



Friends of Honolulu Botanical Gardens

The Bodhi Leaf

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WINTER 2016

State Flower Blooms at Koko Crater Botanical Garden

You will be thrilled to know about a large new planting of the Hawaiian Yellow Hibiscus at Koko Crater Botanical Garden. Over three hundred plants of **Ma`o hau hele** (*Hibiscus brackenridgei* subsp. *mokuleianus*) were planted with the enthusiastic help of Niu Valley Middle School students. This awesome conservation project is a partnership between the Honolulu Botanical Gardens and the Oahu Army Natural Resources Program.

Ma`o hau hele is a federally listed endangered species and this particular subspecies, *mokuleianus*, is currently only found on Oahu, although very rarely. Preservation efforts, such as this one, are crucial for many reasons. For example, they help us understand evolution on this remote island chain.

It's been said that Hawaii is one of the best places in the world to study biological evolution, and here is a terrific example right in your garden. **Ma`o hau hele** shows a wide assortment of shape from one mountainside to the next: The yellow flowers might have a striking maroon center, or not. The stems might have dark red warts, or not. The flower calyx might have sharp spines, or not. The leaves might have coarse hairs, or not. The plant might be a tree, or a low-lying shrub. It reminds me of the finches Darwin studied in the Galapagos Islands!

Please come visit this inspiring collection of our state flower. **Ma`o hau hele** blooms from February to May and the best time to see flowers is in the early morning. (Actually, it's a night bloomer, for the joy of thirsty hawkmoths!)

Naomi Hoffman, Botanist
Honolulu Botanical Gardens



President's Message

Tempus Fugit

My how time flies! It's the New Year already, and we have an idea that needs your approval. I know it's not often elected officials ask your permission to do anything, but your Executive Committee really can't do this if you are not as excited about it as we are. Here's our idea: We think our botanical gardens deserve a sundial. Many of the finest botanical gardens in Europe and Asia have magnificent sundials. England's gardens are loaded with them. They have



almost no sun, but they have plenty of sundials. Our botanical gardens are almost always sunny, but we have no sundials. Something's wrong here. For those of you brought up in the digital age, sundials are how people told time centuries ago before the invention of spring-driven watches and pendulum-powered grandfather clocks. Sundials convert the flight path of the sun into time using the moving shadow of the dial's north-facing pointer cast on a plate marked with the hours of the day. They come in all shapes and sizes and can be both beautiful and accurate. These deceptively simple devices with thousands of years of history, refinement and utility employ complex math and science principles to create an unpowered time piece designed for an exact geographic location. Nowadays, people use the sun to grow crops and power cars, planes, and water heaters, but we have forgotten how to use the sun's flight



path to tell time. The ancient Romans knew how and that's why they said "tempus fugit" or "time flies" and that's why sundials through the ages have this phrase inscribed on them. If you would like to stroll through our gardens and read the time on an elegant sundial, let us know (537-1708 or friendsgardens@aol.com). We will bring it up for a show of hands at our annual meeting (March 19, 2016). If you approve, the Friends will pursue approval from the "powers that be" and attempt to get grant funding for it.

Bill Follmer, President

Friends of Honolulu Botanical Gardens



A Fond Aloha

The Friends is proud of the gift shop it operates at the entrance to Foster Garden. Its uniqueness and quaintness are appreciated by visitors and locals alike. One of the things that makes it special is its staff of three... Friends' board member Adelaide Kistner oversees and Joyce Lau and Connie Francis man it. Joyce will be stepping down in late February, cruising into retirement after 10 years of looking after the shop on weekdays. We are very sorry to see her go as her diligence and dedication have greatly added to the smooth running of the shop. We are currently looking for someone to fill her considerable shoes. Mahalo, Joyce, for your large contribution to the garden.

from the Director's Desk

On December 12, 2015, nearly 200 countries, including the United States, committed to a historic agreement to work together on a common goal: to cut greenhouse gas emissions and curb global warming to less than 2 degrees Centigrade (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) by the end of the century.

Increases in global temperatures have resulted in an increased pace of melting glaciers, retreating ice sheets, rising sea levels, extreme world weather patterns, earlier flowering and fruiting of plants, and faster plant and animal extinctions. By reducing global warming, President Barack Obama called the 2015 Paris Climate Conference deal our "best chance to save the one planet we have."

This is a great time for us to remember the importance of our plant collections in mitigating climate change. At the most basic level, through photosynthesis, trees and plants absorb carbon dioxide, store the carbon, and give off life-sustaining oxygen.

Let us begin the New Year with a renewed sense that we, as stewards of our unique living resource, must do all we can to protect and conserve the plants growing within our five Honolulu Botanical Gardens sites.

Best wishes for a Happy New Year and cooler planet in the 21st Century!

Winnie Singeo, Director
Honolulu Botanical Gardens

Year-End Donations

The Board of Trustees of the Friends of Honolulu Botanical Gardens would like to thank the following for their generous response to our year-end appeal. Mahalo!

Lehua (\$1,000 or more)

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Koko Crater's Greatest Treasure

by Paul Weissich

FHBG Trustee Emeritus & former Director HBG

Our Koko Crater Botanical Garden is a treasury of dryland tropical plants. Its two-mile circle trail displays rare palms, colorful Adeniums and a natural grove of the endemic wili wili, ***Erythrina sandwicensis***, among hundreds of other rare tropicals, many not grown elsewhere in the United States. Its greatest treasure, however, is not a tree or shrub but a person: "Bonzo" (aka Robin Sunio).

Bonzo began his work in the crater in 1984. He was the sole worker there, the entire staff, caring for plantings throughout the 200 acres. He is phenomenal. He established a small nursery where he propagates plants to bolster plantings of threatened species. He knows every plant under his care and is a champion weed-whacker and herbicide-sprayer.

Our director, Winnie Singeo, announced in 2015 the hiring of an additional position for the crater, Cory Mullen. He comes to the crater garden with an excellent educational background. Cory, listen to Bonzo. Help make the crater a "must visit" attraction. And thank you, Bonzo, for 30 years of dedicated service to Honolulu Botanical Gardens.



Robin Sunio

Photo by Derrick Miyasaki

