

# Where does Hawaiian beach sand come from?

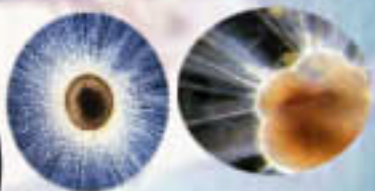
Most of the sand you see on Hawaii's beaches is actually tiny pieces of coral, algae, urchin spines, and shells. Ko'a (coral) is a tiny animal that creates it's own hard home around it. A coral reef is made by millions of ko'a all building new tiny homes on top of the old ones over decades, centuries, and thousands of years. Animals such as the uhu (parrot fish) and the 'ina uli (pastel sea urchin) create sand by scraping and boring into the reef for food and shelter. Sand is also full of tiny hard-shelled single celled organisms called foraminifera, sea snails, and algae like halimeda that hardens after it dies. Sand in Hawaii is a natural substance that actually "grows" on the reef. Look really closely at a handful of sand and you will see that every grain used to be alive!



Mollusk Shells (Snails)  
Pupu



Coral and Coralline Algae Fragments  
Ko'a



Foraminifera Shells



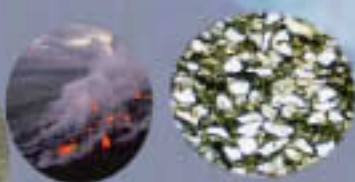
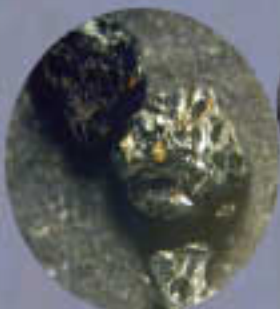
Halimeda Calcareous Algae  
Limu



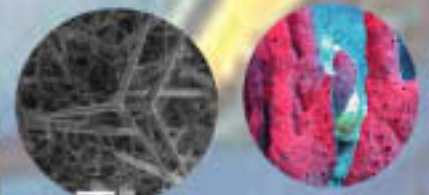
Shell Fragment Sand



Sea Urchin Spines  
'Ina Uli



Land Rocks and Carbonate  
Fossil Reef Fragments



Sponge Spicules  
'Upi