

Native Hawaiian Plant Society Nanea Nā Pua O Ka 'Āina Aloha

NHPS Newsletter

February 2011



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Maui Nui Botanical Gardens—New Programs from Old Traditions

By Tamara Sherrill, MNBG Garden Manager

Native Hawaiian plants are some tough old buggers, and so are the people and organizations that love them. Last weekend I visited an old native plant garden where I was caretaker nearly ten years ago. I was stunned to see that many of the same individual plants that I thought were barely alive ten years ago were still there. The same old dark, dense-leaved 'ūlei shrubs, sheared to within an inch of their lives and thriving; the same old robust, silvery *Achyranthes splendens* still growing inches from the sidewalk in spite of being constantly hacked to make room for pedestrians; and the same old elegant 'a'ali'i trees still enduring the incessant salt spray. Those of us who are gardeners fool ourselves into thinking that the plants endure because of our efforts, but I'm starting to think that the secret to a native plant becoming a beautiful old garden specimen is simply that a long period has passed in which the gardener managed not to kill it.

People who love native plants, such as past and current members of the Native Hawaiian Plant Society and the Maui Nui Botanical Gardens, are tough buggers, too. NHPS, formerly known as the Friends of the Maui Botanical Gardens, began in 1982 as a group that supported and maintained the botanical garden. Over time, NHPS grew into a service organization with projects to maintain and protect native plants all over the island. Meanwhile, the Maui Nui Botanical Gardens expanded to fill the old space left by the Maui Zoo after the zoo closed in 1997. Both groups have grown to fill the space that was available, thriving in spite of hardship. They have remained close partners throughout the years.

The Maui Nui Botanical Gardens is growing once again in spite of a harsh economic climate and internal changes. Just prior to stepping down after fifteen years as Executive Director, Lisa Raymond instigated Ulu Ka Hoi, an interpretive tour and cultural program that has brought new energy and excitement to the Garden. Kapa making, poi pounding stone and board making, lei making, traditional food preparation, cordage making, hala weaving, and Hawaiian games were demonstrated and taught at the Garden by expert cultural practitioners throughout the past year. We were saddened by Lisa's departure and continue to miss her expertise, but Maui Nui Botanical Gardens perseveres and continues the program.

Lisa trained a group of seven docents to give tours to educate people about the uniqueness of Hawaiian native plants and their connection to Hawaiian culture, and the docents are thriving in their new roles. One is long-time NHPS treasurer Becky Lau, who instantly improved on the tour by adding anecdotes from her own extensive experience in the field. She and the other docents have added immense value to the Garden.

Tours at MNBG are active, energetic events: people crowd around to make soapsuds with water and 'ānapanapa leaves, feel the strength of lauhala weaving and hau cordage, smell the spicy scents of pōhinahina, 'awapuhi, noni, and hīnano, and taste the coconut-like seeds of loulu palms. **The docents give free tours at 10 a.m. every Tuesday and Friday, so help us spread the word. If you have family visiting from the mainland or are looking for a fun and easy field trip for a group, call or email (249-2798, info@mnbg.org) to reserve a space.** There is a suggested donation of \$5 per person. Check our website at www.mnbg.org for a schedule of upcoming demonstrations, events, and workshops.



"Some tough old buggers" - MNBG.
Loulu palm and friends.

Hibiscus brackenridgei Ma'ō Hau Hele by Hank Oppenheimer, Project Leader



Above and below: Ma'ō hau hele (*Hibiscus brackenridgei*), Hawaii's critically endangered state flower. Photos by: Hank Oppenheimer



MCLT Land Steward, James Crowe, with NHPS members Katie Romanchuk, Martha Martin and Tom Page. (Irene Newhouse in the background.)



Katie Romanchuk and a visitor to the NHPS lei making booth at the Ha'ikū Ho'olaule'a Flower Festival.



Tracy Lamon shares her lei making expertise with a booth visitor.

In early June, a large wild fire broke out on the ridge above the *Ma'ō hau hele* enclosure. Several days later when it was officially deemed extinguished, several thousand acres had burned. Incredibly, the enclosure was spared, although the surrounding shrubland was devastated. *Mahalo Nui* to all the firefighters and helicopter pilots who worked so hard to save this priceless area. Now, as 2010 draws to a close, it seems like the severe drought that has plagued us the past several years has finally ended, and the foothills are beginning to turn green again. We will have our work cut out for us controlling weeds, which will be more abundant in the adjacent area after the fire. Working with our volunteers and the Plant Extinction Prevention Program, seeds from several mature plants were collected and are in storage for future restoration efforts and as a safety net.

Flyin' Hawaiian Zipline (the landowner) has been using the wild plants in the enclosure to help with restoration efforts. Careful numbering, tagging, and tracking of the parent plants insures that all the genetic variation represented by the population in the enclosure (one of only two wild ones remaining on Maui) is duplicated. They have constructed several outplanting enclosures on neighboring ridges, and part of the zipline adventure is outplanting or watering these plants. If you enjoy high-adrenaline adventures, check them out! You get a birds' eye view of the Plant Society enclosure on the last zip, one of the longest in the world.

If more "down-to earth" activities are more your style, we would love to have your help. Check the Society web site for upcoming service trips.

Maui Coastal Land Trust Waihe'e Refuge Service Trip

In January 2010 NHPS did a service trip to the Maui Coastal Land Trust Waihe'e Coastal Dunes and Wetlands Refuge. Led by MCLT Land Steward, James Crowe, NHPS members, Martha Martin, Irene Newhouse, Katie Romanchuk, Tom Page and Shannon Paapanen, gathered 'āhu'awa seed (*Mariscus javanicus*), a native sedge, removed the seeds from the stalks by rubbing them on a screen and scattered them in weedy areas in hopes the plants will reestablish and out-compete weeds. Members also each planted a flat of 'āhu'awa seedlings that had been started in the MCLT nursery.

Ha'ikū Ho'olaule'a Flower Festival by Katie Romanchuk

NHPS participated in the Ha'ikū Ho'olaule'a Flower Festival 2010 for the first time, and our booth was a real success! We taught people how to make haku lei with the help of Tracy Lamon's expertise, in hopes of acquainting and familiarizing people with Maui's culturally and environmentally significant – not to mention beautiful! – plants. Unfortunately these native plants are increasingly hard to find in the wild, which is why we use lei material harvested from native plants grown in our own gardens.

We had a steady group of interested lei makers, and all chairs were filled. I made my first haku lei, and found it a rare quieting activity for me, and was pleased with the results! We got a chance to promote native plants in an art form that perhaps ignited an interest in the greater ecology of ecosystems in peril in Hawai'i, needing our help. We talked with locals and visitors about native plants versus aliens, showed them samples, and suggested they buy plants at some of the local native nurseries, like Anna Palomino's Ho'olawa Nursery in Ha'ikū or Native Nursery in Kula. Many people asked if our leis were for sale or where they could buy them. The answer was, "They're not for sale, they're a labor of love, learn how to make one here." And some did!

Look for us at the next Haiku Ho'olaule'a Flower Festival, March 5, 2011 and make your own native plant lei. (Native plant material donations from your garden are WELCOME!)

MCLT Waihe'e Refuge Service Trip



NHPS members rub the 'ahu'awa stalks on a screen to separate the seeds.

A pile of chaff – leftover 'ahu'awa stalks after the seeds have been removed.

Table of bounty – piles of 'ahu'awa seeds, cleaned and ready for planting.

MCLT's Waihee Refuge nursery. Flats of 'ahu'awa seedlings at the back.

NHPS Members each planting their tray of sedge seedlings.

Ha'ikū Ho'olaulea Flower Festival



Tracy Lamon shares about lei making with booth visitors.

A lei stand stabilizes the lei making process. Here, dried banana leaf stem is used for the core of the lei.

Katie Romanchuck, Becky Lau and Lorna Hazen.

Becky Lau makes a ti leaf lei.

Lei samples and materials. All native plants used were grown in NHPS member gardens.

Hakalau Forest Photos by Irene Newhouse



'Ōlapa (*Cheiodendron trigynum*) Left: leaves, flowers and berries. Right: flower closeup.

Tiny ferns – *Elaphaglossum* sp.

Endangered mints being raised in the Hakalau Forest Nursery by horticulturalist Baron Horiuchi. Left: *Myllostegia racemosa*. Right: *Stenogyne calminthoides*—flower and fruit.



Clermontia pyrularia.

'Ōhia lehua (*Metrosideros polymorpha*)

'Āweoweo (Big Island type—*Chenopodium oahuense*.)

Labor Day Trip to Hakalau Forest by Shannon Paapanen



Top: Baron Horiuchi, Carl Martin, Bob Hobdy, Martha Martin, Marie VanZandt, Jaye Magalanes.
Bottom: Becky Lau, Tamara Sherrill, Kelson Lau, Doreen Hobdy.



With a boost from Bob Hobdy, Kelson Lau picks kōlea berries while Tamara Sherrill holds the hat.



Removing kōlea seeds from the pulp.



Linda Nelson dwarfed by a huge māmane tree.

On Labor Day Weekend September 2010, NHPS members made what has become an annual trip to Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge on the Big Island. The size of the refuge cabin now limits the number who can go to ten. This year our group consisted of Bob Hobdy, Doreen Hobdy, Becky Lau, Kelson Lau, Carl Martin, Martha Martin, Irene Newhouse, Jaye Magalanes, Tamara Sherrill, Linda Nelson, Marie Van Zandt and myself.

Baron Horiuchi, Horticulturalist with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, was our host for the weekend. He met us at Hilo Airport with a warm smile and three Wildlife Service 4x4 vehicles. First stop – KTA Grocery Store for more provisions. (Note to future groups: there’s always too much food!) Then we headed off caravan style, one vehicle following the other up, Saddle Road toward the Mauna Kea refuge.

After arriving at our cabin, we explored base camp. The infrastructure has grown significantly since the last time I visited about fifteen years ago. There are new buildings for research, equipment maintenance, new water tanks, and the nursery where native plants are raised for outplanting has been expanded. Our first project was to fertilize all the plants in the nursery. That didn’t take long, so some of us explored nearby Hakalau Gulch Trail, a self-guided nature walk with numbered trail markers and a brochure guide provided by the Friends of Hakalau. *Friends* is a nonprofit dedicated to fostering understanding, enjoyment and conservation of the natural and cultural resources of the refuge. The brochure contains great information on the plants, geology, insects and background of this habitat where you are likely to see...birds!

Did I mention the birds? Hakalau is *all* about the birds! Because the forest is designated a National Wildlife Refuge, its sole legal purpose is to protect endangered forest birds and their rainforest habitat. This is another reason it’s such a treat to go there, because it is not generally open to the public. At Hakalau you don’t have to go anywhere particularly special to see birds. They’re everywhere! Around base camp. Outside the cabin. The yellow-olive green *‘amakihi*, the scarlet *‘apapane*, the orange-red *‘i‘iwi*, the little brown fly-catching “puff-ball” *‘elepaio*, and the brown-grey *‘oma‘o* flit and feed in the koa and *‘ōhia*.

Forest birds are fast! According to researchers, honeycreepers, like the *‘i‘iwi* and *‘apapane* must feed constantly in order to sustain their energy. That’s why they never stop moving, flitting from flower to flower. Some even travel to other Big Island forests in the same day to feed. Their incessant movement makes them challenging to watch – much less photograph! – but by the end of the weekend I was able to identify more than a handful of birds and even started recognizing some of their songs.

On our second day we collected seed from some mature kōlea lau nui (*Myrsine lessertiana*) that were fruiting. We picked the berries and processed them at Base Camp, removing the seeds from the dark, blackish-purple pulp. Baron will use the seed for propagation.

On the morning of our departure, we visited an old-growth forest area where giant *‘ōhi‘a* and koa give a glimpse of how the ancient Hawaiian forests might once have looked. The trees are so tall you need binoculars to see into the canopy. And we weren’t the only ones bird-watching. An *‘io* (Hawaiian hawk) perched in the tallest *‘ōhi‘a* was keeping an eye out for his lunch. After eating *our* lunch, we headed back to Hilo airport, our Labor Day Weekend over.

For anyone who hasn’t experienced an NHPS trip to Hakalau Forest, I highly recommend it. It’s a weekend of fun, fellowship, and activities that make you feel a part of this rare and beautiful environment. **NHPS would like to extend a special thanks to Baron Horiuchi, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Horticulturalist, who made this trip possible and very special.**

Can you find the *‘io* (Hawaiian hawk) in this picture?



Upcoming NHPS Events

Annual Membership Meeting & Lecture

February 25 (Friday) 7:00 pm

Steve Perlman, Research Biologist at the National Tropical Botanical Gardens on Kaua'i will be speaking. His talk is entitled: *Working with the Plant Extinction Prevention Program (PEPP) in Hawai'i and Exploring Micronesia*.

Location: Hannibal Tavares Community Center, Poolside Room, Pukalani.

The Annual NHPS Membership Meeting will be held just prior to Steve Perlman's lecture at 6:00 pm to elect the 2011 Board of Directors.

Weekly Service Trips

Kanahā Pond (Every Thursday 8:30-11am)

Contact Lorna Hazen (808) 572-6338 lornajack@clearwire.net

Ha'ikū School (Every Sunday 8:30 am)

Contact Becky Lau (808) 575-2369

Kahului Library

Contact Lorna Hazen for dates and times

(808) 572-6338 or email lornajack@clearwire.net

Service Trip Information:

Irene Newhouse (808) 264-6977 einew@hotmail.com.

Monthly Service Trip Schedule

February 12 - *Hibiscus brackenridgei* exclosure,

Waikapū. Contact: Hank Oppenheimer (808) 357-2074 or email henryO@hawaii.edu

March 5 - Haiku Ho'olaule'a Flower Festival, Haiku Community Center.

April - 'Āwikiwiki Exclosure in Keoneo'io, La Perouse.

May - Maui Nui Botanical Gardens, Kahului.

June 11 - Pu'u Mahoe Fleming Arboretum

Kanahā Pond Now Open to Public with Reduced Restriction

Kanahā Pond is now open to the public from August 31st to Access is via two pedestrian gates on Amala Place—one from the Sewage Treatment Plant and the other just past Kite Beach. The gates are open seven days a week, sun still closed April 1st to September 1st for bird breeding enjoy native birds like the Ae'o (Black-Necked Stilt), Night Heron) and *Koloa Maoli* (Hawaiian duck) in their **are required to stay on marked trails and roads. Rules of gates.**



March 31st, no permit needed. near Cash-n-Carry across the double gate opposite up to sun down. Access is season. Now you can 'Auku'u (Black-Crowned native habitat. **Pedestrians conduct are posted on the**

In Memorium

Eda Kinnear, 75

One of the NHPS founders, Eda Kinnear, passed away May 19, 2010. Eda worked tirelessly for years eradicating invasive species from Kanahā Pond and planting native Hawaiian plants. She was a sparkplug for the creation of the Courtyard Garden at the Kahului Public Library, and planned many fine public educational programs.

Dr. Isabella Kauakea Aiona Abbot, 91

By Lisa Schattenburg-Raymond

Auwe,auwe,auwe! Our esteemed teacher, mentor and world renowned scientist Dr. Isabella Kauakea Aiona Abbott passed away October 28, 2010, at the age of 91. She was a Maui girl born in Hana, a graduate of Kamehameha Schools, and the first native Hawaiian woman to earn a doctorate in science. Her life-long passion was algal taxonomy and she was the world's foremost expert on Central Pacific algae. She discovered or named more than 200 species.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to have her as a teacher deeply appreciated her support and interest in our work, and always endeavored to gain her approval. I remember squirming under her resolute gaze as she would, without fail, challenge you to do even better. As a woman, Hawaiian, and a scientist, she accomplished many "firsts" in her lifetime. She was wonderful role model and mentor and she will be greatly missed.

Dr. Abbott received many awards and recognitions. For more about her accomplishments: <http://www.hawaii.edu/malamalama/2010/10/isabella-abbott/>

Mahalo to:

Cook Kwee's Maui Cookies for donating cookies for our member meetings.

Maui County Parks and Recreation for the use of Hannibal Tavares Community Center Pool Room.

Harry Eager of the *Maui News*.

Exclosure Partners: Hawai'i State DLNR and Duane Ting and Family.



Ohelo kau lā'au (*Vaccinium callycnum*) unripe berries. Big Island "blueberries." Photo: Irene Newhouse

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Membership Form

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(Please print carefully!)

Donation Categories: Individual \$15 _____ Family \$20 _____ Other \$ _____

Native Hawaiian Plant Society P.O. Box 5021 Kahului, Hawai'i 96733-5021

The Native Hawaiian Plant Society is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1980