



Developing a Place-Based Curriculum to Increase Workforce Skills in Hawai'i's Green Industry

The Need for Workforce Development

The number one reported bottleneck for Hawai'i's landscape industry is skilled labor, according to needs assessment surveys and industry advisory panels. No formal certified landscape technician training program has occurred statewide in Hawai'i since before 2019. Additionally, Hawai'i's green industry has long desired a Hawai'i-based training program that addresses the unique environment and culture of Hawai'i. Without a local certified training program that teaches skills, safety, and environmental consciousness, employees have a more difficult time entering or advancing in an industry that requires specialized skills, is inherently dangerous, and has a large impact on Hawai'i's ecosystems.

A Collaborative Statewide Response

CTAHR Cooperative Extension partnered with the Landscape Industry Council of Hawai'i (LICH), Kauai Landscape Industry Council, Maui Association of Landscape Professionals, the Hawaii Landscape & Irrigation Contractors Association, and Windward Community College (WCC) to secure a workforce development grant (\$190K in total). The grant funded the development and execution of a registered class at WCC (AGR7002) consisting of 12 classes and 2 field days. This is the first example of a Hawai'i-based concurrent statewide training program for the landscape industry. The program focused on Hawai'i-based topics like native and tropical plant identification, invasive species, tropical turfgrass management, soils specific to Hawai'i, among other specialized content that made it a more appropriate training for local audiences. The program awarded scholarships and enrolled 73 students from Kaua'i, O'ahu, and Maui. Forty-nine students passed the class and received landscape technician certification through WCC. Seven students have passed the national certification tests and are Certified Landscape Technicians through the National Association of Landscape Professionals.



Students received hands-on training on maintenance and operation of the most common landscape maintenance equipment.

Department of Tropical Plant and Soil Sciences

Russell Galanti, Assistant Extension Agent
rgalanti@hawaii.edu, (808) 746-0910

Alberto Ricordi, Assistant Extension Agent
Hannah Lutgen, Junior Extension Agent
Orville Baldos, Associate Researcher
Tina Lau, Junior Extension Agent

Landscape Industry Council of Hawai'i
Windward Community College
Kauai Landscape Industry Council
Maui Association of Landscape Professionals
Hawaii Landscape & Irrigation Contractors Association



Safety training is one of the most important components of this training program.

Impact and Public Value

- All survey respondents indicated that due to the training they had an increase in knowledge that they would incorporate into their current and future green industry careers, and that this knowledge would lead to positive economic impacts in their lives. Half of respondents indicated economic benefits of up to \$10,000 annually, while 25% indicated economic benefits of over \$10,000 annually.
- The training development and increase in trained landscape technicians across the State provide broad public value. The training supports development of a qualified green-industry workforce, which promotes economic empowerment in Hawai'i. The unique training focus promotes human health and safety, environmental sustainability, and community and social well-being while focusing on local relevance and cultural sensitivity.
- This program resulted in a Hawai'i-specific syllabus, class content, and field day guides for future use, ensuring the training program's sustainability. WCC, LICH, and CTAHR are currently implementing the curriculum in a new training program for Spring 2025.



Field days comprehensively covered the basics for ornamental crops maintenance, safety, and irrigation installation and repair.

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