

Garden to Farm

Creating the Next Generation of Skilled Agriculture Workers

The Situation

With a population of approximately 7,500, the island of Moloka'i has seen its share of businesses come and go. But when one of the top three employers on the island announces it would be closing its Moloka'i facility, this is an event of significance to the local economy.

More than 60 local workers at a seed corn production facility would soon face unemployment or relocation. Most workers are extremely skilled in their job, but their specialization limits their skill set, even in agriculture.

Cooperative Extension's Response

The Garden to Farm Ag Skills Training program was created in response to the recent Mycogen closure. The program targeted displaced workers and/or long-term unemployed persons eligible for unemployment benefits.

Moloka'i Cooperative Extension agents Alton Arakaki and Jennifer Hawkins worked closely with the local Workforce Development Office to secure participants for the program. The program sought to teach agriculture skills in a "Learn by Doing" hands-on approach funded by the State Department of Labor.

Impact/Outcomes

Twenty participants were able to master and complete the Garden to Farm Training by completing assignments, being punctual, and actively participating in class discussions and demonstrations. All classes were hands-on in classroom and outdoor garden settings.

Participants learned about the impacts their actions had on neighboring gardens. This was most often experienced in weed and insect management. They also learned how to grade the produce and determine if the produce was marketable, could be used in value-adding strategies, or if it needed to be culled. There was even a value-adding class in which the students made pickled radish.



Learning as a family

Garden to Farm – continued



Laying weed mats



Cheri, a Garden to Farm participant

The skill sets acquired by participants in order to complete the Garden to Farm Program includes:

- Garden Layout and Design
- Seed Organization
- Nutrition (fertilization) Management
- Irrigation Layout, Design, Maintenance, and Repair
- Trellis Installation
- Integrated Pest Management (insects, diseases, weeds, birds, and deer)
- Row Covers/Mulching
- Plant Propagation/Transplanting/Direct Seeding
- Electric Fence Installation (for deer control)
- Harvesting/Weighing (keeps/culls)
- Utilization of Tools (hoe, sprayer, post driver, plumbing, and harvest knives)
- Non-Circulating Hydroponics (from set up to harvest)
- Food Safety

After completing the program, 7 participants are exploring market gardening, 2 are growing for the market, 5 found jobs locally, and 9 are growing subsistence gardens to offset their income by producing food for their families.

For more information, please contact:

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Collaborators

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