Meakanu (Plant) Diary
(The Plants in My Yard Series)

O - ‘Ohana goal (Why do the activity?) Family Goal

In Hawai‘i our relationships with each other and the ‘āina are important. These relationships are the foundation of culture, practices, and lifestyle choices. This resource is intended to encourage time as a family and to include our yard, our ‘āina, during that family time. One of the most prominent features of our ‘āina is the plants. Plants are traditionally and culturally a primary source for:

- Food
- Medicine
- Materials
- Water
- Shelter
- Clean air

Learning to recognize and document the plants in our yard can spark interest in learning more about plants in general. We can explore together where to find them in our neighborhoods, towns and island home.

Connecting these plant explorations with family time & providing guidance can also encourage a safe space of inquiry & education...let’s explore our ‘āina together!

H - Haʻawina (Let’s do the activity) Lesson, Assignment, Task

Go outside and model having fun and exploring with your keiki. Sort and measure a few leaves, introduce some vocabulary, tell stories about what you played and learned from your back yard growing up, and help keiki reflect on what they’re doing or thinking. As you do things together, you’re setting them up for future success. Who knows, they could grow up to be the next Isabella Abbott (ethnobotanist) or George Helm (aloha ‘āina leader)?
Here are some questions you may want to explore.

- “What kinds of plants do we have in our yard and what are their names?”
- “Who brought/planted these plants in the yard and when?”
- “What are the stories that we’ve heard about these plants?”

See the Meakanu (Plant) Diary Activity and Examples if you need an idea to get started.

Share what you’ve learned with friends and family!

**Tips:**

- Mālama your plants - be mindful/respectful when handling them.
- Use your five senses (sight, smell, touch, taste, sound) to kilo (observe) your plants and their surroundings. For ideas to “kilo,” see the handout, “Nature Sensory Walk” from Biodiversity Education Center.

**Reflective Question(s):**

- What would you do to learn about plants if you did not have any books or internet?
- What plants were brought here on the canoes? How did the others get here?
- What would you plant in your yard and why?

**Extension Activities:**

- Do a science experiment together: [https://www.giftofcuriosity.com/how-leaves-breathe-a-backyard-demonstration-of-leaf-transpiration/](https://www.giftofcuriosity.com/how-leaves-breathe-a-backyard-demonstration-of-leaf-transpiration/)
- Learn about a very important plant in Hawai‘i and how you can be a Plant Hero: [https://gms.ctahr.hawaii.edu/gs/handler/getmedia.ashx?moid=66869&dt=3&g=12](https://gms.ctahr.hawaii.edu/gs/handler/getmedia.ashx?moid=66869&dt=3&g=12)

**Benefits:**

Playing outside and learning go hand in hand for children as well as adults. You don’t have to trade outdoor play for academic readiness, the two can happen at once.

**Resources:**

- Learn more about Hawaiian plants: [http://data.bishopmuseum.org/ethnobotanydb/ethnobotany.php?b=list&o=1](http://data.bishopmuseum.org/ethnobotanydb/ethnobotany.php?b=list&o=1)
• Native plants information: http://nativeplants.hawaii.edu/general/
• Canoe Plants: https://www.canoeplants.com/intro.html
• Interested in stories about plants, people, and places: https://manoa.hawaii.edu/hawaiiancollection/legends/
• Resources for Backyard Explorers: https://imiloahawaii.org/imiloathome
• Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) Education and Resources: https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dofaw/education/
• Ideas for more Family Activities: https://www.plt.org/activities-for-families/in-your-own-backyard/
Meakanu (Plant) Diary Activity

Enjoy this activity as a family at a more relaxed pace by focusing on a different plant each day for a week. Continue the activity after the first week as interest or time allows.

MATERIALS NEEDED:
- Pencil and/or colored crayons/markers
- Blank paper (8-½” x 11”) or a printed copy of the Meakanu Card Template.
- Fresh leaves (if doing a leaf rubbing)
- Camera, printer, scissors, glue/transparent tape (if using a photo of the plant)

PROCESS
1. Choose a plant in your yard to talk about as a family. Here are some questions you may want to explore.
   - What is the name(s) of this plant?
   - Who brought/planted this plant in the yard and when?
   - What are some “fun facts” and stories that we’ve heard about this plant?

2. Cut out a card on the Meakanu Card Template. Do one or a combination of the following on the blank side of the card:
   - Draw the plant/plant parts.
   - Do a leaf rubbing of the plant. (For kōkua with this, see Leaf Rubbing Collection OHAna Resource -- https://blogs.ksbe.edu/ohanaengagement/resources/)
   - Attach a photo that you’ve taken of the plant.

   OR Use a larger blank sheet of paper if the template is too small or if you don’t have printer.

3. Complete the Plant Information on the other side of the card.
Example A (Using Blank Paper - 8-½” x 11”)

Meakanu (Plant) Diary Examples

Example A:

- **Plant Name:** Lychee
- **Who found this plant:** Jacob
- **When:** Mei 2020

**Fun Facts:**
- It starts fruiting in Mei.
- We pick fruit in June and July.
Example B (Using Meakanu Card Template)

**Plant Information**

Plant name(s) Kupukupu
Swordfern
*Nephrolepis cordifolia*

Who found this plant in your yard? When?
Moi, Mei 13, 2020

Fun Fact(s) (e.g. uses, mo'olelo, kino lau, etc.)
1. Kupu means to sprout, grow, increase
2. Kupukupu was often placed on or around hula altars symbolizing that it was a place of learning or the sprouting of knowledge
3. Used to make lei
Plant Information

Plant name(s) Aloe, Aloe Vera

Who found this plant in your yard? When?
Uncle Guy
May 18, 2020

Fun Fact(s) (e.g. uses, mo’olelo, kino lau, etc.)

The aloe vera plant is good to use when you have a burn. Take a little of a leaf tip off. You have to bend the leaf tip until it snaps off. Watch out for the thorns! Rub the sticky sap from the broken end of the leaf on your burn. Let the sap dry on your skin. Apply the aloe sap for several days until your burn goes away. If you need more sap you can keep breaking the same tip you started with.
The first step to learning about nature is observation. Next time you are exploring nature, pause from time to time to get in touch with your five senses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you SEE with your EYES?</th>
<th>What colors do you see?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why is the sky blue? Why is a leaf green? Colors are produced by light waves from the sun. Each color has a unique wavelength. Pigments are materials in objects that absorb certain wavelengths and reflect others. Eyes are amazing instruments that enable us to see. Our eyes perceive only the colors that are reflected by an object. Did you know that some animals perceive color and sight differently than humans?</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you HEAR with your EARS?</th>
<th>What do you SMELL with your NOSE?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examples of different sounds in nature include:</td>
<td>Examples of different smells in nature include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• wind blowing through tree leaves</td>
<td>• fresh flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a trickling stream</td>
<td>• verdant grass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• falling rain</td>
<td>• musty soil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the roll of thunder</td>
<td>• a smoky campfire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a bird singing</td>
<td>• sweet blossoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a coyote howling</td>
<td>• a stinky skunk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• insects buzzing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• the rhythmic chirping of frogs</td>
<td>What other scents can you smell in nature? We often smell something before we are have the opportunity to see or touch it. Pleasant smells tend to attract us to things that are beneficial. Unpleasant smells often serve as a warning to avoid something dangerous, like rotting food that could make you sick.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you TASTE with your MOUTH?</th>
<th>What does something FEEL like when you TOUCH it with your HANDS?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examples of different flavors from nature include -</td>
<td>Examples of different textures in nature include -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• savory pecans</td>
<td>• soft feathers or fur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• sweet plums</td>
<td>• rough or bumpy tree bark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• sour grapes</td>
<td>• smooth rock</td>
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<tr>
<td>• earthy mushrooms</td>
<td>• cool water</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• warm sun</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• slimy algae</td>
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The senses of taste combine with smells to produce thousands of different flavors. There are many wild plants in Coppell Nature Park that produce edible fruits and nuts. Among these are pecan trees, Mexican plum trees, and grapevines. Never taste something unless you know it is safe! Bring your own healthy snacks outside with you to enjoy in the park! Never touch something unless you know it is safe! Poison ivy can cause an itchy rash. Use a probe instead of your hands to explore under logs, leaf litter, or burrows where biting animals like to hide.
## My Nature Walk

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<tr>
<td>SMELT</td>
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<td>HEARD</td>
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<td>TOUCHED</td>
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<td>TASTED</td>
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*Fresh air, bare feet and grubby hands = active minds!* © 2015 Mrs HUG-a-BUG