

# Hoolehua PMC News

Helping People Help The Land



## Lt. Governor Visits the PMC

The People's Garden at the Hoolehua Plant Materials Center, spear-headed by local high-school student Chelsea Sakamoto, has gained state recognition. As her high school "Senior Project", Chelsea has committed herself to the daunting task of coordinating the activities of this nationally recognized project.

Chelsea has taken the lead in planting, maintenance, harvesting, and coordinating with local community organizations, like Molokai Environmental Organization, Molokai Food Bank, Maui Community College Farms, local farmers and other community members. The produce harvested from the People's garden, will all be donated to the local Food Bank of Molokai, includes taro, luau (taro) leaf, sweet potato, different varieties of egg-plant, and sweet corn.

Ms. Sakamoto is doing such a great job that her efforts have been noticed by the Lt. Governor, Brian Schatz, who visited the PMC People's Garden on December 8, 2010.

## Hawaiian Emersion Assists with Plant Evaluation

The Molokai Hawaiian Emersion Program, a program devoted to reviving the Hawaiian language and culture, is currently learning about native Hawaiian plants and how they benefit the environment. They were also interested in the scientific approach to plant study.

This was a perfect opportunity for the Hoolehua Plant Materials Center to take advantage of the helping hands of the Hawaiian Emersion youth to help gather data for one of the plants being studied, *Vitex rotundifolia*. Physical attributes like length and width of vegetative spread and also plant height was recorded. The task that required the most help was the gathering vegetative growth yield data. This entailed cutting the various plots back to the same size. The amount of material removed is then weighed and compared to the other accessions. This technique allows the center to judge which accession is able to cover ground the fastest.

The help from the students was greatly appreciated!



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# Plant of Interest

## *Achyranthes splendens*



*Achyranthes splendens* is a small shrub 2 to 6 feet in height. The leaves are arranged opposite and are obovate to broadly elliptic or suborbicular in shape, ranging in size from  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 4  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches long and  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide. The leaves are also covered with white hairs, especially on the lower surface giving them a silvery appearance. Its flower is a densely-congested spike with a silvery appearance as well and can measure from 1 to 9  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches long.

*Achyranthes splendens* is an endemic shrub. It occurs naturally at low elevations, generally from sea level to 100 feet, in open, dry areas. It is known to survive plantings up to 1000 feet. It is currently known to occur naturally along the western coast of Oahu, on the Kalaupapa peninsula on Molokai, near Manele and Maunalei Gulch on Lanai, in West Maui, and near Kula on East Maui. There are 2 varieties recognized in The Manual of the Flowering Plants of Hawaii (Wagner 1990); *A. splendens* var. *rotundata*, and *A. splendens* var. *splendens*.



## Kilohana Students Learn About Soil Conservation

The Hoolehua Plant Materials Center has always been Molokai's little secret. There are few people on island that have actually been to the center or even know that we exist. It has been our goal to increase our exposure to the public by providing more opportunities for them to visit the center to learn about the type of work we do and what role we play in soil conservation. One way we do this is by providing educational tours to the youth.

On October 12, 2010, the second and fourth graders of Kilohana Elementary School paid a visit to the Hoolehua PMC in hopes of expanding their knowledge about soil conservation. The students are working on a year-long project to explore ways to protect the coral reefs of Hawaii, one of which is by controlling erosion on land to stop run-off into the ocean.

At the Hoolehua PMC, they discovered that plants play a huge role in controlling run-off into the ocean. They were shown the variety of different ground covers and how they held the soil in place when it rained. They also learn that wind can also cause soil erosion and this too can be controlled with plants. They understood how the tall trees helped to slow the wind down and protect the plants behind them. One student liked that we were using Christmas trees (Cook pines) as wind breaks.



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