**‘Ōhiʻa Lehua Fact Sheet**

***Metrosideros Polymorpha***

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**Hawaiian Traditions**

Many native Hawaiian legends refer to the ‘ōhiʻa lehua tree as sacred to [Pele](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pele_(deity)) the [volcano](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volcano) goddess, and to [Laka](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laka" \o "Laka) the goddess of [hula](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hula). The tree itself is referred to as the ʻōhiʻa tree, and the blossoms are called lehua flowers. This comes from the famous [Hawaiian legend:](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawaiian_mythology) ʻŌhiʻa was a handsome warrior and Lehua was his beautiful girlfriend. They were transformed into a tree and its flowers so that they could be together forever.

The wood is used for:

* house construction
* [poi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poi_(food)) boards
* weapons
* tool handles
* [kapa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kapa) beaters
* fencing
* [firewood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wood_fuel)
* statues
* outrigger canoe seats
* decking

The flowers and leaf buds (liko) are used for:

* decking
* making lei
* [medicinally](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbalism) to treat pain experienced during [childbirth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Childbirth).

The nectar from the blossoms are:

* A favorite food of native birds and the birds also help to pollinate the ‘ōhi’a lehua.

**The ‘Ōhiʻa Lehua…**

* Are usually the very first plants to grow on new lava flows
* Trunk can be straight and smooth or gnarly and twisted
* Is slow growing
* Can grow in every ecosystem from sea level to summit
* Can tolerate a wide range of soil conditions, temperature, and rainfall
* May occur as a tall [tree](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tree) or a small [shrub](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrub) and everything in between
  + Can grow up to 100 feet tall in perfect conditions
  + Grow much smaller in [boggy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawaiian_tropical_rainforests#Bogs) (wet) soil
  + Grow like bushes in areas with poor soil or little rainfall
* [Flowers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flower) look like a [pom-pom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pom-pom), color can be fiery red to yellow
* Can [grow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germination) on logs or the stems of fallen [tree ferns](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tree_fern)
* Can have roots above ground that gather moisture from the air

