Kō

**English Name:** Sugarcane  
**Scientific Name:** *Saccharum officinarum*

**Habitat:** Usually grown on banks of loʻi or around homesites. Presently, there are no more than a dozen Hawaiian varieties.

**Uses:** Though not an important part of the Hawaiian diet, kō was definitely enjoyed as a sweetener. It was eaten simply by chewing and sucking upon the stems. Chewing and sucking on the stems may also have had value in cleaning the teeth.

**Medicinal Uses:** The most important medicinal use was to reduce the aftertaste of bitter medicinal herbs.
Hau

Scientific Name: *Hibiscus tiliaceus*

**Habitat:** Hau is found on all islands except for Kahoʻolawe and Niʻihau. Hau grows in dense thickets along streams, in low-lying areas near the sea, and on damp slopes at low- to mid- elevations.

**Uses:** Hau was one of the primary plants used for cordage, as the bark could be easily stripped, soaked, then braided. As a lightwood, hau was also used as floaters for fishnets.

**Medicinal Uses:** Slime from soaking the bark of the stems was medicine for congested chests.

**Moʻolelo:** One moʻolelo says that hau is a sister of the goddess Hina, changed into a tree. Also, some people equate the brief span of the hau flower as representative of the transitory nature of human life.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Kī</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English Name:</strong> Ti</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Scientific Name:</strong> <em>Cordyline fruticosa</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Habitat:</strong> Kī grow best where there is an abundance of sunlight and moisture. Only green-leafed kī grew in Hawai‘i prior to Western contact.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Uses:</strong> Traditionally, the people of Hawai‘i planted kī around their homes and churches for good luck. Kī is also planted around lo‘i. The root of the kī can be cooked and eaten as a sweet.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Medicinal Uses:</strong> Kī is used for wrapping other herbs that needed to be boiled or steamed. It was used almost like a cloth or a napkin. Also, kī leaves would be placed on the forehead to reduce a fever.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mo‘olelo:</strong> Kī is considered sacred to the god Lono and to the goddess of hula, Laka.</td>
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Kukui

**English Name:** Candlenut  
**Scientific Name:** *Aleurites moluccana*  
**Habitat:** Kukui thrives best in the woods of the lower mountain zone, wet gulches and valleys, ravines and hanging valleys. They are identifiable from the mountain side by their pale foliage. Thus the name "Aleurites", a Greek word that means "floury".  
**Uses:** Kukui was most valued for its light, the oil of the white kernels being extracted for its use in stone lamps and in torches. The shelled nuts were skewered on a coconut frond midrib and lit one by one, from the top to bottom, as they sat in a container of sand or dirt, or in the earth itself.  
**Moʻolelo:** Kukui was considered to be the kinolau, or body form, of Kamapuaʻa, the pig god.
Uhi

**English Name:** Yams  
**Scientific Name:** *Dioscorea* species  
**Habitat:** Uhi was grown near homesites, either along hillsides or in bins.  
**Uses:** Traditionally, people usually ate the delicious starchy carbohydrate after cooking it in an imu.  
**Medicinal Uses:** The `ula`ula variety was used as medicine and is said to have healing properties useful for coughs, constipation, dysentery, appendicitis and for counteracting vomiting blood.
### Maiʻa

**English Name:** Banana  
**Scientific Name:** *Musa acuminata*

**Habitat:** Maiʻa were grown around loʻi and in other moist places near the homesites. They were also frequently planted in upland, forest gulches. 

**Uses:** Although cultivation of maiʻa was not as prominent as with other starches, such as kalo and ʻuala, maiʻa produced the sweetest, most accessible starch.

**Moʻolelo:** Maiʻa is most closely associated with the god Kanaloa. In some moʻolelo, the gods Kāne and Kanaloa were believed to have planted all of the maiʻa in Hawaiʻi, so the fruit was offered in heiau and all other houses of the gods. Another moʻolelo tells that a brother of Pele brought the maiʻa to Hawaiʻi from Tahiti. It is believed to be bad luck to dream of maiʻa, to meet someone who carries them, or to bring them on a fishing trip. Many moʻolelo regard the maiʻa plant as a person.
Wauke

**English name:** Paper Mulberry  
**Scientific Name:** Broussonetia papyrifera  
**Habitat:** grows well in damp areas, like along stream banks  
**Uses:** Most used for making kapa to be used for clothes or mats  
**Moʻolelo:** When Maikoha passed away, his daughters buried him by a stream. From that spot grew the first wauke tree. One of his daughters, Lauhuki, was the first to beat kapa. She became the patron of kapa makers. His other daughter, Laahana, was the first to decorate kapa.
Hala

**English name:** Screwpine  
**Scientific name:** *Pandanus tectorius*  
**Habitat:** Grows at lower altitudes in dry areas  
**Uses:** Leaves were used to plait mats, mostly, but other items, such as baskets and fans, were also made from this material. The keys of the fruit were used as brushes and to make lei.  
**Medicinal uses:** The tips of the roots are said to be rich in Vitamin B, and were often pounded, juiced, and strained. This mixture was then combined with other plants and used to treat a variety of ailments, such as common colds, chest pains, and constipation.
ʻUlu

**English Name:** Breadfruit  
**Scientific Name:** *Artocarpus altilis*  
**Habitat:** Grows in coastal areas  
**Uses:** ʻUlu is an important part of the Hawaiian diet. A single, mature fruit, weighing between 2 and 7 pounds, can feed several people. Like kalo, the ʻulu fruit could be baked in an imu, then pounded to make poi.  
**Moʻolelo:** It is said that the god Kū turned himself into an ʻulu tree during a period of starvation so that his wife and children could live. It is also said that Kaululāʻau, a mischievous youth, was banished to Lānaʻi after pulling up the ʻulu trees around Lahaina. On Lānaʻi, Kaululāʻau was attacked by ghosts. He outsmarted them, however, and used ʻulu gum to blind them. After this, he was allowed to return home to Lahaina.
ʻUala

**English Name:** Sweet potato  
**Scientific Name:** *Ipomoea batatas*  

**Habitat:** ʻUala was planted in mounds that formed a patch, which was usually surrounded by stone walls. Hardier than kalo, ʻuala was found in dry, arid plains. In traditional times, there is said to have been as many as 200 varieties of ʻuala planted in Hawaiʻi.

**Uses:** ʻUala was second only to kalo as a staple carbohydrate for Hawaiian people.

**Medicinal Uses:** ʻUala was used as a tonic during pregnancy and to induce lactation. ʻUala was also known to treat asthma and a sore throat.

**Moʻolelo:** ʻUala is associated with Lono, the god of peace, planting, and fertility.
Kalo

**English Name:** Taro

**Scientific Name:** Colocasia esculenta

**Habitat:** Kalo could be grown in both wetland and dryland environments. There are more than 342 known varieties of kalo.

**Uses:** Kalo is regarded as the most important crop for Hawaiian people, as it served as the primary source of carbohydrates.

**Moʻolelo:** Kalo holds an important place in the history of origin for Hawaiian people. When Wākea (sky father) and Papa (earth mother) lived together, their first child, Hāloanakalaukapalili, was a stillborn. They planted his body, and from that spot grew the first kalo plant. Wākea and Papa later had another son, Hāloa, who was the first Hawaiian man and, thus, the ancestor of all Hawaiian people. Kalo is also known as a kinolau, or physical embodiment, of the god Kāne.
ʻŌhiʻa Lehua

Scientific Name: *Metrosideros polymorpha*

Habitat: ʻŌhiʻa lehua is the most common and variable of all Native Hawaiian trees. Now, ʻōhiʻa lehua are commonly found in higher elevations at the forest-levels.

Uses: ʻŌhiʻa lehua provided one of the most important hardwoods in Hawaiian society. The wood was used to create *kiʻi*, or sacred images. The wood was also used when constructing houses and to create seats for canoes. The flowers of the ʻōhiʻa lehua tree are also well known, and range in color from white to oranges and reds.

Moʻolelo: ʻŌhiʻa lehua are known to be *kinolau* of the gods Kāne and Kū.