawaii. It can escape from gardens in wet to mesic (moderately wet) areas. The flowers make nice, long lasting cut flowers for tropical flower arrangements.

Special Characteristics

Edible – The unopened flower buds are edible and very flavorful, and they are used in Southeast Asian cooking.

Hedychium coronarium – White Ginger – white flowers



Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Hedychium coronarium*
Common Names: White

Ginger, White Garland-lily, Butterfly Ginger

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial

Growth Habit: Herb/Forb

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized ornamental garden plant is native to eastern India.

Flower Color: White

Flowering Season: Midsummer to late autumn

Height: To over 6 feet (1.8 m) tall

Description: The butterfly-like flowers emerge from between green bracts on the club-shaped inflorescences. The flowers have 3 slender, linear, pale yellowish or greenish sepals and 3 spoon-shaped, white petals. There is pale yellow at the base of the top, largest petal. Each flower lasts only one day. The seeds are bright red. The pseudostems (formed by the leaf sheaths) emerge from



underground rhizomes. The leaf blades are green, sessile or subsessile, and oblong–lanceolate to lanceolate in shape.

Here in Hawaii, White Ginger is an invasive weed in pastures and forests, and it is especially common along roadsides.

The similar Yellow Ginger (*Hedychium flavescens*) has yellow or cream–colored flowers with darker yellow–orange at the base of the top petal.

Special Characteristics

Edible – The young flowers and flower buds are edible.

Fragrant – The flowers have a lovely, intense fragrance that perfumes the air. When cut, the flowers soon wilt and die, but they can still be used if you cut them immediately before a party or other special event.

Hibiscus rosa–sinensis – Chinese Hibiscus



Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Hibiscus rosa–sinensis*

Common Names: Chinese Hibiscus, Shoeblackplant,

Tropical Hibiscus, Red Hibiscus Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial, Evergreen

Growth Habit: Tree, Shrub, Subshrub

Hawaii Native Status: Cultivated, but it can appear to be growing wild. This ornamental garden plant is native to tropical Asia.

Flower Color: Red, Pink, Yellow, Orange, White

Flowering Season: Year–round

Height: To 12 feet (3.7 m) or more tall

Description: The flowers are 4 to 8 inches (10 to 20 cm) wide and have a whorl of 5 egg–shaped, toothed or smooth–edged petals that are fused at the base to the central column. The central staminal column is tipped with a 5–lobed style above multiple yellow anthers near the tip of the column. The wild–type plants have single, red flowers, but the cultivated varieties can have single or double flowers in a wide variety of colors. The flowers attract nectar–loving birds like Japanese White–eyes (*Zosterops japonicus*). The leaves have pinnate veins and are green, coarsely toothed, alternate, and oval–shaped with a pointed tip.

The flowers only last one day, but since they do not need to be placed in water, they are a popular choice for wearing in your hair here in Hawaii. The juice from the flower petals is used in herbal cosmetics. Juice from the darkened, wilted flowers is prepared to make a blue-black dye used in shoe-blackening, eye-liner, and mascara.

Special Characteristics

Butterfly Plant – The flowers attract larger butterflies.

Edible – The flowers are edible either raw or cooked. The flowers will not wilt until evening, so they can also be used as a long-lasting food garnish.

Ipomoea cairica – Mile A Minute Vine – violet color flowers



Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Ipomoea cairica*

Synonyms: *Ipomoea palmata*, *I. tuberculata* Roem. & Schult.

Common Names: Mile A Minute Vine, Koali Ai, Koali, Kowali

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial

Growth Habit: Vine, Herb/Forb

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized ornamental garden plant and Polynesian canoe plant is native to tropical Africa and Asia.

Flower Color: Purple to violet, White

Height: Up to 16 feet (5 m) tall

Description: The flowers are funnel-shaped, up to 3 1/2 inches (9 cm) in diameter, and purple to white in color with a dark purple center. The flowers are followed by brown, rounded, hairless seed capsules containing hairy, black to tan seeds. The leaves are green, hairless, papery, alternate, and palmately divided into usually 5 or 7 lobes. The stems are slender and twining. The plants are fast growing.

Here in Hawaii, Mile A Minute Vine grows in sunny, open, disturbed, often dry and rocky areas at low elevations.

Special Characteristics

Canoe Plant – The ancient Polynesians brought the seeds to Hawaii in their canoes. They used the stems for cordage and ate the grated, roasted tubers.

Edible – The tubers are reportedly edible if cooked.

Leucaena leucocephala – White Leadtree – white color flowers grows locally





Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Leucaena leucocephala*

Synonyms: *Acacia glauca*, *Leucaena glauca*, *Mimosa glauca*, *M. leucocephala*

Common Names: White Leadtree, Lead Tree, Koa Haole, Ekoa, Leucaena, Horse Tamarind, Jumbie Bean, White Popinac

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial, Evergreen

Growth Habit: Tree, Shrub

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized shade, fuel, forage, fodder, and soil improvement plant is native to Mexico, Belize, and Guatemala.

Flower Color: Creamy white

Height: Up to 20 feet (6 m) tall or more

Description: The flower heads are round, white, 3/4 inch (1.9 cm) in diameter puffballs of numerous white stamens with hairy, pale yellow anthers. The flowers are followed by clusters of linear, up to 7 inch (18 cm) long, flat, thin, drooping, green drying to papery brown bean pods with a bead necklace-like row of seed bumps. The seeds are flat, oval, and a rich glossy brown color. The leaves are bipinnately compound with small, green, narrowly oblong, point-tipped leaflets. The branches have brown, corky pores and are thornless, hairy when young, and brown and hairless when old.

Here in Hawaii, these common, drought tolerant plants grow in dry to well-drained mesic (moderately wet) disturbed areas at low elevations. These non-native plants produce huge quantities of seeds and are adaptable, extremely fast-growing, thicket-forming, and difficult to eradicate, making them a problem weed species.

Although very weedy, White Leadtree does have a number of uses, which is why it was originally deliberately planted here. These fast-growing trees can be used for erosion control and as shade for coffee plantations. This legume can also be used as green manure because it helps fix nitrogen in soil and enriches it. The foliage can be used as animal fodder and forage for ruminants. The wood can be used for firewood or for making charcoal. The hard, brown seeds can be drilled and used to make attractive necklaces.

Special Characteristics

Edible – The seeds and green seedpods are eaten in other countries, but they contain toxic mimosine and so should be cooked and prepared to remove most of the mimosine and only eaten occasionally in limited amounts.

Poisonous – The foliage and seeds contain the toxic amino acid, mimosine, which can cause hair loss, reduced thyroid function, goiter, infertility, and other health problems if regularly ingested. Some ruminants like sheep, cattle, and goats can safely eat this plant if they are accustomed to eating it and have the necessary rumen bacteria for it. Humans and non-ruminant animals can suffer hair loss and other health problems if they regularly consume this plant or make it a major portion of their diet.

Momordica charantia – Bitter Melon – yellow flower orange fruit





Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Momordica charantia*

Common Names: Bitter Melon, Balsampear, Balsam-pear, Balsam-apple, Bitter Gourd, Bitter Cucumber, Carilla Gourd

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Annual

Growth Habit: Vine, Herb/Forb

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized food and medicinal plant is native to Africa, Asia, and Australasia.

Flower Color: Yellow

Height: Up to 15 feet (4.5 m) tall

Description: The plants are monoecious. The flowers are up to 1 1/4 inches (3 cm) across and have 5 ruffled, egg-shaped petals. The female flowers are followed by warty, egg-shaped to oblong, green ripening to yellow and then orange fruit with a tapering tip. When fully ripe, the orange fruits split open into 3 curling segments to reveal black seeds enclosed in soft, bright red pulp. The leaves are green, hairy, alternate, and deeply palmately lobed with 5 coarsely toothed lobes. The stems have twining tendrils and are slender, green, and hairy.

Bitter Melon grows in a wide variety of disturbed areas.

Special Characteristics

Edible – Although bitter, the green fruit is edible if cooked, and it is a popular vegetable in Asian cooking. Green Bitter Melons are commonly found in produce markets here in Hawaii. The ripe yellow or orange fruit is not edible. This plant has traditionally been used for a variety of medicinal purposes

(treating infections, diabetes, etc.), but because of the possible resulting side effects, it's recommended that pregnant women and those with hypoglycemia avoid consuming it.
Foul-smelling – The plants and especially the ripe orange fruits have a repulsive odor.
Poisonous – The ripe orange fruit and mature seeds are toxic, as are the uncooked plants if eaten in large amounts.

Monstera deliciosa – Monstera



Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Monstera deliciosa*

Synonym: *Philodendron pertusum*

Common Names: Monstera, Tarovine, Swiss Cheese Plant, Monster Fruit, Split-leaf Philodendron, Mexican Breadfruit, Windowleaf, Salad Fruit

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial, Evergreen

Growth Habit: Vine, Herb/Forb

Hawaii Native Status: Cultivated. This ornamental garden plant, tropical foliage plant, houseplant, and food plant is native to Mexico and Central America.

Flower Color: Yellowish with a cream-colored spathe

Height: Climbing up to 100 feet (30 m) tall

Description: The tiny flowers are in an upright, fleshy, phallic, pale yellowish, up to 1 foot (30 cm) long spadix (flower spike) enclosed by a large, creamy white, boat-shaped spathe (petal-like bract). The inflorescences look like large, crude calla lilies. The flowers are followed by large, green, fleshy, phallic or corncob-like fruits with hexagonal fruit segments and aromatic white flesh. The leaves are

large, up to 3 feet (0.9 m) across, glossy dark green, leathery, alternate, heart-shaped, and pinnately dissected with deep slits and oblong, Swiss cheese-like perforations along the midrib. The stems either sprawl on the ground or climb trees using aerial roots that can become long and trailing. Here in Hawaii, *Monstera* is very common and grows best in warm, moist, humid, partly shady gardens, where it likes to climb trees. The leaves can be used in tropical flower arrangements.

Special Characteristics

Edible – The white flesh of the ripe fruit segments is edible and has a delicious tropical fruit salad flavor. The fruits are very slow to ripen. The fruit segments are ripe when the green hexagonal scales pop off.

Poisonous – The foliage and unripe fruits are poisonous and contain calcium oxalate crystals that can cause severe mouth irritation.

Morinda citrifolia – Noni – white flower



Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Morinda citrifolia*

Common Names: Noni, Indian Mulberry

Plant Characteristics



Duration: Perennial, Evergreen

Growth Habit: Tree, Shrub

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized Polynesian canoe plant is native to Southeast Asia.

Flower Color: White

Flowering Season: It flowers throughout the year.

Height: To 20 feet (6 m) tall

Description: The flowers are tubular and have 5 lobes with pointed tips. The flowers emerge from the tops of the developing compound fruits. The ripe fruits are a translucent whitish to yellowish white color. The leaves are shiny green, up to 1 foot (30 cm) long, and rounded to oblong in shape. The branches are tetragonal (4-angled) in cross section with rounded angles.

Special Characteristics

Canoe Plant – This plant was originally brought to Hawaii by the ancient Polynesians in their canoes. The fruit was used for medicinal purposes (as it still is today) and as a famine food of last resort. The root was used to make yellow dye, while the bark was used for red dye.

Edible – Noni fruit is edible, but it's very foul-smelling. The much more palatable processed and/or blended fruit juice is used in a variety of health drinks and other natural health products.

Foul-smelling – The ripe, white fruit has a nauseatingly bad smell, very much like fresh vomit mixed with rancid garbage. Avoid smelling it if you have a weak stomach.

Musa ornata – Flowering Banana – pink flowers





Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Musa ornata*

Common Names: Flowering Banana, Ornamental Banana

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial

Growth Habit: Herb/Forb

Hawaii Native Status: Cultivated. This ornamental garden plant is native to India, Bangladesh, and Myanmar (Burma).

Flower Color: Pink, Lavender

Height: Up to 9 feet (2.7 m) tall

Description: The inflorescences emerge from the tip of the plant and are erect, elongating, and have pink to lilac, petal-like bracts that open to reveal single rows of 3 to 6 deep yellow-orange, male or female flowers. The female flowers are the first to open on the young inflorescences. The male flowers open later after the fruit begins developing. Each row of female flowers produces an erect "hand" of 3 to 6 bananas. The bananas are small, greenish yellow to reddish purple, and contain numerous black seeds and creamy white flesh. The banana-like leaves have a sturdy midrib and are glaucous green, oblong, and up to 6 feet (1.8 m) long and 1 foot (30 cm) wide. The trunk-like pseudostems (formed by the tightly overlapping leaf sheaths) emerge from underground rhizomes and have a swollen base. The pseudostems die after flowering. The plants are suckering and form dense clumps.

The similar Hairy Banana (*Musa velutina*) also has upright inflorescences, but it has hairy fruit.

Common bananas like Edible Banana (*Musa acuminata*) and French Plantain (*Musa × paradisiaca*) have drooping inflorescences.

Special Characteristics

Edible – The flesh of the ripe fruits is edible, but these bananas are very seedy and not worth the trouble to eat.

Oxalis debilis var. *corymbosa* – Pink Wood Sorrel – bright pink flowers



debilis var. *corymbosa*

Synonym: *Oxalis corymbosa*

Common Names: Pink Wood Sorrel,
Lilac Oxalis, Large-flowered Pink

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial

Growth Habit: Herb/Forb

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized ornamental garden plant is native to South America.

Flower Color: Pink, Pinkish lilac

Height: To 1 foot (30 cm) tall

Description: The flowers are in umbel-like clusters above the leaves. The individual flowers have 5 round-tipped petals with a streaked base. The flowers are sometimes followed by cylindrical seed capsules. The leaves have long petioles and are clover-like and trifoliate with 3 green, hairless to sparsely hairy, broadly heart-shaped leaflets. The plants grow from scaly, underground bulbs and are stemless with leaves in a basal rosette.

This particular variety is grown as a garden ornamental and has showier flowers.



Plant Name

Scientific
Name: *Oxalis*

Pink Woodsorrel,
Sorrel



Here in Hawaii, Pink Wood Sorrel grows in moist, shady areas at lower elevations. The plants are propagated by small bulbils produced by the main bulb.

Special Characteristics

Edible – The flowers, leaves, and roots are edible, but this plant should only be consumed in small amounts because it contains oxalic acid.

Poisonous – The plants contain oxalic acid and can cause calcium deficiency if eaten in larger amounts.

Pandanus tectorius – Hala





Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Pandanus tectorius*

Synonyms: *Pandanus chamissonis*, *P. douglasii*, *P. menziesii*, *P. odoratissimus*

Common Names: Hala, Tahitian Screwpine, Pu Hala, Screw Pine, Textile Screwpine, Thatch Screwpine, Pandanus, Pandan, Tourist Pineapple, Pineapple Tree

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial, Evergreen

Growth Habit: Tree

Hawaii Native Status: Native (indigenous)

Flower Color: Cream or whitish

Height: Up to 50 feet (15 m) tall, but usually less

Description: The plants are dioecious with male and female flowers on separate plants. The tiny male flowers are in dense, pendant clusters and surrounded by large, creamy white bracts. The female flowers are in rounded, pineapple-like flower heads. The female flowers are followed by rounded, also pineapple-like fruit heads composed of multiple wedge-shaped fruits. The individual fruit segments have a green top and a yellow, orange, or red base. Tourists and others unfamiliar with Hala may mistake the fruit heads for pineapples, but this plant is unrelated to pineapples. The leaves are dark green, sword-shaped, bent, edged with small, sharp spines, spirally arranged, and densely clustered at the branch tips. Some varieties have variegated or smooth-edged leaves. The plants have a slender, upright, branched trunk with brown, ringed bark and a cone of distinctive stilt or prop roots at the base.

Here in Hawaii, Hala grows in the coastal lowlands, often near the edge of the ocean. The fruit is buoyant, salt water tolerant, and can spread to new land areas by ocean current.

This is the only *Pandanus* species found in Hawaii. The similar and related 'le'ie (*Freycinetia arborea*) grows as a clinging vine instead of a tree like Hala.

Special Characteristics

Canoe Plant – Although this plant was already here, different cultivated varieties of Hala were brought to Hawaii by the ancient Polynesians in their canoes. The plants were used for a variety of medicinal purposes. The fruit was eaten and used to make leis. The roots were used for cordage. The leaves were used as thatch and stripped of their spiny edges and woven or plaited into mats, pillows, sails, baskets, hats, sandals, and fans. Many of these items are still commonly made and sold here in Hawaii.

Edible – The fruits are edible, and some cultivated varieties have tastier fruit. The seeds and the fleshy, fibrous, colorful base of the ripe fruit segments, known as phalanges or "keys" can be eaten either raw or cooked.

Fragrant – The male flowers are sweetly fragrant and attract bees.

Passiflora edulis f. flavicarpa – Liliko'i – violet ring in inner flower region



Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Passiflora edulis* f. *flavicarpa*

Synonym: *Passiflora edulis* var. *flavicarpa*

Common Names: Liliko'i, Lilikoi, Yellow Passionfruit, Yellow Passion Fruit

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial (short-lived)

Growth Habit: Vine

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized ornamental garden plant and food plant is native to the Amazon region in Brazil.

Flower Color: White to tinged purple

Flowering Season: Spring, Summer, Fall

Height: To 20 feet (6 m) long

Description: The unusual flowers are up to 3 1/2 inches (9 cm) across and have a light green center, long, white, curly filaments, and 10 white tepals (5 petals and 5 petal-like sepals) with dark purple at their base. The flowers are followed by round to egg-shaped, up to 3 1/2 inch (9 cm) in diameter, yellow fruit with soft, loose, juicy, yellow to orange pulp surrounding black seeds. The leaves are shiny, green, alternate, and deeply 3-lobed with 3 egg-shaped, saw-toothed lobes. The stems have coiling tendrils and are slender, green at the tips, and woody at the base. These plants can grow rampantly and smother small trees and shrubs.

Liliko'i grows in sunny locations in low to middle elevation, mesic (moderately wet) forests and shrublands.

Purple Granadilla (*Passiflora edulis*) has smaller, sweet, dull purple fruit, while Liliko'i (*P. edulis* f. *flavicarpa*) has larger, tart, yellow fruit and is more common here in Hawaii.

Special Characteristics

Butterfly Plant – Liliko'i is a larval food plant for Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*) butterflies.

Edible – The tart, highly flavorful fruit pulp is edible either raw or cooked. It has a musky, somewhat guava-like fragrance and is quite delicious. The pulp can be eaten fresh along with the seeds or strained and made into juice or syrup for flavoring deserts. Here in Hawaii, Liliko'i is commonly used to flavor shave ice, a popular Hawaiian treat.

Passiflora vitifolia – Perfumed Passionflower – red flower



Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Passiflora vitifolia*

Common Names: Perfumed Passionflower, Grape-leaved Passion Fruit, Vine-Leaf Passion Flower, Crimson Passionflower

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial

Growth Habit: Vine

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized ornamental garden plant is native to Central and South America.

Flower Color: Red

Height: To 20 feet (6 m) long

Description: The unusual flowers are up to 6 inches (15 cm) across and have red outer filaments, white inner filaments, and 10 red tepals (5 petals and 5 petal-like sepals). The flowers are followed by yellow-speckled to white-speckled, bright green, egg-shaped fruit with soft, juicy, whitish pulp. The grape-like leaves have 2 saucer-shaped nectaries at the base of the petioles and are dark green, alternate, fuzzy-haired below, and deeply 3-lobed with 3 lanceolate, toothed to scalloped lobes. The stems are slender and have coiling tendrils.

The similar Red Passionflower (*Passiflora manicata*) has flowers with a purple center and purple filaments.

Special Characteristics

Butterfly Plant – Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*) butterfly caterpillars feed on the leaves.

Edible – The fruit pulp is sweet and edible.

Fragrant – The flowers are fragrant.

Classification

Persea americana – Avocado



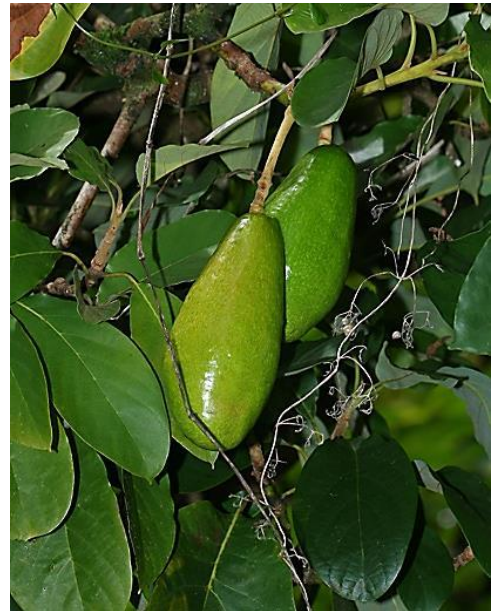
Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Persea americana*

Common

Names: Avocado, Alligator

Plant Characteristics



Pear

Duration: Perennial, Evergreen

Growth Habit: Tree

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized fruit tree is native to Mexico and Central America.

Flower Color: Yellow–green

Height: 30 to 65 feet (9 to 20 m) tall

Description: The small flowers are in clusters at the branch tips. The individual flowers have no petals and 6 hairy, yellow–green sepals in 2 whorls of 3. The flowers are followed by smooth to rough, yellow–green, green, reddish brown, purplish, or almost black, pear–shaped, egg–shaped, or round fruits with yellow to green flesh and a single large, brown seed. The leaves are glossy dark green above, pale glaucous green below, alternate, and variably elliptic in shape.

Here in Hawaii, Avocados are cultivated for their fruit and also grow wild in mesic (moderately wet) forests at low elevations.

Special Characteristics

Edible – The soft, buttery flesh of the ripe fruits is edible and quite delicious. This is the familiar Avocado of commerce.

Poisonous – The leaves, fruit skin, seeds, and bark are poisonous.



Psidium cattleianum – Strawberry Guava – red fruit



Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Psidium cattleianum*

Synonym: *Psidium littorale*

Common Names: Strawberry Guava, Cattley Guava

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial, Evergreen

Growth Habit: Tree, Shrub

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized fruit tree and ornamental landscaping plant is native to Brazil.

Flower Color: White

Height: To 20 feet (6 m) tall

Description: The flowers have 4 or 5 white petals and numerous white stamens. The fruits are up to 1 1/2 inches (3.8 cm) in diameter and have red (sometimes yellow) skin, whitish flesh, and persistent calyx lobes. The leaves are glossy, leathery, dark green, hairless, and broadly to narrowly egg-shaped. The crushed leaves have a resinous odor. The bark is smooth and brown.

Here in Hawaii, Strawberry Guava is a seriously invasive weed in wet and mesic forests, open areas, and along roadsides from sea level to about 4000 feet (1219 m) in elevation. This plant suckers and can form vast, dense thickets that crowd out native plants. Non-native birds and Feral Pigs (*Sus scrofa*) love the fruit and are responsible for spreading the seeds.

The other Guava species found in Hawaii, Guava (*Psidium guajava*), has prominently veined leaves and larger, musky-fragrant, yellow fruit.

Special Characteristics Edible – The fruits are edible and can be used fresh, cooked, or preserved. Both the strawberry-flavored skin and the sweet, juicy pulp are eaten. Strawberry Guava fruit does not have a strong, musky fragrance like that of Guava (*P. guajava*) and is not as flavorful.

Ricinus communis – Castor Bean





Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Ricinus communis*

Common Name: Castor Bean, Castorbean, Castor Oil Plant, Palma Christi

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Annual, Perennial, Evergreen

Growth Habit: Tree, Shrub, Subshrub, Herb/Forb

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized weed and medicinal plant is native to Africa.

Flower Color: Inconspicuous, red female flowers, tan male flowers

Height: Up to 16 feet (5 m) tall, but usually less

Description: The plants are monoecious with separate male and female flowers on the same plant. The up to 1 foot (30 cm) long inflorescences contain both male and female flowers and are located at the stem tips. The small female flowers are located at the tips of the inflorescences and have red stigmas. The tan-colored male flower clusters are located at the base of the inflorescences. The female flowers are followed by clusters of spiny, rounded, trilobed, 3-seeded, green or red seed capsules that turn a dark red-brown color and explode open when dry. The shiny, grayish to beige seeds are mottled with dark brown and resemble spotted dog ticks in size, shape and markings. The leaves are large, prominently veined, green, purplish, or dark reddish in color, alternate, lopsidedly peltate with stout, reddish stalks, and palmately lobed with usually 7 to 11 point-tipped, sharply toothed lobes. The stems are erect, branched or single-stemmed, hairless, greenish red to brown in color, hollow to pithy, and woody at the base. The plants are weedy and fast-growing.

Here in Hawaii, Castor Bean grows in sunny, disturbed areas and along roadsides in dry to mesic (moderately wet) areas at low to middle elevations.

Special Characteristics

Edible – Castor oil, which is extracted from the oily seeds, is used as a laxative and as a labor-inducer. The non-yellowing oil is also used in cosmetics. Although the oil from the seeds is safe to consume, the seeds themselves are deadly poisonous and should never be eaten.

Poisonous – The seeds are extremely poisonous to both humans and animals and should be kept away from young children and livestock. The seeds contain the deadly toxin ricin. Castor Bean, along with Rosary Pea (*Abrus precatorius*), are two of the most poisonous plants in the World.

Rubus argutus – Sawtooth Blackberry – white flowers



Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Rubus argutus*

Synonyms: *Rubus abundiflorus*, *R. betulifolius*, *R. floridensis*, *R. floridus*, *R. incisifrons*, *R. louisianus*, *R. penetrans*, *R. rhodophyllus*

Common Names: Sawtooth Blackberry, Prickly Florida Blackberry, Highbush Blackberry

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial

Growth Habit: Subshrub

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized food plant is native to the eastern United States.

Flower Color: White

Height: Up to 10 feet (3 m) long

Description: The flowers are in short, open clusters on the lateral branches of the floricanes (second-year flowering and fruiting canes). The individual flowers are 1 to 2 inches (2.5 to 5 cm) across and have 5 white, egg-shaped petals and 5 small, hairy, green sepals. The flowers are followed by red ripening to black, round to oblong, 3/4 inch (2 cm) long berries. The leaves have prickly petioles and midribs and are dark green and almost hairless above, paler green and softly hairy below, and palmately compound with 3 or 5 deeply veined, elliptic, oblong-oblongate, or egg-shaped leaflets with coarsely and irregularly saw-toothed margins. The primocanes (first-year non-flowering canes) have larger leaves than the floricanes. The canes (stems) are stiff, angled, sparsely to densely hairy, and covered with straight or hooked prickles. The plants are a thicket-forming bramble with stiff, arching stems that can take root where they touch the ground.

Here in Hawaii, Sawtooth Blackberry is an invasive weed in middle to upper elevation, wet to mesic (moderately wet) disturbed areas and open forests. Birds are responsible for spreading the seeds.

The very similar Himalayan Blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*, formerly *Rubus discolor*) has white or pink flowers and leaves that are light greenish gray below.

Special Characteristics

Edible – The black, ripe blackberries are edible, but they are very tart and taste better with a little sweetening or when mixed with other, sweeter fruit.

Rubus rosifolius – West Indian Raspberry – white flowers red fruit



Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Rubus rosifolius*

Synonym: *Rubus rosaefolius*

Common Names: West Indian Raspberry, Ola'a, Roseleaf Raspberry, Rose-leaf Bramble, Thimbleberry

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial

Growth Habit: Subshrub

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized raspberry plant is native to Asia and Australia.

Flower Color: White

Height: Stems up to 6 1/2 feet (2 m) long

Description: The flowers have 5 white, egg-shaped petals and 5 hairy, green, lanceolate sepals with long, pointed, tapering tips. The flowers are followed by green, ripening to ruby red raspberries. The leaves are alternate and pinnately compound with 3, 5, or 7 green, ovate to lanceolate leaflets with doubly serrate (teeth on teeth) margins. The stems are hairy, sparsely covered with sharp prickles, and erect, arching, or trailing.

This weedy raspberry grows in moist, open, disturbed areas and in partly shady, wet to mesic (moderately wet), lower elevation forests. The other raspberry species found here typically grow at higher elevations.

Special Characteristics

Edible – The ripe raspberries are edible either raw or cooked, but although they are sweet and juicy, they are not as tart and flavorful as commercial raspberries.

Saccharum officinarum – Sugarcane



Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Saccharum officinarum*

Common Names: Sugarcane, Sugar Cane, Ko

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial

Growth Habit: Graminoid

Hawaii Native Status: Cultivated. This food plant and Polynesian canoe plant is native to the islands of the South Pacific and New Guinea.

Flower Color: Inconspicuous (white)

Flowering Season: Mainly in winter

Height: Up to 20 feet (6 m) tall

Description: The tiny, drooping, awnless flower spikelets are in feathery, silvery purple, up to 2 foot (0.6 m) long panicles at the mature stem tips. As they age, the panicles turn whitish. The leaf blades have rough, rasping, saw-toothed edges that can cut skin, a thick midrib, and are green and linear in shape. The stems are woody, bamboo-like, leaning, 1 to 2 inches (2.5 to 5 cm) thick, ringed by conspicuous internodes, and green, brown, red, or purple in color depending on the cultivated variety. This large grass is clumping and thicket-forming.

Here in Hawaii, Sugarcane is found growing in fields or along field edges at lower elevations. The plants are grown to produce sugar and fiber, and they are propagated by stem cuttings.

Special Characteristics

Canoe Plant – Sugarcane was originally brought here to Hawaii by the ancient Polynesians in their canoes. Hawaiians used Sugarcane for food, juice, and to sweeten other foods. They also used the plants for a variety of medicinal purposes. The flower stalks were made into game darts, and the leaves were sometimes used for thatching. Sugarcane charcoal was used as a dye.

Edible – The sugary sap (cane juice) from inside the stems is commercially processed into cane syrup, cane sugar (sucrose or table sugar), and molasses. It is also fermented to make rum. The sweet, whitish, fibrous raw pith inside the stems can be chewed as a refreshing snack.

Sadleria cyatheoides – Amaumau Fern



Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Sadleria cyatheoides*

Common Names: Amaumau Fern, 'Ama'uma'u, 'Ama'u, Rasp Fern

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial, Evergreen

Growth Habit: Shrub, Fern

Hawaii Native Status: Native (endemic)

Flower Color: Non-flowering

Height: Up to 5 feet (1.5 m) tall

Description: This plant can appear as a large, low-growing fern with a creeping rhizome or as a tree fern with an upright, trunk-like rhizome. The trunks typically have a skirt of drooping, silvery gray dead leaves. The lower leaf stalks are surrounded by brown, hairlike scales. The large, gracefully arching fronds are pinnately compound with leathery, narrowly oval-shaped pinnae that are shiny green above and greenish white below. The new leaves are a distinctive flame-like red to orange color. Fertile fronds have dark brown sori on the undersides of their pinnae, while sterile fronds do not. The sori line either side of the single, prominent midvein for most of the length of the pinna.

This fern grows in moist forests and colonizes upland lava flows.

Special Characteristics

Edible – The young leaves and the starchy core of the trunk (a traditional Hawaiian famine food) are edible if cooked.

Setaria palmifolia – Palmgrass



Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Setaria palmifolia*

Synonyms: *Panicum palmifolium*, *P. palmaefolium*

Common Names: Palmgrass, Palm Grass, Broadleaved Bristlegrass, Hailans Pitpit, Short Pitpit, Highland Pitpit

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial

Growth Habit: Graminoid

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized ornamental grass and food plant is native to Asia.

Flower Color: Inconspicuous

Height: 3 to 6 feet (1 to 2 m) tall

Description: The single-bristled flower spikelets are in lax, flexible, open panicles on tall, slender stalks. The flowers are followed by small, light brown caryopses (grains). The leaves resemble those of seedling palms and have stiffly haired sheaths and large, green, plicate (pleated), fusiform (wide in the middle and tapering at both ends) leaf blades. The culms (grass stems) are erect and they emerge from a short rhizome.

Here in Hawaii, Palmgrass is a weed in wet and mesic (moderately wet) forested areas from low to middle elevations.

Special Characteristics

Edible – The young, unopened, sheath-enclosed flower shoots are edible, but they are much better in the cultivated "Pitpit" varieties of this plant, which are grown for food. The cereal grain is also edible, but it is small.

Solanum americanum – American Black Nightshade – white flowers with yellow buds in center with black fruit [Plant Name](#)

Scientific Name: *Solanum americanum*

Synonyms: *Solanum caribaeum*, *S. fistulosum*, *S. hermannii*, *S. linnaeanum*, *S. nigrum* var. *americanum*, *S. nigrum* var. *virginicum*, *S. nodiflorum*, *S. sodomeum*

Common Names: American Black Nightshade, Glossy Nightshade, Small-flowered Nightshade, 'Olohua, Polopolo, Popolo, Popolohua

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Annual, Perennial

Growth Habit: Subshrub, Herb/Forb

Hawaii Native Status: Native (indigenous)

Flower Color: White to tinged purple

Height: Up to 4 feet (1.2 m) tall

Description: The flowers are in small, umbel-like clusters below the leaf axils. The individual flowers are small, drooping, and have 5 often reflexed (bent backwards toward the stem), white to purplish lobes and a beak of yellow stamens and a longer style. The flowers are followed by clusters of small, round, shiny black berries with a strongly reflexed green calyx and disk-shaped seeds. The leaves are green, hairy to almost hairless, smooth-edged to coarsely blunt-toothed, alternate, and broadly to

narrowly egg-shaped with a pointed tip. The stems are mostly erect, well-branched, and green to tinged purple in color.

Here in Hawaii, this plant grows in a wide variety of habitats from low to high elevations. American Black Nightshade is a very important Hawaiian medicinal plant and is still used for this purpose to this day.

The similar Divine Nightshade (*Solanum nigrescens*) and Black Nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*) both have dull, matte black berries.

Special Characteristics

Edible – The fully ripe black berries are edible and were eaten by the Hawaiians.

Poisonous – The green berries are poisonous and contain solanine along with other nightshade toxins.

Classification



Syzygium malaccense – Mountain Apple – red flower



Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Syzygium malaccense*

Synonyms: *Eugenia malaccensis*, *Jambosa malaccensis*

Common Names: Mountain Apple, Malaysian Apple, 'Ohi'a 'Ai, Rose Apple,

Malay Apple, Pomerac, Otaheite-apple

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial, Evergreen

Growth Habit: Tree

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized Polynesian canoe plant is native to Malaysia and Indonesia.

Flower Color: Red, Hot pink to cerise, White (rare)

Flowering Season: Variable. These flowers were observed in January, while the fruits were observed in late May.

Height: Up to 50 feet (15 m) tall

Description: The flowers are in clusters on the older, woody branches and occasionally even on the trunk itself. The individual flowers have 4 small, cupped, rounded, red, magenta, or rarely white petals and numerous red to cerise stamens tipped with tiny, yellow anthers. The flowers attract nectar-feeding birds. When in bloom, the larger trees will be surrounded by a colorful carpet of fallen stamens. The flowers are followed by pear-shaped, dimple-bottomed, up to 4 inch (10 cm) long, red, pink, white (rare), or streaked rose-red and white fruits with white, watery flesh and usually a single, large seed. The leaves have reddish petioles and are glossy dark green above, lighter green below,

somewhat leathery, opposite, and elliptic to narrowly egg-shaped. The new leaves are pinkish bronze in color. The trunk is erect and has grayish brown bark.

Despite its common name, Mountain Apple mainly grows in low elevation wet to mesic (moderately wet) windward forests and valleys here in Hawaii. These Mountain Apples were observed in the understory of a coastal forest.

Although the fruits are very apple-like, Mountain Apples are not actually apples and are in a completely unrelated family.

Special Characteristics

Canoe Plant – This useful food plant was originally brought to Hawaii by the ancient Polynesians in their canoes. The fruits were eaten and placed on hula alters. Various parts of the plant were used for medicinal purposes. Brown dye was made from the inner bark and roots, and red dye was made from the fruit skins. The wood was used for building and carving.

Edible – Like apples, the ripe fruits are edible either raw or cooked. Although the crisp, sweet, white, apple-like flesh is quite refreshing and has a lovely hint of rose essence, it lacks tartness and is less flavorful than that of a typical apple. The ripe fruits are picked from the tree (not the ground), and they don't last very long after being picked.

hespesia populnea – Milo – yellow white leaves with red blotches in center – early flowers are pinkish





Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Thebesia populnea*

Synonyms: *Hibiscus populneooides*, *H. populneus*, *Thebesia macrophylla*, *T. populneooides*

Common Names: Milo, Portia Tree, Pacific Rosewood, Seaside Mahoe, Indian Tulip Tree

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial, Evergreen

Growth Habit: Tree, Shrub

Hawaii Native Status: Native (indigenous). This plant is most likely native to Hawaii, but it was also introduced here by the ancient Polynesians.

Flower Color: Pale yellow, Pink (old)

Height: Up to 40 feet (12 m) tall, but usually less

Description: The flowers are tulip-shaped, only partly opened, up to 3 inches (7.6 cm) long, and have a cup-shaped calyx, a yellow staminal column, and 5 heavily crinkled, overlapping, yellow aging to pink petals with red at the base. The flowers are followed by rounded, somewhat flattened, 5-angled, 1 to 2 inch (2.5 to 5 cm) in diameter, leathery, green drying to brown seed capsules. The leaves are shiny, yellow-green to dark green, somewhat fleshy, alternate, and heart-shaped. The bark is gray and lightly fissured.

Here in Hawaii, Milo grows along the coast and can tolerate brackish water.

The similar Hau (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*) also grows along the coast and has color-changing flowers and heart-shaped leaves, but it has more widely opened flowers with conspicuous lanceolate sepals.

Special Characteristics

Canoe Plant – Although it likely already existed here, Milo was also brought to Hawaii by the ancient Polynesians in their canoes. The attractively grained wood takes a high polish and was used to make food bowls and plates because it would not flavor the food like some other types of wood. The bark was used for fiber to make cordage. The young leaves were eaten. The fruits were used to make a yellowish green dye.

Edible – The young leaves are edible.

Classification

Tropaeolum majus – Nasturtium – red flowers



Plant Name

Scientific

Name: *Tropaeolum majus*

Common

Names: Nasturtium,
Garden Nasturtium

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Annual, Perennial

Growth Habit: Vine, Herb/Forb

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This naturalized ornamental and edible garden plant is native to Brazil and Peru.

Flower Color: Brilliant orange, Yellow, Red, Cream (cultivated), Pink (cultivated)

Height: Climbing or trailing to 5 feet (1.5 m) or more.

Description: The flowers are up to 2 1/3 inches (6 cm) in diameter and have 5 petals and 5 sepals. The seeds are large, light brown, and wrinkled. The leaves are bright green, round in shape, and peltate with palmate veins radiating from the petiole.

Special Characteristics

Edible – The flowers and young leaves are edible and can be used in salads. They have a hot, peppery, watercress-like flavor. The seeds are also edible and can be dried and ground as a pepper substitute.

Vaccinium calycinum – Ohelo Kau La'au – red berries



Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Vaccinium calycinum*

Synonym: *Vaccinium dentatum* var. *minutifolium*

Common Names: Ohelo Kau La'au, Tree Ohelo

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial, Deciduous

Growth Habit: Shrub

Hawaii Native Status: Native (endemic)

Flower Color: Green to tinged yellowish or reddish

Height: Up to 16 feet (5 m) tall, but often less

Description: The flowers are tubular, cylindrical to urn-shaped, triangular-lobed, and up to almost 1/2 inch (12 mm) long. The flowers are followed by round, bright red, up to 2/3 inch (15 mm) in diameter berries with numerous small seeds. The leaves are green, hairless, alternate, saw-toothed, 2 to 3 inches (5 to 8 cm) long, and egg-shaped to obovate (narrower near the base and wider near the tip).

The shrubs are clumping and have multiple, erect branches.

Ohelo Kau La'au grows in wet native rainforests and in bogs.

Two other, very similar *Vaccinium* species are found here in Hawaii, but Ohelo 'Ai (*Vaccinium reticulatum*) is a smaller plant and has more flavorful berries and smaller leaves, while Ohelo (*Vaccinium dentatum*) is also a smaller plant and has more sharply toothed, elliptic leaves.

Special Characteristics

Edible – The fruits are sweet and edible, but they are rather insipid not nearly as flavorful as those of Ohelo 'Ai.

Vaccinium reticulatum – Ohelo 'Ai – red berries



Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Vaccinium reticulatum*

Synonyms: *Vaccinium berberidifolium*, *V. pahalae*, *V. peleanum*

Common Names: Ohelo 'Ai, Hawaiian Blueberry

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial, Evergreen

Growth Habit: Shrub

Hawaii Native Status: Native (endemic)

Flower Color: Red, Yellow

Height: To 4 feet (1.2 m) tall

Description: The flowers are tubular, pendent, 1/4 inch (6 mm) long, and have 5 lobes and 10 stamens. Flowers and berries can be found on the plants at the same time. The berries ripen in the autumn and are orange, red, or reddish to bluish purple in color. The berries are an important food

source for the Hawaiian Goose or Nene (*Branta sandvicensis*). The leaves densely line the stems and are leathery, oval-shaped, and up to 1 1/4 inches (3.2 cm) long. The leaves are quite variable and may be dull and fuzzy or shiny and smooth, toothed or not, and bright yellow-green to darker grayish green in color. New leaves are often colored bright red. The branches sprout from underground rhizomes.

Ohelo 'Ai is found in open and disturbed areas like on lava flows above 2000 feet (610 m) in elevation.

Two other, similar *Vaccinium* species are found here in Hawaii, but they both grow in wetter areas like rainforests and bogs. Ohelo Kau La'au (*Vaccinium calycinum*) is a larger plant with green flowers, less tasty berries, and larger leaves, while Ohelo (*Vaccinium dentatum*) has more sharply toothed leaves.

Special Characteristics

Edible – The berries are edible and quite delicious. The fruit is tart like a sweet cranberry, and it can be eaten fresh or used to make jams, jellies, and pies.

Zingiber zerumbet – Shampoo Ginger – red



Plant Name

Scientific Name: *Zingiber zerumbet*

Synonym: *Amomum zerumbet*

Common Names: Shampoo Ginger, Bitter Ginger, 'Awapuhi, 'Awapuhi kuahiwi, Pinecone Ginger, Wild Ginger

Plant Characteristics

Duration: Perennial

Growth Habit: Herb/Forb

Hawaii Native Status: Introduced. This useful and medicinal Polynesian canoe plant is native to India and the Malay Peninsula.

Flower Color: Floral Bracts: Green, Red

Flowering Season: Summer

Height: Up to 6 feet (2 m) tall, but usually 4 feet tall (1.2 m) or less.

Description: Both the leaves and the pine cone-like inflorescences arise from underground rhizomes. The floral bracts are green when young and red when old. The actual flowers emerge from between the floral bracts and are inconspicuous, 3-petaled, and pale yellowish in color. Although they make long-lasting cut flowers, the inflorescences can be surprisingly heavy and waterlogged because they become filled with a clear, slimy-sudsy, ginger-scented fluid that can be squeezed out and used as shampoo. The shampoo can be left in as a hair conditioner or rinsed out. The seeds are black. The leaves are green and alternate. The leaf sheaths wrap around the stems, and the leaf blades are oblanceolate or narrowly oblong in shape.

Here in Hawaii, Shampoo Ginger grows in moist, shaded, forested areas.

Special Characteristics

Canoe Plant – The ancient Polynesians brought this plant to Hawaii in their canoes. The fragrant fluid in the flowers was used to shampoo and condition the hair and to massage the skin. The roots were used for medicinal purposes and dried to make a fragrant powder. The leaves were wrapped around baked meat to flavor it.

Edible – The underground rhizomes are edible and can be used like those of commercial Garden Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*), but they are bitter.

Fragrant – The fluid in the flowers and the rhizomes have a ginger spice fragrance.

Milo tree, Lyon Arboretum, Manoa Valley, Honolulu, Hawaii - Image ID: C0JXDF



Cordyline fruticosa edible Edible Parts: Cluster of cultivated Ti plants The roots and very tender young leaves are good survival foods and are very sweet when mature. Boil or bake the short, stout roots

found at the base of the plant. They are a valuable source of starch. Boil the very young leaves to eat.
– Ti leaves are used as food wrappers for cooking food in an imu, a Hawaiian underground pit oven used to cook food for luaus (Hawaiian feasts). The sweet, starchy underground rhizomes can be baked and eaten.

