

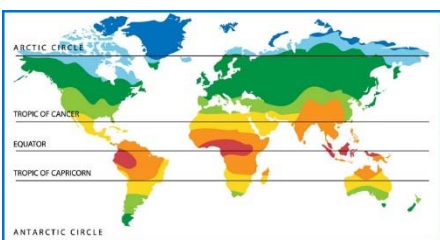
This article was first published in the June 2021 issue of the Sylvia Woods Harp Center e-Newsletter. It is part of Sylvia's ongoing series about living on Kauai, Hawaii.

Lāhainā Noon

Twice a year, in May and July, the Sun passes directly overhead in Hawai'i. On these two days, around local noon, the Sun will be exactly overhead, at a 90° angle, and an upright object such as a flagpole will have no shadow. This phenomenon only occurs in the tropics; the Sun is never directly overhead on any other part of the planet. Hawai'i is the only U.S. state in the tropics and thus the only state where this occurs. In 1990 Bishop Museum held a contest to give a name to this phenomenon. The winner was "Lāhainā Noon."

(Quoted from the Hawaiian [Bishop Museum](#) website.)

The word Lāhainā means "cruel sun" or "relentless sun," and is the name of a historic fishing town on Maui.



The "sub-polar point" is the scientific name for what Hawaiians now call the Lāhainā Noon. Every year, it travels through the tropics, between the Tropic of Cancer (23.5° north) on the June Solstice and the Tropic of Capricorn (23.5° south) on the December Solstice. Because Hawaii is in the northern hemisphere, the Lāhainā Noon happens here in May and July.

It takes a little over two weeks for the Lāhainā Noon to travel through the Hawaiian Islands. This year it started on the Big Island of Hawaii (18.9° north) on May 14th, slowly moving north to Kauai (22° north) on May 30th. In July, it will travel from Kauai on the 11th, moving down the island chain through the 27th.

This is a picture of the Lihue post office, near my house on Kauai.



I took these photos of the base of the flagpole during the 30-minute period from 12:22 to 12:52 pm on Sunday, May 30th. You'll see the shadow shrinking, then disappearing at 12:35, and then growing on the eastern side.

Please visit the [Bishop Museum](#) website for more fascinating information about Lāhainā Noon.

