

The legacy of the Breadfruit

A lifetime of adequate food and prosperity

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Breadfruit Trees known as “canoe plants” were brought to Hawaii by ancient voyaging Polynesians. The breadfruit (Ulu’) was a staple food and was important in the cultural, and spiritual life of ancient Hawaiians.

The breadfruit tree was an important source of wood for canoes, drums, surfboards, and houses; bark for kapa; Sap from the tree was used as caulking, chewing gum and salve. The fruits can grow up to 12lbs and can be eaten in many stages and prepared many ways. The starchy fruit has many vitamins and minerals.

Ulu’ in Hawaiian meaning to grow, spread or increase.

Hawaiian Legend

In the Hawaiian legend – The Gift of Ku’; a war-god Kuka’ilimoku married a mortal Hawaiian woman and lived by the sea as a farmer. During a time of famine, he buried himself in the ground to emerge again as a healthy breadfruit tree. He told his mortal wife to eat some fruits, feed the children and share the roots with the village. By giving himself, he saved his family and village from starvation.

There is a saying in Hawaii: "Look for the oozing breadfruit": Do what Ku's wife did. Marry someone who always makes sure you have food.

The Breadfruit Quilt



The Breadfruit tree is a legacy of the Hawaiian people and their canoes that carried them across the oceans. Breadfruit trees have nourished the Hawaiian people for almost 1000 years.

The Ulu' has become as common traditional Hawaiian Quilt motif because of its importance in traditional Hawaiian life. It is the first pattern used by a new quilter to insure the quilter will continue to make many additional quilts. Some believe it will also assure the quilter of adequate food and a lifetime of prosperity.

Honor the Breadfruit (Ulu') in a Hawaiian quilt where the symmetrical designs honor the survival of the Hawaiian people.

The traditional Hawaiian quilt emerged about 1870. The Hawaiian women created the designs from large pieces of fabric by tracing elements from nature. Traditional Hawaiian quilts were stories of their lives and culture and were protected by each family. Many rules and spiritual beliefs were followed in making the quilts.

The ulu' design is great for learning to applique because of its points, and circular areas. Many Hawaiian Quilt teachers use the Ulu' as a beginning pattern. Many patterns are available for the breadfruit (ulu') in many sizes. Please visit www.alohaquiltshop.com .