

The Hawai'i Public Seed Network Continues to Grow

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The Hawai'i Public Seed Initiative's 2-day workshop, "Train the Trainers" held in 2013 in Kona continued the work to further education of seed saving and seed production in the Hawaiian Islands. Network leaders from around the islands came together to help identify goals for their respective islands for the next 2 years.

The ideas presented led to exciting possibilities and plans for 2014-15.



During 2014, HPSI will be conducting a statewide **plant variety survey** to send out to our seed network members, experienced gardeners and school gardens teachers. This survey is intended to create a better understanding and documentation of the practical knowledge of statewide farmers and gardeners regarding named varieties that they grow successfully in various island locations, seasons and conditions.

In 2014-15 HPSI will begin **on-farm variety trials** and the training of small farmers and gardeners in the art of plant selection. Farms have been identified on all five islands that are willing to conduct trials and participatory plant variety projects designed in collaboration with our UH CTAHR faculty team and input from our HPSI-SN members. Results will be compiled into a database and made available to other island seed growers and island seed share stations. We feel this work can

play a vital role in conserving agro-biodiversity and help to develop varieties that are disease resistant and adapted to local climates. Hands-on workshops held during different phases of these trials will serve to provide some farm labor, while imparting on-site, real time information to participants regarding soil preparation, disease controls, pollination, isolation, selection, rouging, harvesting, seed cleaning and storage.

Diverse climatic conditions that exist across the Hawaiian Islands give a unique opportunity to explore the performance of seed crop varieties. By utilizing the power of selected backyard gardeners growing under various situations, variety trials will be conducted to generate data that can be used to identify those seed varieties that do best in our tropical climates.

HPSI recognizes that seed preserved and grown from generation to generation is the sign of a true treasure. Although many of these seeds may still be grown around the islands we do not have good methods to find and identify them. Many people who have been growing these

seeds for generations may not even realize their importance and how their preservation might play an important role in today's loss of diversity and changing climate. To address this situation, a **statewide contest** is planned as a means of discovering these **local, ethnic heirloom seed sources** and the stories about these seeds.

Seed Lending Libraries are a concept that has gained momentum in many communities on the mainland. HPSI network members are now growing the movement of Seed Share Stations that potentially will lead to permanent seed lending libraries across the state.

As our islands seed movement grows the potential arises for a statewide seed co-op with branches on each island to document, conserve and distribute locally improved and adapted seed varieties to our islands communities.

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Article content is the sole responsibility of the author. For more information about this article, contact Lyn Howe, email: lynhowe1946@yahoo.com

