

10 Important Crops for your Homestead Garden in Hawai'i

Hawai'i Seed Grower's Network – by Nancy Redfeather

Top Ten Crops for a Homestead Garden

Greens-Corn-Tomatoes-Squash-Beans-Peppers-Herbs-Onions-Fruits-The Carbs

Greens come in a lot of forms and flavors and give you that daily dose of vitamins & minerals, phytonutrients and antioxidants. Right now there are 5 different greens available on the HSGN Marketplace and a couple of new ones on the way.

- The dark leafies are **Red Amaranth** and **Calaloo-leaf Amaranth** great for adding nutrition to soups, stir fries, or lightly steamed.
- The lettuces **Canasta** and **Margaret Krimm** have very different tastes for your daily salads
- **Tsungu Mustard** is a nutritious spicy African green that can be added to soups & stir-fries.
- Little Gem Lettuce and Ethiopian Kale are coming soon!

Corn - Sweet and Flour

Corn is one of the cereal grains of the tropics and this is a good time of year to plant it. You can find the *Nalo Orange Corn* on the HSGN Marketplace. <https://www.hawaiiseedgrowersnetwork.com/?Collection=Grains>

Nalo Orange - named for its orange color (from high levels of Beta-carotenes) and Waimanalo (on the island of Oahu) - is a variety of flint corn developed from combining the best of Dr James Brewbaker's 50 years worth of breeding work for tropical adaptation and disease resistance with the orange, flint texture from Argentina (which Dr Frank Kutka has been working with as part of Seeds We Need). Flint corns have higher levels of oil and protein and lower amounts of simple starches which gives them a harder texture and nuttier flavor than types of corn called dent and floury. Nalo Orange is a vigorous grower with good weed competing abilities, good disease resistance, and good yield. The best uses of its kernels are ground as cornmeal, polenta, grits. It has a rich, nutty flavor. The kernels can be nixtamalized making them easier to digest (see link below) and then ground into masa for tortillas or tamales. However, due to the higher oil content these tend to be chewy and not as fluffy as they are when made from a dent or flour corn as is common practice. Soon, we'll have more varieties for sale and if you are impatient, contact Jay Bost (jbost@hawaii.edu) with whom you could participate in trying out varieties in development. Here is the recipe for nixtamalizing Nalo Orange:

<http://farmandforagekitchen.com/blog/how-and-why-to-nixtamize-corn>

Sweet Corn - The UH Seed Lab has 3 varieties available, again they were bred by Dr. Brewbaker. All have great flavor and good disease resistance for Hawai'i.

* My personal favorite is **Supersweet #9 Yellow**

* **Supersweet #9 Silver** (white)

* **Supersweet #10**

See UH Seed Lab's online order form at the end of this Blog or use this link

<https://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/seed/>

Tomatoes

Tomatoes, another tasty fruit of the tropics. Tomatoes are usually but not always grown on a trellis, depending on the tomato variety. Some varieties make successive crops and some just one. The HSGN Marketplace currently has 6 varieties available:

- **Gold Cherry** a new introduction and a golden grape tomato
- **Alan Chadwick Cherry** – a large improved cherry tomato grown on Maui
- **Jay's Tomato** – the classic red cherry that does well in wet areas
- **AVTO 1350 Cherry** - a grape-like tomato with disease resistance
- **Tomatillo Mix** - a green & purple crossed and best for salsa and sauces
- **Austin Red Pear** another good sauce or salad tomato.

All these tomatoes are the salad work-horses and can be used to make a sauces and salsas.

The UH Manoa Seed Lab currently has 5 varieties of the larger slicing tomatoes all bred by Dr. Jim Gilbert long ago, and very disease resistant. Disease resistance is important because Hawai'i has a LOT of tomato diseases. I like to grow both kinds, the smaller ones and the larger ones. There is nothing as tasty as a home grown tomato, and you can't buy them in Hawai'i except at farmer's markets so grow your own!

<https://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/seed/Downloads/New%202020%20Seed%20Order%20Form.pdf>

Squash and Pumpkins

Squash and Pumpkins will give your family a great quantity of food and they can be a ground cover to slow down the weeds. Because they love to run around, put them at the end of your garden or in a corner of the property. They are usually good keepers and having food that can be steamed, baked, used in soups, stir-fries, pies and breads that will keep on the shelf for months is a food security winner.

Right now we have a new arrival called **Aloha Atitlan** a robust Moschata squash, a family that loves growing in the tropics. This new variety happened through a marriage of the local Kabocha with a unique green-black fleshed landrace Lago Atitlan from Guatemala. The result is a squash of varying shapes with a relatively firm and sticky flesh when cooked.

Beans Fresh or Dry

Beans fresh or dry are essential to any home garden especially during difficult times. **Long Beans, Dry Shelling Beans, Pole Green Beans, Winged Beans, Blackeyed Peas** require a trellis. **Bush Beans and Soy Beans** grow in smaller compact bushes. **The Pigeon Pea** is a tall bush.

- **Long Beans** (*Taiwan, Zens Long*,) Can be cooked fresh or dried.
- **Dry shelling beans** like *Ele'ele, Violet's Butter Bean, Peking Black, and the White Beniquez*, - grow on a trellis. Harvest when pod turns yellow or brown, remove seeds and allow them to dry.

- **Pole Green Beans** such as *Alan Chadwick and Lualualei* and the **Bush Green Bean Provider** are all excellent classic Green Beans.
- **Winged Beans** – beautiful purple & green pod harvest when young & flexible
- **Soy Beans** – *Kahala* bush variety no trellis needed.
- **Blackeyed peas** – California Cowpea & Black Vigna are both tropical peas that are dried and then cooked, or steamed when young.
- **Pigeon Pea** – In tropical countries especially India & the Phillipines the *gandule bean* is one of the basics in cuisine of those regions. This “pea” can be used to make a dal and the leaves fed to animals. High protein.

Experiment and see which ones grow well for you. **Having a green bean, a dry shelling bean, the pigeon pea, and one other** in your garden will continue to provide your family with some basic foods you can cook with creating many new dishes. Many of these beans can also be used to make hummus. Combining a legume with a grain increases the amount of protein you have in a meal.

Peppers

Peppers are the spice of life and come in so many different forms, tastes, and sweet heat.

Right now we have 5 varieties available.

- **Carnaval Seasoning Pepper** – From Puerto Rico – mild spiciness, Habanero Family
- **Nana’s Fingers Hot Peppers** – A cross between a Serrano and a Thai Chili Pepper. Moderate Heat and bred for the tropics.
- **Datil Hot Pepper** – Fruity & hot heritage pepper
- **Hawaiian Sunray Sweet Pepper** – A long sweet yellow pepper for grilling, stuffing, or raw
- **Ka’ala Sweet Pepper** – A sweet red UH Variety raw or grilled

Herbs & Medicines

Fresh herbs add so much to any meal. Right now we have only a few with many more on the way that include basil, dill, spilanthes, fennel, and cilantro.

- **Vana Tulsi Basil** – Culinary and medicinal
- **Ashwagandha** – Medicinal: See Blog for more information
<https://www.hawaiiseedgrowersnetwork.com/post/ashwagandha>
- **Blue Butterfly** – Tea and medicinal: <https://www.hawaiiseedgrowersnetwork.com/post/2019/01/11/clitoria-ternatea-a-lovely-lady-for-the-garden-and-the-kitchen>
- **Roselle Hibiscis** – Fresh or dried for teas, jams, and syrups

Hawaii’s gardens would do well to have a few ginger and olena (turmeric) plants growing. Ask your friends for a piece of the root to get started growing your medicine chest.

Onions

Onions are one of the queens of the spices. Very soon the HSGN will be offering the ***Koba Green Onion***. This small leafed onion is ready in 60 days and all parts of the onion can be used. If you don't have large onions in your pantry you can always substitute this one. I love using the tops finely sliced to spice up so many dishes, including just plain scrambled eggs!

Also, there are a few local varieties of shallots that you might be able to get from the gardeners of your Island since they grow from bulb. We are a Short Day area for growing onions and garlic, and those short day varieties have been disappearing over the years, and organic onions are sometimes hard to find in supermarkets. However there is still one company Dixondale Farms in Southern Texas who can ship a bundle (75-100) of short day onion starts to you. I love this company. So far, I have never had an onion that didn't grow. Currently they have 2 varieties of short day onions (1 sweet and 1 red) and leeks in bundles and are very inexpensive. www.dixondalefarms.com

Fruits

Currently we have one amazing fruit the ***Poha Berry***. If you have never grown them I think you will be happy to add this to your fruit mix. I like to use them fresh out of hand, to add to any fruit salad, or to dry in the dehydrator making Hawaiian Raisins and adding them to my homemade granola. In 2020 we will be adding some new varieties of papaya.

The UH Seed Lab has 2 non-GMO papayas right now, the Sunrise and the Sunset.

The Carbs

These important foods include beans, peas, corn, nuts, grains, sweet potatoes, taro, banana, cassava, ulu, potatoes, chayote can be included also in a home garden.

We talked about beans, corn, & peas which can be grown from seed, but many of the other basic carbohydrates need to be started from a corm, a cutting, a keiki, or a huli. So in Hawai'i right now, we are very dependent on our local gardeners and growers to share or sell stock to us to get our home garden going. Perhaps you know someone who grows taro, cassava, sweet potatoes, or chayote who could share a few cuttings/hulis/corms/fruits with you. You can grow them out and multiply them yourself. Also, look for those little bags of "seed potatoes" in your local health food store. Let them sprout a bit and then plant them. It would be a good thing to create a way for Hawaii's gardeners to get these basic home garden starts more easily.

If you have space in your backyard for a few fruit trees you could plant them on the perimeter. A lemon or lime, an avocado, a mac-nut, etc. can produce an amazing amount of food. Then you could trade what you have for another food that someone else grows that you don't have.

All the seed growers in the HSGN have a deep desire for greater health and food security for every person in Hawai'i... keiki to kupuna. I think we are all helping to create a more fruitful and balanced world by planting, tending, and eating from a home garden; a world that is based on the health of the soil, the food, the people, the children, the community, and the world. We are all connected.

Mahalo Nui for all you do each day to help create this reality. Catch us again for our Earth Day Blog – coming soon!

Ordering Locally Grown Seed:

Hawai'i Seed Growers Network: www.hawaiiseedgrowersnetwork.com

UH Manoa Seed Lab Order Form: <https://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/seed/>

Click on Seed Order Form under Quicklinks.