

GROUP MANA

The word mana means "branching" and refers to the habit of division of the parent corm, which is characteristic of this group. A single parent corm of Mana Uliuli may produce seven or more mana, or branches; the usual number for the other Mana is two or three. Branching takes place with most varieties only when the corms are fairly well matured; under some conditions of growth only a small percentage of the plants produce branches. Probably because of the branching habit, oha are produced sparingly and much later than in other taros.

The petioles of the Mana are curved sharply at the apex, causing the blade to hang almost vertically. The blades are very narrow, and the primary veins are oblique, giving the impression that they are much more numerous than in the other groups although actually the number is practically the same in all taros. The coloring of the piko is also rather unusual in that color splotching extends along the midrib and the main veins of the basal lobes, forming a more or less distinct Y. The Mana are usually quite upright in growth, with rather stiffly erect petioles.

The corms of the Mana taros have a somewhat dry, mealy, flaky texture when cooked. They are excellent as table taro but usually make very poor poi. The shape of the corms is irregular because of the branching. Most varieties are fairly heavy producers and mature comparatively early, in from 7 to 12 months.

The Mana are usually planted under upland culture. They are grown fairly extensively on the island of Hawaii, especially in Kona, Puna, and Kau. Mana Keokeo and Mana Ulu are the two most popular varieties in this group.

The Mana group is one of the largest; eight varieties are represented in the station's plantings, and descriptions of at least two others have been recorded. Commercially, the group is not important since it is little used for poi, but it is probably the most popular taro for the home gardens because of its excellent quality as table taro. The Mana and the LauLoa taros are used in preference to all others for making the Hawaiian pudding kulolo, a combination of grated taro and coconut milk.