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Learn why and how to save seed at Molokai workshop

by Rachel Wagenman

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The following information is provided by Hawaii Public Seed Initiative:

KAMUELA, Hawai‘i—July 23, 2012—A workshop for farmers and gardeners on seed production and seed saving methods offered by Hawai‘i Public Seed Initiative will be held Friday, August 24, and Saturday, August 25, in Ho‘olehua on Moloka‘i. The workshop will be at Lanikeha Center and at the NRCS Plant Materials Center.

Registration and scholarship application deadline is August 19.

The cost of the workshop is \$50 for both days, which includes a seed manual, a catered lunch on both days, and a tour of the Plant Materials Center. For more details and online registration information, visit

kohalacenter.org/seedbasicsworkshop/molokai.html.

Five youth scholarships are offered to students in grades 11 through college interested in agriculture. Scholarship forms are available online at the website above. Contact Lyn Howe, Hawai‘i Public Seed workshop coordinator, at (808) 756-5310 or seedproject@kohalacenter.org for information.

The two-day workshops, offered on all five islands, are designed to create a beginning working knowledge of seed production, botany and biology, plant selection, seed harvesting, cleaning, and saving various types of seed as well as develop island-wide seed networks. These workshops are possible through the support of the CERES Trust and The Kohala Center.



The workshop includes lectures and hands-on fieldwork so participants can practice harvesting, selecting, cleaning, and storing fresh seed. Fieldwork focuses on growing lettuce and tomato and on seed and taro propagation. Strategies to account for differences in elevation, weather patterns, and rainfall will be discussed.

Among the presenters sharing their knowledge are:

- Hector Valenzuela, Ph.D., College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Relations (CTAHR) Extension, vegetable specialist;
- Russell Nagata, Ph.D., CTAHR County of Hawai‘i Extension administrator, lettuce propagation and seed production specialist;
- Glenn Teves, CTAHR Moloka‘i Extension Office, taro and tomato propagation specialist;
- Ellen Sugawara, Co-owner and operator of Papohaku Biodynamic Farm; and
- Nancy Redfeather, program director of the Hawai‘i Public Seed Initiative and the Hawai‘i Island School Garden Network, and co-owner of Kawanui Farm on Hawai‘i Island.

“By learning to save seed, farmers and gardeners can help to halt the loss of diversity in our food supply experienced over the last century,” said The Kohala Center’s Howe.

“A 1983 study conducted by the Rural Advancement Foundation surveyed 66 crops and found that 93 percent of varieties are extinct. More than 300 varieties of corn existed 80 years ago; now only 12 varieties remain. Tomato varieties have dwindled from 408 to 79; peas from 408 to 25—and the list goes on. Large corporations have bought out many seed suppliers; and this consolidation of seed, combined with the loss of knowledge of seed-saving practices, has resulted in the disappearance of thousands of varieties of heirloom, open-pollinated seeds,” Howe said.

Paul Myers, a home gardener who attended the Kaua‘i workshop, said, “The Kaua‘i seed workshop demystified the basics of gathering my own seeds and empowered me to imagine a greater involvement with our garden. Bringing this knowledge and these friendships back to the garden has invigorated our daily work with enthusiasm and the knowledge that we are not doing this alone.”

For a firsthand account of the Kaua‘i workshop, see “The State of Seed” in the Hawai‘i Homegrown Food Network newsletter at <http://hawaiihomegrown.net/reports/288-thegardentalks-the-state-of-seeds>.

A workshop will be held on Hawai‘i Island on November 3 and 4 at Amy Greenwell Ethnobotanical Garden in Captain Cook with optional farm field trips on November 5.

