Photo Gallery: See Some of Honolulu's Exceptional Trees

We spent weeks contemplating some of O'ahu's oldest, biggest and most impressive trees to capture their natural magnificence.

By Jennifer Sinclair
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The Banyan tree is one of most exceptional trees on the grounds of the Department of Agriculture on South King Street. Photo: Susan K. Stallman

To the casual eye, we were walking through a quick jaw-minutes away from downtown. It was a Saturday morning, and we had decided to take a stroll through Kaka'ako to see what we could find. We had no obsession—now that pizza or the ukulele ukes all have sound—we go with any concern that a giant face—which the U.S. Forest Service says is difficult to date but could be as old as 300 years—is carved into a tree. Nor were we looking for the oldest, the biggest, or even the most unusual. We were simply on a search for trees, thinking maybe in advance of our next adventure, the oldest in the state.

Trees with documented histories were an largely urban plants planted on earlier than the 1800s. The Outdoor Circle and other have already been documenting and protecting many of them through their Heritage Trees program, which has been underway since the mid-1970s. Many of the trees listed in the Outdoor Circle's data bases have sound accompanying more than 200 years. You can find out more about the Heritage Trees program at www.outdoorcircle.com.

We met photographer Aaron K. Yoshino to spend time capturing some of the others on the list on a public tour, to see our state's exceptional beauty in their rowdiness and beauty. See more about each tree, then look through our full gallery below.

Benjamin Fig (Ficus benjamina)

Location: The Front lawn of Roosevelt High School, 1330 Nehoa St.

Photo: Aaron K. Yoshino

When we called around to find out more about the for him by tree, no one seemed to know anything about the tree's history, or even how old it was. Nor could anyone tell us why it was there. The director of Honolulu's botanical gardens Heidi Bartelmai seem to be the closest to The Honolulu Advertiser that the tree was the best example of the Benjamin banyan left on the island. She noted that Roosevelt's campus was the site of a plantation and that the tree could be one of the last of the Banyan's by the yards, which became Pearl Harbor Naval Station. Seen weakened by disease and pruned on them in the 1940s to keep away dengue fever carrying mosquitos. The trees later fell to a storm.

Mango, Manakō (Mangifera indica)

Location: Nu'uanu Valley Park, 2950 Pali Highway, in the right of the parking lot

Photo: Aaron K. Yoshino

The prize mango tree at the Walker Estate usually gets the most love from tourists—likely because the 57-ish acres is home to some other exceptional trees—but just half a mile down Pali Highway from the Nu'uanu Pali Lookout, this tree is a real beauty. It's a Manakō, a variety that was brought with just a military policy branch under its wainwrose branches. Sim exceptional tree sticks out because of its size and unusual shape, and because it's not the Hawaiian "Rose" variety, which is used in 80-100 percent. Rosie is the primary

Baobab (Adansonia digitata)

Location: University of Hawai'i Mānoa, Art Building, 2535 McCarthy Mall

Photo: Aaron K. Yoshino

It's an arresting sight—large, amoeba-looking thing appears to have been built around a barbed-wire. This is exactly what happened. When Johnson Hall was demolished and pushed to 1973, the tree set building was designed to be connected to the Art Building. The tree was then the baobab in one of the Hawai'i Botanical Society's greenhouses. Its seeds were 15 to 20 years old when it was transplanted in 2012 and between Joseph Rock begun adding hundreds of plants to the grounds.

Earpod (Enterolobium cyclocarpum)

Location: Waialae Public Library, 87 1000 Kealohanui St

Photo: Aaron K. Yoshino

The library and nearby pre-science are dwarfed their almost 200 year old neighbor that spreads its branches and shelters the entrance to the library. The tree was a gift from the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' North Shore and was planted in 1892. The earpod was one of the first species by William Hillebrand prior to his garden in the 1850s to the wood was thought to be good for a future shipbuilding industry. The tree is a member of the pea family and is native to tropical America. It produces a flat, edible seedpod of pungent taste, including a price of 10 on Hillebrand's Barrels.

Kapok (Ceiba pentandra)

Location: Dept. of Agriculture, 1428 S. King St.

Photo: Aaron K. Yoshino

The oldest of the kapoks in the Islands is at Foster Botanical Garden, but this younger sapling, a mere 150 years old or so, had the grandest canopy of the urban trees near the intersection of Punchbowl and King streets. Its branches, like the Banyan's, spread out and touch the ground. One of the most exceptional trees on the grounds of the former Territorial Board of Agriculture building that was built in 1910. The other bar one the only mature apple Dracaenas (sacred tree) and West Indian Jute Grassmen identified on the list.

Indian Banyan (Ficus benghalensis)

Location: Ka'ahumanu Elementary School, 760 N. King St.

Photo: Aaron K. Yoshino

Don't find more Indian banyans on the list of Exceptional Trees. It's that any other species. Most are in Waikiki, including the signature banyan at the International Market Place. But the beautiful specimen behind the signature tree of the Kalihi school stands out. When Princess Victoria Ka'iulani died in 1899, her father, David Kalakaua, planted the tree in her memory. Ka'iulani's mother, Princess Kai'ulani, also planted a Banyan tree at home and gave it to the school where it grows today and even serves as the logo on the school and yearbook.

Pink Bombax Tree (Pseudobombax ellipticum)

Location: Queen's Medical Center, right of the roundabout

Photo: Aaron K. Yoshino

This more than 200 year old bombax tree was planted by Dr. William Hillebrand to continue Queen Emma's tradition of planting exceptional specimens on the grounds of her summer home. Hillebrand, a Landscape Design and Development Social Internet calls Bombax, always than attention. The Bombax, which is native to Central and South America, is known for its showy flowers and its trunk, which is covered with thin mature into pieces. Another Bombax, is "which it's actively growing, the bark smelly ... and the trunk is covered with sharp spines," Yoshino says. "The leaves turn red and the bark turns green, it's kind of an obvious lollipop."

Here is the gallery of images of these magnificent trees taken by Aaron K. Yoshino:

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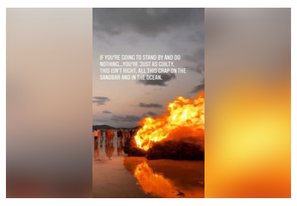

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