

## Conservation Innovation Award Nomination 2014

Submitted by Michelle Mansker, Oahu Army Natural Resource Program

For Hui Ku Maoli Ola

Hui Ku Maoli Ola is a company dedicated to the perpetuation and preservation of Hawaii's natural history and culture. By integrating education, the propagation of native Hawaiian plants, and through quality restoration and landscaping services, Hui Ku Maoli Ola is making improvements to and increasing public appreciation for the unique natural environment and cultural history of Hawaii. The company was started in 1999 by Rick Barboza and Matt Schirman and grows over 100 native Hawaiian plants and Polynesian introductions. Prior to them founding the company, those wishing to landscape with native plants could barely get their hands on them. Thanks to Matt and Rick, native Hawaiian plants can now be purchased at large home improvement stores such as Home Depot, the Navy Exchange, and Walmart. Even better is that each plant is labeled with a thorough description of its tie to Hawaiian culture and importance in the native forest. This is such an important fundamental education piece that has been missing in Hawaii for so many years. We have all had visitor's come to see us in Hawaii and ask the inevitable question "is that a native plant" and the inevitable answer "no, sorry, 99.9% of what you see are introduced plants". Then the next inevitable question "why don't they use native plants in landscaping". Matt and Rick's work has made this a reality. Now you can walk down the street throughout Hawaii and see native plants adorning new construction sites. This is the first step in helping to bridge the gap with the community. It is vital for them to make the connection between the importance of native plants and conservation of Hawaii's open spaces. Rick Barboza's free guide "10 Questions to Ask Your Landscaper to Maximize the Benefits of Your Hawaiian Garden" is a great example of making the most out of the opportunity to spread the word on using native plants. They also have an extensive website with lots of good information about native plants, their link to the cultural history, and conservation in Hawaii. They also use social media such as Facebook, Pinterest, and Twitter to spread information about native plants. Before their arrival on the scene, there were very few nurseries growing native plants, let alone providing them in large quantities to construction projects. Native plants have become so popular that they have expanded their business to include plant rentals, gift baskets and centerpieces, consultation, restoration, educational, and surveying services. They are recognized as experts on native Hawaiian plants by such State and Federal agencies as the Department of Health, the Department of Land and Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Defense, and University of Hawaii. They have been recognized for their cultural and environmental expertise by the Pauahi Management Group (formerly the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Estate), Scenic Hawaii, Waimanalo Health Center, and the Garden Club of Honolulu, just to name a few. Some of their restoration projects so far include Waimanalo Stream Rehabilitation, Mokapu Pensisula Wetland Rehabilitation, Kalaeloa Coastal Restoration and Johnston Atoll Restoration. Rick Barboza and Matt Schirman and Hui Ku Maoli Ola truly embody who should be up for our Conservation Innovation Award. They have definitely been the champion of native plants in Hawaii and their use in landscaping. Without their presence, Hawaii would still be lacking this important educational tool.