

## Honua Ola Partners with Hawai'i Community College to Cultivate a Food Forest on the Hāmākua Coast



In partnership with Hawai'i Community College's forestry and agriculture programs, Honua Ola Bioenergy has dedicated two acres of land that is allowing students to gain hands-on experience in the forestry and agriculture sectors.

"It's an honor to collaborate with Hawai'i Community College and their students in a hands-on learning environment that is creating locally sourced and produced foods, local building materials and supporting renewable energy," said Warren Lee, Honua Ola president. "It's important that we work together for the common good of our communities. Giving our college-age adults the incentive to build a life and career here on Hawai'i Island is vital to our collective future. Helping them learn important skills, such as growing multi-purpose crops, and realizing that good-paying jobs can be found in a variety of industries, including forestry, agriculture, construction and renewable energy, will give them hope they don't have to leave home."

Starting this semester, college students are actively managing the forest ecosystem and conducting research on adolescent eucalyptus trees to understand how different elements are affecting their growth. Students are collecting and studying soil samples, analyzing weed profiles, and taking growth measurements of the trees to support their work in developing a food forest.

The students are also using the lot to cultivate crops for the community's benefit, such as commercial trees for timber production and fruit trees for food production. This multi-purpose use is in line with the lot's dedicated USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's conservation plan.

Students will be focusing their efforts on planting and growing Pacific Island crops, including ulu (breadfruit), coconut, avocados, rambutan, longan, kalo (taro), uala (Hawaiian sweet potato), and olena (tumeric). All of the crops produced from the lot will be used by the college's culinary program with the food donated to the Food Basket to help support those in need.

Honua Ola is proud to partner with the Hawai'i Community College to help support the students and their interest in forestry and agriculture and promote sustainable and eco-friendly practices. They are looking forward to seeing the results from the students' in-the-field classroom.



▲ Students conduct measurements. Photo: Hawaii Community College.