

Features

The story of seed far from finished

Visiting experts to trace epic saga at public talk on April 16

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The story of seed -- from the wild to the engineered -- will be the focus of a free public lecture from 5:30-7 p.m. Friday, April 16, at the Outrigger Keauhou Beach Resort. The program will precede the Hua Ka Hua-Restore Our Seed Symposium.

Speakers Matthew Dillon of the Organic Seed Alliance (OSA) and Frank Morton of Wild Garden Seeds in Philomath, Ore., will present "The Story of Seed: Wild, Domesticated, Bred and Engineered -- Where Did We Begin and Where Might We Go?"

They will describe the epic of crop domestication from the early days of hunter-gatherers to the scientific revolution, pre-modern breeding prior to the study of genetics, the rediscovery of Mendelian genetics and first wave of classical breeding, the biotech boom, and the agro-ecological approach to seeds that they and others are developing.

"We are in the midst of a revolutionary food epoch unlike any other in history. It's rich with potential, creativity and passion. And it's rife with conflict, despair and danger," Dillon wrote in a recent article.

As OSA's founder and director of advocacy, Dillon focuses on issues of intellectual property and farmers rights, consolidation, genetic contamination and competition in the seed industry. He is a Lannan Foundation Fellow, author of the "State of Organic Seed Report," chair of the Organic Seed Symposium, and serves on the organizational committee for "Seeds and Breeds for 21st Century Agriculture."

He served as a consultant for the Organization for Competitive Markets on seed concentration issues, work that has led to a Department of Justice antitrust investigation of Monsanto. Prior to OSA, he was the executive director of Abundant Life Seed Foundation, an heirloom seed conservation organization, and was a consultant on biological and genetic resource conservation for the United Nations Development Program's Africa 2015 Initiative.

Morton has been an organic seed grower for 28 years. His company, Wild Garden Seed, is a leader in on-farm selection and breeding of new varieties and disease resistant strains for organic farmers. These seeds, grown in Oregon's Willamette Valley, are available from most North American seed companies that supply the organic seed trade. Morton's mission is to educate and encourage other organic seed folks to pursue similar purposes, only better.

The symposium, which focuses on restoring and revitalizing the local seed industry, will be held April 17-18 at the resort. Farmers, gardeners and seed experts from around the state and the mainland will share ways to grow, select and save high quality seeds for both home and market during the symposium. Participants will also help to plan a public seed initiative.

For the symposium program, speakers and partners, visit <http://kohalacenter.org/seedsymposium/about.html> or contact Nancy Redfeather, symposium coordinator, at 322-2801, nredfeather@kohalacenter.org.

Registration for the symposium is \$100 (cost includes buffet lunch for both days). To register, visit <http://www.kohalacenter.org/seedsymposium/registration.html>. A limited number of scholarships are available for teachers. Contact Redfeather for information. The Outrigger Keauhou Beach Resort is offering a special symposium room rate.

The symposium is hosted by The Kohala Center, with funding from the USDA Organic Research and Education Initiative (OREI) and the County of Hawaii Department of Research and Development. Other sponsors include the College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Natural Resource Management at the University of Hawaii at Hilo; the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, UH-Manoa, and Keauhou-Kahalu'u Education Group/Kamehameha Schools.



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Frank Morton of Wild Garden Seeds collects mature lettuce seeds in Philomath, Ore. - Karen Morton

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