

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### ***Kohala Center receives funding to launch statewide Public Seed Initiative***

KAMUELA, Hawai‘i—August 16, 2011—The Kohala Center has received funding from the Ceres Trust for a statewide Public Seed Initiative designed to help Hawai‘i’s farmers and gardeners to select, grow, harvest, store, and improve seed varieties that will thrive in Hawai‘i.

The Ceres Trust, whose name pays homage to the ancient Roman goddess of agriculture, has as its main focus the support and promotion of organic and sustainable agriculture.

The Public Seed Initiative will consist of workshops on each of the five main Hawaiian Islands, with two workshops scheduled on each island over the course of the next two years. The goals of the project are to increase the community’s knowledge of and practical experience with seed production. Partnering in this effort are The Kohala Center, the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Extension Service, Regenerations Botanical Garden, and multiple farms and organizations throughout the state.

The two-day workshops will focus on introductory seed biology and on how to grow, harvest, and save varieties of lettuce and a wet seeded crop. The workshops will include both lecture presentations and hands-on fieldwork at demonstration farms, so participants can practice harvesting, cleaning, and storing fresh seed. Strategies to account for differences in elevation, weather patterns, and rainfall will be discussed.

“Over the past 110 years, 95 percent of the open-pollinated vegetable/fruit/herb varieties that were grown in home gardens and small farms in 1900 have become extinct,” said Nancy Redfeather, who is helping to coordinate the Public Seed Initiative on behalf of The Kohala Center. “Seed is the foundation of food production.”

Redfeather serves as coordinator of the Hawai‘i Island School Garden Network (HISGN), and she plans to incorporate seed training into her School Garden Teacher Training Program this year. “Students instinctively love to grow and save seed,” Redfeather said. “Giving them hands-on practice will help to cultivate a new generation of community members who can actively participate in growing and saving seeds at home.”

The statewide Public Seed Initiative arose out of discussions at the 2010 Seed Symposium, *Hua Ka Hua: Restore Our Seed*. At the end of this event, a statewide working group was formed to carry on the goals identified at the symposium. This working group has continued to consult with

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the two coordinators of the Public Seed Initiative, Redfeather and Dr. Hector Valenzuela Extension, Vegetable Specialist at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. Dr. Russell Nagata, Hawai'i County Administrator for the University of Hawai'i at Manoa Extension Service, is providing assistance with the lettuce seed work. Dr. Nagata has previously managed an active lettuce breeding and genetics program at the University of Florida.

The first two-day seed workshop will be held on Kaua'i in November. For more information and details on upcoming workshops, visit the project Web site at [www.kohalacenter.org/publicseedinitiative/about.html](http://www.kohalacenter.org/publicseedinitiative/about.html).