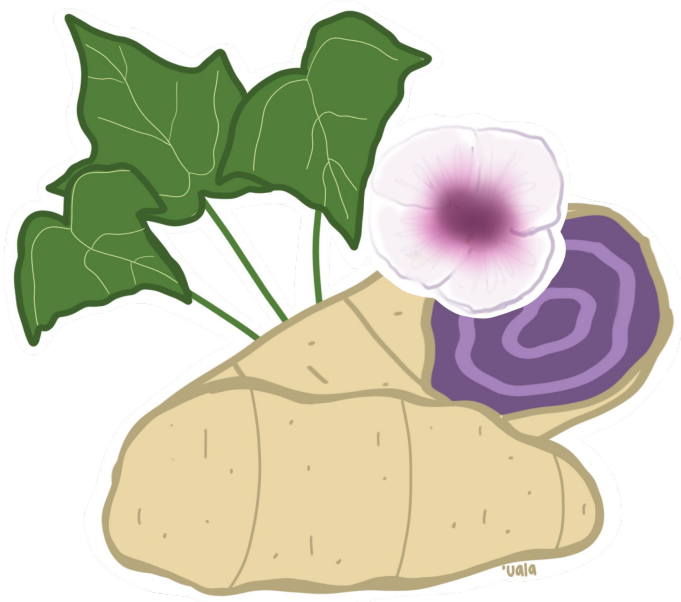


Growing ‘Uala

He ‘uala ka ‘ai ho‘ōla koke i ka wī

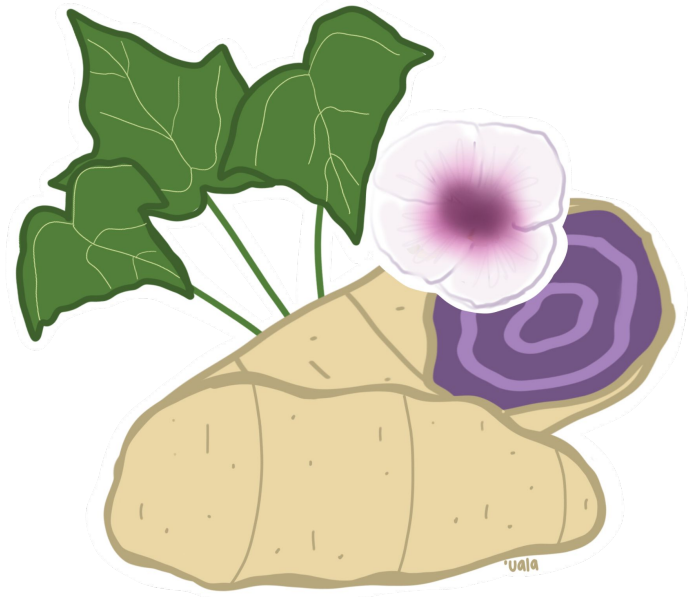
The sweet potato is the food that ends famine quickly
(‘Ōlelo No’eau No. 946)



'Uala Overview

'Uala is a general term for any kind of sweet potato. It was the second most cultivated food in old Hawai'i, with kalo being the first. 'Uala planters used many names and descriptors for the different varieties of 'uala, the shape of the leaves, the color of the leaves and vines, and the type of tuber produced by the plant.

There are several benefits to planting 'uala as opposed to kalo, however kalo is usually the preferred mea'ai (food). 'Uala can be grown in less favorable sun and soil conditions than kalo. Clay-like soils are the only soils that 'uala struggle to thrive in. 'Uala also grows very quickly. It takes 3-6 months to produce food, whereas kalo can take between 9-18 months. 'Uala also takes less effort to plant and maintain.



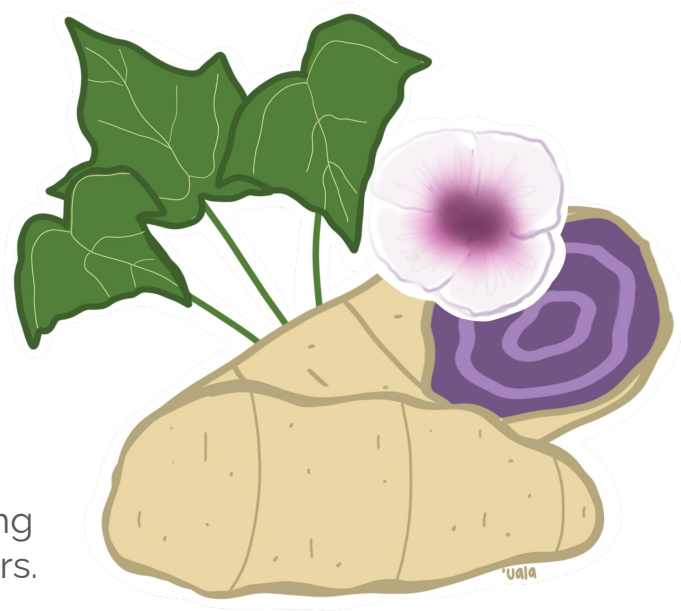
Preparing the Lau 'Uala

'Uala is propagated using vine cuttings/slips which are called lau 'uala. To harvest the lau 'uala, you can cut a 12-20 inch long piece from the end of the vine. To measure this, you can use your ha'ilima which is the measurement from your fingertips to your elbow.



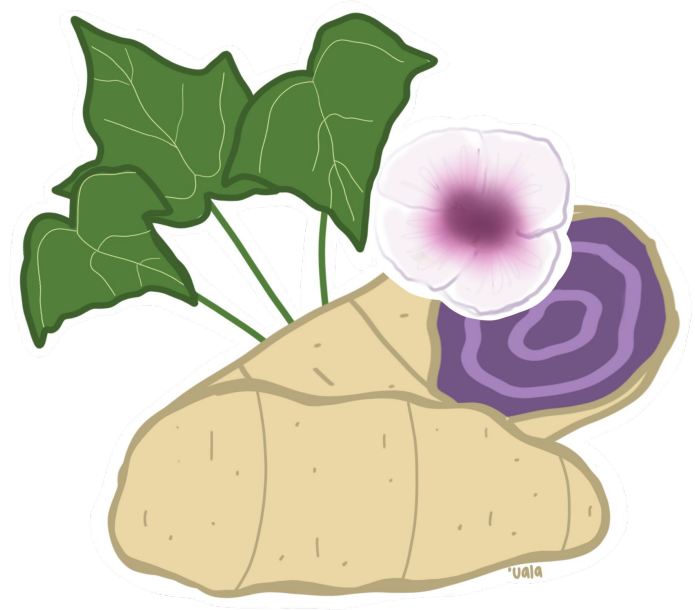


It is better to collect the lau 'uala when it is not too hot outside. Doing so is said to stunt the growth of the plant, producing less 'uala tubers.



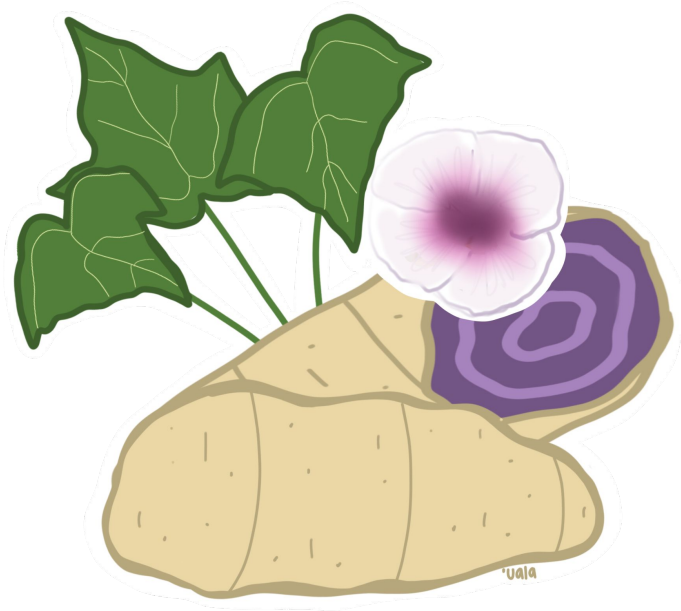


After collecting at least 2-3 lau 'uala, you want to carefully remove, or snip off, all the leaves except for the last three near the mu'o which is the leaf bud at the tip of the lau 'uala.



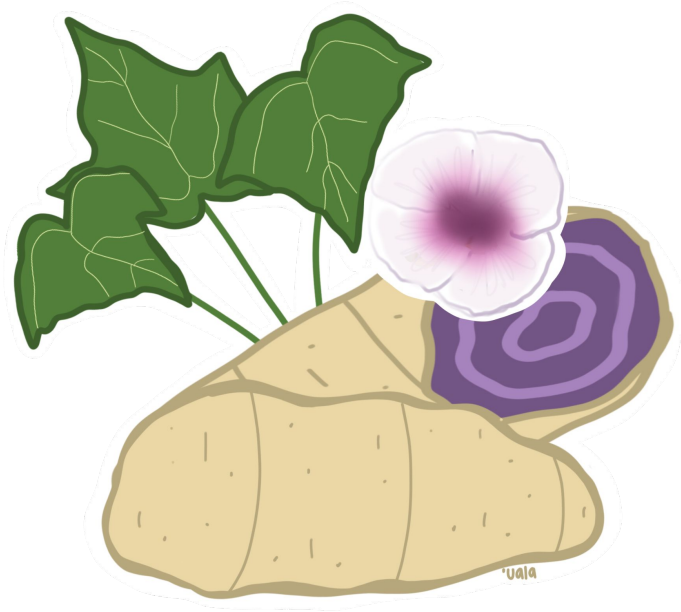


Be careful not to rip the maka or buds that are found at the end of each ha or petiole.



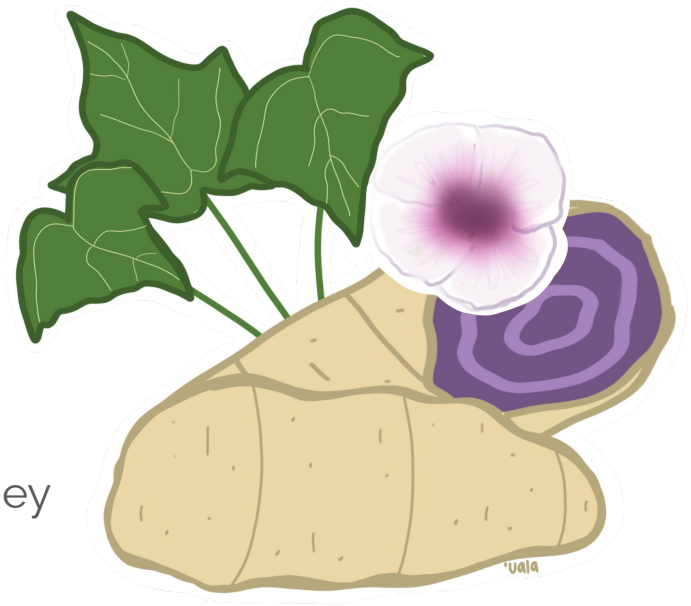


Be careful not to rip the maka or buds that are found at the end of each ha or petiole.



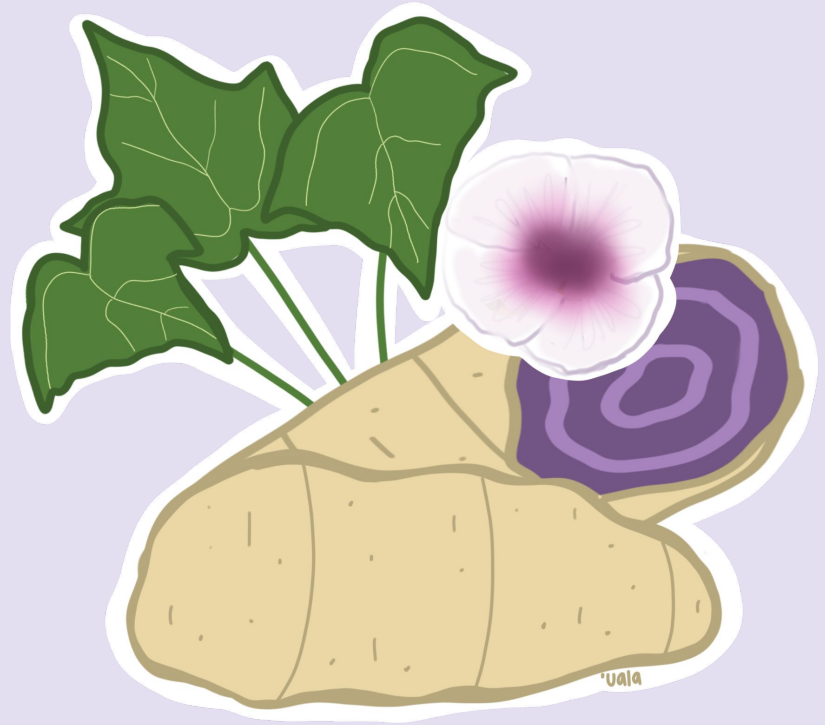


After you have picked off the leaves from 2-3 lau 'uala they should look like this. You are ready for planting!



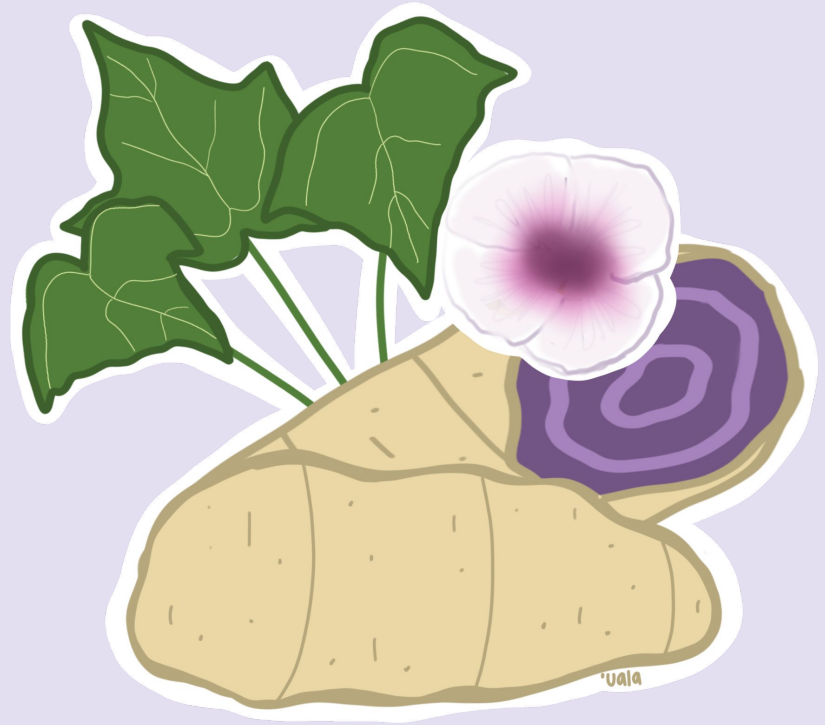
When to Plant

Planting the lau 'uala can happen right after they have been collected or up to 3 days after they are taken, as long as they are kept damp and protected from the sun's rays. It is best to plant 'uala early in the morning or later in the afternoon when the heat from the sun is not as significant.



When to Plant

The best moons for planting lau 'uala are Hilo, Hoaka, and the Kū moons: Huna, Mahealani, and Akua. These moons are said to yield the best results for 'uala crops. As it with most it is meakanu, it is not recommended to plant on any 'ole moons because 'ole means "nothing", which implies that you will get little to nothing from the crop planted on those days.



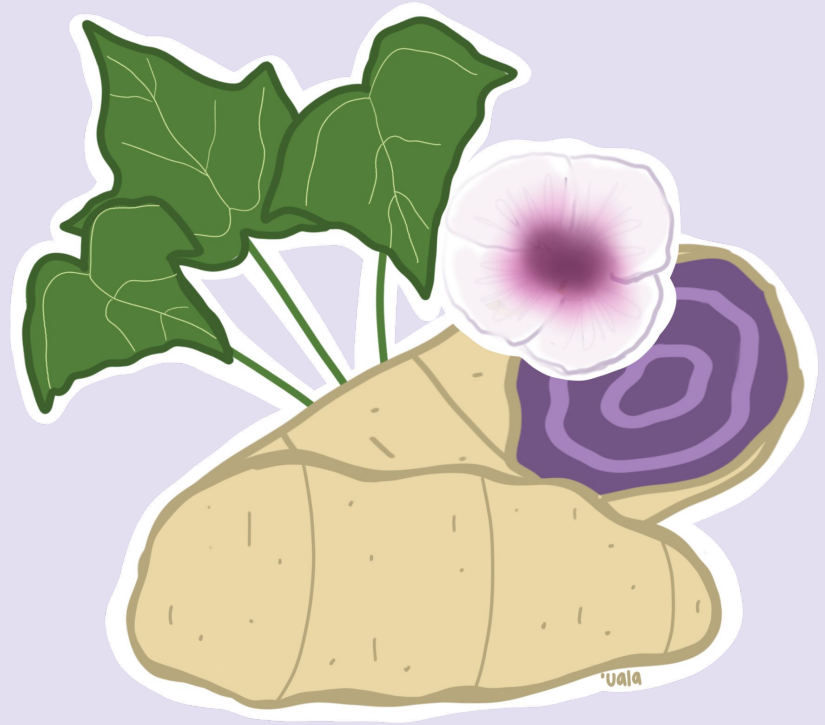
How to Plant

The most practical way to plant 'uala is to use pu'e. These are small mounds that are low to the ground. Higher mounds, called pu'epu'e, can be used in areas that receive a lot of rain to help with drainage.



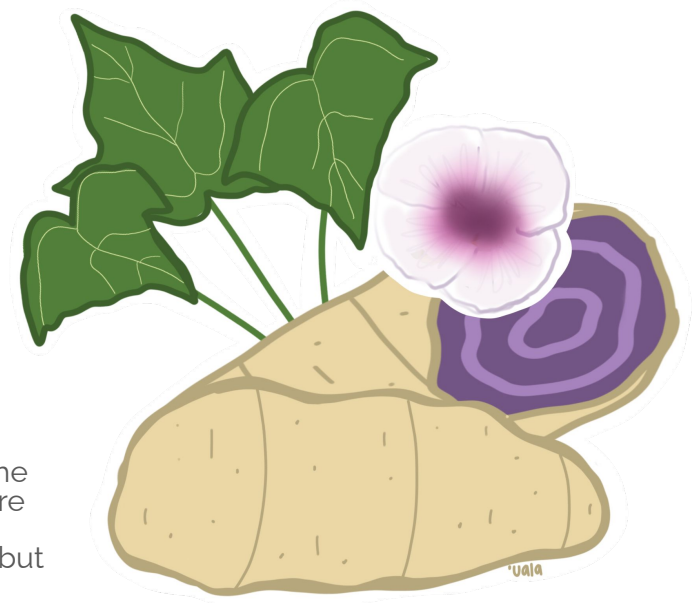
How to Plant

After creating these pu'e, plant 2 or 3 lau 'uala in a hole that is dug 6 to 8 inches down. You can plant them vertically or horizontally, as long as the mu'o is sticking out of the ground. Cover the rest of the lau 'uala and give the pu'e a good watering.



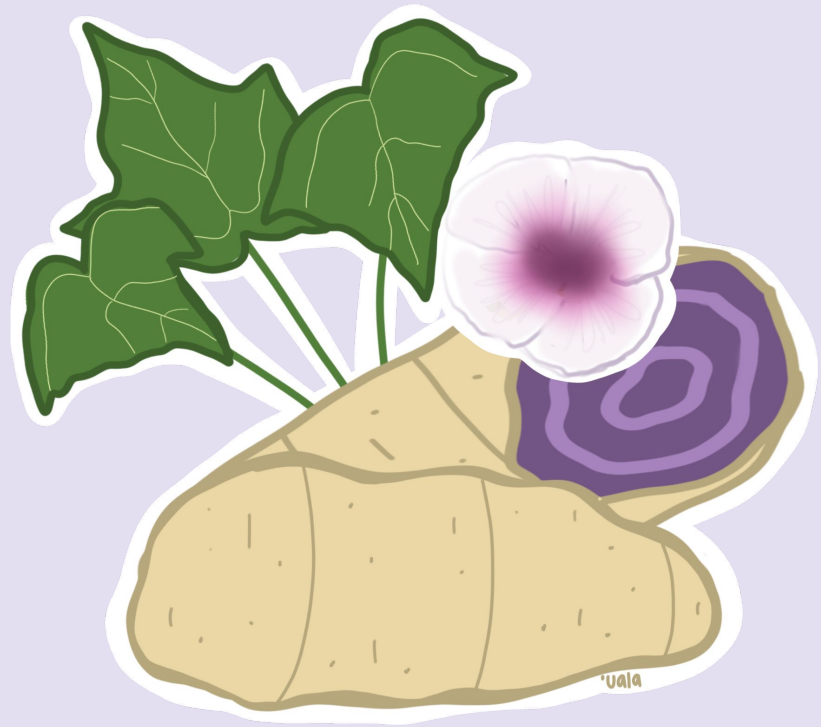


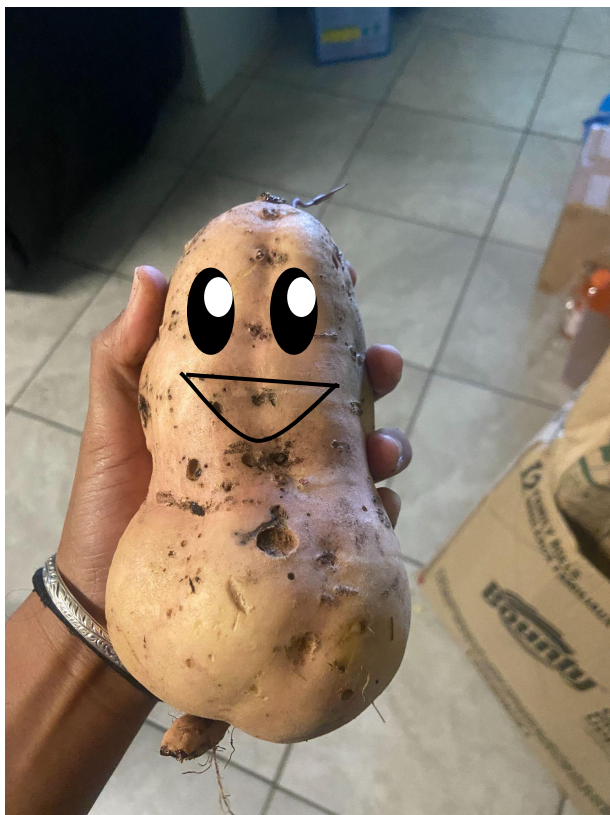
Occasional weeding may be needed as the 'u'ala grows. Be careful not to disturb the roots of the u'ala itself. As the vines grow longer, twirl them around the center where they were originally planted. Some mahi'ai then cover the vines with soil to encourage the plant to put its effort into producing more tubers rather than vines, but this is optional.



Harvesting

You can harvest the 'uala around 3-6 months after planting it. You can start by pulling up all the vines and finding the center. Huki or pull the vines up until they come out of the ground. It should come up in one bundle. After you've pulled the vines out, sift through the pu'e to find the hidden 'uala tubers.





What do you call a kind vegetable?

A sweet potato!

