

MO'OLELO MINUTE

May Day is Lei Day in Hawai'i Nei

Nā Lei o Hawai'i

Hawai'i is famous for having one be adorned with Lei; Lei is made and worn on any occasion. It is seen everywhere, for birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, celebrations, and much more. It can symbolize love, honor, respect, and even condolences. You can find Lei everywhere, especially on Lei Day, or May Day.

Today, in modern May Day Celebrations it is now held as a mixture of bringing traditional Hawaiian customs to light with a swing on contemporary pageantry. In these celebrations it is customary to honor the symbolic color and floral emblem of each island, through mo'olelo (stories), traditional histories, wahi pana (sacred places), mele (songs), and so on.



[“Nā Lei ‘o Hawai‘i”](#) (original), a mele that later became the template for the flowers and color assignment for each island of today's May Day celebrations, was written by Rev. Samuel Kapū of Maui. This mele was originally written to honor the majestic Hi'iakaikapoliopole and her journey across the Hawaiian Islands. It was set to music by Paleuli Amalu and sung for the first time at a concert held for Puka'ana Church in 1901.

A few years later, in 1909, the Ka'ahumanu Society sang this mele at the old Opera House, formerly located next to Ali'iōlani Hale, the judiciary building. During their performance, young women would act out the song, in a pageant-like event, by adorning themselves in the appropriate colors and florals representing each individual island. By 1912, the colors and florals had become customary and the standardized version of [“Nā Lei ‘o Hawai‘i”](#) inspired by Charles E. King's was performed.

Both versions of this mele described each island's flower, color, ali'i (chief), and various landscapes.

May Day Today

Today, May Day or Lei Day is continuously celebrated throughout the Hawaiian Islands annually on May 1st, since 1928, when Don Blanding, a writer of the Honolulu Star-Bulletin came up with an idea of honoring the traditions of Lei. This celebration took place in the lobby of Bank of Hawai'i. This celebration included a Lei competition, in which Lei were judged based on the appropriate use of flowers and colors of islands, as designated in 1923 by Hawai'i's Territorial Legislatures Joint Resolutions I.



Ni'ihau - Pūpū Shells



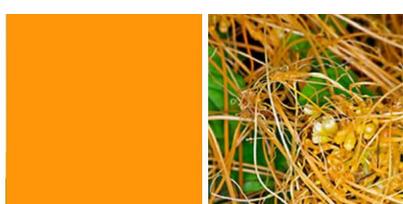
Kaua'i - Mokihana berry



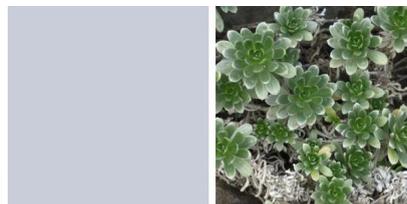
O'ahu - 'Ilima



Moloka'i - Kukui nut flower



Lāna'i - Kaunā'oa



Kahō'olawe - Hinahina



Maui - Lokelani Rose



Hawai'i - Lehua



Honoring Prince Albert Edward

Like an unforgettable Lei, we continue to honor our late Prince, Albert Edward Kauikeaouli Kaleiopapa a Kamehameha, born on May 20, 1858.

Prince Albert was the only son of King Kamehameha IV, Alexander Liholiho and Queen Emma. He was affectionately known as "[Ka Haku o Hawai'i](#)," the Lord of Hawai'i. His godmother was Queen Victoria of England, and supported by Edward Albert, Prince of Wales and his uncle Kamehameha III, Kauikeaouli.

Unfortunately, the young Prince passed away at the age of four on August 27, 1862, due to "brain fever." It was a death that left his royal parents and the entire Hawaiian nation in great sorrow.

One of the most honorable marks honoring Prince Albert Edward, is an area on the North side of Kaua'i. Robert Crichton Wyllie, a Scotsman and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the Hawaiian Kingdom, dedicated and named his plantation after the late Prince. It will forever be known, and still is today, as "Princeville."



“E lei kau, e lei ho‘oilo i ke aloha.”

Love is worn like a wreath through the summers and the winters.

Please see bonus resources below:

[Kaua'i High School Virtual May Day 2021](#)

[Forest Friday Episode 3: How do you connect with the Forest?](#)

[The Royal Family of Hawai'i](#)