Plants referred to as “native” are categorized as either endemic, unique to Maui or the Hawaiian Islands and found nowhere else in the world, or indigenous, naturally occurring in Hawai‘i but also found elsewhere. Early Polynesians introduced plants that were important for their survival, supplying food, clothing and housing. As Europeans discovered the Hawaiian Islands, plants that were introduced during and after that time are often referred to as “post contact.” Our botanical signs feature a plant or tree’s Hawaiian name, common name in English and scientific name. They also indicate the plant or tree’s origin on the island.

Hale Pa‘ahao (stuck-in-iron’s house) was Lahaina’s “new” prison in the 1850s. During the peak of the whaling era, the small village of Lahaina was rampant with rowdy sailors who were ready for fun and relaxation along with villagers who were willing to play and trade with them. Under the wary eyes of missionaries and town officials, Lahaina saw a growing need to control the actions of the whalers and house the ones who were no longer “guests” of the government. This new prison was to replace the small jail located under the Old Fort on the waterfront. So in 1852, the fort was razed for its thick coral blocks that would be used to surround the prison yard. The imposing wall you see today is several feet deep and high.

When the prison was finished in 1853, a two-story wooden gatehouse stood between the walls, which also served as the warden’s home. There were two wooden jail cell buildings, one for men and another for women. Inside each were a row of cells complete with wall shackles (irons) and restraints for difficult prisoners. Today, Lahaina Restoration Foundation has restored and preserved one of the cell blocks along with the gatehouse. The prison yard is now a botanical garden.

We invite you to stroll through our grounds and enjoy the colorful tapestry of trees and plants.
Tree and Plant Guide

Alani (Orange) • Citrus sinensis
BREADFRUIT • Arecaceae • Polynesian Introduced
These trees have a history dating back to 2000 BC in China. They were brought to Hawaii by Polynesians who found them to be useful. They were used for cooking, holding food, and as a source of fiber and sugar. The fruit, which is rich in sugar and calories, is an important food source in Hawaii.

Tree and Plant Guide

Ma'ila (Bamboo) • Musa × paradisiaca
MUSACEAE • Polynesian Introduced
Originating in the Asian tropics, Ma'ila has many uses in Hawaii. Its shoots are used to make baskets, hats, and furniture. It is also used for thatching and shading. The fruit, which is edible, is often used as a snack.

Tree and Plant Guide

Neni • Morinda citrifolia
RUBIACEAE
Neni is important in Polynesian medicine. It is used to treat a wide range of conditions, including fever, cough, and diarrhea.

Tree and Plant Guide

Ohi'a (Monkeyberry) • Samanov (or Albizia) saman
LEGUMINOSAE
Post European Contact
First introduced to Hawaii in 1847 by the British, the Ohi'a is a deciduous tree that is native to Hawaii. It is used for shade and for its edible fruit.

Tree and Plant Guide

Paliku (Banyan) • Ficus microcarpa
MORACEAE
This tree is native to Hawaii and is commonly found in the islands. It is used for shade and for its edible fruit.

Tree and Plant Guide

Pili (Pineapple) • Ananas comosus
BROMELIACEAE
Post European Contact
First introduced to Hawaii by the Spanish in the 18th century, the Pili is a large, spiky plant that is native to Hawaii. It is used for shade and for its edible fruit.