Polynesians brought many precious items with them on their long journeys of two-way voyaging to Hawai‘i. These “canoe plants” ensured the survival of their people and played a vital role in every aspect of life.

Noni
Indian Mulberry
*Morinda citrifolia*
Polynesian Introduced

This medicinal plant was used to treat wounds, boils, bone fractures, and sore muscles. The roots and bark make red and yellow dye for *kapa* (barkcloth).

**Polynesian Introduced:** Brought to Hawai‘i by Polynesians on canoes.
**Indigenous:** Found in Hawai‘i and elsewhere on Earth.
**Endemic:** Evolved in Hawai‘i and found nowhere else on Earth

Mai‘a
Banana
*Musa acuminata*
Polynesian Introduced

This large herb produces edible fruits, cooked or given as *ho‘okupu* (offerings) at *heiau* (temples). Most bananas were *kapa* (forbidden) to women. Banana leaves serve as food wrappers and keep food clean, the juicy stalks are an important part of cooking food in the *imu* (earth oven). It is the plant form of the god Kanaloa.

Kukui
Candlenut
*Aleurites moluccana*
Polynesian Introduced

*Kukui* kernels fueled Hawaiian torches and candles. The nuts are roasted and eaten as a relish called ‘*inamona*. Medicinally, the raw nuts were eaten as a laxative. *Kukui* nut oil was used as a canoe varnish.

Ko‘o
Kou
*Cordia subcordata*
Polynesian Introduced

*Kou* wood was prized for food platters, bowls, and containers; it does not impart a bad taste onto food like the native *kou* wood. Canoes, paddles, and fishhooks were also made of *kou*.

Wauke
Paper Mulberry
*Broussonetia papyrifera*
Polynesian Introduced

*Kou* was cultivated for its inner bark from which the finest quality *kapa* (barkcloth) was made. Making *kapa* is a lengthy process; the inner bark is removed, soaked, and then pounded on a wooden anvil with different types of wooden beaters.

‘Ulu
Breadfruit
*Artocarpus altilis*
Polynesian Introduced

The large edible fruits of ‘*ulu* are contain high amounts of vitamins B and C. Strong glue was rendered from the milky sap for canoe building. ‘*Ulu* and other woods were also used to make surfboards, canoes, and *ki‘i* (carved images).
Ipu
Bottle Gourd
*Lagenaria siceraria*
Polynesian Introduced

*Ipu* were primarily cultivated for use as water containers, and for storage. Percussion instruments and rattles made from *ipu* accompany hula and chants. *Ipu* were carved into ceremonial helmets used by priests of Kū.

Hala
*Pandanus tectorius*
Polynesian Introduced
Indigenous

Durable *hala* leaves were plaited into canoe sails, mats, and baskets. The leaves were also used for thatching. The many “keys” of the large fruit were eaten fresh as a famine food or dried to make small brushes for decorating *kapa* (barkcloth) with plant dyes.

Milo
Portia Tree
*Thespesia populnea*
Polynesian Introduced

*Milo* wood came second only to *kou* for wood carvings such as food platters, poi calabashes, and bowls. This was one of the many cordage plants.

Pili
Tanglehead Grass
*Heteropogon contortus*
Indigenous

*Pili* grass was primarily used for thatching *hale* (houses). It grows in large clumps that can be uprooted, trimmed, and bundled, then tied and layered upon the wooden framework. *Pili* grass is abundant in dry areas. Look it in the main parking lot.

Kamani
Alexandrian Laurel
*Calophyllum inophyllum*
Polynesian Introduced

*Kamani* wood was ideal for bowls and platters known as *pā kamani*. Its aromatic flowers scented *kapa* cloth. Look for it in the main parking lot.

Niu
Coconut
*Cocos nucifera*
Polynesian Introduced

*Niu* is truly the “tree of life” it provided Hawaiians with food, coconut water, baskets, thatching, and cordage. Coconut husk fibers made strong rope, seven miles of cordage was required to make a double hull canoe! *Niu* is the plant form of the god Kū and the goddess Hina.

Kū or Ti
*Cordyline fruticose*
Polynesian Introduced

Ti leaves have a multitude of uses such as; cooking, storing food, fashioning ‘*ahu lāʻī*’ (rain capes) and *hukilau* (fishing with a seine). *Ho‘okupu* (offerings) were usually wrapped with ti. It is the plant form of the god Kāne.

Loulu
Hawaiian Fan Palm
*Pritchardia* spp.
Endemic

*Loulu* wood was used for spears, thatching, house posts, and drums. Considered sacred, its fibers were woven into burial caskets. The green fruit is edible. There are 19 species of *loulu*, some are endangered, rare, or vulnerable.