

Ka'ūpūlehu Foundation Provides Continued Support for Ho'ola Ka Makana'ā o Ka'ūpūlehu Restoration and Education Program

The Ka'ūpūlehu Foundation awarded the Hawai'i Forest Institute (HFI) \$40,000 this year for Ho'ola Ka Makana'ā o Ka'ūpūlehu. This is the fourth year the Foundation has supported this program, which includes forest restoration and education at Ka'ūpūlehu Dryland Forest and Kalaemanō Cultural Center. Other learning sites include Ka loko o Kiholo, Kahuwai, Pu'uwa'awa'a, and Mahiki (Hamakua). The Cultural Ecology Team shares stories of place, ancestral connections, and natural history of these rare dryland ecosystems, intertwining a homeland perspective into 'āina-based learning.

Although volunteer site activities were canceled through September this year, the Cultural Ecology Team hosted a student group in October. To keep the stakeholders engaged in the program, the Team held several virtual presentations and shared online lesson plans with parents and teachers. In addition, new Ho'ola Ka Makana'ā o Ka'ūpūlehu signage and educational resources were produced.

The program is comprised of four strands, three outreach educational strands and one restoration strand. Each strand, while unique, provides curriculum that teaches the ecology of native ecosystems and integrates ideas of culture, mālama, kuleana, and creative thinking. Learning opportunities are offered in multiple ways—solo, as a team, on-site, off-site, and online—depending on what is most appropriate to the circumstances and participants.

The Team focus on integrating traditional ecological and cultural knowledge into restoration activities of multi-generational learners. Volunteers experience connecting to place through quiet observation, place-based learning activities, and restoration work such as collecting and distributing seed, planting seedlings, pulling weeds, and building trails. Residents and visitors benefit from classroom and off-site outreach events, displays and presentations. The program's target population includes students from a mix of schools, particularly those serving native Hawaiians.



▲ Hawai'i Preparatory Academy class prepare to plant natives seedlings at Ka'ūpūlehu. Photo: Keoki A. Carter.

A collaboration with KUPU and Huliaupa'a Archaeology brought a new dimension to Ka'ūpūlehu intern efforts. KUPU intern Janali Torres started her monitoring internship in 2020, which ended in August 2021. Janali worked with the Team to monitor natural regeneration of rare natives, plant resilience, outplant mortality and to maintain a comprehensive database

Only 5% of Hawaii's endangered dryland ecosystems remain. Safe havens of learning in place-based settings were once the norm in the traditional hālau-style. Today they are rare due to changes in land ownership that fragment society and cause disconnect in communities. Our dryland forest restoration and education programs transcend these barriers in a partnership with the land, Hawaiian culture, and the community. These sites are adjacent to expanding resort and residential areas; therefore there is a pressing need to protect and perpetuate them.

In addition to Ka'ūpūlehu Foundation, funding this year was provided by Kamehameha Schools, and National Tropical Botanical Garden. Learn more on the [project webpage](#) and on [Ka 'ahahui o ka Nāhelehele website](#).

The Ka'ūpūlehu Dryland Forest is located on 76 acres in the North Kona District on Hawai'i Island. This rare forest is among the best remaining dryland forests in Hawai'i. Bequeathed by Ke Ali'i Bernice Pauahi Bishop to Kamehameha Schools, Ka'ūpūlehu is a unique and treasured place.