

Connecting with Trees

A Multi-Sensory Multi-Day Program
For Grades K through 2



Created by Marianne Bickett, MA for *Trees for Honolulu's Future*
Fall 2024

Introduction

“I think that I shall never see
A poem as lovely as a tree.”

An excerpt from the poem entitled “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer

Ever since I was a little girl, I have loved trees. Trees were my friends who protected me, nourished me, and inspired me. There is a great deal we have yet to learn about trees, but we already know most of the things trees do for us (though I have no doubt we have not yet discovered *all* that they do). This program was developed to be a resource for parents, teachers, grandparents, and anyone who wishes to further explore our profound relationship with our sturdy fellow earth-beings.

Please use the lessons in any way that suits your needs. For example, kindergarteners may not be able to cut the heart and leaf shapes. Volunteers can assist with that part of the activities. The lessons are divided into at least four continuous lessons (you can divide them into even more lessons to suit the time available) and last about a half hour to forty-five minutes. Thank you for utilizing this program!

Marianne Bickett, MA, www.MarianneBickett.com
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What a delight that Marianne Bickett has put this amazing curriculum together for Creative Commons use. Trees work so hard for humans providing myriad benefits – cooling, food, filtering air, creating oxygen, capturing stormwater runoff, the list goes on and on. Marianne, with her decades of experience in art education, has put together an easy-to-follow guide that will help young learners articulate why we love trees. A companion initiative is our annual “We ♥ Trees” Keiki Art Contest open to grades K-8 statewide. For more information click on QR code or email: artcontest@treesforhonolulu.org.

Daniel Dinell, President, *Trees for Honolulu's Future*



Supplies

One of the important aspects of this program is about connections. So, ahead of time, please ask the students to each bring in one cereal-type box from home. Have enough for each student. You can set them aside, or, ahead of time have volunteers cut them out in the heart shape provided in the Appendix section at the end of the lessons. Either before or during the lesson, volunteers or the students will need to punch a hole in the top center of the heart to pull the string through to hang.

Making sure that the children understand that the boxes are made from trees is vital. A segway lesson about recycling, repurposing, reusing, and refusing can happen before or after this tree program.

Second, you'll need 100% cotton strings that can be in color or white. A volunteer can precut the string into 6-to-8-inch lengths, one per child. The string will be used to hang the hearts.

On the day the hearts are decorated, you will need crayons and/or color pencils. Also, although not required, a sharpie helps so that the students can trace their statement on the heart so that it does not become obscured by the coloring. See the examples in the Appendix.

A bulletin board, whiteboard with magnets or something that you can hang the different information sheets on in the room would be helpful.



In the Resources Section, there are links that will take you to sites referred to in each lesson. If you have photos of trees, art with trees in it, or any diagrams of trees, please feel free to use those as well. If you wish to create a bulletin board when the lessons are completed, you will need pins and/or a stapler for that as well as any long color kraft paper.

Note:

I highly recommend that you create a few examples of the tree hearts ahead of time so you have a chance to work through the process and the children can understand how the words and art fit on one side of the heart shape.

Day One: Thankful for Trees: An Introduction

Entire lesson takes up to 45 minutes but can be broken into two days.

Gather the students and engage them in the following conversations:

Who loves trees?!

What do we already know about trees?

Show students the diagram of seed to a tree. See *Resources* for links of seed to tree diagrams. I recommend this site with the poem under the (seed to tree) illustration:

<https://nelda.org.in/tree-poems-for-kids/>

Ask the students to share their experiences growing seeds.

Go over parts of trees (diagram link in *Resources*) then stand to sing and move to the *Parts of a Tree Song* (tune of Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes) that can be found in *Day One Appendix*.

Next, dialog with the students about the senses.

What are the five senses? How can we explore trees using our senses?

(Examples: we can listen to leaves blowing in the wind, touch the bumpy bark, see the shape of leaves, smell the scent of the trunk or flowers, and (not now) we taste the fruit or tea made from trees). At this point, you can read the book *If I Were a Tree*, or it can be saved until the end of this first lesson.

Let's go outside and meet a tree using our senses!

Important note:

Ahead of time, be sure to locate a few trees in the school yard where you'd like to take the children. Consider the area, if there is a space where they can stand or sit around the tree. If possible, ask the principal or groundskeepers what kind(s) of trees they are, so you know.

Gather around the tree. Ask the students to use their senses to notice things about the tree. Ask for them to share. You can tell them what kind of tree it is if you know and any information that is useful such as it bears fruit, the leaves or bark can be used for medicine, the Hawaiians of old revered the tree, etc.

Students can “adopt” this tree to become their class friend. Ask students to ponder a name for their tree. Read a poem to the tree (see *Appendix*).

Note: The activities below can be done on another day.

Back inside:

Ask the students to share all the things we can be thankful for regarding trees, what they do for us.

Write answers on board or large white paper to save for later. Either way, be sure you have a copy of all their answers. Encourage each child to be thankful for something not already mentioned, if possible. *

Examples of things to be Thankful to Trees:

Food, shelter, shade, beauty, erosion control, enjoyment, wood for homes/furniture, paper/cardboard, sounds the leaves make in the wind, soothe us, listen, oxygen, teach us how to bend and let go, how to be calm and still. See *Appendix for Day One* for a list.

*Another option is to, ahead of time:

Print out 20 things or more as per each student that we could be thankful for and cut them up into rectangles. See the list in the *Appendix*. Each child can draw a word out of a container. Then, each child can bring their word to adhere onto a prepared board. Discuss each word if there is time. Save the words for the next lesson.

Wrap up with the *Parts of a Tree song*.

Next time: make hearts for trees.

Day Two: Creating *Thank-You* Hearts for Trees

This lesson takes 30 minutes.

Note:

By today, as per the instructions in the Supplies section, either a heart has been precut or the students will cut out a heart shape from a piece of cereal grade cardboard. The hearts can have a hole already punched or the students can do that if possible. The strings should be precut and ready to distribute.

Gather students and sing/move to the *Parts of a Tree* song that was done last time. Quick review of last session. What did we learn last time?

Each child can choose a word from the list of *Thank you* for trees from last time or uses the word they came up with. So, each child has a word or short description of something for which they are thankful to trees.

Show example(s) that you've made ahead of time of the *Thank You* to tree heart. Engage in discussion that the cardboard was made from trees: Where do the cereal boxes come from?

On one side of the heart (once the heart shapes are cut out and ready) there are the colors from the outside of the cardboard. On the other side it is blank (it will be either white or a grayish color).

They will write and color on the blank side.

First the students will write a sentence: *Thank you tree, for.....* They will finish the sentence with the word(s) they have chosen or written. For example:

Thank you, tree for oxygen. Thank you tree for erosion control. Thank you tree for shade.... etc...

Students can trace the pencil writing with a sharpie to make it stand out. For younger students, a teacher or parent volunteer can write the phrase for the children.

Next, the students will decorate around their sentence any images such as a tree, leaves, fruit or nuts, etc. Anything that has to do with a tree, even birds, butterflies, etc. Color with crayons and/or colored pencils.

When they are finished, the string can go through the hole and be tied for hanging.

Make sure each heart has the student's name somewhere on the front. Share if time. Collect the hearts to hang on a tree or to put on a bulletin board.

Clean up and wrap up with the *Parts of a Tree* song.

Next time: Hang hearts and/or choose a tree for a bulletin board.

Day Three: Leaf shapes, Hawaiian words, and What We Can Do for Trees

This lesson takes up to 30 minutes depending on if you are making a bulletin board or not. See *Resources* for tree options to feature on the bulletin board.

Select a tree you want to focus on such as a Milo, 'Ōhi'a, Koa, Wiliwili, etc. Students can cut out the green paper leaf shapes for that tree or they can be precut by volunteers.

Review the parts of the tree and share the Hawaiian words for tree parts, see *Appendix*. This is a good time to discuss how trees communicate with each other. This happens with the roots/mycorrhizal network underground where the mycelium works as a conduit. See *Resources*.

You can also have the students make flowers (if applicable) or fruit/nuts of the tree. Use tissue papers, construction papers for this.

When the leaves, etc. are finished, collect and save. Be sure each student has written their name on the back of each before collection.

Discussion:

We know many things that trees do for us.

But, what can we do for the trees?

Brainstorm, write down the student's answers on white board or large white tablet papers to save. Can we all try to do one thing to help trees? What would that be?

Did they come up with a name their special tree friend near classroom? That can be decided now if possible.

If you plan to hang the hearts on a tree outside, that can be done at this time. Explain that the wind, rain, and sun will deteriorate the hearts rather quickly. But that's OK. The tree will get the messages. Collect the hearts after they become worn and either return to the students or make it a point to tell them you can compost them. You can do both the outdoor hangings and a bulletin board.

Wrap up with the *Parts of a Tree* song.

Day Four: Wrap Up, Art Extension, and More

This lesson can take 15 to 30 minutes depending on how much time you can give them to work on the drawing.

Begin with the *Parts of a Tree* song if you wish.

Review:

Remember that trees are wonderful teachers. They teach us how to listen, how to be still, how to bend in the wind, and how to grow.

What can we do to help the trees? Recall from last time.

What did we learn?

Trees grow from seeds like most plants.

We can use our senses to explore trees: see, hear, touch, smell, taste (fruit, sometimes the bark and leaves are used for medicines).

The parts of a tree: roots, trunk, crown, branches, leaves and sometimes flowers and fruit.

Trees do many, many things to help us like provide shade, food, wood, erosion control, oxygen, cool the earth in hot weather, medicines, beauty, and more.

Trees communicate through their roots and the mycelium network.

Share photos or posters of art that features trees. See *Resources* for examples.

On the back of a used piece of paper or another paper, draw a tree that could be your friend. **Draw a picture of you with your tree.** Are you swinging from a branch? Are you sitting under its shade reading a book? Are you reaching for its fruit? What kinds of questions would you want to ask your tree? See *Appendix* for Day Four with examples of *Questions for Trees*.

Students can share their drawings. They can be displayed or sent home.

The class could create their own special poem about their tree as an extension.

The bulletin board could be completed, and the students could admire their work.

Enjoy learning more about trees such as: different kinds of trees and their special leaf shapes, different textures and colors of bark, some trees grow best in mauka, others best by the sea, and differences between native and non-native trees, etc....

Family outing idea: visit any of the amazing [botanical gardens around O‘ahu](#) where you’ll find many interesting trees.

Also, see the last link in *Resources* for Creation Stories from around the world involving trees. Trees are very widely used in many cultures about how the world began. The relationship between humans and trees is deeply rooted in us 😊.

E Ulu Ke Ola: Life will grow.

My Tree and Me!



Example by Jaxon Belét, First Grade
Tempera paint straw painting with color pencil drawing (background and collage).

Appendices for each day:

Day One:

Parts of a Tree song.

Seed to tree diagram, see link in *Resources*.

Parts of tree diagram, see link in *Resources*.

Poems about friendship for a tree.

Heart shape to trace.

Thank you to trees list.

Day Two:

Examples of the hearts for trees.

Day Three:

Hawaiian words for parts of a tree. Also, there is a link in *Resources*.

Leaf shapes.

Link for Hawaiian trees in *Resources*.

Day Four:

See *Resources* for Examples of Trees in Art.

Questions for Trees

See *Resources* for link regarding mycelium and tree root communication.

Resources

Links provided as mentioned above.

Gratitude Offering

Day One: Song, Poem, Heart Shape, Thank You to trees

Enlarged type so you can copy the song for the students to follow along:
See the link in Resources.

Song of the Tree Parts

To the Tune “Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes...” song.

Roots, Trunks,

Branches, Leaves

(repeat)

Buds and fruits and

flowers in the breeze

Those are the parts of

trees!!

My Tree

Poem by Lenore Hetrick

Now I will plant this little tree!

Forever and ever it belongs to me.

When it's grown up I will lift my eyes

To see my tree against the skies.

A great, tall, living thing I shall see.

And how glad I'll feel that it's my tree.

My Friend, the Tree

By Marianne Bickett

One day I thought I had no friends

Until I met a kind tree.

I sat beneath its lovely boughs

And it sat close to me.

The tree's branches swayed

Quietly in the breeze.

Until I began to realize

How much I loved trees.

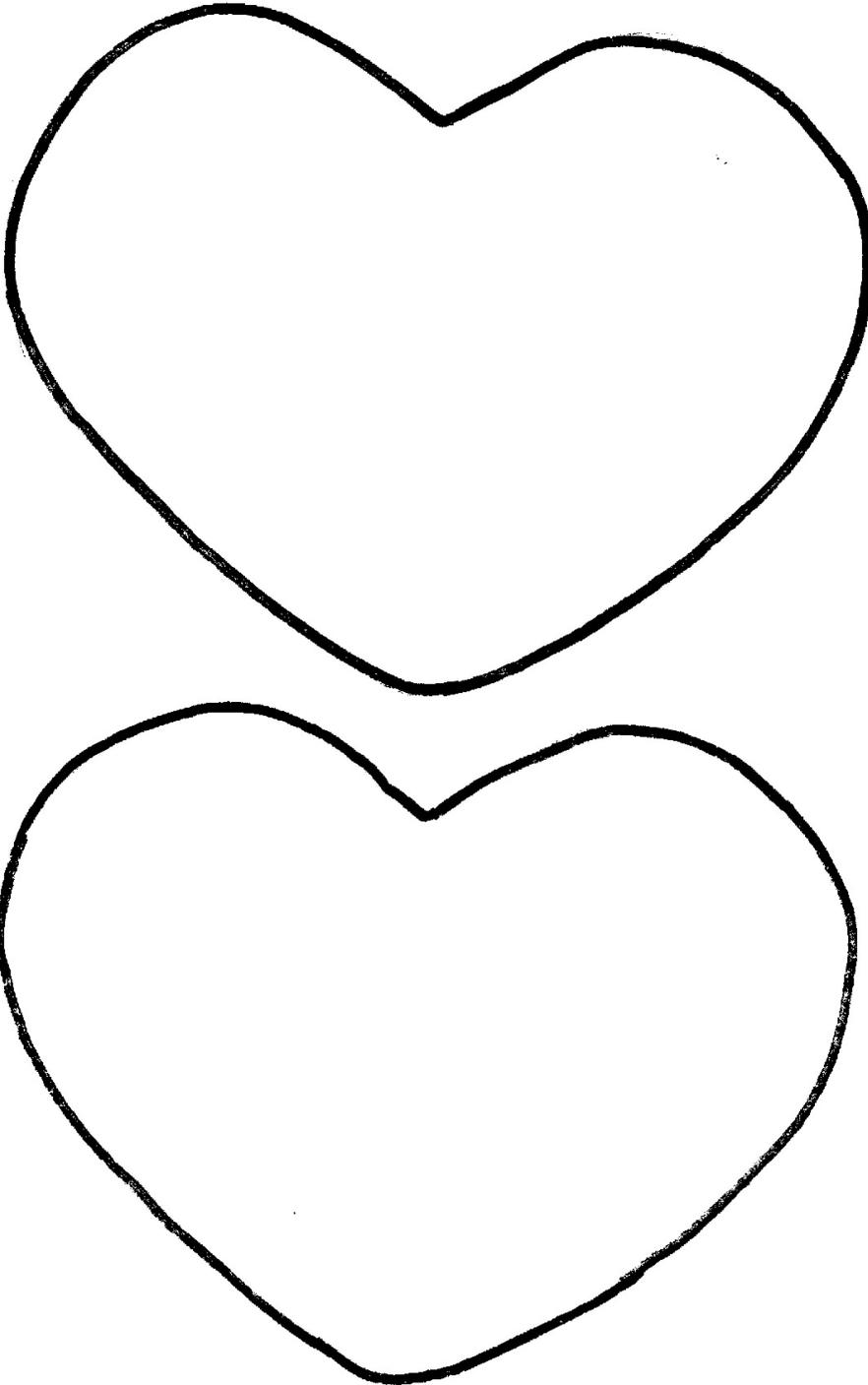
Trees are patient and listen well

Trust me, try it! You'll see...

You can count on your new friend

Your very own, special tree.

Heart Shape to Trace for cereal cardboard art



We are thankful to trees for: (20 thought starter concepts, no particular order of importance)

Food

Erosion control

Fresh water/help recharge aquifers

Shelter

Home for animals

Shade

Enjoyment

Wood

Furniture

Paper/Cardboard

Sounds

Textures

Colors

Smells

Different shapes

Oxygen

Clean air

Beauty

Peace

Listening

Food

Erosion control

Shelter

Homes

Shade

Enjoyment

Wood

Furniture

Paper

Cardboard

Sounds

Textures

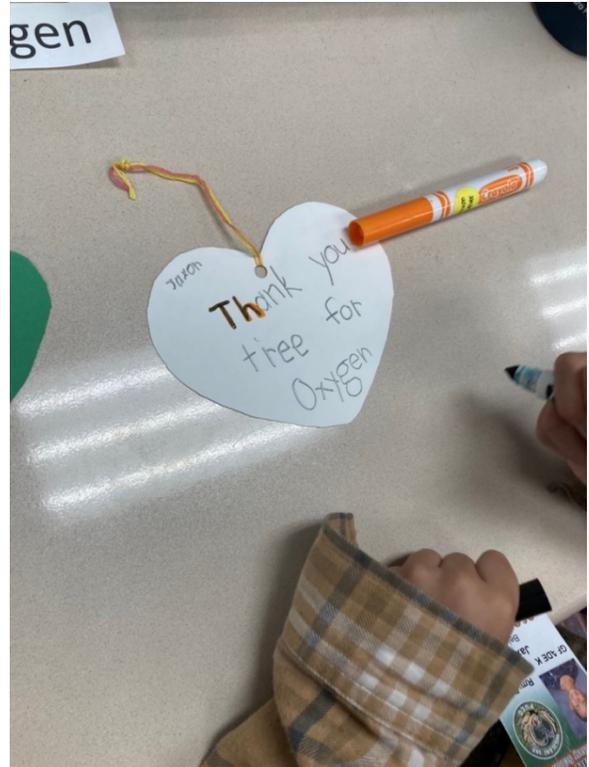
Colors

Smells

Different
shapes
Oxygen
Clean air
Beauty
Peace
Listening

Day Two: Examples of Hearts for Trees and Bulletin board

These are copyrighted photos and may not be reproduced. These examples are from a pilot of this program in May, 2024. For information only, thank you!





Marianne with her grandson. Notice the information about the tree in addition to the artwork. The children chose the Milo tree and created leaves and flowers.

Day Three: Hawaiian words, leaf shapes

Hawaiian words for parts of a tree:

A fun exercise is to draw a tree and have the students label the parts in both languages.

kumulā‘au

Tree

lālā

Branch

pua

Flower

lau

Leaf

a‘a

Root

‘ano‘ano

Seed

lepo

Soil

kupu

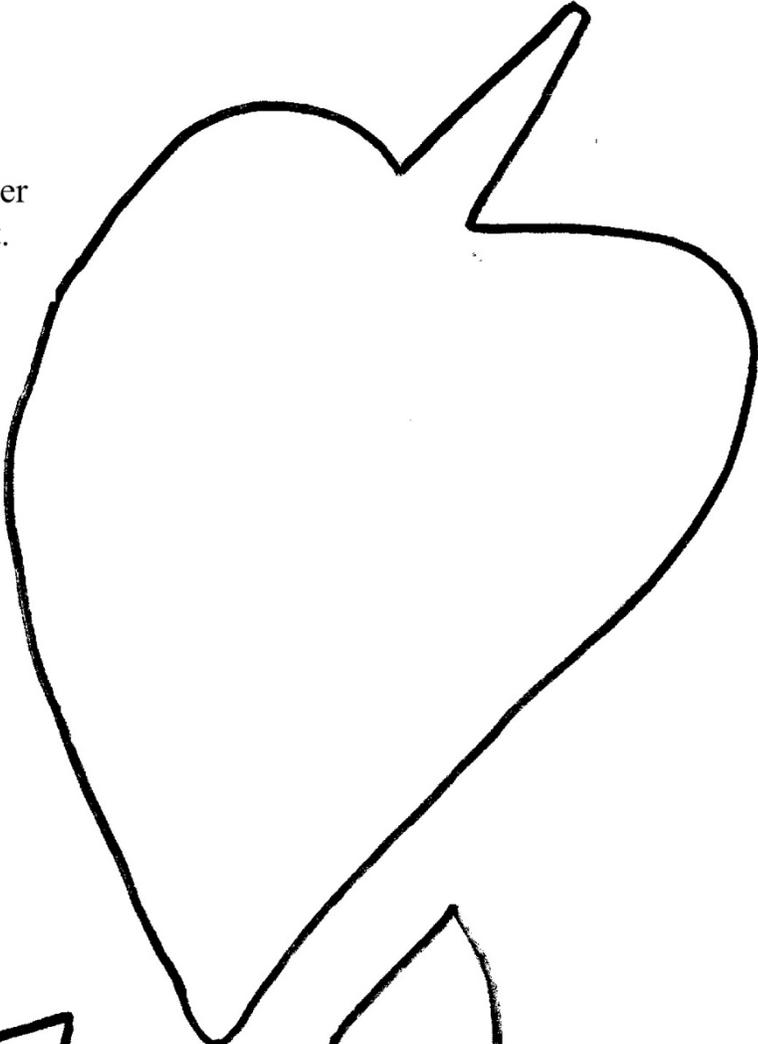
Sprout

For more information: <https://hilo.hawaii.edu/wehe/>

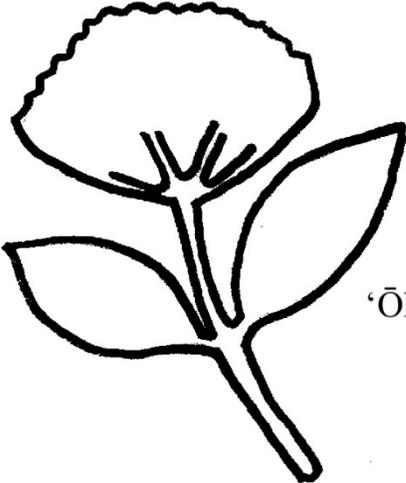
Leaf Shapes of a few native Hawaiian trees:

Milo tree leaf (top)

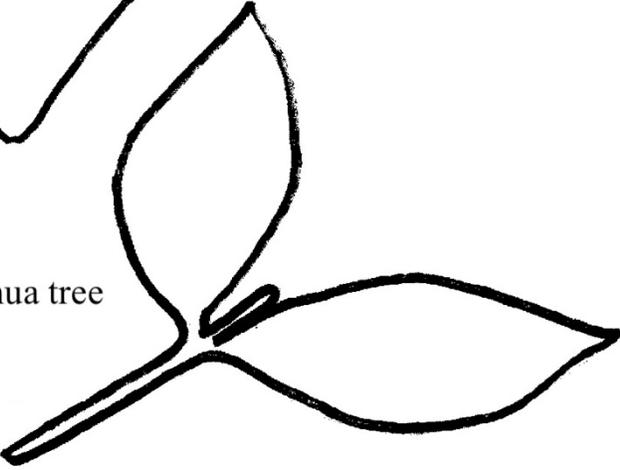
Stems are thicker
for cutting out.



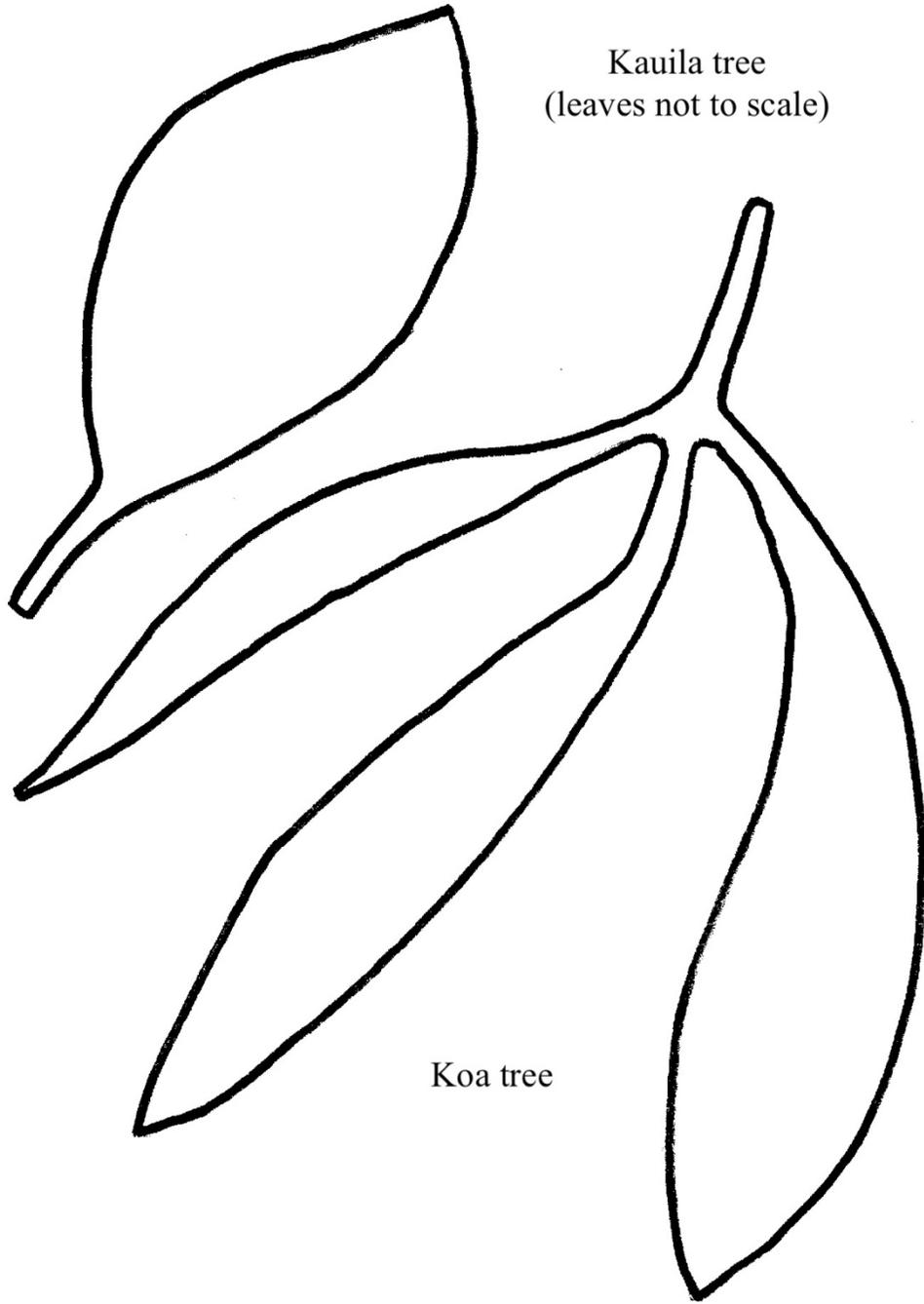
Flower



'Ōhi'a a lehua tree



Kauila tree
(leaves not to scale)



Koa tree

Day Four: Questions for trees

Trees in Art links in Resources, next page.

Mycelium and Tree roots communication, next page.

Questions for the trees

Examples:

How does it feel to be a tree?

Do you like the birds to build nests on you?

Do you like it when animals climb on you?

Are you ever sad or happy?

What makes you happy?

Do you have friends?

How do you talk to your friends?

Resources: Links

Parts of a Tree Song

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJqy967xs1c>

Tree Poems for children:

<https://www.playosmo.com/kids-learning/tree-poem-for-kids/>

<https://nelda.org.in/tree-poems-for-kids/>

Seed to Tree Diagram: there are many options online depicting seed to trees

<https://www.shutterstock.com/search/tree-growth-diagram>

Parts of a Tree Diagram: there are also many options online of tree parts

<https://www.google.com/search?q=Parts+of+a+tree+diagrams>

Hawaiian Trees (native and nonnative): There are also many options online.

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/psw/publications/documents/misc/ah679.pdf>

<https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/forestry/plants/>

Trees in Art links:

<https://www.aaronreedphotography.com/gallery/seven-famous-tree-paintings-inspired-by-nature/>

<https://www.nga.gov/stories/portraits-of-trees.html>

https://www.etsy.com/market/hawaii_tree_art

Mycelium and Tree Roots communication:

<https://www.nationalforests.org/blog/underground-mycorrhizal-network>

Creation Stories from around the world that feature trees:

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/news-and-features/features/2018/june/myths-and-stories-behind-trees-from-all-over-the-world/>

Gratitude

Mahalo Nui Loa to Mrs. Hirasa and her kindergarten students (2024) of Mililani 'Ike Elementary School for welcoming Marianne and Trees for Honolulu into her classroom to explore these wonderful connections to trees.

Immense Gratitude to Daniel Dinell, Director of *Trees for Honolulu* for working on this project with me to make it available to parents, teachers, and all tree lovers!

Aloha e to my husband, Brian, for helping me with technical questions, and to my grandson, Jaxon, for his beautiful artwork.

Mahalo to all of you who love trees!!