

For Immediate Release

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Learning to Grow Their Own Food

KAMUELA, Hawaii—November 12, 2008—In the last year the Hawai'i Island School Garden Network has expanded to serve school gardens in communities around the island. There are currently 45 projects, at varying stages of development, participating in the Garden Network.

On Saturday, November 22, the Hawai'i Island School Garden Network has invited the 45 schools and garden teachers to Ka 'Umeke Kā'eo Hawaiian Immersion Public Charter School in Keaukaha-Hilo to learn about growing Hawaiian crops in school gardens island wide. The "*Keiki, Kalo, and Ko'e* (Children, Taro, & Worms)" workshop runs from 8 a.m. to noon, followed by a potluck lunch.

This is a unique opportunity to visit Ka 'Umeke, the oldest Hawaiian immersion school in the state, which has devoted a large portion of its campus to the production, processing, and sharing of Hawaiian food crops for the local community. The stories (*'olelo*) of the kalo, ecological methods of production, and methods of preparation will be shared by hosts Pua Mendonca, Ka 'Umeke's Garden Teacher, and Jerry Konanui, an 8th generation taro farmer from Puna. Garden teachers will be able to take home *huli* (taro tops) for their school gardens. Community members are also welcome to attend on a space-available basis. To reserve a space, call Uluwehi Vanblarcom at 808-258-4358.

The Kohala Center coordinates the Garden Network and helps to support these school garden projects. The immediate goals of the school gardens are to encourage youth and their families to grow edible plants and trees, to increase consumption of locally grown fruits and vegetables, and to share knowledge and respect for traditional Hawaiian food crops. Through hands-on work in school gardens, students learn about the development of sustainable agricultural systems.

The Kohala Center has just launched a new Web site so that island residents can learn more about the Garden Network, the participating schools, and upcoming events which showcase school gardens in communities around the island. Visit <http://www.kohalacenter.org/HISGN/about.html> to learn more.

Community volunteers are invited to assist with the work being done in school gardens around the island. To volunteer, contact Nancy Redfeather, project director of the Hawai'i Island School Garden Network, at 808-322-2801 or via e-mail at nredfeather@kohalacenter.org.

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The Kohala Center is an independent, not-for-profit center for research and education *about* and *for* the environment. By respectfully engaging Hawai'i Island as the world's most vibrant classroom and laboratory for humanity, The Kohala Center builds teaching and research programs that enhance island environments, serve island communities, and advance the work of the academy. The Kohala Center operates in partnership with local, national, and international research and educational institutions. Among its current project partners are Hawaii Community College, the Edith Kanaka'ole Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Kamehameha Schools, the University of Hawaii, Brown University, Cornell University, the Redlands Institute, the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale University, the University of California at Santa Barbara, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, among many others. See <http://www.kohalacenter.org/>.



Photo: Ka 'Umeke Kā'eo Hawaiian Immersion Public Charter School kindergarteners and third graders helping to clean *kalo* (taro) after the harvest. The third graders act as *kua'ana* (older siblings) and help to ensure the job is done correctly.