

Feature Farmer

Barking Deer Farm

Tocatta Spearman

Maunaloa, HI – Molokai Island

By: Jennifer Hawkins- Molokai Edible Crops Agent

How long have you been farming? Area currently under production?

9 years farming Area: 2 acres

How many years has your current operation been in production? Since 2011

Crops grown, animals raise, other goods & services?

Beets, carrots, lettuce, salad mix, kale, swiss chard, fennel, green onions

Number of employees and/or family members involved in the operation?

1-Currently, it's just me working on the farm.



What is your production system and fertility management?

Our production system is a blend of practices I believe have contributed to the success of the farm. Although the farm is not certified

organic, we use some natural/organic practices along with some biodynamic practices and incorporate some cultural practices such as planting by the moon. Cover crops play a huge role in the soil health. For fertility I use pelleted chicken manure and fish/bone meal as needed.

Pest management Practices?

My goal is to spray as little as possible. When needed

products such as Pyganic and Neem are used. By using cover

crops such as SunnHemp and Sorghum Sudan ('Piper') I have

been successful in keeping the soil healthy and breaking insect

and disease cycles which is important when growing root crops. I removed the panax which was used as windbreak for years and have seen fewer insects. It seemed to be harboring insects within the farm. The panax was also labor intensive in that it required continual pruning, and then the pruned limbs would need to be hauled off. I replaced the panax with Vetiver grass and Gandule bean. Neither seem to harbor insects; the beans fix nitrogen and the vetiver helps with runoff after heavy rains. Both the grass and the beans can be chopped and dropped, then left in place as a mulch. The beans get taller than the grass, therefore allowing for double protection from the wind.



What is your process in complying with Food Safety Regulations?

Food safety is very important. I start in the field by double stacking my harvest bins, so the inner harvest bin never actually touches the ground. In recent years, I have expanded our post-harvest handling area. SaniDate 5.0 is the choice for sanitizing in this area. I wash/sanitize the produce, place it on the drying rack, and once dry, it goes straight in the cooler.



What are your strategies for controlling costs?

It's just me, so labor cost is a huge savings. Drip tape is utilized which helps lower water costs, and the cool bot is only run 24-48 hours a week to hold produce between post-harvest cleaning/packing and deliver to the market. When seeding a new bed of root crops, row

covers are used to prevent birds from picking at the seeds/seedlings. In addition, the row cover helps hold soil moisture, and deflects heat. This is left on for about a week and a half and saves time, water, seeds which saves money.

Places you sell your products?

The produce is sold through Sust'ainable Molokai's Mobile Market. I do sell salad mix to Pacific Eatery here on Molokai where it has been a big hit!



How do you promote and keep up with market trends?

Sust'ainable Molokai does all the marketing for the produce sold through the Mobile Market. Reputation goes a long way along with word of mouth.

What does the future hold for your farm?

More years of learning how to grow things better, keep up with production and continue to have more food here on Molokai.



New products/services provided?

No new products or services.

What advice would you give to other aspiring farmers?

First, if you can find a way to live where you farm, that will save so much time and add efficiency. Second, try not to get too discouraged. There are a lot of things that can and do go wrong. It takes a while to figure out how and what you uniquely want to farm. Farming is anything but easy and there are many variables that can add to the challenge. When it

all goes right though, it's pretty amazing!

Barking Deer Farm

P.O. Box 179

Maunaloa, HI 96770

(808) 646-0467 / (808) 658-9935

barkingdeerfarm@gmail.com

Facebook: