

# TAKING ROOT

ALOHA TREE ALLIANCE



2022 COMMUNITY REPORT



**“Our human connection to seasons and cycles awakens within us our oneness with all life. If we are to care for ourselves, we must also care for our earth.”**

**-Arlynnna Livingston, ATA Founder**

# ROOTING FOR HAWAII'S FORESTS AND WATERSHEDS

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MESSAGE

**F**EW experiences uplift us like watching a seed take root and then quietly and magically generate new life.

At the start of the Kuli'ou'ou Ridge Trail in East Honolulu, dozens of native Alahe'e, Kou, Lonomea, and Willwili trees push proudly skyward. Many of them, now three to four feet tall, started out just one year ago as three-to four-inch seedlings.

Like these plantings, Aloha Tree Alliance has "taken root" with a sharp trajectory of growth this past year. Between October 2021 and July 2022, ATA's team and several hundred dedicated volunteers cleared over 23 restoration sites on the Kuli'ou'ou Trail, strategically planted 818 trees and shrubs, remediated over one-third of the 60 trail shortcuts to minimize erosion, removed invasive species, repaired steps near the trail's summit, and collaborated with excellent like-minded organizations.

ATA's young plantings embody our hope of developing an effective global response to the threat of climate change. It's easy to focus on the numbers: Degrees of warming. Feet of sea level rise. Thousands of trees lost. Tons of carbon being released into the atmosphere. While these measures are important, the obstacles that accompany the climate problem can create a feeling of hopelessness.

ATA takes an optimistic view by envisioning and implementing solutions to climate change that benefit Hawaii's environment and human life. Our team members, business partners and terrific volunteers take manageable steps to slow the climate crisis by participating in monthly community workdays, weekly Aloha Friday Watering events, Adopt-a-Kipuka program, and stewardship opportunities aimed at developing the next generation of environmental leaders.

ATA is proud of the 91% survival rate of its plantings, thanks to the C.A.R.E. conservation model, rooted in the idea that nature's value to all life, including humans, requires proactive and protective efforts that go far beyond planting.

As the trees and ATA take root, we joyfully witness the transformation of the Kuli'ou'ou forest and watershed to its original integrity. Our heartfelt thanks to ATA's volunteers and donors for their generous commitment to helping us spark change, address the climate emergency, and ensure the protection and enjoyment of our natural environment for generations to come.

Aloha,

Laurie Chang



## 2021-2022 IMPACT



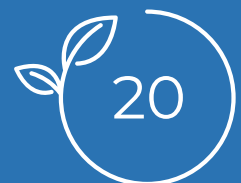
Native trees and shrubs planted



Kipuka and trail cut sites remediated



Volunteers engaged



Alliances established



Earth Stewards trained

# THE KULI'OU'OU WATERSHED

**T**HE Kuli'ou'ou Valley ahupua'a is rich in natural and cultural history.

Before the onset of Western contact approximately 1,000 years ago, inhabitants may have used the area for shelter and fishing. Centuries later, the valley housed a large and beautiful coastal wetland and pool named 'Elelupe that served as Kamehameha III and his court's summer retreat.

Mo'olelo speaks of the beautiful and diverse array of endemic, singing Kahuli tree snails, about the size of one's thumbnail, that once abundantly inhabited the native forests of the Waianae and Ko'olau mountain ranges, including Kuli'ou'ou Valley. Found only on O'ahu, these "jewels of the forest" are now endangered.

Disappearing trees have proved much of the problem. In the late 19th century, the introduction of livestock

devastated hundreds of acres of native forest land and animal habitats. Decades later, the Civilian Conservation Corps' (CCC) arrival in the Islands would save O'ahu's forests and watersheds with its massive plantings of non-native forestry trees, including Cook Pine, Albizia, Ironwood, and Eucalyptus along many mountain ridges. These trees remain visible on the Kuli'ou'ou Ridge Trail.

Almost 100 years later, and threatened with grave consequences from the climate crisis, the Kuli'ou'ou forest and watershed are once again in trouble. Aloha Tree Alliance and its dedicated volunteers commit to planting over 1,500 native trees by the end of 2023, helping to increase biodiversity and advancing a healthier, more resilient forest ecosystem on the beautiful Kuli'ou'ou Ridge Trail.



## PLANTING WITH C.A.R.E

ATA's forestry project at the Kuli'ou'ou Ridge Trail honors the effort of growing trees, from seed collection and propagation, to outplanting. By planting with C.A.R.E., a reforestation model developed by ATA, survivorship of trees planted from October 2021 to October 2022 resulted in 91% survivorship. This C.A.R.E model will help ensure our seedlings will grow to fill the forest canopy.



**C.A.R.E**

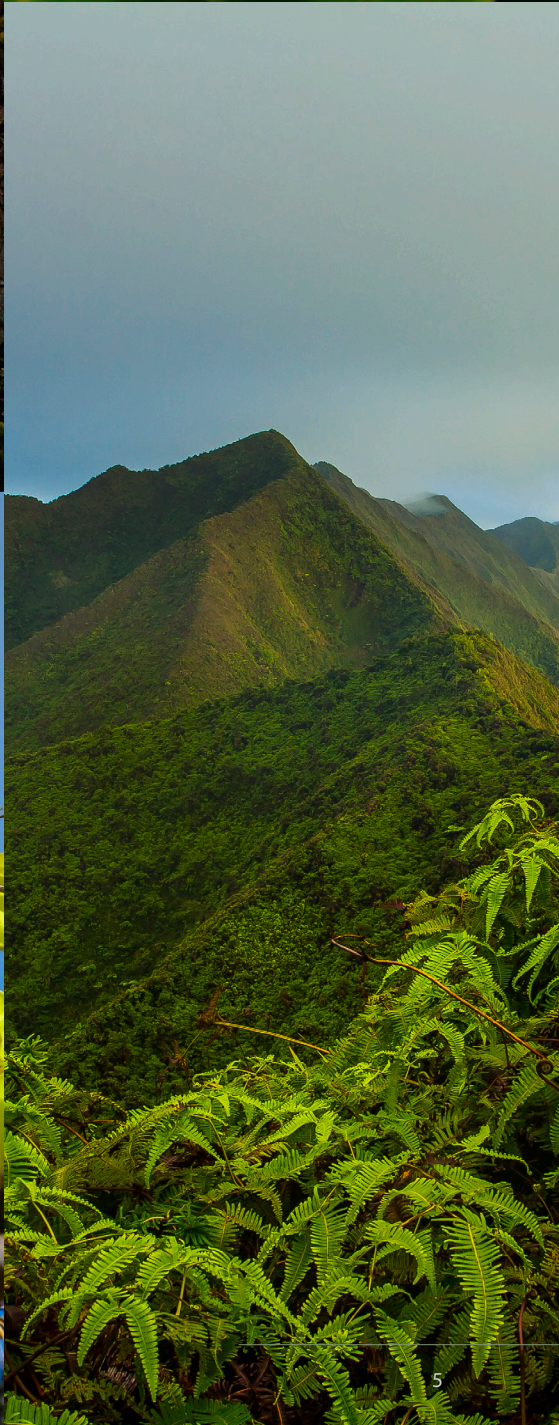
**CONSULT** with indigenous knowledge, local communities and forest experts about restoration methods

**ACTIVATE** Hawaii's youth leaders and foster sustainable forestry stewardship

**RESPECT** cultural protocols, practices and traditions

**EDUCATE** community members about reforestation and maintenance

©ATA



## EMPTY PROMISES ECHO EERILY IN PHANTOM FORESTS

**G**OVERNMENT initiatives across the world, such as the Bonn Challenge and World Economic Forum's One Trillion Trees Initiative, have pledged to plant millions of trees and committed millions of dollars in an attempt to sequester carbon and mitigate emissions on a warming planet. However, in some cases, these costly projects have been sadly unsuccessful.

Planting the wrong species at the wrong time, planting trees in areas not previously forested, and failure to hand these projects over to the local community for management have resulted in survivorship rates as low as 2%. Take the Filipino island of Luzon, which outplanted a million mangroves in 2012. The muddy coastal zones in which the mangroves were planted lacked oxygen in the soils for the trees to breathe. Consequently, 98% of seedlings either died or were washed away. In November 2019, the Turkish government, as part of World Afforestation Day, planted 11 million trees. However, an independent survey run by the country's union of forestry found that 90% of the planting had died just two months later.

Ambitious planting initiatives by world governments achieve nothing if planted trees do not survive. Adequate surveying, mapping, planning, working with nature, traditional knowledge and involvement from local communities is crucial to successful reforestation projects.

ATA's commitment to plant healthy native trees and shrubs in selected kipuka, care for them until they have securely taken root, and engage young people to be earth stewards is our best hope for a resilient ecosystem that will support future generations.

Source: Pearce, Fred, "Phantom Forests: Why Ambitious Tree Planting Projects Are Failing." *Yale E360*, 6 Oct. 2022, <https://e360.yale.edu/features/phantom-forests-tree-planting-climate-change>.

# BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

*The importance of building community has been a part of Aloha Tree Alliance's DNA since the organization's inception. By joining hands with like-minded individuals, state agencies, school groups and business partners, ATA finds solutions to help mitigate environmental problems that plague Hawaii's forests and watersheds, and to slow climate change. To sustain this climate momentum, we must continue to engage more people and communities in this urgent work.*

## Monthly Community Workdays

ATA's volunteers are a special breed. They wake early on a Saturday morning, join people they have never met to hike along challenging switchbacks while carrying tools, plants and jugs of water, and spend three to four hours tending to the earth—planting trees, repairing trail cuts, and clearing invasive species.

At the end of the work day, the upwards to 50 volunteers who range in age from 6 to 80 years old, gather to celebrate their accomplishments. They express their gratitude for the hospitality, love and knowledge provided by the forest in an oli mahalo, a Hawaiian gratitude chant. They leave feeling they have tended to the earth, and in turn, the earth has tended to them.

Aloha Tree Alliance is humbled by the many selfless community volunteers who come out to support the restoration of the Kuli'ou'ou Watershed and Kuli'ou'ou Ridge Trail. Together, they are making a difference to protect and preserve one of Hawaii's precious biological treasures.

## Aloha Friday Watering

Planting trees requires diligent maintenance. Each Friday morning, a group of dedicated volunteers meet on Kuli'ou'ou Ridge Trail to quench the thirst of 818 native trees and shrubs and monitor their survival. Hearty volunteers carry gallon jugs of water up to one mile along the trail and tend to each plant with care. The result: hundreds of happy plants and an impressive 91% survival rate of native trees!



*A happy volunteer carries gallon jugs one mile up the trail to fill ATA's water catchment tanks.*

## Adopt-a-Kipuka Program

The Hawaiian saying, “no task is too big when done by all” could aptly describe ATA's Adopt-A-Kipuka program. Established in the spring of 2022, the community-driven program enables business and volunteer groups opportunities to mālama 'āina and steward selected portions of the Kuli'ou'ou Ridge Trail for one year.

Volunteers help care for and maintain their respective adopted restoration site(s) of native trees and plants, and prevent further erosion and forest degradation. The enthusiasm and dedication these volunteers exude inspires other groups to take ownership of the Kuli'ou'ou Ridge Trail.

In 2022, Architects Hawaii Ltd. (AHL), became ATA's first business partner to adopt five kipuka and create a plan to beautify and maintain the Kuli'ou'ou trailhead with flowering native plants and trees. With the Hawaii State Department of Land and Natural Resources receiving less than 2% of the state's budget to oversee forest service lands and over 40 hiking trails on O'ahu, collaborative partnerships like AHL are critical to helping restore and fortify Hawaii's forests and watersheds for future generations.



Two percent of Hawaii's state budget is allocated towards managing Hawaii's ecosystems and hiking trails. ATA's partnerships with DLNR, Nā Ala Hele Trail and Access, and Kaulunani Urban and Community Forestry Program is a model of community engagement to extend aloha 'āina to the Kuli'ou'ou Watershed and hiking trails. The effort to protect and restore our local ecosystems cannot be done by government alone. Mālama Maunaloa, Maunaloa Fishpond Heritage Center, Protect and Preserve Hawaii and Livable Hawaii Kai Hui are allies that help to extend the state's efforts to protect and restore East Honolulu's natural resources for future generations.



A volunteer places native plants and tools in buckets to prepare for a community work day.



What better way than hands-on experience for a young volunteer to have fun while gaining environmental stewardship skills?



ATA's "Hike Pono" signage, a collaboration with the Division of Forestry and Wildlife, encourages pono, or "right" hiking behavior.

# GROWING EARTH STEWARDS

*Teaching the next generation of Earth Stewards is at the core of ATA's work. From engaging KUPU HYCC Americorps members, local students and ATA team members and interns, ATA is committed to fostering meaningful environmental education experiences for Hawaii's youth.*

## A TRAIL-BLAZING SUMMER INTERNSHIP



*KUPU interns take a break from repairing the stairs at the top of Kuli'ou'ou Ridge Trail.*

**T**WENTY young earth stewards from KUPU's Hawaii Youth Conservation Corp (HYCC) program experienced a trail-blazing summer interning with Aloha Tree Alliance on the Kuli'ou'ou Ridge Trail and learning about reforestation and conservation.

The enthusiastic interns cleared and prepared new restoration sites, removed invasive species, built fences from harvested guava poles to remediate trail shortcuts, conducted plant health monitoring surveys and repaired steps at the top section

of the trail, with guidance from the Hawaii State Department of Land and Natural Resources Nā Ala Hele Trail and Access program staff and Sierra Club volunteer Randy Ching.

"Restoring the trail is hard work, but the results are amazing," said KUPU intern Annabelle Rogers. "Seeing our progress is motivating."

Sandy Beach also benefited from the interns' hard work. By removing invasive Koa Haole and California Grass along the coast, they made a difference from mauka to makai.



*KUPU interns remove invasive species at Sandy Beach.*



*KUPU intern Austin conducts plant health monitoring on a Lonomea tree at the Autograph Tree Site.*



# GENERATION GREEN



Students from Chaminade University's sustainability club planted native species.

ON Earth Day week, ATA welcomed keiki to kupuna who showed up for Planet Earth. Thirty middle school students from Hawai'i Tech Academy (HTA) in Waipahu ventured to East Honolulu for a mauka-to-makai experience. Their first stop: Kalauha'eha'e Fishpond in Niu Valley. Here, Maunaloa Heritage Fishpond Center Director Chris Cramer shared fascinating mo'olelo about the ancient fishpond in which 'awa, aholehole and mullet once thrived. An afternoon on Kuli'ou'ou Ridge Trail taught the budding forest stewards about the traditional Hawaiian ahupua'a land division system

and the importance of implementing protective and practical approaches to sustain the natural environment from erosion, overuse and pollution.

Earth Day on the Kuli'ou'ou Ridge Trail drew over 50 volunteers who got down and dirty to help ATA hit its goal of planting 550 native trees and shrubs. As a grateful recipient of Oboz Footwear's 2022 One More Tree campaign, ATA purchased 100 Alahe'e trees.

Volunteers from ULOHA, Sustainable Coastlines, the Sierra Club and UH School of Public Health also did their part to help the planet, knowing that a green future is a prosperous future!



HTA students listen to mo'olelo by Chris Cramer at the Kalauha'eha'e Fishpond.



ULOHA volunteers carry Alahe'e trees up the trail.

## LEADING WITH ALOHA

Anyone who volunteers with ATA team leader Kanoa Nakamura immediately absorbs his exuberant passion, excitement and knowledge of Hawaiian plants. A generous and caring soul, Kanoa never hesitates to share his values of aloha 'āina, or love for the land.

"Aloha, the driving principle of Hawaiian culture, is something that extends beyond humanity, into the 'āina, which returns abundance in exchange for responsible stewardship," says Kanoa. "I envision a future in which every ahupua'a has a team of stewards and community members that educate and organize folks to help mitigate invasive species, plant natives and grow crops to feed local communities."

Kanoa believes stewardship not only sustains environmental practices, but improves the quality of life for people, now and in the future. His advice for anyone aspiring to be an environmental leader: "Don't be afraid to break out of your comfort zone and try something different. New growth is a good thing, for people and plants!"



ATA intern Kanoa Nakamura leads a volunteer group during a community workday on Kuli'ou'ou Ridge Trail.

# CELEBRATING VOLUNTEERS

Aloha Tree Alliance's first fundraising event, Good Things Come in Trees, lived up to its name. Over 350 nature lovers and tree huggers gathered at the Bishop Museum on October 14, 2022 to celebrate ATA's volunteers and the work that ATA accomplished in 2021-2022.

A benefit concert featured singer-songwriter Jenny Yim, who used her beautiful voice to share her original compositions about life and protecting the environment. Grammy-nominated musician LT Smooth performed beautiful slack key guitar and shared compelling stories. Their memorable duet performance of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah" provided a gift of music for the captivated audience.

Hundreds of beautiful trees, shrubs, succulents and plants, generously donated by local nurseries across O`ahu, added to the earth-loving energy. Alongside the plant booth, a silent auction offered a variety of items for bid, from vacations at the Kahala Resort and a Malaekahana beach house, to a hydrofoil, glass blown vase from a prominent local artist, and beautiful gift baskets and backpacks from popular Hawaii retailers.

Proceeds from the plant sale will benefit ATA's native tree and shrub purchases for the 2022- 2023 planting season. Mahalo to the many individuals, business and local environmental non-profit partners who contributed to the successful event!



Jenny Yim performs original music at ATA's Bishop Museum Event.



Hundreds of plants donated by local nurseries, including The Plant Place in Waimanalo, fill ATA's plant sale tent.

## HONORING RANDY CHING



Randy Ching receives the 2022 ATA Stewardship Award from Executive Director Laurie Chang at the Bishop Museum in October.

To Randy Ching, practicing stewardship means changing the way we live on the earth. ATA's first Stewardship Award recipient believes "humans must see the natural world as a living integral part of their existence and to stop materialism that

consumes and diminishes the value of clean air, clean water, the natural world, and the wisdom of indigenous peoples around the world."

Randy acknowledges it is wonderful to plant trees; however, he believes people must also be engaged politically, support politicians who share similar values, associate with like-minded people and socially motivated groups that help educate and create momentum to protect the earth.

"The larger your circle of like-minded people, the greater your impact will be," said Ching, an outstanding member of Sierra Club of Hawaii since the 1980s and named Volunteer of the Year in 2016. Randy has helped the Sierra Club and numerous

groups fulfill their missions to promote good government and protect Hawaii's environment and people.

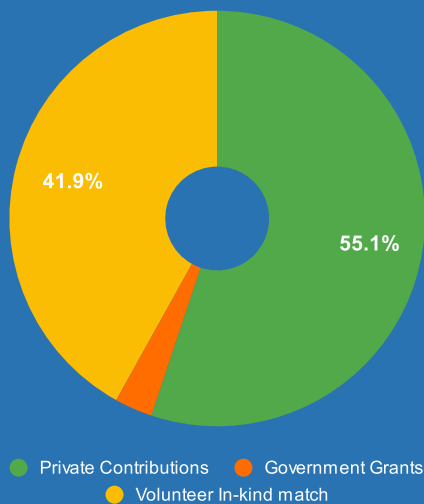
When asked what gives him hope for the future, Ching is quick to respond, "The young people."

"Young people understand that the world is in dire straits and it is up to them if they and all living things will survive," he said.

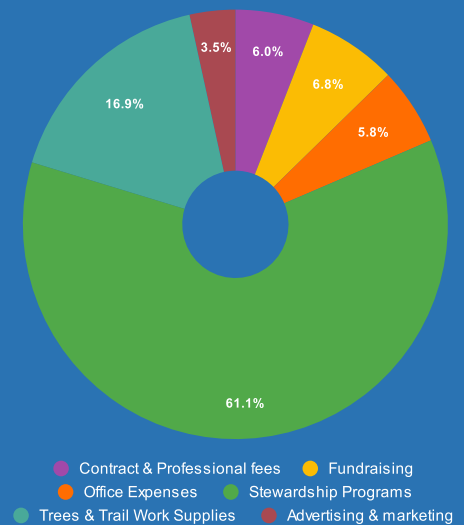
Randy Ching is the rare person who lives his values, practices what he teaches and tirelessly advocates for healing the earth. He is a living treasure in Hawaii and ATA is grateful to have Randy as a friend and contributor to its mission.

# ATA FINANCIAL REPORT

## REVENUE & SUPPORT



## OPERATING EXPENSES



## Gratitude and Mahalo

Congratulations to Cailyn Schmidt, ATA's 2021-2022 Earth Steward, who has completed her two-year internship. Cailyn has been an integral partner in the development and successful growth of ATA and we are grateful to continue our work together. Cailyn is an extraordinary talent whose contributions make a significant impact on our world.

Will Weaver, ATA's forest consultant, has taken a position on the Big Island of Hawai'i. We are happy for Will and thankful that he will remain a consultant. Will has mentored in 2022 Team Leader Kanoa Nakamura, who has stepped into Will's leadership role on community work days. Mahalo, Will, for sharing your knowledge of native trees and plants, planting methods, and restoration site planning. We wish you the best.

ATA is the recipient of the Kaulunani Urban and Community Forestry Grant (from DLNR) for the second year. Being a Kaulunani grantee has been a wonderful learning experience that has connected ATA with the DLNR community of hard working, supportive professionals. The grant of \$7,500 helped ATA launch its first planting season, which involved the sourcing, placement and nurturing of native trees and plants, and survival rate monitoring and reporting.

The Coconut Traveler awarded ATA \$10,000 on Giving Tuesday 2022. Debbie Misajon, Coconut Traveler's founder, is committed to sensitizing travelers to Hawaii's fragile ecosystem and unique culture, while providing opportunities for them to give back by making a donation earmarked for "Responsible Tourism." We are honored and look forward to working with the Coconut Traveler to raise eco-consciousness as we restore and reforest one of Oahu's most popular and spectacular hiking trails.



**Support tree planting and future Earth Stewards.  
Donate Today.  
Visit [www.alohatreealliance.org](http://www.alohatreealliance.org)**



## GROW WITH US

[www.alohatreealliance.org](http://www.alohatreealliance.org)

*"I want to remind you that the forest is far more than a source of timber. It is our collective medicine cabinet. It is our lungs. It is the regulatory system for our climate and our oceans. It is the mantle of our planet. It is the health and well-being of our children and grandchildren. It is our sacred home. It is our salvation."*

*- Diana Beresford-Kroeger*