

June 2016 West Oahu SWCD news: KōHana Rum, Cover Crop stories, Planing Pono for Hawaii, Webinar for weed management in organic cropping systems, and more!

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KoHana Rum from Manulele Distillers

What began as an investigation into sugarcane as a renewable energy source turned into a journey more profound than any of us could have imagined. Several years ago, we were introduced to our first stalk of native heirloom cane – Kō Manulele. We quickly realized this cane was meant to be Celebrated. Cherished. Revered.

Nearly a thousand years ago, the first Polynesians set sail for the Hawaiian Islands using only the stars for navigation. Among the canoe plants they brought with them were select varieties of Kō – sugarcane. These Kō plants were the progenitors of the remaining heirloom varieties of native Hawaiian sugarcane in existence today.

Kō was used in daily living and was purposely planted around homes. In addition to its leaves, Kō was valued for its ease of chewing and ample juice in the stalks. Its sweet juice was a key ingredient in many medicinal recipes. Kō was also used as an offering to the Gods and as a core component in many ceremonies. In the ancient love ceremony Hana Aloha, as documented by Auntie Mary Kawena Pukui, Kō Manulele was one of three sugarcanes used to arouse a deep and everlasting love.

Every varietal of heirloom cane has a story and flavor profile of its own. At Manulele Distillers, home of Kō Hana Agricole Rum, our sincerest hope is to honor and celebrate the Kō we have the privilege to plant and grow.

Kō Hana Agricole Rum is meticulously crafted from farm to bottle. We grow single varieties that are hand harvested, pressed to juice and then distilled to perfection — resulting in one of the world's finest pure cane rums.

Cherishing sugarcane akin to a winery loving the grape, our Agricole style celebrates the juice. Kō Hana embraces the natural earthiness and sweetness of the Kō. In stark contrast, the vast majority of the rum in the world is made from molasses — a by-product from the commercial sugar refining process.

We pay special attention to the unique characteristics of each specific cane varietal. A select portion of our rum rests in oak barrels to further develop and reveal the essence of the cane. This sensory process is demanding and time consuming yet necessary to honor the Kō. We are a boutique distillery where only rums that we love are bottled without compromise.

We are honored to be part of the agricultural community within the Honouliuli Ahupua'a in West O'ahu. It is with our deepest humility, gratitude and utmost respect we thank and honor all those who came before us. Let us be guided by their light and blessing and at every turn give back to this precious earth we all call home.

Tours are available Wednesday through Saturday from 10am until 3pm and are \$15 for Kama'aina.

—The KōHana Ohana



Monsanto Hawaii: Cover Crops

Farms use a variety of methods to manage pests and keep our fields healthy and sustainable. One of those tools is cover crops.

Cover crops are plants grown at Monsanto Hawaii to suppress weeds and diseases, promote soil fertility, and maintain a healthy ecosystem on the farm

lands. For example, after growing and harvesting a field of corn, staff may plant a cover crop – such as buckwheat, sunflowers, cowpeas or a combination of plants – on that field before rotating back to corn again. The site grows a variety of cover crops to provide as much biodiversity as possible.

Some good reasons to use cover crops:

- Top soil is one of our communities' most precious natural resources. Cover crops help to protect against soil loss by keeping the dirt in place and reducing erosion.
- Through their root systems, cover crops promote a healthy ecosystem by improving the movement of air and water in the soil.
- When their foliage is tilled into the ground, cover crops function as “green manure,” providing valuable nutrients and organic matter to the soil.
- Cover crops can suppress the growth of weeds which in turn reduces the need to control weeds in the farmer's crop of choice.
- Certain cover crops can attract beneficial ‘bugs’ that feed on the unwanted insects that damage farm crops, which helps keep pest populations under control.
- At Monsanto, we use cover crops at all of our farms in Hawaii, as rotational crops and green manure, and as refuges for beneficial bugs.
- As wonderful as cover crops are, however, they're not a cure-all for a farmer's pest challenges. That is why many farmers, including Monsanto, use a comprehensive toolbox – also known as an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) system – to protect their crops and produce more for a growing world population.

To learn more about Monsanto's IPM practices or to request a tour please visit our website at MonsantoHawaii.com.



[Plant Pono](http://www.plantpono.org): An Online Resource for Hawaii and Pacific Islands

If you're like me, you look for species that will do well in your yard and plants that are new and different. But do you ever wonder if the plant you're considering could do a little too well - that with the help of birds or wind, it could become invasive? Luckily, there is a tool that predicts if a plant is likely to become a pest, so you can know – before you grow!

The Hawaii-Pacific Weed Risk Assessment (HPWRA) is a scientific tool that predicts whether a plant species is likely to become invasive; the Plant Pono website (www.plantpono.org) has information about the HPWRA as well as suggestions on planting “pono”. “Pono” is a Hawaiian word that means righteous, upright, and just; the website is intended to help people make good planting decisions. Plant Pono’s website launched in 2012 but was recently updated and expanded.

The Plant Pono website allows visitors to search more than 1700 plants that have been screened with the HPWRA to assess their potential to invade Hawaii and similar Pacific islands. The HPWRA is like a free background check for plants. Assessments are completed by a botanist who researches published information to answer 49 objective questions about the plant, resulting in a prediction that is more than 90% accurate at flagging invasive plants. The HPWRA began as a research project by Dr. Curt Daehler of the University of Hawaii at Mānoa and Dr. Julie Denslow, now retired from the U.S. Forest

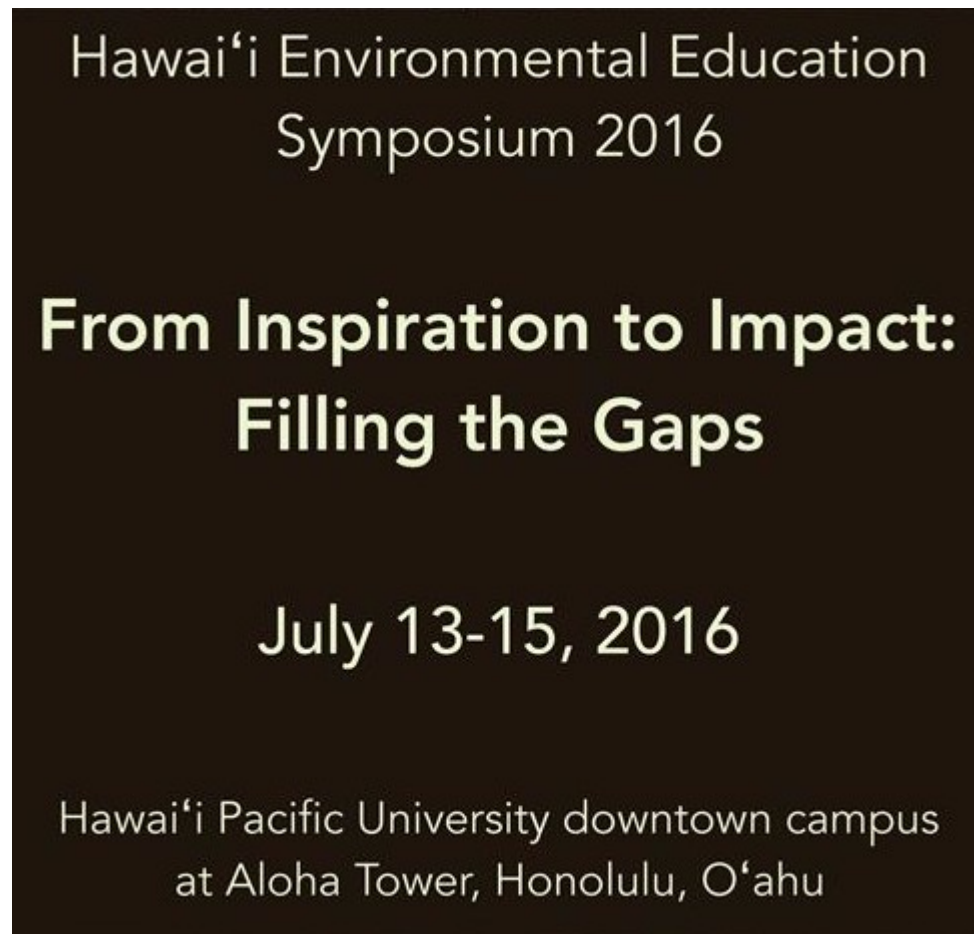
Service. It has since transitioned into a public service supported by the Hawaii Invasive Species Council.

To find out whether a plant is invasive or not, just enter the common or Latin name into the search box on the Plant Pono website. If the plant hasn't yet been screened, submit the plant name to Chuck Chimera (hpwra@yahoo.com) for a free assessment.

For Hawaii gardeners and landscapers, Plant Pono provides planting suggestions for native Hawaiian and non-invasive ornamental plants. Plants selected for the website are good, safe choices that are beautiful and serve the intended purpose, such as producing shade, fruit, fragrance or acting as a windbreak. The website also offers information on invasive plants and their impacts to help the community better understand where the plant has become a pest and how it is impacting our 'āina. For landscape businesses, nurseries, and garden clubs, the site provides a user-friendly interface to help make pono decisions.

In Hawaii, plants are not checked for their potential to become invasive when they are imported (the federal Plant Protection Act preempts the state from being more restrictive), and noxious seed and weed rules regulate less than 100 species of plants, most of which are already present in Hawaii. Because of this lack of governmental oversight, it is important for those of us involved in plant trades such as agriculture, forestry, and horticulture to voluntarily take measures to protect Hawaii's natural areas, pastures, and cultivated fields from our yards.

Once they arrive, invasive plants tend to hopscotch their way island to island and across the Pacific. Today, with www.plantpono.org, we can significantly reduce the importation, use, and spread of invasive plants. By using the HPWRA, we can prevent the next damaging pest from ever reaching our shores - now that's pono!



Our inspiration comes from the shared passion that compels us to mālama our natural environment in Hawai'i, and the impact we envision is environmental literacy for all the people of our islands. But how do we get from inspiration to impact? Our goal for this year's symposium is to begin to "fill the gaps" by sharing our successes with environmental education in Hawai'i. The event is designed to support innovation, create networks, and promote learning about:

- Best practices for environmental education in schools,
- Community resources for environmental education,
- Connecting Hawaiian culture and environmental education,
- Engaging the general public or government,
- Environmental education on school campuses & gardens,
- Achieving Next Generation Science Standards,
- Professional development opportunities,
- Evaluation/assessment,
- Communication/marketing/branding/fund-raising.

July 13 (9:00 AM - 6:30 PM) Symposium

9:00 AM - 4:30 PM Keynote Speaker and Presentations

4:30 PM - 6:30 PM Pau Hana Reception

July 14 (8:30 AM - 3:30 PM) Workshops

July 15 (8:30 AM - 3:30 PM) Field Trips

[Register today for Early Bird!](#)



United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) is a competitive grant program that provides funding for fundamental and applied research, education, and Extension projects in food and agricultural sciences. In this RFA, NIFA requests applications for six AFRI priority areas through the Foundational Program for FY 2016. The global agricultural output needs to expand by a minimum of 70 percent to meet the food needs of the population expected in 2050; thus, it is imperative to develop innovative, safe and sustainable management strategies for livestock, crops, and critical underlying resources. The goal of this program is to invest in agricultural production research, education, and Extension projects for more sustainable, productive and economically viable plant and animal production systems.

In FY 2016, applications are sought in the following US agriculture priority areas:

1. Plant health and production and plant products;
2. Animal health and production and animal products;
3. Food safety, nutrition, and health;
4. Bioenergy, natural resources, and environment;
5. Agriculture systems and technology; and
6. Agriculture economics and rural communities.

The anticipated amount available for grants in FY 2016 is approximately \$130 million.



NRCS Webinars

- June 7, 2016 2:00pm Eastern: [Weed Management in Organic Cropping Systems](#)

Weed management is often cited as the major challenge for organic producers and those transitioning to organic production. This webinar will discuss the primary weed control strategies for organic systems: the role of prevention, cultural and mechanical control, crop rotation, crop competition, and cultivation. Experts from Penn State will also introduce the Organic Crop Production guide that includes weed management as well as many other organic topics and case studies of successful organic crop farmers.

- June 8, 2016 2PM EST [Managing Soil Quality in Forests](#)

Maintaining forest soil quality is essential to sustainable forest uses, but forest soils, like other soils, can be degraded through improper management. Some forest soils are susceptible to compaction and rutting by heavy equipment, or erosion and sedimentation due to poorly-designed roads. Nutrients and organic matter may be removed in forest products, and cumulative changes in physical and chemical soil properties can affect the environment for soil biota. These concerns and others are typically addressed through planning processes, management guidelines, and forest certification standards. The webinar will provide an overview of forest soil management issues and an introduction to practices that limit or mitigate impacts.

- June 29, 2016 2pm EST [Record Keeping for Grazing Systems - It's Not Just Spreadsheets Anymore](#)

This webinar takes a fresh look at record keeping for grazing systems. Traditionally, NRCS conservation planners and other technical advisors have sought to use one

centralized system embodied in a specific software for farmers and ranchers to use. This is much more efficient for NRCS or other government agencies to retrieve data from one source. However, livestock graziers use other methods that fit their individual management style of keeping records and making management decisions and probably very few producers are using the same method. These 'other' record keeping systems have been developed by farmers and ranchers themselves, as well as some land grant universities. Join us as we take a look at some of these systems and how NRCS and other technical advisors can use the data from this diversity of record keeping systems to obtain the information they need to administer technical assistance and documentation of implementation of grazing management.

More webinars can be found

here: <http://www.conservationwebinars.net/documents/planned-conservation-webinars>

All West Oahu SWCD Meetings are noticed in this Newsletter and on the Lt. Governor's Website. Agendas are posted on the Lt Governor's website in accordance with sunshine law.

June West Oahu SWCD meeting: Tuesday June 28, 12:30. **Location: To be Determined** Learn more at <http://www.oahuswcd.org>.

West Oahu SWCD Directors

Larry Jefts (Chair), Peter Gibson, Alan Gottlieb, Taylor Kellerman, & John McHugh.

The West Oahu Soil and Water Conservation District is committed to building partnerships that strengthen agriculture in Hawaii and contribute to a vibrant island community, environment, and economy.

Newsletter compiled by Michelle Gorham, West Oahu SWCD, and edited by Cindy Pinick, Hawaii Agriculture Research Center.

Submit articles and information to Michelle@OahuSWCD.org



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