

# 4-H Junior Master Gardener Program

## *Growing Great Kids in Times of Adversity*

### The Situation

With the COVID-19 pandemic stay-at-home orders, families needed ways to keep their children engaged during the day. Also, schools were looking to supplement their students with a “stay at home” project that was (1) educational, (2) connected to their class studies, and (3) could be completed from the safety of their home.



In an effort to have more accountability and give plants a good start, families/schools were expected to provide photos showing their garden area was ready to receive plants. This step not only helped ensure project success, but also provided an indication of families needing additional support.

### Extension's Response

Hawai'i County 4-H started a program in 2012 to grow giant pumpkins. Due to the popularity of this program, it has continued to be held annually. Over the years, we were able to diversify to include many other giant fruits and vegetables.

Typically, this program would start in June and conclude in September. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and “stay at home” orders began, an effort was made to start the program earlier to give youth “something” to do, supplement school studies, and get our youths outdoors and away from their computers.

Prior to plant distribution, we held a seminar to provide growing information and answer questions about growing giant produce. We established a Facebook Group page so participants could post their successes and receive assistance when challenges would arise. Monthly “Talk Story” sessions and an annual tour (all held virtually) added to even more educational opportunities throughout the 2020 program.

### Impacts and Outcomes

- Because many youths were at home a greater portion of the day due to the pandemic, they were well-positioned to manage and take better care of their plants, which resulted in more contest entries at the conclusion of the program.
  - o In 2019, there were 22 entries for our contest. This year, we ended up with 76 entries — an increase of 245%!
  - o Seven state records were produced.
- Survey results indicated:
  - o 50% of the participants were first-time gardeners.
  - o Highly significant positive changes in participant knowledge/ability to grow “Giant” vegetables and plants.
- 100% of the responses indicated that families/schools want to see:
  - o the annual seminar continue
  - o monthly ‘Talk Story’ sessions continue



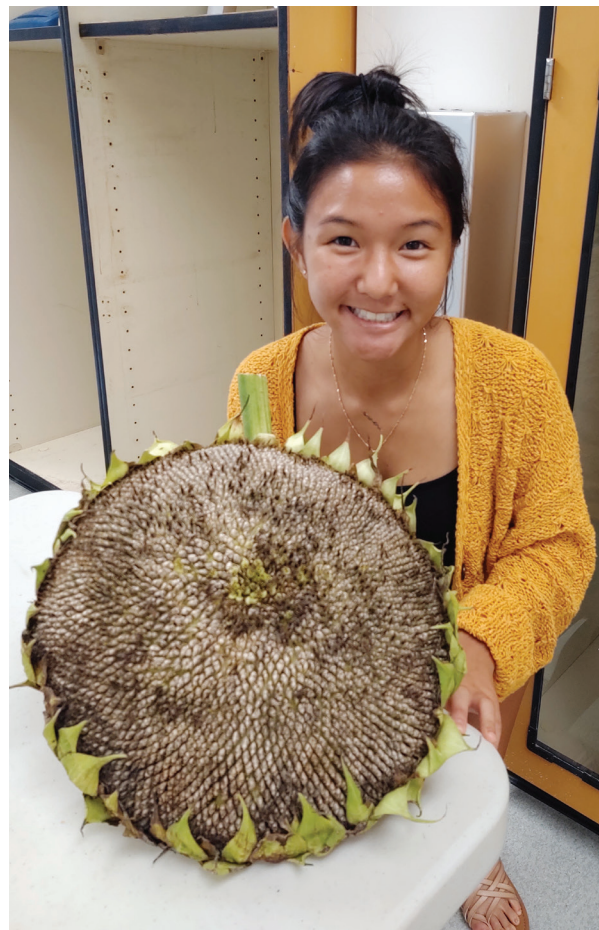
- o the annual tour continue
- o they ALL had fun participating
- o 100% of the 2020 participants stated they would participate again in 2021.

## NIFA Critical Issue:

Youth/Family/Community Development and Health

## For more information, please contact:

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## Rank your knowledge/ability to grow "Giants" before and after the 2020 contest

(1=Knows nothing, 5 Knows it all)

