

Saturday workshop focuses on growing food

By Special To West Hawaii Today
Wednesday, November 19, 2008 8:19 AM HST

In the last year, the Hawaii Island School Garden Network has expanded to serve school gardens in communities around the island. There are currently 45 projects, at varying stages of development, participating in the Garden Network.

On Saturday, the Hawaii Island School Garden Network has invited the 45 schools and garden teachers to Ka Umeke Kaeo Hawaiian Immersion Public Charter School in Keaukaha to learn about growing Hawaiian crops in school gardens islandwide. The "Keiki, Kalo and Koe (Children, Taro and Worms)" workshop runs from 8 a.m. to noon, followed by a potluck lunch.

This is an opportunity to visit Ka Umeke, the oldest Hawaiian immersion school in the state, which has devoted a large portion of its campus to the production, processing and sharing of Hawaiian food crops for the local community. The stories of the kalo, ecological methods of production and methods of preparation will be shared by host Pua Mendonca, Ka Umeke's garden teacher, and Jerry Konanui, an eighth generation taro farmer from Puna. Garden teachers will be able to take home huli (taro tops) for their school gardens. Community members are also welcome to attend on a space-available basis. To reserve a space, call Uluwehi Vanblarcom at 258-4358.

The Kohala Center coordinates the Garden Network and helps to support these school garden projects. The immediate goals of the school gardens are to encourage youth and their families to grow edible plants and trees, to increase consumption of locally grown fruits and vegetables and to share knowledge and respect for traditional Hawaiian food crops. Through hands-on work in school gardens, students learn about the development of sustainable agricultural systems.

The Kohala Center has just launched a new Web site so that island residents can learn more about the Garden Network, the participating schools and upcoming events showcasing school gardens in communities around the island. Visit <http://www.kohalacenter.org/HISGN/about.html> to learn more.

Community volunteers are invited to assist with the work being done in school gardens around the island. To volunteer, contact Nancy Redfeather, Hawaii Island School Garden Network project director, at 322-2801 or e-mail redfeather@kohalacenter.org.



Ka Umeke Kaeo Hawaiian Immersion Public Charter School kindergartners and third-graders clean kalo (taro) after the harvest. The third-graders act as kuaana (older siblings) and help to ensure the job is done correctly. - Special To West Hawaii Today