

Connecting with Trees

A Multi-Sensory Multi-Day Program
For Preschoolers



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. Volunteers can assist with that part of the activities, such as cutting out shapes, etc, ahead of time. The lessons are divided into at least three 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.

You can find this program on the TFHF link below. Thank you!
(Photo on title page is of my grandson, Jacen, hanging out with trees, 2024)

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 specifically for preschoolers. 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 our very youngest learners articulate why we love trees.

Daniel Dinell, President, *Trees for Honolulu's Future*
<https://www.treesforhonolulu.org/keiki-art-contest-2024/>

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, and, 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 then needs to be threaded through the hole ahead of time to hang the hearts.

On the day the hearts are decorated, you will need crayons and/or color pencils. Stamps of leaves would be great if you have them.

In the Resources Section, there are links that will take you to very helpful sites. 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.

An Introduction

Entire lesson takes up to 30 minutes but can be broken into two days 15 - 20 minutes each.

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. Do trees grow from seeds? Are trees plants?

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*. This is a good time to also teach the Hawaiian words for tree, parts of a tree. Or, you can do that at the end of this project.

Sitting: Next, dialog with the students about the senses.

What are three of the senses? Go through and demonstrate: seeing (colors), hearing (sounds), feeling (textures).

Now, Let's all be a tree!

Children stand. Teacher begins:

Let's all raise our hands and breathe in...and out, three times.

Let's imagine that, right now, you are a tree.

I want you to breathe all the way down to your feet and toes. That's it! That's right!

Now think of your toes growing roots. Let's all grow roots! Let your roots sink into the ground and go deep into the earth.

Can you feel your roots holding you in place?

Now, let's breathe into your legs, your tummy, your back, all the way up to your chest. Imagine you are growing dark, beautiful bark all around you that protects you. Can you feel the bark? What is the texture? Rough, smooth, bumpy?

Next, breathe into your shoulders, arms, and hands and your head. Grow branches and twigs. Wonderful! Can you feel your arms become branches?

And...now let's all sprout green leaves on our branches. Breathe into your fingers, hands, arms, shoulders, and neck and head. Imagine sweet green leaves growing out of your branches. The leaves are the lungs of the tree, so feel your leaves breathing in the air and sending out oxygen.

Do you feel the wind? Let's feel the wind. What does the wind do to trees? Yes!! Let's sway like the tree branches and leaves in the wind. Let's sway with our roots keeping us safe and in place. Let's wiggle our fingers and shake a little like the leaves in the wind. Let's wave at each other! Wonderful!

Now, let's stand very still. Can you hear the birds on your branches? Can you see them? Can you feel them? What do they sound like? Yes, that's great! Chirp, chirp, chirp!!

It has been a busy day. Now it is time for our trees to rest. When you're ready, let's shake a little and imagine our leaves, branches, trunk, and roots melting away. Wonderful!! You can imagine you are a tree anytime you want to feel safe and protected and happy.

This could happen another day, gauge your children's, student's energy level and interest:

If possible, if there is a tree nearby where students can safely stand around a tree, then **Let's go outside** and meet a tree using our three senses!

What does it look like? What does it feel like? What does it sound like?

Important note:

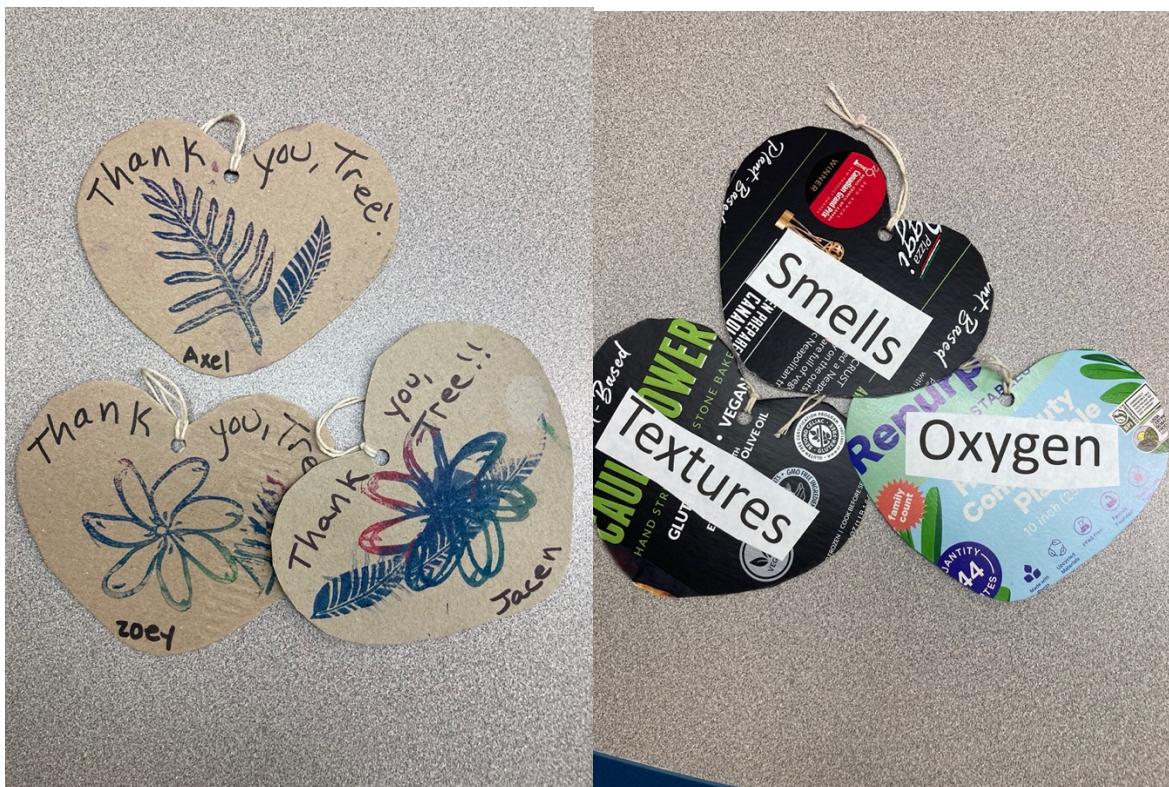
Ahead of time, be sure to locate a few trees in the school yard where you'd like to take the children. Consider the area, if there is a space where they can stand or sit around the tree. If possible, ask the principal or groundskeepers what kind(s) of trees they are, so you know.

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*).

Thankful for Trees!

Have cereal type boxes to show children. What are they made from? Trees, yes! (Emphasize how important it is to reuse/repurpose cardboard like this because it is not recyclable here.) Trees do many things for us. They give us shelter, food, beauty, shade, the roots help keep the soil together, they breathe out oxygen for us to breathe, etc.

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*. Ahead of time, glue the word on the back of the heart to save time during the lesson. The word could be glued on the back, opposite side of *Thank You Tree!* Be sure each child's name is on the heart. Hand out the hearts to the children and read the word (glued on) to reveal something we can be thankful to trees for.



Child-friendly (washable non-toxic) stamp ink with leaf/flower stamps and the back with words.

Lesson outline:
(20 min)

Who loves trees? Are trees plants?

Seed to tree diagram, show actual seed(s), sprouted, if possible.

Stand and sing “Parts of a Tree song”

Senses? See, Hear, Touch Use our senses to be a tree!

Go through tree motions: roots, trunk, branches, leaves

What are we thankful for to trees?

Each child gets heart: look at word on back! Hang on a tree or someplace where you’ll remember.

Activity: children each get a leaf stamp and/or can color the heart.

Thank you, trees!!!

Ideally, the children could help hang the hearts on a real tree, but that’s not always possible, so find a way the hearts can be displayed in the room or encourage children to take them home and hang on a tree with their parents.

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

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.

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

Review what we've done and learned.

Have leaf shapes precut with each child's name on each leaf.

You can engage the children in creating a "tree" for the room by one-by-one painting on a large board or kraft paper the roots, ground, bark, branches of a tree.

If you have that ready, then the leaves can be adhered to the tree. If you do not have a "tree" to hang the leaves onto, then you can create any space for the leaves to be placed together to show we are all leaves on the same tree!

On the leaf, ideally, a small photo of each child could be glued onto each leaf with their names. Or, children can draw a circle then their eyes, nose, mouth and hair.

They can draw their face on the leaf and color it. Or, you can have them make leaf prints on the leaf (one on one activity). Also, I found bringing a big chard leaf with dark, red lines in it a great way to engage the children with the lines in leaves...and how a leaf looks like a tree with branches! If you can do that, then the children can make their own colorful lines on the leaf shapes.



Precut Milo leaf shapes with lines created by children inspired by leaf veins.

Cultural Connections:

Introduce the Hawaiian words for tree and parts of a tree as well. See attached sheets. This can be done at the same time the English words are shown earlier on.

And to wrap up:

Engage children in a conversation about things we can do to help trees:
Water them, watch them and report diseases, don't use pesticides, plant them, and say Thank you! 😊

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.

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.

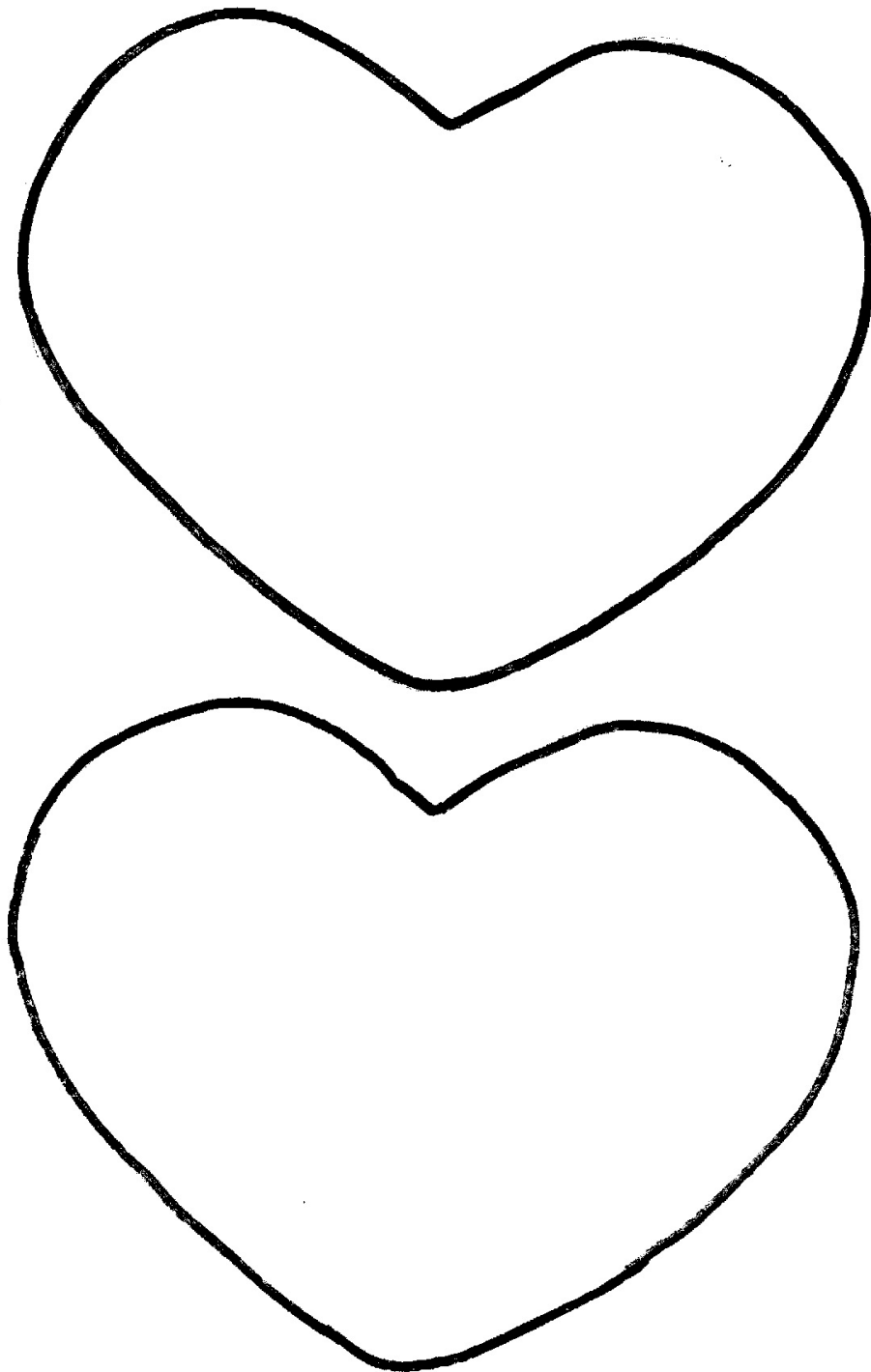
When it's grown up I will lift my eyes

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.

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

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Smells

Different
shapes
Oxygen
Clean air
Beauty
Peace
Listening

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

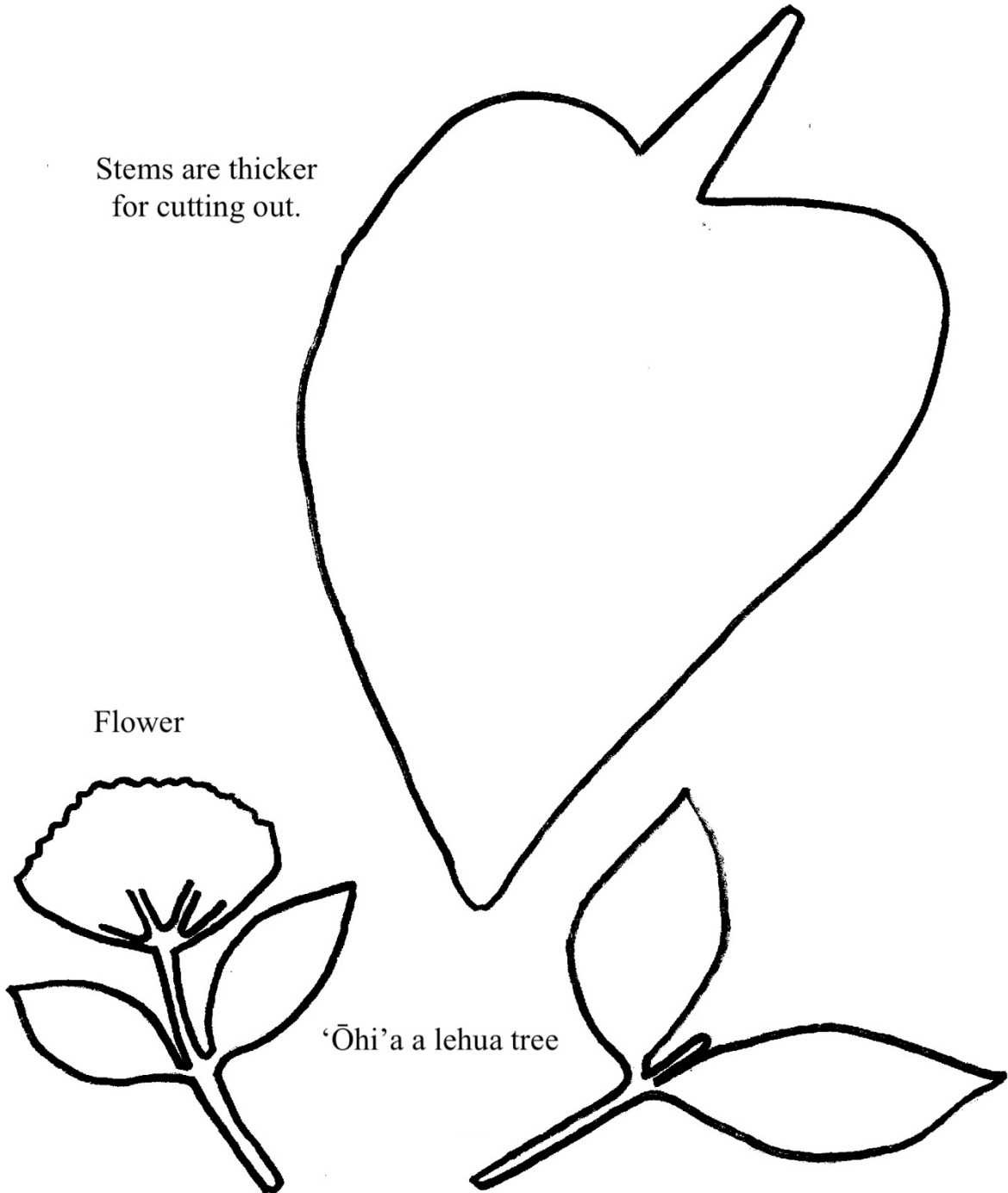
Sprout

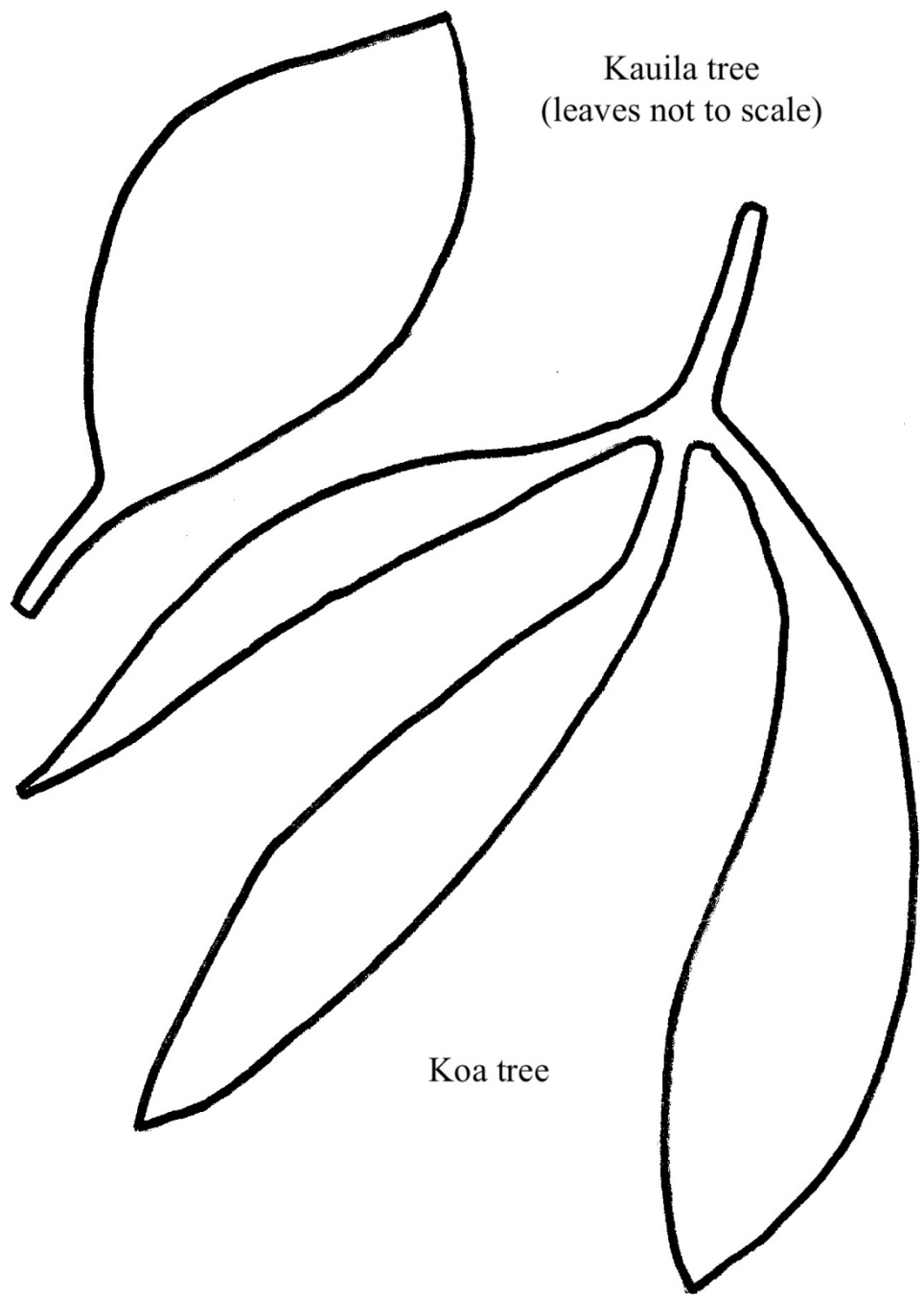
For more information: <https://hilo.hawaii.edu/wehe/>

Leaf Shapes of a few native Hawaiian trees:

Milo tree leaf (top)

Stems are thicker
for cutting out.





Kauila tree
(leaves not to scale)

Koa tree

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

Heartfelt Gratitude to “Ms. Dani” from Mililani Baptist Preschool for inviting me to present this program to her amazing preschoolers! See tree art below from her fabulous classroom.

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, Jacen for his beautiful artwork.

Mahalo to all of you who love trees!!



Ms. Dani traced the children’s hands to form a tree trunk and branches, then they used colorful tissue papers for autumn leaves. Marvelous!! Thank you, Jacen, for your artwork.