

1 ISLET 3 DAYS 750,000 SEEDS

by Jon Letman, Associate Editor



▲ Scattering seeds on Lehua. Photo by Natalia Tangalin

In the spring of 2008, NTBG Research Biologist Ken Wood wrote about the Garden's restoration efforts on the offshore islet of Lehua (The Bulletin Vol. XXV, No. 3). This is a follow-up to that article.

Armed with surfboards, GPS equipment, and 750,000 seeds, conservation staff boarded a catamaran last August and headed for Lehua, 18 miles west of Kaua'i. Their goal was simple – to plant native Hawaiian seeds in designated areas on the 290-acre tuff cone crater and help further re-establish native plants on the islet considered to be one of the most important seabird colonies in Hawai'i.

Mike DeMotta, Assistant Director of Living Collections and Horticulture, explained that the Garden has been collecting

Aipolani Kanahale, a student from Kula Ni'ihau O Kekaha, preparing a'ali'i (*Dodonaea viscosa*) seeds for the Lehua Restoration Project.
Photo by Jon Letman



thousands of seeds representing dozens of species over the last 18 months from across the Islands. The seeds were chosen based on species lists assembled by Dr. David Burney and Ken Wood who selected plants suitable for Lehua's extremely arid climate.

Among the seeds sown were 'āweoweo, naio, and an endemic Hawaiian white morning glory¹. Seeds were packed in foil pouches containing as few as a dozen and as many as 64,000 seeds of a single species. DeMotta said both 'āweoweo and naio were selected because of their potential to serve as nesting plants for red-footed boobies and the endangered Nihoa finch.

GIS (Geographic Information System) Coordinator Jonathan Carbone joined conservation staff Emory Griffin-Noyes, Natalia Tangalin, and DeMotta for the three-day trip in order to record accession numbers and plot seed dispersal locations on updated layered maps. The four staff members spent the bulk of their time scattering the seeds in moist seeps where they have the best chance to survive until the arrival of winter rains.

While on Lehua, staff also checked on the NTBG-installed irrigation system and the progress of plantings from previous trips.

DeMotta reported 'ilima, ma'o, and pockets of wild pili grass² were all doing well, adding that if *Pritchardia aylmer-robinsonii* (loulou) palms could reach underground moisture, they would "flush green and take off." Overall, he said he was very pleased with progress and was now just hoping for a good, rainy winter.

And the surfboards they brought along? Those were used for used for shuttling equipment and the stash of seeds from the boat to the tiny island.

1 *Chenopodium oahuense*, *Myoporum sanwicense*, *Ipomoea tuboides* respectively

2 *Sida fallax*, *Gossypium sanwicense*, *Heteropogon contortus* respectively

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