



For Immediate Release

Contact: Lyn Howe
Director, Hawai'i Public Seed Initiative
The Kohala Center
seedproject@kohalacenter.org
808-756-5310

New website offers “local seeds for local needs” *Hawai'i-grown seeds specifically adapted for islands' small farms and home gardens*

KAMUELA, Hawai'i—December 7, 2017—Small-scale farmers and home gardeners in Hawai'i now have an additional option for purchasing locally produced seeds.

The Hawai'i Seed Growers Network (HSGN), a statewide group of seed producers organized and supported by The Kohala Center's Hawai'i Public Seed Initiative program, officially launched its online store on December 4. Customers can pre-order 2018 seed varieties at hawaiiseedgrowersnetwork.com/shop, with orders shipping in late December. HSGN currently offers locally adapted, selectively bred seeds including beans, flowers, fruits, greens, herbs, and peppers.

HSGN is comprised of artisanal farmers that have worked together for more than five years to grow, develop, and provide high-quality local seeds to Hawai'i's gardeners and market farmers. Members commit to growing seed crops on a small scale to maintain close connections with their products, carefully observing, selecting, and harvesting from only the hardiest plants. Their goal is to contribute to resilient local food systems by offering seeds selectively bred and produced in Hawai'i for the islands' diverse soils and microclimates.

“Restarting a local seed industry in Hawai'i is a slow and ongoing process,” said Lyn Howe, director of The Kohala Center's Hawai'i Public Seed Initiative. “It takes many generations of growing and selecting varieties to produce quality seed with consistent, desired agricultural and culinary traits. But when you're 2,300 miles from the nearest seed source, we think it's a wise idea and worth the effort.”

Prior to the launch of HSGN's online seed marketplace, the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's Seed Lab was the only local seed producer. Hawai'i's gardeners have relied heavily on seeds imported from the continental United States, despite the fact that many are not properly adapted to Hawai'i's tropical and sub-tropical conditions, soil composition, pests, and plant diseases.

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P.O. Box 437462 | Kamuela, Hawai'i 96743 | Tel. 808-887-6411 | Fax 808-885-6707 | www.kohalacenter.org

The Kohala Center is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

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The Kohala Center, a nonprofit organization based on Hawai‘i Island, started the Hawai‘i Public Seed Initiative in 2009 as part of its goal to reduce Hawai‘i’s dependence on imported food. Participants in the Initiative began to grow and share plant varieties that thrived in their own gardens and fields. By saving and sharing the best seeds and re-growing them in other local microclimates, producers were able to evaluate seed performance under various environmental conditions.

The Center secured funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture, and Ceres Trust to help train and support HSGN producers, conduct seed trials, selectively breed and produce seeds, and develop the online marketplace. The Hawai‘i Island Seed Bank, the only facility in the Hawaiian Islands that stores native, conservation, and agricultural seeds, provides storage services for seeds sold through the marketplace. Additional seed varieties will be offered in 2018.

About The Kohala Center

Founded in the year 2000, The Kohala Center (kohalacenter.org) is an independent, community-based center for research, conservation, and education. We turn research and ancestral knowledge into action, so that communities in Hawai‘i and around the world can thrive—ecologically, economically, culturally, and socially.

Additional Online Resources

Hawai‘i Public Seed Initiative: kohalacenter.org/hpsi

Hawai‘i Seed Growers Network: hawaiiseedgrowersnetwork.com