

A HISTORY OF LEI DAY

The lei known the world over, is a symbol of aloha. Great care is taken into the gathering of the materials to make a lei. After the materials are gathered, they are prepared and then fashioned into a lei. As this is done, the mana (or spirit) of the creator of the lei is sewn or woven into it. Therefore, when you give a lei, you are giving a part of you. Likewise, as you receive a lei, you are receiving a part of the creator of the lei.



ISLAND OF HAWAI'I

Color: 'Ula'ula (red)

Flower: 'Ohi'a Lehua (*Metrosideros macropus*)



Visitors to Hawai'i quickly became accustomed to the lei as an expression of welcome and hospitality. Poet laureate, Don Blanding, thought that Hawai'i should have a day set aside to celebrate and recognize the custom of giving and receiving lei. While working at the Honolulu Star Bulletin, Don discussed the idea with "Kamaaina Kolumn" columnist Grace Tower Warren. She enthusiastically embraced the idea and suggested that the day should be May Day and coined the phrase *May Day is Lei Day*. Inspired by their zeal, Leonard "Red" and Ruth Hawk, a musician, composed *May Day is Lei Day in Hawai'i*. This song resonates throughout every Lei Day celebration in the State of Hawai'i.



ISLAND OF MAUI

Color: 'Akala (pink)

Flower: Lokelani (*Rosa damascena*)

The first Lei Day was in 1927 and celebrated in downtown Honolulu with a few people wearing lei. From that it grew and more and more people began to wear lei on May 1. We are told that the first celebration and exhibit of lei was

at the Bank of Hawai'i. In 1928, the first lei queen was Nina Bowman. Mayor Charles Arnold crowned lei Queen Nina Bowman here in Honolulu.



ISLAND OF O'AHU

Color: Pala luhiehu (golden yellow) or melemele (yellow)

Flower: 'Ilima (*Sida fallax*)



After a few years, Lei Day was held at City Hall with a lei exhibit and pageant. The lei of the eight major Hawaiian Islands became the theme for the pageant and a lei queen chosen with a princess representing each of the islands, wearing lei fashioned with the island's flower and color.



ISLAND OF MOLOKA'I

Color: 'Oma'oma'o (green)

Flower: Kukui (*Aleurites moluccana*)



Gaining in popularity, the celebration soon outgrew City Hall where it then became the responsibility of the City's Department of Parks and Recreation. The celebration was moved to Kapi'olani Park, where it continues to this day. The program continues to honor the day with a queen and her court, and adult and children's lei contests. Entertainment with many halau participating adds to the day's festivities.



ISLAND OF LANAI

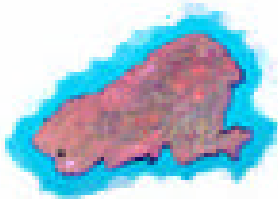
Color: 'Alani (orange)

Flower: Kauna'oa (*Cuscuta sandwichiana*)



At the adult lei contest, you will see lei exhibited in a variety of colors and methods. Keiki are especially encouraged to learn and perpetuate the artistry of lei making. Awards are given in both lei contests. The theme for the 2006 lei contest is Na Lei Malamalama o Na Kai 'Ewalu (the illuminating lei of the eight seas).

ISLAND OF KAHO'OLAWE



Color: Hinahina (silvery gray)

Flower: Hinahina (*Heliotropium anomalum*)



Traditionally held on May 1st of each year, the queen and court will reside over the City's 79th annual Lei Day Celebration on Monday, May 1, 2006, at the Queen Kapi'olani Park. This year's event will begin at 9:00 a.m., with the Royal Hawaiian Band. The queen's investiture program begins at 11:00 a.m., at the bandstand. Entertaining throughout the day will be the Makaha Sons, Ho'onu'a, Kapena, and various halau. The Lei Contest Exhibit and Ho'olaule'a will feature music from the Hawaiian Steel Guitar Association .



ISLAND OF KAUA'I

Color: Poni (purple)

Flower: Mokihana (*Pelea anisata*)



On May 2, the contest lei will be taken to Mauna 'Ala, the Royal Mausoleum at 2261 Nu'uano Avenue. The public is invited to this ceremony, which begins at 9:00 a.m. The lei may be viewed before the ceremony begins. As part of the ceremony, the public participates by draping the lei on the crypts and tombs of our ali'i.



ISLAND OF NI'IIHAU

Color: Ke'oke'o (white)

Flower: Pupu (shell. Ni'ihau is the only island with a shell not a flower/plant as its symbol.)

Mahalo nui loa to Professor Gerald Carr of the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Department of Botany, for graciously allowing the City and County of Honolulu, Department of Parks and Recreation to use his and H. St. John's photographs of the island flowers. These materials are freely provided for instructional and educational purposes. Any duplication or publication of text or images as provided by Professor Gerald Carr or H. St. John herein for commercial gain without explicit written permission of the owner or photographer constitutes breach of trust and violation of copyright. For more information: <http://www.botany.hawaii.edu/faculty/carr/default.htm>