

# 'AWA

## CUTTING TO BEVERAGE

'Awa (Piper methysticum), was brought to Hawai'i by the Polynesian discoverers and first settlers of these islands. 'Awa may be used in ceremonies, medicines, and beverages. The traditional beverage, also called 'awa, is made by mixing a mash of roots and stump in water and straining out the fibers before drinking. The process is illustrated below.

**1.** Photo depicting mature, harvested 'awa plant with stump and lateral roots.

**2.** 'Awa produces no seeds. It must be propagated from cuttings. Collect a node with a breaking bud from a mature plant. Place the node in a layer of moist sphagnum moss on top of a sterile soil mix in a gallon sized growing pot.

**3.** The node will produce roots in the moss which will then grow into the soil mix and produce a plant large enough for field planting in 2 ½ to three months. The fields may be planted in various ways – large containers, inter cropped, agro forestry, row crop. The 3 to 5 years required for the plants to mature needs to be considered in selecting a field planting system.

**4.** Understory, agro-forestry.

**5.** Or Row Crop.

**6.** Harvest the plant in 3 to 5 years.

**7.** After preliminary cleaning the roots and stump are reduced in size for pressure washing and sorting.

**8.** The pre-frozen, cubed 'awa root and stump mix may remain frozen for storage or processed into pulp.

**9.** The pre-frozen, cubed root and stump are then ground to a mash. Use of a food chopper such as Hobart for large quantity and Ninja 1500 Watt or Vita-Mix for small.

**10.** The frozen, mashed 'awa pulp may be used immediately or bagged and remain frozen for storage.

**11.** Fresh 'Awa Beverage can be made from strained, 'awa pulp and water or coconut water.



*Photo Credits: Ed Johnston  
Gladys Konanui  
Jerry Konanui*



## UNIQUE HAWAIIAN 'AWA CULTIVARS

There are at least 13 cultivars of 'awa which are unique to Hawai'i. All have long history of safe use. Each selected by Hawaiian planters hundreds of years ago. 'Awa cannot produce viable seed so selections were according to somatic mutation and the preference of those who did the selecting. Starting left to right from 1st row – Kūmakua, Papa Kea, Mō'i, Papa 'Ele'ele Pu'upu'u, Mapulehu, Mahakea, Hiwa, second row from left – Nēnē, Uliuli a opulepule no ho'i also known as – Hanakāpi'āi, Pana'ewa, 'Ophikao, Honokāne Iki, and Papa 'Ele'ele. All cultivar photos by Ed Johnston except Mō'i, which is by Kawika Winter, and Papa 'Ele'ele Pu'upu'u, which is by Harry Brevoort.

