



Friends of Honolulu Botanical Gardens

The Bodhi Leaf

FALL 2012

180 N. Vineyard Boulevard • Honolulu, Hawaii 96817 • Phone 537-1708



Photo: Ellen Osborne

Weissich's Sunrise, a new ti

Horticulturist and ti breeder, Nathan Miranda of Waiahole Botanicals, has bred a unique new ti. He named it "Weissich's Sunrise" in honor of Paul Weissich, former Director of Honolulu Botanical Gardens. A husky plant with whorls of foliage up to 36" across bears colorful 6" wide leaves to 16" long with a petiole length up to 6". The new leaves emerge wrapped with creamy pink undersides and unfold to reveal a cream colored leaf overlaid with green chevrons. With the right amount of full midday sun (10 am to 1 pm) the green chevrons blend into the cream to give the mature leaf a smooth pastel yellow coloring which reminded Nathan Miranda of a sunrise. Ti Weissich's Sunrise will be released to the public for the first time at the Friends' Spring Plant Sale on Saturday, May 25, 2013.

Editor's Note: Nathan Miranda, the horticulturist who bred the new ti plant, said he wanted to name it in Paul's honor as a way of thanking him for keeping people excited about plants.

President's Message

Getting Educated

As a teacher, I know my students expect me to make learning fun. I try, but I'm a math teacher and sometimes the subject matter is hard and its future use is not obvious. It's then my students who are wondering if the topic is worth the effort ask: "Mr. Follmer, when are we ever going to need this?" I can usually come up with a profession where this kind of knowledge is essential, but inevitably one of my 15 year-old students who can't predict what color his/her hair will be tomorrow replies with certainty that he or she is never going to be a "whatever that profession is." I explain that all knowledge is useful and there will be a test on it next week just in case you change your mind and want the option of becoming a "whatever".

Unfortunately, that technique only works with captive audiences.

The Friends and the city offer education programs that use a different motivational learning model. We offer practical knowledge that people already want to learn. Since becoming your president a few months ago, I have taken advantage of three plant-oriented education events: One free-to-the-public city production and two affordable Friends Education Program events. Getting educated wasn't my idea. Marion, my wife, wanted to go. So, I wanted to go. And, I am so glad I did. Not only did it make Marion happy, I learned a lot and it was fun. Now, you married guys may question the sincerity of that last assertion so let me describe what made it fun and why you should reconsider your reluctance to try one yourself.

My first learning event was the vanilla orchid workshop put on by Scott Mitamura, one of our talented city employees. I had already killed one vanilla orchid which in its short unhappy life bore no fruit. I was willing to accept defeat and ready to move on to easier challenges, but Marion spotted the HBG Education Program handout and the rest is history. Scott delivered a short picture-packed lecture that even I could understand and followed it with some hands-on practice in the mating ritual of vanilla orchids. I can't guarantee that I won't kill that orchid which is patiently waiting outside my kitchen door for its chance to fulfill its mission, but at least now, thanks to the city's Education Program, I know what to do.

The second event was the Friends' tour of Frankie's Fruit Tree Nursery. Fruit trees are a passion of mine, and I have several trees that give me great joy. But my passion and knowledge is nothing compared to Frankie's. Walking through his 40-acre garden and sampling his delicacies was like a prelude to heaven. I ended up buying a two-foot tall Kasturi tree which replaced a 30 foot unknown monster that took two weeks of my summer vacation to dig up, cut up and dispose of. The fun part was finishing the job.

The third event was the Friends' tour of the 77 acre Hui Ku Maoli Ola Nursery located in Waimanalo. Our guide and co-owner, Rick Barboza graciously escorted us through his vast nursery and thrilled us with his encyclopedic knowledge of Hawaiian plants, animals and culture that reflected a passion and work ethic that was truly awe-inspiring. I was proud to learn that 20 years ago he was one of my students. Unfortunately, I can't take credit for his success. He was only in my homeroom and not one of my math students. But, at least I didn't turn him off on getting educated. I hope this article has a similar effect on you.

Bill Follmer

Friends of Honolulu Botanical Gardens

From the Director's Desk

It's been a little over a year since we made botanical history at Foster Botanical Garden, with the successful pollination of our 75-year old double coconut palm.

As garden enthusiasts, many of you no doubt walked past the two female palms over the years, wondering when you would see the "world's largest seed" developing. Without human intervention, there was no chance of this happening. This is because there are no pollen-bearing male double coconut palms in Hawai'i. There were at least three attempts in the past to hand pollinate the female flowers with pollen obtained from Sri Lanka, the Seychelles and Singapore. All failed. Last year, however, Dr. George Staples, former botanist at Bishop Museum, and currently senior researcher at the Singapore Botanic Gardens (SBG), arranged for fresh pollen to be collected from their male double coconut palm and sent to us.

The window of opportunity to successfully pollinate the double coconut is thought to be only a few hours to possibly a couple of days. So as soon as the pollen arrived, Foster Botanical Garden (FBG) Plant Propagator, Romel Silva, climbed up a ladder and hand pollinated the female flowers. Leftover pollen was kept cool and dry. Then all we could do was wait and watch. Two months after pollination of the first flowering spike, a second spike emerged, and pollen was applied to those flowers over several days. At the same time, it seemed that one "flower" from the first spike was a little bit enlarged. It took a few weeks before staff at SBG confirmed through photos that pollination was successful: a double coconut fruit was developing! This success was repeated months later, as it became obvious that more fruits were developing on the second spike.

During the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) conference held in Honolulu in November 2011, and attended by the heads of twenty-one economies, FBG had a surprise visitor, Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong. It was a proud moment for the staff to show this distinguished guest the results of the international partnership between Singapore and Hawai'i.

When mature, double coconut fruits can weigh up to 50 pounds each. Fruits take five to seven years to develop, so staff and visitors alike will be able to see and appreciate the long-term consequences of this effort for many years.

Winnie Singeo

Honolulu Botanical Gardens

Visit www.honolulu.gov/parks/hbg

for more information.

Then come visit the gardens!



Photo: Winnie Singeo

Romel Silva, Plant Propagator, checks out the developing double coconut fruits

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TO ALL PLANT LOVERS

There are still some fascinating tours and classes left on this year's calendar:

Garden Sex (PG-13): by Dr. Richard Criley

Saturday, September 15th 10:00 – 11:00am

Location: Ho'omaluhia Botanical Garden

Well-known horticulturist Dr. Richard Criley will host an informative presentation at Ho'omaluhia in which he will discuss the reproductive mechanisms of plants ranging from single cell algae to great forest trees. Gain practical propagation knowledge. Bring a picnic lunch and enjoy the beauty and peace of the garden.

Fee: \$15 for members, \$20 for non-members.

Ohia Lehua: by horticulturist Dennis Kim

Saturday, November 10th 10:00 – 11:00am

Location: Waimanalo

In this field trip you will be guided through a nursery which offers beautiful flower color variations, both small and large specimens of lehua and even a "hanging" basket form. Other native species will also be shown.

Please note that because flowering is at the will of Mother Nature this tour may be rescheduled a week. You will be notified if this occurs.

Fee: \$15 for members, \$20 for non-members. Sales are welcome

Pruning Young Trees and Shrubs by Aloha Arborist Association

Saturday, November 17th 9:00am – 12:00pm

Location: Ho'omaluhia Botanical Garden – Check in at Lecture Room

Certified Arborists, Dudley Hulbert and Carol Kwan, will give talks on pruning young trees (Hubert) and pruning shrubs (Kwan). Each talk will be followed by a demonstration in the courtyard. The tour will end with a question and answer session where you can ask away at these talented arborists.

Fee: \$15 for members, \$20 for non-members.

