

## Hawaiian Hat Weaving

Every old Hawaiian made herself a new hat for Easter.

There were two kinds of hat weaving, the block and the braid. The block weaving was begun at the center of the crown (piko) and braided round and round until the top was completed, then the strands were bound down over the block and the sides braided and a cord tied in to keep them from stretching while the rim was woven. The braid weaving was easier. Enough finished braid was first measured off to make the hat, then the straw was basted over the block to form the shape desired.

The braid was always measured by the fathom (anana) or the distance between the tips of the fingers when the arms are stretched as far as possible out at the side away from the body. From one elbow to the tip of the finger of the other arm is a moku. From the center of the chest to the tip of the finger of either outstretched arm is an iwile'i, from the elbow to the tip of the finger of the same arm is a ha'ilima. The stretch of the index finger and the thumb is a kiko'o. Three kiko'o equal one ha'ilima.

The braids are made from a variety of plants.

- 1 - Sugar cane blossoms make the finest braid of all. Pull off the long white stem and cut off the blossoming part. Split the stem into four parts and scrape it with a knife, or in old days with an opihi shell, boil the cleaned stems, and scrape again.
- 2 - Makaloa Bulrushes, washed clean and dried, used in old days for the best Niihau mats.
- 3 - Lau ni'u young coconut leaves, strip off the midrib and cut the leaves into strands.
- 4 - Lau ni'u keokeo white coconut, select the young leaves, split the midrib in two and the upper part boil and dry in the sun. This makes a perfect imitation of the Panama hat.
  - 4a- Loulu palm, excellent-the very young leaves are cut off and dried. The loulu and the coconut are the only indigenous palms in Hawaii.

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- 5 - Mana fern, from the mountains of Ola'a. Cut off the leaves and split the stem into fours, scrape clean, and dry. Before using, cut into any width desired, soak to make it pliable. The color is white inside, dark outside.
- 6 - Iwaiwa fern (wild maidenhair) cut off the leaves and dry the stem to get out the sap, then soak just before weaving to make it pliable.
- 7 - Iwa fern from Maui, prepare just like the mana. It will be a little lighter in color but just as shiney.
- 8 - Pa-moho (Fern with very black shining stem), treated like the maidenhair. It is liked for the pa-wehe pattern.
- 9 - Ihiihi (Fern from Koko Head), treated just like the maidenhair and has a dark brown shiny stem. It is used only for block weaving, never for braid.
- 10 - Ekaha (bird's nest fern), only the back of the midrib is used. Cut it away from the midrib, scrape, clean, and dry, and for weaving treat it the same as the mana fern.
- 11 - Hapu'u ama'u (lumpy leafed tree), select only those stems with a good brown color. Split the stalk in two, separating the back (kua) from the front (alo), which is shinier than the back, scrape off the pulp of the stem and dry. Before using, cut into the desired width and soak, weaving while the straw is still damp.
- 12 - Lau palaa (pumpkin stem), cut off the leaves and keep the stalk and midribs, soak until partly decomposed, then wash away the pulp and keep the fibres for weaving. Wash clean and dry. This makes a fine white shiney braid.
- 13 - Mai'a eleele (black banana) from the mountains, known by its black shiny trunk. Cut off the back of the midrib, scrape, and dry. Soak it before weaving to make it pliable. This makes a dull black braid.
- 14 - Ohe (Bamboo), use the stalk of an immature plant, cutting off the knots. Scrape off the outer green surface and cut it down with a single cut so that as it dries it will open flat. Before it is thoroughly dry separate the layers into sheets. The outer will be coarse and of little value, the inner are white and fine. Boil and dry, or to make it very white, soak the half dried sheets in blueing water and then dry. Roll up the sheets like a paper collar and put them away. Before using, cut into the width desired. It will be soft and pliable.
- 15 - Lauhala May be treated in three ways.
  - 1. Maloo, uses the leaves which have dried on the tree. Sheath and thorns at the edges and along the back of the midrib are pared away with a sharp knife or awl, the leaves are wiped clean with a damp cloth and scraped with the back of a knife to make them pliable. They are then rolled and put away for use.

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2. Kupa, uses the green leaves cut from the tree, with thorns removed in the same way, boiled, dried, and treated as above.
3. Olala, the immature leaves are cut in a cluster and tied together at the tip, then passed back and forth over an oven of heated stones until the leaves whiten, then put away for several days to dry, and prepared as above. This is the very best way of treating the lauhala.

Each braid has a descriptive name applied to it:

1. Iwi puhi (backbone of the eel)
2. Alahaka o Nualolo (ladder of Nualolo)
3. Alapi'i o ka opae (shrimp's stairway)
4. Lu (scattered)
5. Piko-o-Haleakala (peak of Haleakala (mountain))
6. Pa wehe (open dish)
7. Kala hale (side walls of the house)
8. Lau ma'u (fern leaf)
9. Uhi wai (Inset)
10. Oeno <sup>by twos</sup> (two under and two over)
11. Pa ha ( by fours, also a favorite braid)
12. Pa lima (by fives)
13. Pa hiku (by sevens)
14. Pa walu (by eights)
15. Ekeeke (basket weave)
16. Ie-nihoniho (pointed braid)