

Needs and Interests of Experienced Hawai'i Seed Savers

At A Glance: Hawai'i's numerous microclimates, diverse soils, and tropical growing conditions can be major barriers for farmers and gardeners who want to obtain high-performing, locally adapted seeds.

The University of Hawai'i's College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR), Extension Seed-Saving Hui, formed in 2020 to address the need for high-quality seed and support the development of local seed production. An online needs-assessment survey conducted in 2021 revealed important information about the state's existing small-scale seed saving and production efforts. Results also highlighted the potential for future expansion.



Experienced Seed Grower Respondents

Almost half (46%) of experienced seed grower respondents had 10+ years of seed saving experience, and 83% were growing 1 acre of seed or less. Most experienced growers were home gardeners (n=30), followed by educators, farmers, and researchers.

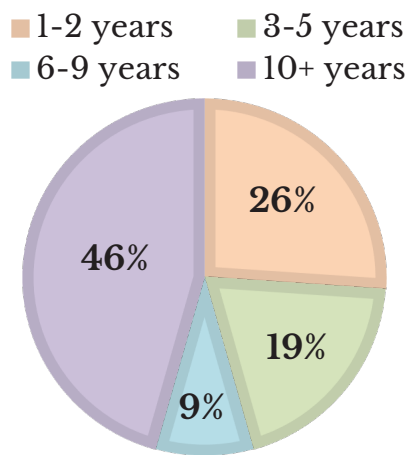


Figure 1. Years of seed saving experience for experienced seed grower survey respondents (n=46).

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Emilie Kirk
Joshua Silva
James Keach

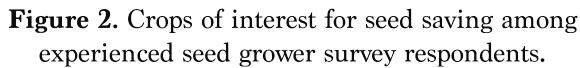
Department of Tropical Plant and Soil Sciences
erkirk@hawaii.edu, (808) 274-3471

Marielle Hampton
Christine Hanakawa

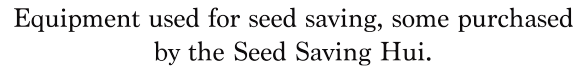
Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

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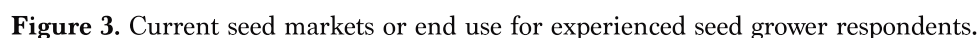
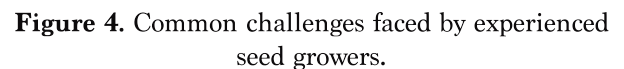
The crops of greatest interest to experienced seed savers are represented in this word cloud, with the larger text indicating more frequent responses and higher interest among survey respondents. Growers also indicated interest in saving seed from a greater diversity of crops, varieties developed by the University of Hawai'i, and crops and varieties that are adapted to local conditions as well as resistant to local stresses such as pests, diseases, and climate.



Nearly 90% of experienced seed growers indicated they save seed for personal use. At least 50% also utilize seed for public distribution or food security. Only 30% sell seed or use it for educational purposes.



The most common challenge cited by experienced seed savers was time (60% of respondents), followed by weather, infrastructure, equipment, and labor. For experienced seed savers, survey results showed that 78% expressed an interest in expanding their production, and 39% wanted to expand for commercial seed production purposes.



Opportunities for Support

Respondents felt CTAHR could support future seed saving efforts through events (e.g., seed exchanges, trainings, networking), educational resources, cultivar releases, and equipment for seed saving projects.

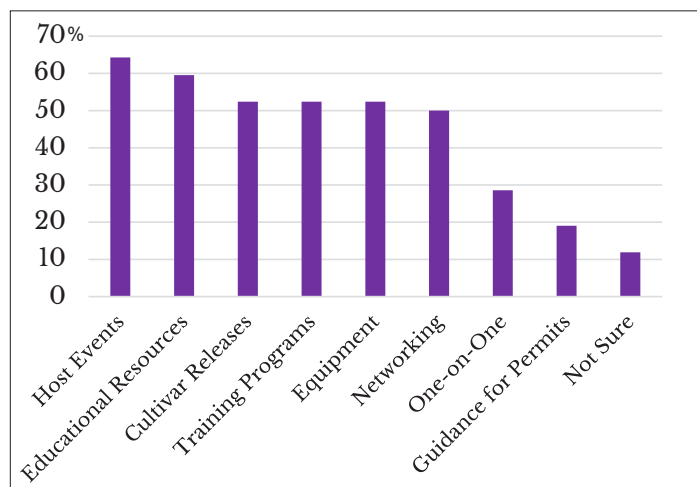


Figure 5. How CTAHR Extension can help experienced growers with their seed saving goals.



Figure 6. Since the 1960's, the UH Seed Lab has been the steward of more than 30 locally adapted vegetable and papaya varieties.

Additional Resources

Brewbaker, J. 1982. Crop Improvement in Hawaii: Past, Present and Future. <https://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/MP-180.pdf>

The Kohala Center. 2010. Hawai'i Public Seed Initiative. "Hua Ka Hua: Restore Our Seed" Symposium. <https://kohalacenter.org/hpsi/seed-symposium>

Motomura, S.A., Radovich, T.J.K., & Nagata, R.T. 2014. Saving Seed. <https://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/SCM-32.pdf>

Kirk, E., Keach, J. 2023. Feature Farmers: University of Hawai'i Seed Lab. <https://gms.ctahr.hawaii.edu/gs/handler/getmedia.ashx?moid=72082&dt=3&g=12>

Acknowledgements

Mahalo nui to survey participants for providing this important information to CTAHR Seed Saving Hui members and community partners.

"I think seed saving is a major component of a healthy food system. Improving varieties for our unique island conditions is critical." – Survey Respondent

Visit Us

The CTAHR Extension Seed Saving Hui is currently working on supporting these needs. Please visit our website at <http://go.hawaii.edu/x8H>.

