



DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

News Release

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**SAVING HAWAI'I'S RAREST NATIVE PLANTS
FROM EXTINCTION TAKES 'PEP'**

Little-known program yielding hopeful signs of success

HONOLULU – Protecting Hawai'i's rarest native plants from extinction is the aim of a unique partnership known as the Plant Extinction Prevention (PEP) program, supported by the Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) along with numerous conservation partners who are working to provide Hawai'i's native plant populations with the resources to survive for generations to come.

The PEP Program is funded in part by DOFAW, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other state, federal and private funds, and focuses on plant species (known as "PEP" species) *with fewer than 50 plants remaining in the wild.*

In 2009, the PEP Program and its partners discovered new individuals or populations of 17 PEP species through surveys on all the main Hawaiian Islands. The hope-inspiring discovery of these "founder plants"-- or naturally occurring wild plants -- is important to the survival of the species. Having a complete picture of all known individual plants allows conservation botanists to plan their recovery actions in an informed way, increasing the species' chances of recovery in the ecosystems to which they belong.

To protect these precious few plants from extinction PEP partners use fencing (to prevent damage from wild sheep, goats, cows and donkeys), weed control, propagule (seeds and cuttings) collection, and planting out in the wild.

The PEP program also completed propagule collection from a total of 89 PEP species in 2009. The propagules—fruit, cuttings, or seeds—are taken to off-site seed storage labs, tissue culture labs or partnering nurseries to preserve the genetic material of the founder plants and are used to reintroduce the species back into their natural habitat.

“We have seen precipitous declines of Hawai‘i’s biodiversity over the past 200 years because of loss of natural habitat to human uses, introduction of animal and weed pests, and diseases,” said Joan Yoshioka, Statewide PEP Coordinator.

“I’ve personally witnessed several plant extinctions in the past 20 years. It’s time to accept that we can and must do more to preserve the native Hawaiian biological treasures that have been placed in our care. The PEP Program, together with all its partners, is trying to do just that,” said Yoshioka.

Hawai‘i’s isolation in the middle of the Pacific Ocean results in extreme species diversity. Approximately 90 percent of Hawai‘i’s flora is endemic and found no where else in the world.

This richness in diversity represents 42 percent of all endangered plant species in the United States, the largest number of any state.

To preserve the biodiversity of these islands, PEP and DLNR will continue to work together to monitor and recover these rare species to ensure their survival and continued presence in Hawai‘i’s fragile ecosystems.

For more information on the PEP Program and how you can get involved visit www.pepphi.org.

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For more information, media may contact:
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Photographs of two PEP species: PDF attached, please contact DLNR if (larger file) jpeg is desired.

Photo Captions:



Brighamia insignis – is endemic to Hawaii’s Islands of Ni‘ihau and Kaua‘i. However, wild populations have not been observed on Ni‘ihau since 1947¹ and as of June 2009, there was only one documented plant remaining in the wild on Kaua‘i. The diversity of wild stock is important for the species to endure climate change, introduction of new diseases, etc. This genus is named in honor of the first director of Bishop Museum, William Tufts Brigham, one of Hawaii’s most prominent botanists. **Photo Credit:** Anya Tagawa. ¹- Wagner, Herbst, and Sohmer. 1999. *Manual of the Flowering Plants of Hawai‘i: Revised Edition*.



Lobelia monostachya – is a federally listed endangered species and endemic to O‘ahu and found nowhere else in the world. As of June 2009, only one documented population with a total of eight plants was known to exist. **Photo Credit: Ane Bakutis, Moloka‘i PEP Coordinator.**