Classifying Plants

I. Scientists name or classify every animal, plant and other living thing on Earth like this:

Kingdom,
Phylum,
Class,
Order,
Family,
Genus,
Species

Hawaiian scientists long ago did the same thing, in much the same way. You do it, too! It’s just the way humans think - we organize our ideas to help us understand things better.

II. In modern and Hawaiian science, there are 2 names for plants (genus & species). This way of naming is known as:

• Binomial, meaning two-part (bi-) names (-nomial)

Look at how this plant is named by scientists:

Hawaiian Name          Modern or Western Science Name
koki'o ke'o ke'o       Hibiscus waimeae

Now look at what these words mean:

white hibiscus          Waimea hibiscus (in Latin, tells where it was found)

III. Sometimes there are 3 names for plants, like this seaweed:

Hawaiian Name          Modern or Western Science Name
Limu wāwae'iole        Codium edule, C. reediae

These names give details about the plant so we remember better. This plant’s name means:

Rat foot seaweed edible (edule) head (codia) found by Reed

These names can tell stories, like who, when & where it was found, or what the plant’s color, taste, habitat or importance to Hawaiians is.

IV. BONUS! There are still lots of undiscovered plants that you could name! Try it! Imagine & sketch a plant, then give it a Genus & Species!