

'Aha Kumulā'au Community Forestry Partners Gathering

Friday, September 20th, 2024

University of Hawai'i at West O'ahu: Nāulu Learning Center, Hale 'O Kūahuokalā, Māla

Intention to Connect and Celebrate:

The Kaulunani Urban and Community Forestry Program (DLNR-DOFAW) team recognizes how much our partners learn from each other and how they are experts of their places and practices. With this value in mind, we sought to provide a meaningful, in-person opportunity to lift up our growing network of partner organizations to 1) strengthen pilina among people and between people and trees and 2) celebrate trees and the people and programs that support trees.



Figure 1. Event organizers and facilitators pose with an expression of 'āina momona. From right to left: Dr. Manulani Aluli Meyer, Emma Broderick, Dr. Matthew Lau, Jesse Pili'aloa Mikasobe Kealiinohomoku, Indrajit Gunasekara, Ioane Jahn, Kehau Kahele-Madali, Chris Fujimoto, Desiree Page, Joshua Silva, Jolie Dollar. Photo: Skye Haraga

A Collection of Relationships Among Trees and People:

Collectively, the event attracted more than 90 attendees from O'ahu, Hawai'i, Maui, Kaula'i, and Moloka'i including students, 'ohana members, tree care professionals, farmers, educators, scientists, extension agents, Hawaiian cultural art practitioners, nonprofit leaders, Kaulunani Council members, and government representatives whose work is either immersed in or intersects with urban and community forestry at county, state, and federal levels. The invitation was extended to current partners, but with remaining space, spots filled organically (mostly from attendees or organizers wanting to bring valued established partners and potential or new collaborators).



Figure 2. Event participants make 'apu (coconut shell cup) with Jesse Pili'aloa Mikasobe Kealiinohomoku. Photo: Ryan Aguilar

Kumulā'au Engagements:

Kumu niu, pū hala, and 'ohe took center stage at the beginning of the event as the practitioners welcomed attendees to join in practices of making 'apu, preparing lau for ulana, and stamping 'ohe kāpala. Attendees found these activities memorable and valuable. Lydi Morgan Bernal (UH Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources Farm to School) felt she was “moving closer to my desire to learn ulana lauhala – new inspiration to include pū hala (trees) in our school agroforests.” Another appreciated the opportunity for participant choice where “people could participate in activities that interested them most and honored trees in different ways.”



Figure 3: Nalu Andrade guides participants to stamp 'ohe kāpala he carved. Photo credit: Ryan Aguilar



Figure 4: Weavers from Keanahala guide participants to clean lau. Photo: Ryan Aguilar

These engagements were intentionally first on the agenda, which Wei Fang (MA'O Organic Farms) considered a “great idea to start the day with hands on, informal work” and David Bryant (National Tropical Botanical Garden) “loved how we were invited to participate in plant-based practices, from hala weaving to 'ohe kāpala,” and thought this “really set a perfect tone for the day.”

Takeaways:

Without question, connections were made at this event. These statements illustrate the qualities of connection and profound moments with trees and people:

We use trees as connectors -- to place, to people, to past, present, and future (Skye Haraga, Kupu Hawai'i and Kaulunani)

Gratitude is key for those caring for the trees on their grounds, at their workplace. "Care for the people who care for the trees" (Pua Heimuli, Division of Forestry and Wildlife O'ahu Outreach and Education)

A connection I made was the importance of relationships. Relationships are the glues in systems and organizations making things possible. Do not underestimate the power of relationships. (Jeanette Burdick Purple Mai'a Hawai'i Food+ Policy)

Connection between ocean + reef health + near shore forestry. Cultural practice doesn't need gatekeepers. Go, practice the culture. (Alex Beatty, City & County of Honolulu, Transit Oriented Design)

Breakout groups:

Four breakout options were offered over two sessions, and are pictured clockwise from the top left.



- 1. Invasive Species – Maka’ala Kākou! WATCH OUT: Practices to prevent the spread of diseases and pests in plants.** Led by Josh Silva (University of Hawai’i Cooperative Extension) and Jolie Dollar (Windward Community College), this session included demonstrations of plant inspection and setting up a quarantine area.
- 2. Tree Planting and Care – Deepening our Relationships by Ritualizing Right Tree, Right Place, Right Care.** Emma Broderick, Executive Director of Pu’uhonua Society and Desireé Page, a practicing Arborist and Kaulunani Advisory Council member offered perspectives on the topic.
- 3. Weaving Project Partners – Bridging, Building, and Maintaining Complex Relationships Within Wahi Kapu.** Ioane Jahn led this session independently with stories from his relationship to Kūkaniloko.
- 4. Aspiration to Action: (How) are we growing biocultural well-being?** Led by Kaulunani staff members Heather McMillen, Kate Wiechmann, and Koki Atcheson under the guidance of Sanjeev Sridharan (UH Mānoa faculty and Evaluation Advisor to Kaulunani), this breakout session invited participants to consider the “who, how, and why” of what they do and how that relates to trees.



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