

2025

SAFEGUARDING THE HAWAIIAN COCONUT,  
CELEBRATING COCONUT GENETIC DIVERSITY

# IMPACT REPORT



**KUPU KA NIU, KUPU KE KANAKA.**

*When coconuts grow, humanity thrives.*

— He Pule Niu (1897)



**NIU NOW – PU'UHONUA SOCIETY  
COMMUNITY COCONUT PROJECT – KAULUNANI URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM  
DIVISION OF FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE - DLNR**

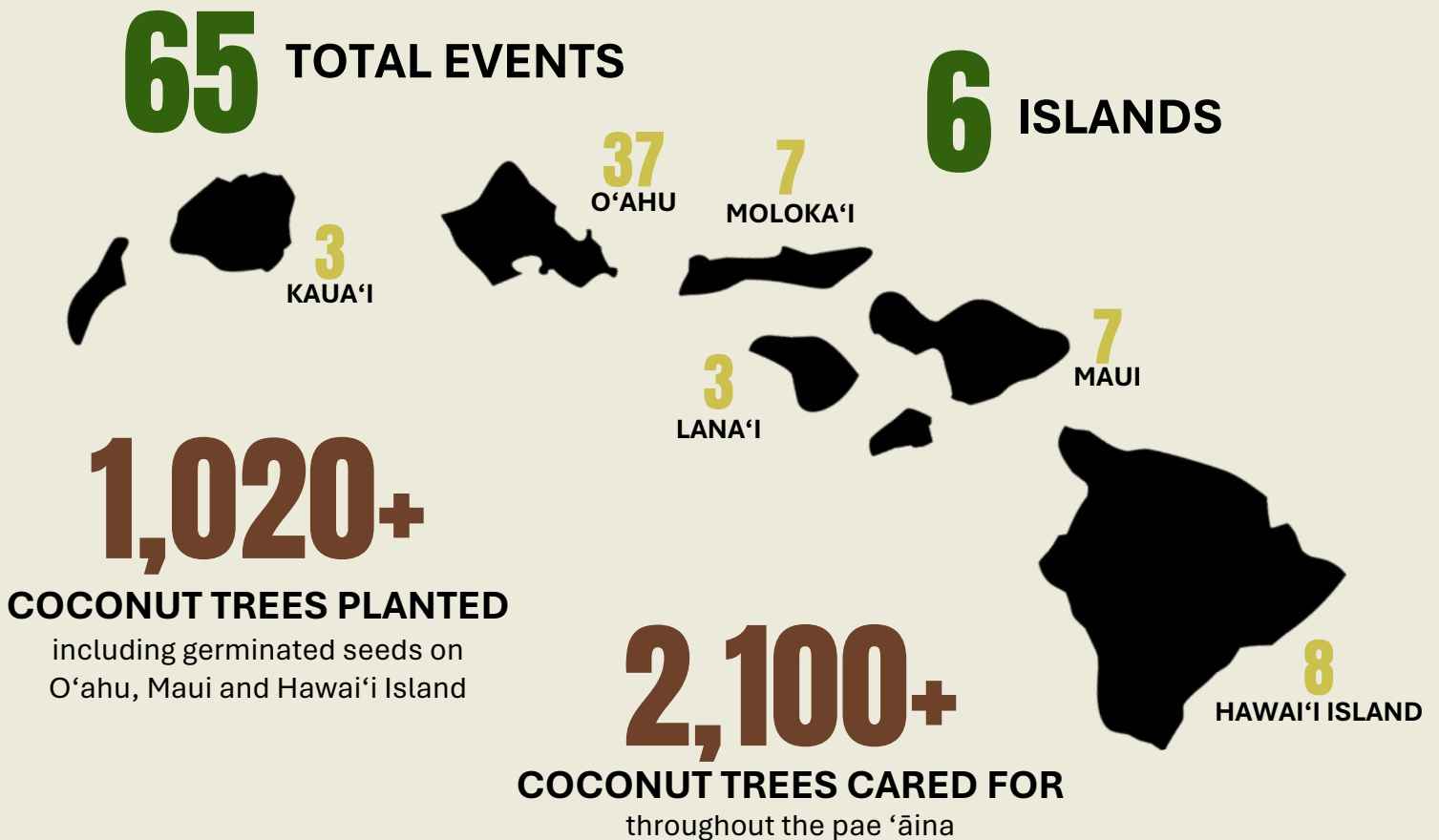
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# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS PREPARING FOR 2026

We envision coconut as a relationship rooted in community and aloha 'āina.



In partnership with **Niu Now**— a grassroots, community-based cultural agroforestry movement of Pu'uhonua Society— we continue advancing the restoration of niu (coconut) as a living cultural, ecological, and food resource across the Hawaiian Islands. Co-led by Dr. Manulani Aluli Meyer and Indrajit Gunasekara, Niu Now is dedicated to renewing the relationship between people and niu by revitalizing uluniu and Hawai'i's ancestral coconut knowledge.

Grounded in land-based practice and community engagement, the movement affirms niu as the “tree of life” and a complete food system. This work inspired the creation of the Community Coconut Project, established under the Kaulunani Urban and Community Forestry Program, with guidance from Dr. Heather McMillen, leadership from Indrajit Gunasekara, and assistance from Kehau Kahele-Madali and Kanile'a Smith.

The Hawai'i **Community Coconut Project** is the first initiative of its kind within the Division of Forestry and Wildlife's Kaulunani Urban & Community Forestry Program. We are deeply grateful for the support, dedication, and aloha of the many community members who make it possible to protect, restore, and uplift niu throughout Hawai'i.

# CORE PRIORITIES

1

## CULTURAL REVITALIZATION

Honoring and utilizing every part of the kumu niu (coconut tree), while reconnecting communities to associated cultural practices, ceremonies, and 'ike niu (coconut knowledge systems).

2

## ECOLOGICAL CONSERVATION

Safeguarding, replanting and deepening our understanding function-based niu genetic diversity and Hawaiian uluniu (coconut grove) systems to strengthen resilience and support their role as a vital tool for climate change mitigation.

3

## FOOD SECURITY & HEALING

Reintegrating niu into Hawai'i's staple food systems as a reliable source of nourishment, medicine, and community well-being.

## Reflections

With humility and joy, we share a snapshot of our 2025 activities and accomplishments—made possible through strong community relationships, dedicated partners, and a shared commitment to aloha 'āina. The pillars guiding this work were first established by the Niu Now community through nearly a decade of steadfast effort, and the Community Coconut Project continues to build on this foundation to restore niu as a cultural relative and vital resource for Hawai'i.

Across the islands, the Community Coconut Project, the Kaulunani Urban and Community Forestry Program, Niu Now, and many partners have grown this movement together. Over the past year, we hosted more than 65 community coconut events and planted over 1,000 coconut trees, including the creation of four niu germplasm collections to safeguard and share Hawaiian niu diversity.

Through hands-on learning and gatherings, we connected with over 4,100 community members, sharing 'ike niu and skills such as lau niu weaving, 'aha making, food preparation, wood and 'apu work, and niu planting practices. We also supported community learning around coconut rhinoceros beetle (CRB) management, uluniu sanctuary care, and a range of niu-centered presentations and film screenings—all rooted in strengthening relationships between people, niu, and place.



Community Forest Fest - Nov. 16, 2025



Uluniu UH West Oahu workday - June 28, 2025

# MAHALO VOLUNTEERS & PROJECT SUPPORTERS

## O'AHU



Aunty Lynette Paglinawan  
*Ho'oponopono Kumu*

Aunty Manu Aluli Meyer  
*UHWO Chancellor's Office*  
*Niu Now Co-Founder*

Uncle Calvin Hoe  
*Hakipu'u Learning Center*

Heather McMillen  
*Kaulunani Urban & Community Forestry Program*

Uncle Tom Lenchanko  
*Kūkaniloko*

Ioane Jahn  
*Kūkaniloko*

Kahealani Hrbacek  
*Kūkaniloko*

Uncle Eric Enos  
*Ka'ala Farms*

Jesse Mikasobe-Keali'inohomoku  
*Wai'anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center (WCCHC), UHWO*

Adam Kekaula Hanohano  
*Niu Now + Mālama Learning Center (MLC)*

Nalamaku Ahsing  
*Kauluakalana, Ulupō*

Pauline Sato  
*Malama Learning Center*

Emma Broderick  
*Pu'uhonua Society*

Maile Meyer  
*Pu'uhonua Society*

Lehuanani DeFranco  
*Pu'uhonua Society*

Jahna Kehau Kahele-Madali  
*UHWO Alumni + MLC*

Lennie Espinoza  
*Kupu*

Koki Atcheson  
*Kaulunani Urban & Community Forestry Program*

Dianna "Ula" Hill  
*UHWO*

Sa'iliemanu Lilomaiava-Doktor  
*Professor, Hawaiian and Pacific Studies*

Jaime Abrazado  
*Hawai'i Positive Engagement Project (UH Mānoa)*

Annabelle Le Jeune  
*The Nature Conservancy*

Millie Almony-Leon  
*Ka Huli o Haloa*

Uncle Mona & Aunty BJ Kahawaii  
*Lai'e*

Tasia Yamamura  
*UH West O'ahu Gardener*

Alicia Higa  
*WCCHC*

Kimeona Kane  
*808 Cleanups*

Lydi Bernal  
*Farm to School Program Specialist*

Roxanne Adams  
*City & County of Honolulu*  
*Division of Urban Forestry*

Lilinoe Bassett  
*Community*

Malu Cassidy  
*MSW and launiu weaver*

Kaukahi Severson  
*Castle High School Ag Teacher*

Kauai Sana  
*MA'O Farms*

Kukui Maunakea-Forth  
*MA'O Farms*

Chris Cramer  
*Maunaloa Fishpond Heritage*

Mahi LaPierre  
*Cultural Practitioner*

Vilsoni Hereniko  
*Professor + launiu weaver*

Fa'i Lowe  
*Educator and 'ike niu practitioner*

Malynta Haleyalpiy  
*Educator and 'ike niu practitioner*

Randee Wilding  
*Dream House*

Brandon Maka'awa'awa  
*Nation of Hawai'i*

Julie Zill  
*Bellows Air Force Station*

Kima Wassel Hardy  
*Urban Agroecologist & Community Organizer*

## HAWAI'I ISLAND



Leila Kealoha  
*Pōhaku Pelemaka*

Noa Lincoln  
*UH Mānoa*

Auli'i Mitchell  
*Kumu Hula*

Mikey Kyser  
*Pōhaku Pelemaka + Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo + Kahu 'Āina O Puna*

Makani Gregg  
*Pōhaku Pelemaka*

Pono Akina  
*Pōhaku Pelemaka*

Misty Carter  
*Hui Oihana*

Pono Kekala  
*Hui Oihana*

Hannah Rozendo  
*Pōhaku Pelemaka*

Rafaell Rozendo  
*Pōhaku Pelemaka*

Ho'oli Cui-Yockeman  
*UH Hilo*

Peter Watson (Kaleikukui)  
*UH Hilo*

Kalisi Mausio  
*Project Kanu*

## MAUI



Vicky Duran  
*Koali Niu Project*

James Freudenberg-Pu  
*Koali Niu*

Waihua Pu  
*Niu Now, Hana*

Ikaika Nakahashi  
*UH Maui + MNBG+Natural Resource Manager, OHA*

Pūlama Collier  
*Cultural Practitioner*

Kia'i Collier  
*Hawaii Land Trust*

Ishikawa 'ohana  
*Paeloko Learning Center*

Philippe Visintainer  
*Coconut Protector*

## KAUA'I



Yoshito L'Hote  
*'Āina Ho'okupu O Kīlauea*

Chris Ka'iakapu  
*Hawai'i 'Ulu Cooperative*

Nalani Kaneakua  
*Limu Practitioner*

## GLOBAL

Roland Bourdeix  
*French Agricultural Research & Cooperation Organization*

Nat Tuivavalagni - Fiji  
*Professor, Agricultural Sciences,*

Lalith Perera  
*Coconut Research Institute of Sri Lanka*

Nimali Munasingha - Australia  
*Professor, Disaster Studies*

Renuka De Silva - USA  
*Professor, Indigenous Studies*

Mark Ero  
*The Pacific Community*

Carmel Pilotti  
*The Pacific Community*

Alex Cantatore - New York  
*QuickActCasual Productions*

Upolu Luma Vaai - Tonga  
*Chancellor, Pasifika Communities University*

## LANA'I



Michael Hunter  
*Dreams Come True*

Susan Hunter  
*Dreams come True*

## MOLOKA'I



Uncle Kunani Nihipali  
*Niu Now, Moloka'i*

Aunty Ipo Nihipali  
*Niu Now, Moloka'i*

Kilia Purdy-Avelino  
*Moloka'i Moku Resilience Stewardship*

Uncle Kaleo Pua'a  
*Molokai Mahi'ai*

Ali Momilani Kaina  
*Upward Bound Advisor, Moloka'i, UH Maui*

# SAFEGAURDING NIU DIVERSITY



Ka'akepa Uluniu in Puna, Hawai'i Island

The Community Coconut Project kicked off the year with a visit to Puna on Hawai'i Island, accepting an invitation from **Pōhaku Pelemaka**, the community organization dedicated to protecting and preserving Puna, to lead a three-day training. Guided by Aunty Leila Kealoha, we worked together to create a coconut grove documentation system to help track and care for the Ka'akepa uluniu. The team set shared goals and a collective action plan for stewarding Ka'akepa and nearby groves, and this effort continued throughout the year, **ultimately engaging more than 200 community members across Hawai'i Island.**



Waihe'e, Maui



Ho'olehua, Moloka'i

**In January alone, the Community Coconut Project spent 11 days working across three islands—Hawai'i Island, Maui, and Moloka'i.** In partnership with Niu Now and the Hawai'i Land Trust, our team visited more than ten sites in Maui to identify and collect rare and older Hawaiian niu seeds. **We gathered 300 seeds representing 24 varieties**, laying the groundwork for a major niu nursery and a shared vision to establish a thriving uluniu in January 2026.

# NIU GENETIC DIVERSITY

# NURTURING NIU NURSERIES

## WAI'ANAE COAST COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH CENTER, O'AHU

This marks the third round of niu nursery work we've carried out with the Wai'anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center (WCCHC). Back in October 2021, we gifted more than **300 niu seedlings of over 20 varieties** to families and organizations throughout Wai'anae and neighboring communities.

Building on the continued partnership between Alicia Higa and Jesse Mikasobe-Keali'inohomoku at WCCHC and Niu Now, we began gathering niu seeds once again, from Nānākuli to Mākaha, for this third cycle. Today, the Wai'anae niu nursery is thriving with **more than 300 healthy niu keiki across 20+ varieties**—germinated, growing strong, and on track to be planted in 2026.



Niu seedlings at WCCHC  
04/03/25



Over 70% niu germinated  
10/25/25

## KOALI NIU PROJECT, MAUI



Koali Niu Project



Kalo at Koali Niu Project

The Community Coconut Project and Niu Now is offering guidance and monitoring the progress of **Koali Niu Project**, a newly established local coconut genebank. This first-of-its-kind initiative in Hawai'i is led by Aunty Vicky Durand.

Throughout the year, our team visited the Koali Niu Project multiple times, studying ancient uluniu and documenting exceptionally rare and unique coconut varieties found throughout Hāna. Today, **the Koali uluniu holds three old Hawaiian niu types from Wai'anae, O'ahu, along with 24 sprouted niu representing six additional Maui varieties.**

The Wai'anae niu were intentionally relocated to this genebank to protect their genetics from the spread of CRB, as the parent trees in Wai'anae have already been lost to CRB damage.

At the Koali Niu Genebank, overgrown hau, African tulip, bamboo, and other nonnative plants were cleared and turned into mulch to expand the Koali niu genebank and help restore the long-buried mala (garden). This year, we harvested our second round of kalo and replanted sections of the restored māla—land that has gone unused for more than 200 years.

“**MAUI OBSERVES THE SUN FROM WAILOHI AND SEES WHERE IT RISES. HE FASHIONS STRONG CORD OF COCONUT FIBER FROM PEELOKO (PAELOKO) AT WAIHEE.**”

— Beckwith, P. 231, 1940

We established four coconut nurseries across Hawai‘i, each with a distinct focus and vision:

- **Nursery #1** - WCCHC, Wai‘anae, O‘ahu: established to safeguard coconut genetic diversity in response to the rapid spread of the CRB along the West O‘ahu coast.
- **Nursery #2** - Hāna, Maui: established to collect and protect unique and culturally significant East Maui niu varieties, helping the Koali Niu Project grow into an important gene bank.
- **Nursery #3** - Kapoho, Waihe‘e, Maui: established to support the planned planting of a large uluniu in January 2026.
- **Nursery #4** - Papakōlea, O‘ahu: established to germinate and care for several rare and special O‘ahu niu varieties under the stewardship of Indrajit.



Selecting niu seedlings at the WCCHC nursery



## Hawaiian Niu Stages

‘ō‘io	Unripe nut with jelly-like translucent flesh
haohao	Maturing nut with shell still white; flesh soft + white
‘ili kole	<i>Half-ripe nut, not good for cream; meat eaten raw with salt+poi; Hawaiian favorite</i>
o‘o	Nut mature but husk not dried; ripe, consistent meat; good for cream
malo‘o	<i>Brown mature nut; water still present; dry husk; best stage for planting</i>
ho‘oiho	Spongy pulp in sprouting nuts; choice food
ōka‘a, 'āka'a	Brown, old nut with no water and meat and seperated from shell; makes a rattling sound; oil is extracted at this stage

## EXPANDING NIU DIVERSITY

We joined Pōhaku Pelemaka for their Ho‘owehe i Ka Niu Camp and Ka‘akepa programs from July 3–7, 2025. The Community Coconut Project led a series of ‘ike niu workshops that brought coconut knowledge to life through hands-on practice. Participants learned lau niu (coconut leaf) weaving, crafted aha (cordage) and ‘apu (bowls), explored uluniu mulch management, examined niu genetic diversity through morphological traits, identified coconut maturity stages and their traditional Hawaiian names, and made fresh coconut milk—starting with how to recognize the right fruit maturity for both milk and cream.

We also visited the original coconut tree **collection of Leslie Wishard in Puakō, where more than 150 coconut varieties from around the world were introduced to Hawai‘i** in the mid-1900s. Some of the offspring seedlings from this remarkable collection were later donated to Kahanu Garden in Hāna, Maui in 1978.

# NIU GENETIC DIVERSITY

# ESTABLISHING ULUNI

## CULTURAL SITE AT ULUPŌ HEIAU



Preparing for planting the Ulupō Uluniu

On March 1st, the Community Coconut Project, Niu Now, and ‘Elepaiō Social Services collaborated with Kauluakalana, a Kailua-based community organization, to plant an uluniu at the historic site of **Ulupō Heiau**. This new grove serves as a living collection of niu varieties from Wai‘anae and surrounding areas. **A total of 30 seedlings representing 10 carefully selected old varieties** were planted using a genetic conservation strategy known as **Polymotu**. Most varieties were planted in clusters of three, arranged in a triangular pattern, encouraging them to grow together and increasing the likelihood of inbreeding within the same variety, so that future seeds remain true to type. This model of niu planting is a new approach for Hawai‘i, supporting the long-term preservation of traditional niu varieties for generations to come.



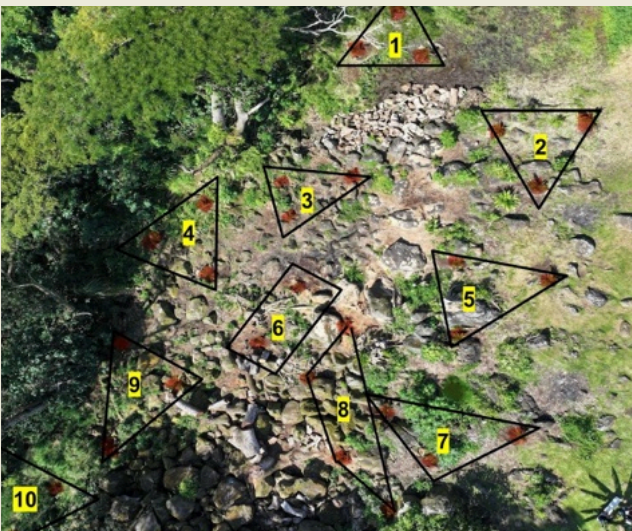
Planting demonstration at the Ulupō Uluniu



Planting of the first niu at Ulupō Uluniu

An uluniu is now taking shape at the ancient Ulupō Heiau, inspired by a traditional Hawaiian niu-planting practice in which coconuts were planted with the po‘o (head) of the he‘e (octopus). This method was believed to strengthen the way the roots grasp the ‘āina— much like the suction cups of the he‘e— while the coconuts themselves were said to resemble the he‘e’s head as it bulges.

The uluniu at Ulupō is standing strong— **10 varieties of 30 specific Wai‘anae niu** were selected for this uluniu, marking some of them as the last set of niu seed harvested due to the rapid spread of CRB destruction on the coast of Wai‘anae.



Uluniu floor plan at the Ulupō Heiau in Kailua

Polymotu uses traditional techniques with contemporary applications. The map on the left demonstrates the coconut tree planting layout for the uluniu at the Ulupō Heiau. Through this planting strategy, ancient niu varieties are safeguarded.

Different niu varieties are grouped by their germ color—the natural color of the spot where the sprout emerges—and planted in clusters to encourage pollination within the same type. This increases the chances of producing future seeds that stay “true to the kind.” Each motu is observed in the triangular or four-sided diagrams, marked with numbers 1–10, arranged from makai to mauka, to help track and care for the plantings.

# NIU GENETIC DIVERSITY

# PLANNING ULUNIU

## KAPOHO, MAUI

Another uluniu is on the way. After more than a year of dedicated work by many hands in Kapoho, Waihe'e, Maui, the effort is coming together for an uluniu planting set for January 21, 2026.



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	FRONT	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16		
	1D	2D	3T	3T	3T	3T	3T	3T		3T	3T	3T	3T	3T	3T	3T	3T	3T	1
	3T	3T	3T	3T	3T	3T	4T	4T		4T	4T	4T	4T	5T	5T	5T	5T		2
	5T	5T	5T	5T	5T	5T	6T	6T		6T	6T	6T	6T	6T	6T	6T	6T		3
	7T	7T	7T	7T	7T	7T	7T	8T		8T	8T	8T	8T	8T	8T	8T	8T		4
	8T	9T	9T	9T	9T	9T	9T	9T		9T	9T	9T	10T	10T	10T	10T	10T		5
	10T	10T	10T	10T	11T	11T	11T	11T		11T	11T	11T	11T	11T	11T	11T	11T		6
	11T	11T	11T	11T	11T	11T	11T	11T		11T	11T	11T	11T	11T	11T	11T	11T		7
Makai end	11T	11T	11T	11T	12T	12T	12T	12T		12T	12T	12T	12T	12T	12T	12T	12T	Mauka end	8
	12T	13T	13T	13T	13T	13T	13T	13T		13T	13T	14T	14T	14T	14T	14T	14T		9
	14T	14T	14T	14T	14T	14T	14T	14T		15D	15D	15D	15D	15D	15D	15D	15D		10
	15D	15D	16T	16T	16T	16T	16T	16T		16T	16T	16T	16T	16T	16T	16T	16T		11
	17T	17T	17T	18T	18T	18T	18T	18T		18T	18T	18T	18T	19T	19T	19T	19T		12
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	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23		23									16
									BACK										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16		



Top Left: Prepping for the uluniu planned for Kapoho, Maui

Right: A digital copy of the nursery structure

Bottom Left: Uluniu floorplan, each circle= 1 motu of 3 or more niu of the same kind; 133 niu seedlings total

Right: Over 80% niu germination in December 2025

## KUALOA BEACH PARK

The uluniu in progress hosts old varieties of niu, tended with the joyful spirit that Uncle Calvin brings to every coconut he touches. Together with Uncle Calvin and Ka Huli o Hāloa, we planted 10 niu representing the traditional varieties of Kanawao and Hakipu'u. Establishing these trees along the coastline of Kualoa Beach Park helps control erosion and protect 'iwi kūpuna resting in the area.



Planting niu at Kualoa Beach with Uncle Cal

# NIU GENETIC DIVERSITY

## DOCUMENTING NIU GENETICS

### HAWAIIAN COCONUT CATALOG

This year, we began developing the **first Hawaiian coconut catalog**, focusing on the “Old Varieties of Hawaiian Niu.” Through research, community relationships, and shared mo’olelo, we identified the **Puna District on Hawai’i Island as one of the few places where function-based, traditional Hawaiian niu varieties still remain.** As a result, the uluniu along the Puna coastline have become a central focus of this documentation effort.

We are coordinating this work with Dr. Roland Bourdeix, a world-renowned coconut scientist with more than three decades of experience across 45 coconut-growing nations and currently with the French Agricultural Research and Cooperation Organization. His expertise is helping ensure both the scientific and cultural integrity of this project. The manual is now in development and will be released in the near future.

Dr. Bourdeix shared the wealth of his knowledge of coconuts where we learned many expectations of niu germplasm, genebanking, understanding ancient grove systems, and the scientific process of how to catalog function-based cultural niu diversity.



First standardized picture of niu documentation  
Ka’akepa, Puna



Dr. Roland and Dr. Noa at Ka’akepa

“ Over these days, working with Indrajit, all colleagues and with members of the traditional communities, especially through the inspiring associations, has been an unforgettable experience. The atmosphere was not only productive but also filled with warmth, generosity, and genuine human connection. Although I came to share knowledge about the coconut palm, I leave with the feeling that I have also learned from all of you. Beyond the scientific and technical exchanges, it was the human dimension that touched me most deeply: the spirit of collaboration, the respect for culture and tradition, and the passion for preserving and revitalizing the coconut as a living heritage. Thank you for opening your hearts, your knowledge, and your traditions to me. These moments will remain precious, and I carry them with me as a source of inspiration for the future. ”

— Dr. Roland Bourdeix

# OUR NIU HERITAGE

## Mo'olelo

*In the story of Māui lassoing the sun for his mother Hina, Paeloko is identified as the ancient coconut grove that once served the function of growing niu with a certain morphology preferable for cordage making. During the era of foreign land ownership, this ancient grove was cleared for sugarcane and macadamia plantations, erasing its sacred function and unique genetics, thus severing the place-based connection to mo'olelo. The future uluniu at Paeloko serves as a reparative action, bringing back niu kaula to place it once reigned.*



Maui Slowing The Sun by Dietrich Varez

## SHARING THE CULTURAL ROLE OF NIU

A special variety of niu was found around Waihe'e, Maui with a large quantity of fiber, ideal for making 'aha, and eaten in accordance with the moon. Congruent with the Hawaiian mo'olelo, this variety is also found in the same area where the Hawaiian God Maui went to make his coconut sennit net before he embarked on the mission of capturing the sun. We visited the **Paeloko Learning Center** with the Ishikawa 'ohana to put a plan in action for a future uluniu site in 2026! Together with the Paeloko Learning Center, we set out to bring the Maui community into familiarity with 'ike niu (coconut knowledge) and to teach how to identify different stages of maturity.



Niu demonstration at Paeloko



Planting an uluniu for niu kaula



Keiki learn about niu kaula during a demonstration



Demonstration on niu diversity

“**IF YOU PLAN FOR A YEAR, PLANT KALO.  
IF YOU PLAN FOR 10 YEARS, PLANT KOA.  
IF YOU PLAN FOR 100 YEARS, TEACH THE CHILDREN ALOHA ‘ĀINA.**”  
— Hawaiian Proverb



Jermy sharing a niu demonstration

## HERITAGE PLANT & COMMUNITY DAY

The Ka ‘Āina Ho‘oilina event in Hilo on August 30 featured Kaulunani Advisory Council member Jermy Uowolo, who shared the ‘ike and traditions he learned growing up on Yap Island, Federated States of Micronesia.



Volunteers at Kūkaniloko plant a niu together

## MAKAHIKI AT KŪKANILOKO

The uluniu at Kūkaniloko—planted in 2021 through a partnership between Niu Now and ‘Āina Kaiāulu—now **includes 108 growing niu keiki representing 16 selected varieties.**

This year, we welcomed the Makahiki season and marked our fourth niu-versary at the site. In the spirit of Lonoikamakahiki, we also celebrated the birth of our community partner, Kahealani, and her pēpē. Led by Uncle Tom Lenchanko, we planted the ‘iewe (placenta) with niu, an ancestral practice that protects the newborn and strengthens the connection to ‘āina and kūpuna.



Aunty Manu, Uncle Tom, and Indrajit, Nov, 2025

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## CELEBRATING THE YEAR OF OUR COMMUNITY FORESTS

Together with all Kaulunani Urban and Community Forestry Program partners, **we honored 2025 as the Year of Our Community Forests**. Community Forest Fest was held at Foster Botanical Garden and brought people together around shared learning, and our volunteers hosted an educational, hands-on cultural workshop that highlighted the remarkable diversity of niu varieties and their many uses.

Interpretive displays showcased the ingenuity and cultural depth of niu—featuring cordage processing, woven umeke (baskets), and other traditional practices—while a guided lau niu weaving activity invited participants to learn through direct experience. The day underscored how niu continues to connect communities, strengthen cultural knowledge, and inspire stewardship across Hawai‘i.



Niu Now volunteers Annabelle, Auntie Cheri, and Jaime join the Kaulunani team members Kanile‘a and Indrajit to prep and weave decorations for Forest Fest



Niu weaving workshop at Forest Fest



Kumu Loke’s 6th grade class, Ke Kula Kaiapuni o Kualapu‘u

## GENERATIONAL EDUCATION IN MOLOKA‘I

We carried out a series of niu-focused activities on Moloka‘i in collaboration with Niu Now Moloka‘i, the Nihipali ‘ohana, Mālama Learning Center, and Moloka‘i High School and Elementary. Our time on the island included visits to several historic uluniu, among them the secluded groves of Waiakāne, Mapulehu, and Kapuāiwa. At Ke Kula Kaiapuni o Kualapu‘u, we shared an interactive presentation where 6th grade haumāna learned foundational niu knowledge and were introduced to a developing plan to safeguard the ancient uluniu of Kapuāiwa.



Nihipali ‘Ohana Uluniu

We also **supported the petition advanced by the Nihipali ‘ohana and Niu Now Moloka‘i urging the Hawai‘i Board of Agriculture to establish an interim rule preventing CRB from reaching Moloka‘i**. The petition—authored by cultural practitioners and Moloka‘i residents Kunani and Ipo Nihipali—called for a temporary halt to the import of gardening and landscaping materials that could unintentionally transport CRB to the island. This effort reflects the community’s commitment to protecting Moloka‘i’s living heritage and ensuring the resilience of its irreplaceable uluniu.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

# NIU FOREVER THE FILM

## FILM RELEASE & FREE COMMUNITY SCREENINGS

The Niu Forever film is now available to the community, offering a clear and heartfelt look at **our collective work to protect Hawaiian niu and carry forward ‘ike niu**. Created by filmmaker Alex Cantatore, whose award-winning earlier film *Kumu Niu* helped spark broader awareness of niu stewardship—this new documentary continues a shared vision to tell stories that uplift culture, ‘āina, and community.

Free community screenings, often paired with live Q&A or post-film discussions, have become an important way to deepen engagement. These gatherings create space for people to ask questions, share their own ‘ike, and connect more personally with the movement behind the film. They also help ensure that the story of niu reaches audiences who might not otherwise encounter it.

**FREE COMMUNITY FILM SCREENINGS**  
on Moloka'i  
**NIU FOREVER**  
Join us for the documentary and Q&A with Niu Now, sharing 'ike niu & preparedness for fighting Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle.

RSVP for tix  
MANGO THEATER  
Moloka'i  
15 KAUNAKAI PL., KAUNAKAI

HONORED BY NIU NOW HONOLULU!  
KUMU NIU  
WITH NIU NOW O'AHU  
WANGI KUMARU SAMPANINGHA COORDINATOR  
JESSE MIKASOBE-KEALIINOHOMOKU  
ALEX CANTATORE  
JESSIE MIKASOBE-KEALIINOHOMOKU  
ALEX CANTATORE  
JESSIE MIKASOBE-KEALIINOHOMOKU  
ALEX CANTATORE  
A FILM DIRECTOR  
ALEX CANTATORE

Sat, 8/2 - 11am-1pm  
Sun, 8/3 - 10am-12pm  
Mon, 8/4 - 6pm-8pm

niuforeverfilm.com

These screenings made possible by the support of the Kaunani Urban and Community Forestry Program of the DLNR Division of Forestry and Wildlife. Special thanks to Moloka'i Mango Theater.

PIC, ELEPAIWA, MANAHE COAST HEALTH CENTER, and other logos.

**NIU FOREVER**  
FREE EVENT!  
TUESDAY, 7/22  
3:15 PM - 5:15 PM

**AN INTERACTIVE FILM SCREENING ON THE MOVEMENT TO SAFEGUARD HAWAII'S UNIQUE COCONUT DIVERSITY**

featuring  
INDRAJIT GUNASEKARA  
JESSE MIKASOBE-KEALIINOHOMOKU  
ALEX CANTATORE  
NIU COMMUNITY

Hawai'i Conservation Conference  
Hawai'i Convention Center

Saturday, July 26th @ 5:30pm  
**FREE COMMUNITY FILM SCREENING**  
in Honolulu  
**NIU FOREVER**  
Join us for the documentary and Q&A with Niu Now, sharing 'ike niu & strategies for fighting Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle.

HOSTED BY  
NATIVE BOOKS

Time: 6:30 PM - DOORS OPEN, PURUPU  
6:00 PM - FILM BEGINS  
8:15 PM - Q&A

RSVP to attend:  
[QR Code]

Location:  
NATIVE BOOKS HAWAII  
1164 NUUANU AVE  
HONOLULU, HI 96817

This screening was made possible by the support of the Kaunani Urban and Community Forestry Program of the DLNR Division of Forestry and Wildlife. Special thanks to Native Books Hawai'i.

PIC, NATIVE BOOKS, and other logos.

## THE HAWAII CONSERVATION CONFERENCE

Hawai'i is the only U.S. state where niu is both native and deeply rooted in Indigenous culture—central to traditional agriculture, food, medicine, building, and spiritual practice. Today, Hawai'i's unique niu varieties face a conservation crisis, intensified by the spread of CRB and the loss of cultural relationships with the Pacific “Tree of Life.”

The film *Niu Forever* highlights a community-led movement to document, gene-bank, and restore Hawaiian niu through the revival of uluniu and ‘ike niu. Featuring Indigenous experts and community leaders of the Niu Now movement, the documentary weaves cultural storytelling with scientific perspectives to showcase land stewardship, biocultural conservation, and a hopeful path forward for Hawai'i's community forests.



Friends celebrating the *Niu Forever* screening at HCC

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

# CRB AWARENESS & EDUCATION

## WORKING WITH NIU NOW PARTNERS IN PUNA

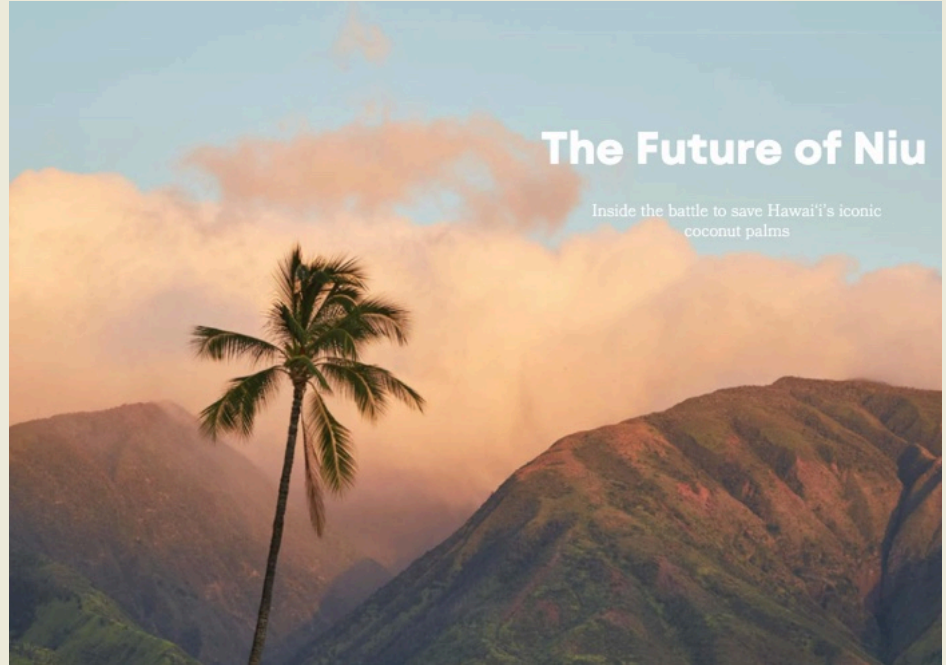
Our work along the Puna coast continued with efforts to track niu diversity along the coastline, documenting the range of varieties found across the district. In July, we partnered with Pōhaku Pelemaka for a Ka'akepa mulch-management workshop, **taking a proactive approach to CRB by burying 1,300 cubic feet of material across 11 trenches.** The Puna Niu Now Hui also gathered at Ka'akepa to record local niu and begin shaping a future catalog during the visit of Dr. Bordiex, whose guidance helped strengthen this growing body of knowledge.



Top & left column: Working with the niu hui of Puna to exchange knowledge  
Bottom Right: Noa Lincoln and his 'ohana weaving pāpale lau niu (coconut leaf hats) during the Ka'akepa campout.

## SHARING OUR COCONUT HERITAGE

The article, “Future of Niu” by Derek Ferrar, published in the Dec. 2025 issue of *Hana Hou!*, brings needed visibility to the state of niu in Hawai‘i today. The story highlights the everyday caretaking that keeps trees healthy, the cultural connections strengthened through community stewardship, and the growing urgency around CRB awareness. By weaving personal voices with on-the-ground realities, **the article highlights why protecting niu requires both knowledge and collective action.** The story continues to broaden public awareness at a critical time, when informed engagement is essential for the future of niu.



Feature in *Hana Hou!* Story by Derek Ferrar, Photo by Linny Morris



Prepping the trunk of the tree

## OBSERVING CRB DAMAGE ACROSS HAWAI‘I

A senile kumu niu (coconut tree) enters a journey into its second life as it transitions into an ‘ahu (alter) or other cultural objects. This is one of the trees that was confirmed to carry the lineage of an ancient uluniu that once stood at Pōka‘ī Bay before the grove was dismantled. It was among the few remaining niu from Pōka‘ī Bay, safeguarded in Mākaha for decades until it ultimately succumbed to CRB—its story is now carried forward by the people who continue to care for what remains.

We witnessed rapid devastation on Kaua‘i during a two-day islandwide assessment of CRB impacts on niu. More than a thousand kumu niu have already been lost, and the beetle continues to spread quickly. Kaua‘i’s remaining niu can still be protected, but immediate action is critical. A detailed report from our assessment will be available on our program site in the coming year.



Coconut trees at Waialua Golf Course affected by CRB

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

# UH WEST COMMUNITY WORKDAYS

## UH WEST O‘AHU ULUNIU COMMUNITY WORK DAYS

On the last Saturday of each month, community members joined the Niu Now workdays, tending to the uluniu through shared stewardship. **These efforts honor land-based practices that connect us to the coconut heritage of our kūpuna.** That responsibility continues through our collective commitments—across our pae ‘āina and through the partnerships that help sustain our vision and our niu practice.

At the UH West O‘ahu campus māla, volunteers offered their time and sweat to care for the foods that nourish us. Within the uluniu, ‘ulu, mai‘a, and ‘uala grow alongside the niu. Much like people, coconut trees thrive in community; they grow stronger when surrounded by other plants, breathing together and sharing cooler air through transpiration.



Uluniu workdays at UH West O‘ahu throughout 2025

*E komo mai!*

## 2026 ULUNIU WORKDAYS ARE SET— COME JOIN!

UH West O‘ahu 2026 Volunteer Days meet on the last Saturday of every month. Be a part of our cultural agroforestry movement dedicated to ‘ike niu— caretaking for our sacred plant relative, niu, building food security, strengthening cultural connections, and healing relationships with community.

- January 31
- February 28
- March 28
- April 25
- May 30
- June 27
- July 25
- August 29
- September 26
- October 31
- November 7 (@Kūkaniloko)
- November 28

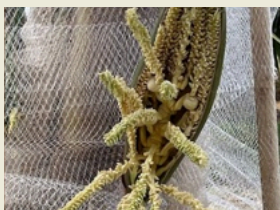
**Location:** UH West Oahu

**Time:** 8:00am - 12:00pm

**Bring:** Water, shoes, sun protection, friends!

**Lunch:** Pot-luck family style, bring a dish to share

**Learn more:** [puuhonua-society.org/niu-now](https://puuhonua-society.org/niu-now)



# Mahalo

The Community Coconut Project reaches far beyond genetic diversity work and planting; it is a movement of reconnection, healing, and renewed kuleana to place. Strengthening our relationship with niu also strengthens our ties to culture, community, and the ‘āina that sustains us. We welcome all who feel the call to join this growing circle of niunates, to breathe life back into this generous tree, and to share ‘ike niu with one another.



**KUPU KA NIU, KUPU KE KANAKA.**

*When coconuts grow, humanity thrives.*

— He Pule Niu (1897)



**A special mahalo ā nui to our Kaulunani ‘ohana: Heather, Kate, Koki, Le‘a, Maila, Lennie, Mille our dedicated Kaulunani advisory board, and support team at Research Corporation of the University of Hawai‘i (RCUH) and Pu ‘uhonua Society. Your steady presence uplifts this work in ways beyond measure. We extend our sincere appreciation for your continued trust and unwavering support.**