

## Featured Farmer: Tane and Maureen Datta, Adaptations

**Area under production:** Our growing area is 8.5 acres; 1 acre in coffee, 3 acres in intensive production systems and the rest in orchards.

**Years farming in Hawaii:** Started close to 25 years ago.

**Crops:** Herbs, edible flowers, choy, eggplant, micromix, coffee, avocado, citrus, lettuce, poha; medicinal plants such as gota cola, awa and passion vine; squash, cinnamon.

**Fertility management practices:** Certified organic with "Organic Certifiers," compost, feathermeal, rock fertilizers, silica sand.

**Pest Management:** Environmental pest and disease controls plus neem, soaps, pyganic®.

**What Sustainability Means to You:** To me, sustainability means our human desires for food, energy and shelter are fulfilled by connecting our needs to strengthening and caring for nature. Doing this provides a long term base for independence and is in a sense the way freedom is grown. Freedom based on an ecologically sustainable economy works for both the individual and society as a whole.

**How did the next generation successfully integrate into the family farm?** I am more concerned with the sustainable practices that I have developed on my farm being available to other farmers than having my daughters run the farm in the future. I would like to see the next generation in my family have the ability to create the world they live in as fully as I have created mine. This they are doing. Employees and WWOOFers (interns from WWOOF, World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) of the next generation get lots of on job training and a chance to fully manage specific crops.

**How do you price your products?** For the high end accounts, we look at the cost per plate (serving) and the cost of producing at the square foot scale and see where the best match is. This leads to a large diversity of crops that evolve over time. The farm goal is to make sure all production space is utilized and that the crop is destined for a specific market before it is planted. The market goal is to make sure every crop we sell is appreciated by the final consumer. For the natural food stores and lower end accounts we look at what crops from the mainland can we displace given our production costs. If we can produce a crop that reaches the market within 20% of the mainland price, it is worth exploring. We try to maintain year round pricing. Most of our accounts value that and don't drop us for cheaper mainland summer prices and then expect us to keep that price level when the mainland crop price goes up in the winter. Year round pricing develops stability for the market.

**How do you promote your product(s)?** Our products are promoted by word of mouth, buyer farm tours, participation in sustainable conferences and trying to provide good service. We have very little advertising outside of donations and have not developed a web site. We do maintain organic certification for both personal and marketing reasons.



*Greenhouse at Adaptations Farm, Photo by Saffron Datta*

**How do you adapt your production to meet the needs of clients?** We talk to our clients several times a week. For the mainland medicinal market I study various systems of medicine such as Chinese, Ayurvedic, American Indian and modern herbalism. This is partly out of natural curiosity and partly to understand what the customers are looking for. More directly, we increase what customers want more of and decrease what they are not asking for. We often maintain plants that people wanted in the past and find that they often come back into demand. In the meantime, we have developed more experience with the plant.

**Where do you market your products?** We market to restaurants, resorts, health food stores, schools, supermarkets, herbal practitioners, and direct to people through a CSA program called "Fresh Feasts."

**How many growers do you work with?** We work with over 60 growers. Some are quite small with one or two exotic fruit trees and others are family based commercial farms. All our products are grown on the islands.

**What does the future look like for your farm?** I'm looking at developing medicinal crops and other crops outside the culinary market. Our primary farm is on Bishop Estate lease land which always has a bit of uncertainty involved when looking toward the future. Our production is likely to spread to other locations and the knowledge gained from here used to develop sustainable agricultural systems in new places. I think organic greenhouses help lower the risk of farming and increase the productivity of a farm.



**Hot Tip from Adaptations**

Farming is always a learning experience. To enjoy organic farming, valuing that you are an important link between the natural world and the ever growing human society, the independence and the freedom of the lifestyle along with economics is important. When farming gets discouraging consider modifying your crops or your production system or both.

Mahalo to the Sustainable and Organic Agriculture Program for reaching out to sustainable farmers.

*Mahalo nui loa to the Datta 'Ohana for this interview.*



**Sustainable and Organic Agriculture Program**

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