Loulu - Hawaiʻi’s Native Palm

By: Robert W. Hobdy, MNBG Board member

Loulu is the Hawaiian name referring to all of the palm species of the genus *Pritchardia* found throughout the Hawaiian Islands. This collection of loulu are the only truly native palms in Hawaiʻi. These graceful palms form a distinctive element in our wet to mesic forests, mostly between the elevations of 2,000 to 3,000 feet. They range from small plants that cling to steep, wet, windy slopes to towering 80 foot tall giants that rise above the forest canopy.

Loulu are “fan palms” with broad round leaves that are deeply pleated and have narrowly pointed leaf tips that are either stiffly erect or drooping. Flowers are borne on stalks that range from 2 feet long to as much as 10 feet long in some species where they arch gracefully out beyond the leaves. The fruits can be oval to spherical and range from .75 inches to over 2 inches in diameter and are shiny black when ripe.

There is much diversity in the genus *Pritchardia* throughout Hawaiʻi. As presently understood there are 24 separate species occurring on 8 different islands, with 6 of these species occurring on 2 islands and the rest being single island endemics. Kauaʻi has 7 species, Oʻahu, Maui and Hawaiʻi each have 5, Molokaʻi has 4, Lānaʻi has 2 and Niʻihau and Nihoa each have 1. On each island most species occupy different areas that don’t overlap. For instance, Maui has *Pritchardia arecina* on the windward slopes of east Maui, *P. woodii* on the east end above Makaʻalae. West Maui has *P. glabrata* on its eastern slopes in Nā Wai ʻEHĀ, *P. forbesiana* on the western and northern slopes from Haelā‘au to Honokōhau, and *P. munroi* on the southern slopes above Ukumehame and Māʻalaea. The 3 West Maui species also occur on Molokaʻi or Lānaʻi.

Loulu, like most other native plant species, were well known to the Hawaiians and were assessed for useful qualities. Loulu leaves, with their broad pleated surfaces, were found to make excellent thatch for roofs and were used like shingles that lasted longer than grass thatch. These sturdy leaves were also used as makeshift umbrellas and could be woven into excellent hats as well. The green sub-mature seeds, which were called hāwane or wahane, were considered a delicacy when cracked open and the soft white meat was said to taste somewhat like niu haohao, the soft meat of the green coconut.

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Layout Editor, Uʻi Nahoʻolewa

MAIL: P.O. Box 6040 Kahului, HI 96733 SITE: 150 Kanaloa Avenue, Kahului
TEL: (808) 249-2798 FAX: (808) 249-0325 EMAIL: info@mnbg.org WEB: www.mnbg.org
A small red and grey native bird from Hawai‘i Island called ‘ula ‘ai hāwane was said to have made such regular use of the nectar of the hāwane (an alternative name sometimes used for the loulu) that it was given this name which means “the red bird that feeds on the hāwane”. This bird is now extinct.

Two species of loulu still occur along the coasts of Hawai‘i and Moloka‘i, and it has long intrigued botanists as to why more loulu don’t occur in the lowlands below 2,000 feet elevation where most of the species currently occur, especially since these upland species usually thrive when planted in the lowlands. It could be that this pattern of occurrence is the result of a long period of overharvesting of loulu in the lowlands where they were once readily available.

Present threats to our loulu species, 9 of which are now on the Endangered Species list, include goats, deer, pigs and cattle which eat the young plants, and rats and pigs that eat the seeds.

Many of these loulu palm species, including many of the rare species, are now in cultivation and some of their habitats are now being protected. It is an important goal that none of these species be lost.

In September, the Merwin Conservancy introduced us to Dr. John Dransfield, former head of palm research at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, England. Dr. Dransfield and his wife came at our request to advise us on a method of hand pollinating an endangered Maui Nui loulu, Pritchardia munroi. This loulu, planted at MNBG in the early 1980’s, had only a single known wild tree on Moloka‘i when it was listed as endangered in 1992. Since then a few individuals have been discovered in West Maui and at a second location on Moloka‘i, but it remains critically endangered. All Hawaiian loulu species are in high demand for landscaping. Wild populations, threatened by rat predation and invasive species, can be further threatened by over-collection of seeds for landscaping. The best way to produce seeds for landscaping are in cultivation. However, gardens with several different loulu species like MNBG run the risk of producing hybridized seeds, because the flowers can be pollinated by both wind and insects. Seeds in cultivation must be bagged and hand pollinated to prevent hybridization.

Dr. Dransfield examined our P. munroi in flower and instructed us in methods that will help us ensure that future seeds from this tree have not crossed with other nearby loulu species. We can now more confidently experiment with methods to produce loulu seeds that are true to species from the cultivated trees in our collection. Our thanks to Dr. Dransfield for his time and to the Merwin Conservancy for introducing us!

Save the Date

Saturday, October 22, 9 AM to 4 PM: Gourd Carrying Net Making with Lisa & Lei
Learn the traditional method of tying a gourd for carrying with Kumu Lisa Schattenburg-Raymond & Lei Ishikawa. Students from previous cordage classes will have the skills to create their own cord of native plant materials. Cost: $125 (includes 1 yr. membership), or $100 for current Garden Members. *Participants may bring their own ipu, plastic containers, or purchase an ipu at the workshop.

Saturday, October 29, from 9 AM to 1 PM: Lāʻau Lapaʻau with Kiʻi Kahoʻohanohano
In old Hawai‘i, trained practitioners used native plants to create countless traditional medicines. Practically every part of the honua (earth) is a lāʻau (medicine): fresh water, sea water, trees, roots, shrub, plants on and in the land, plants on and in the ocean, sea and stream dwellers, rain water and mists are used for healing. Cultural practitioner, Kiʻi Kahoʻohanohano, will share traditional Hawaiian healing remedies and practices using Hawaiian plants. Cost: $50 (includes 1 yr. membership), or $25 for current Garden Members.

Saturday, November 26, from 9 AM to 5 PM: Bailey House Museum Fundraiser
The 15th annual E Pūlama Mau iā Maui is a fundraising event to benefit The Bailey House Museum. This event features beautiful Hawaiian music and hula, over 40 craft and food vendors, as well as cultural demonstrations, silent auction, and a special exhibition by the Maui Historical Society. Tickets are $10 in advance or $15 at the door, and are available at the Bailey House Museum and Native Intelligence. MNBG will be selling Hawaiian plants at this event.
With Gratitude from Our Garden:
Ohana of Edward Tamayose for gardening gloves and sickles, Gloria Adlawan for drinking cups and 5-gal buckets, Connie Luk for 5-gal buckets, Alaka'i Paleka for colored pencils, Cindy Singer for volunteer refreshments, Maggie Sniffen for garden gloves, plates, pruners, clipppers and Hawaiian Miles gift certificates, All Kine Electric for hula pā electrical work, Jeff Gray for dump truck services, all our wonderful Silent Auction donors, and a special mahalo to Haleakala Ranch Company, Ocean Vodka and Envisions Entertainment & Productions, Inc. for their sponsorship of An Evening in the Gardens, a benefit Fundraiser for Maui Nui Botanical Gardens.

MNBG Community Contributions:

Mahalo to our Interns & Volunteers:

Wish List

- Garden gloves (all sizes)
- 100 sturdy plastic chairs
- Rakes (leaf or landscaping)
- Medium sized picks
- Shovels
- Sickles
- Hand pruners (clippers)
- Outdoor tables & chairs
- Hawaiian Miles (for interisland travel for staff training)
- Handicapable gardening tools: for ideas, visit http://disabilityworktools.com and click “Gardening”

*If you would like to contribute to the purchase of one or more of these items please call 808-249-2798. Pots: We are no longer accepting drop offs of used plastic pots. If you have new or used cement or ceramic pots to donate, please give us a call and we will be happy to arrange a pick up.

MAUI NUI BOTANICAL GARDENS
MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Maui Nui Botanical Gardens is to foster appreciation and understanding of Maui Nui’s plants and their role in Hawaiian cultural expression by providing a gathering place for discovery, education, and conservation.

DONATIONS!
Give Online! Make a donation, pledge or renew your membership by visiting www.mnbg.org and clicking on “make a donation”.
The International Union for the Conservation of Nature held their World Conservation Congress on O‘ahu in September. We participated in a related series of events on Maui. One event at MNBG brought together IUCN participants to discuss their experiences growing heritage varieties, and important next steps for their conservation and recovery. At the Indigenous Crop Biodiversity Festival at the Maui Tropical Plantation, we featured 38 Hawaiian kalo varieties in the Kalo (Taro) Tent; 8 canoe species in the Lā‘au Lapa‘au (Medicine)/Lei Tent; 13 Hawaiian ‘awa and 17 kō varieties in the ‘Awa (Kava) /Kō (Sugarcane) Tent, and 39 coastal native species in the ‘Āina (Land) Tent. With help from Anna Palomino of Ho‘olawa Farms, we created an exhibit of 69 native Hawaiian species from mauka (mountain) to makai (ocean). Our gratitude goes out to Anna for her beautiful display plants and aesthetic talent, and Penny Levin for coordinating all the Maui events.

As native plant propagators, we collect seeds from both natural areas and gardens. Unused seeds were stored in a donated refrigerator. Over 15 years, we accumulated nearly 132 species - 44% endangered species and 78% coastal species. In order to manage this resource, Joseph Riley of the Americorps program has taken on the formidable task of sorting through nearly 500 separate stored seed collections (accessions), extracting 50 seed samples, and attempting to germinate the samples. His data from the last three months shows that of 172 accessions tested representing 85 species, about half are still viable. The oldest seeds that have germinated are ‘Ahu ‘awa (*Cyperus javanicus*) from 2002 – after 14 years still nearly a third were alive! Most seeds don’t survive long unless they are dried carefully and stored at the ideal temperatures. We are now starting to use better techniques for important seeds we intend to store. The resulting seedlings from Joseph’s tests have been donated to restoration projects for the Natural Area Reserves, Kealia Pond National Wildlife Refuge, the Hawaiian Islands Land Trust Waiheʻe site, and community groups.

The endangered *Brighamia rockii* is a highly coveted plant that, like many endemic species, has reduced numbers and risks genetic bottlenecking both in the wild and in cultivation. The Plant Extinction Prevention Program (PEPP) and Olinda Rare Plant Nursery entrusted us with six of these beautiful plants from three different maternal founders to attempt to cross-pollinate them and produce healthy seeds. Steve Perlman and Hank Oppenheimer of PEPP visited MNBG to show us how to cross pollinate the plants. MNBG Plant Collections Manager Chris d’Avella cross pollinated to maximize genetic diversity for several months, and though we found that ālula is still difficult for us to keep healthy, we produced a good amount of seed that was sent to Lyon Arboretum for storage and Molokai PEPP for restoration planting.
Saturday
November 5th, 2016
9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Maui Nui Botanical Gardens
150 Kanaloa Avenue in Kahului

1,000 Hawaiian Tree Giveaway
Free Hawaiian trees include ‘a‘ali‘i, alahe‘e, hala pepe, hame, kamani, koa, koai‘a, kokio ‘ula, kokio ke‘o ke‘o, kou, māmaki, milo, nānū, ‘ohe makai, ‘ōhi‘a ai, ‘ōhi‘a lehua, wauke, wiliwili, and many more!

Free Admission    Free Parking    www.mnbg.org    Phone: (808) 249-2798

• Free hands-on Hawaiian cultural activities for the whole family!
• Certified arborists will share information on proper planting and tree care.
• Maui Master Gardeners will help you select the perfect tree for your home.
• Learn about the great conservation work being done by local nonprofits!

This event is funded by the Maui Electric Company and Kaulunani Urban and Community Forestry Program of the DLNR Division of Forestry and Wildlife and State and Private Forestry Branch of the U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Region 5.
Mahalo e All Kine Electric!

The hula pā is wired for sound! Anyone who has attended an event at MNBG such as Hoʻomau, the annual fundraiser for Hawaiian Language Immersion Schools on Maui, has enjoyed talented entertainment on this grassy stage in the big field near the banyan tree. In the past, these productions required gas powered generators. Now thanks to a partnership project initiated by Pūnana Leo director, Kili Namauʻu, we have expanded our electrical capacity to include a whole new part of the Garden. This also will help reduce costs in the future realization of our Master Plan. Mahalo to All Kine Electric and Pūnana Leo O Maui for making this improvement possible.

Matching Grant Challenge: Mission Accomplished!

This summer, the impact of our supporters’ donations were doubled! An anonymous donor offered a matching challenge grant of $5,000 to sustain the mission and programs of Maui Nui Botanical Gardens. We reached our goal within two months. The funds will be used to make much needed repairs to garden structures, and help us host free Hawaiian cultural activities at our Arbor Day 1,000 Hawaiian Tree Give-Away set for Saturday, November 5th, from 9am-12pm. Mahalo nui to everyone who helped up to reach our goal.

MNBG Benefits from BlueʻĀina Campaign!

In August 2016, Maui Nui Botanical Gardens was the beneficiary of Trilogy Excursions’ BlueʻĀina Reef Cleanup Campaign. Trilogy Excursions offers monthly underwater reef cleanups targeting reefs in distress on Maui. The campaign’s objective is to cleanup and maintain Maui’s reefs, educate the community, and raise money for non-profits.

On August 7th, 60 volunteers boarded a trilogy catamaran for a reef cleanup near Mala Wharf. The once busy pier was shattered by hurricane Iniki, leaving a dock that now serves as an artificial reef. Turtles, tropical fish and more flourish at the site, making it an important location to preserve. As a popular fishing location, endless amounts of fishing line were wrapped around the reef and the sunken pier, which was removed by volunteers. The cleanup was sponsored by longtime MNBG supporters Maui Electric Company, who made an in-kind donation of $5,000 towards MNBG’s upcoming Arbor Day event!

For more information on how to get involved with Trilogy Excursions’ BlueʻĀina campaign, email Magen.Schifiliti@sailtrilogy.com
If you love working with native plants, you’ll love the Weed & Pot Club! This volunteer gardening group meets every Wednesday morning, from 8:30 AM to 10:30 AM. Spend your morning helping the Gardens thrive through weeding and propagation. Come prepared to work with covered shoes and gardening attire.

**Mahalo Weed & Pot Club**

Anna Mae Shishido
Becky Lau
Cindy Singer
Connie Luk
Darryl Amaral
Diane Carr
Gloria Adlawan
Janet Allan
Jennifer Rose
Linda Tesar-Amimoto
Mālie Unabia-Verkerke
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Phyllis Sato
Raymond Higashi
Renee Leiter
Robert Pitts
Robin Yamashita
Tom Takeuchi
Enid Sands
Stephanie
Seidman-Czar
Vilma Seiler

MNBG appreciates Kaunoa’s RSVP partnership for its support of MNBG volunteers. Like MNBG, Kaunoa provides opportunities for people 55 and better to learn and grow through a variety of programs throughout Maui Nui. Call (808) 270-7986 for more information.

**Check Out What’s Blooming!**

**Noni**

*Morinda citrifolia*

Polynesian-introduced

Though unpleasant in smell and taste, noni is considered an exceptionally important medicinal plant. Boils, bruises, sores and even head lice can be treated with parts of noni. Learn more at MNBG’s upcoming Lā’au Lapa’au Workshop with Ki’i Kaho’ohanohano on Saturday, October 29th, from 9am-1pm. Cost: $50, or $25 for current Garden Members. Email info@mnbg.org for reservations.
Mahalo to our new & returning donors!

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Kaupuni & Pii Aiwohi
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We are extremely grateful to all who have made donations to the Gardens over the years. We make every effort to assure an accurate membership list; however, if your name was omitted or misspelled, please contact us at info@mnbg.org and we will be happy to update our records.

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In Memoriam

Charlie Lamoureux  
Bob Wagstaff

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We make every effort to assure an accurate membership list; however, if your name was omitted or misspelled, please contact us at info@mnbg.org and we will be happy to update our records.

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Receive updates on upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, and learn more about Hawai‘i’s unique plants within ‘MNBG’s Hawaiian plant of the day’ photo album!

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Visit us on the web at: www.mnbg.org

Check out the feature on MNBG in the latest issue of Maui Nō Ka ‘Oi Magazine!

Support the Gardens & Help Native Plants Thrive
Kupu means to sprout or grow. Just like the kupukupu ferns, you can help the Gardens grow through donations, memberships, bequests or by volunteering. Your contribution helps to ensure the survival and perpetuation of native Hawaiian plants and culture.

Donate
Donations of monetary or in-kind contributions are greatly appreciated. To contribute, please fill out the enclosed donation envelope, call 249-2798 or visit www.mnbg.org to donate online.

Membership
Yearly memberships help to fund important botanical and educational programs, research and conservation efforts. Fill out the enclosed donation envelope or call 249-2798 to become a member.

Leave a Legacy
Play a lasting part in protecting Hawai‘i’s native plants through planned giving. Consider making a bequest to the Maui Nui Botanical Gardens in your will or trust. Call 249-2798.

Volunteer
Give a gift of time. Volunteering at MNBG helps the Gardens accomplish many projects and also gives you an opportunity to learn about and work with native plants. Join our Weed & Pot Club every Wednesday morning from 8:30 am - 10:30 am. Call 249-2798 or visit www.mnbg.org for more information.