For most of us, the New Year means a new chapter in our lives, and that means creating a new year’s resolution. For students this could be getting better grades, being fit, or planning to do community service. Turn your resolutions into goals. Don’t give heed to distractions that discourage you from achieving that New Year’s goal. Just stay committed. As long as you stay committed to your goals, there shouldn’t be any difficulties. If you’ve already started or haven’t done so, here’s something to add to your list: Live and act sustainably.

Whether some of us tend to the crops, animals, or soil, we’re all agriculturalists. We care about Mother Nature and all that she provides for us. So how does one live sustainably? It depends on each person’s way of interpreting “sustainability”. However you interpret it, try these simple things.

- Compost if you haven’t done so. They make good fertilizers for your plants and crops.
- Recycle cell phones, plastics, paper, or reuse materials in another way. Students, you can
Introducing Acting Dean Bruce Mathews

Last month, Dr. Bill Steiner stepped down as Dean of CAFNRM after nearly seven years, and Dr. Bruce Mathews was named Acting Dean.

In this position, Mathews will work with faculty and staff to streamline curriculum, maintain fiscal transparency, and develop food safety standard operating procedures (particularly for produce) at the UHH Farm. On the curriculum front, Mathews will seek to combine or modify some existing courses where overlaps exist and encourage development of new courses so that individual courses efficiently and effectively fit together in the curriculum. Mathews wants to review core proficiencies and learning outcomes for the College’s specializations to ensure graduates are prepared to enter the workforce or continue their studies. For classes with high enrollment, he hopes to bring in assistants to help facilitate labs, and he wants to see a greater emphasis on business and farm management skills. “Since agriculture is a business, all students should have a background in accounting and be able to write simple business plans and grant proposals,” he says. “Students should also leave with experience in operating basic farm equipment and agro-environmental laboratory instruments.” With Chancellor Donald Straney “very supportive” of improving food and energy security in Hawaii, the future of the College is bright.

Regarding College funds, Mathews wants to strengthen oversight as to how funds are used, and emphasizes the importance of maintaining transparency. “If you’re open, you’re more apt to run a shop where people don’t question your honesty and integrity,” he says. He is committed to maintaining an open door policy, and encourages students to stop by. “A Dean should be a facilitator,” says Mathews. He is enthusiastic about bringing people together to move the College forward.

Mathews grew up in San Diego, but spent time in Hawaii as a kid with his family. He became interested in applied sciences while studying at a California community college, and transferred to UH Hilo after meeting some of the professors in 1982. While at UH Hilo, he was awarded the Chancellor’s Achievement Scholarship. With encouragement from Dr. Tsang to apply to graduate school, he obtained his Master’s degree from Louisiana State University. He worked for the International Paper Co.’s Southlands Experiment Forest in Bainbridge, Georgia as a research aide in silviculture before attending the University of Florida for his doctorate in Agronomy. After obtaining his PhD, he briefly worked for the USDA NRCS Earth Team on soil conservation and watershed management projects. He returned to Hilo in 1993 as a temporary Assistant Professor of Soils Science, and was offered a tenure-track faculty position in 1995. Mathews was promoted to Full Professor in 2004 and his research has resulted in over 50 publications in scientific journals and conference proceedings.

Mathews typically teaches SOILS 304 (Tropical Soils), and several other courses. Patrick Niemeyer, a former field soil scientist with the USDA NRCS, is teaching SOILS 304 this Spring, and will likely teach other soils-related courses like AGRN 310 and SOILS 350 in the Fall if Mathews’ term is extended.
A semester in
Costa Rica

By Aleysia Kaha

Sometimes we find ourselves to be like an ‘opiihi on a rock, stuck to Hawai‘i where we feel safe, but imagine an adventure where you are given the opportunity to explore jungles and meet people of an entirely different culture. In the study abroad program School for Field Studies (SFS), students travel to Atenas, Costa Rica to study in outdoor classrooms and engage in different ecosystems, national parks, and learn more about sustainable development.

Costa Rica, a place full of life and rich with biodiversity is rapidly developing. Their economy is shifting from agriculture to one driven by ecotourism and technology exports which in turn are straining the resources of Costa Rica’s land and people. As a result, SFS aims to “study different development and resource management models” to protect Costa Rica’s biodiversity and provide socioeconomic benefits to its people.

SFS allows students to discover themselves as teachers and aspires to strengthen their knowledge about agriculture, conservation, development, and resource management by allowing them to directly interact with communities, farms, and visiting parts of Costa Rica that enrich the culture of its people. In this way, these students gain an appreciation and passion for the life of the land and the people of Costa Rica that we do not often get opportunities to truly see. Last semester, agriculture student Leina‘ala Hall participated in this program. The most rewarding part of the experience, she says, “was giving back to the communities who allowed us to become members in their hometowns and made real personal connections with us.”

For more information visit: http://www.fieldstudies.org/costarica/semester

Market Day continues on campus

CAFRNM and the AgClub are continuing to sponsor Farmer’s Market Days on campus. The next Market Day will be on January 26, 2012 at 2 pm at the Campus Center Plaza. Last semester, AgClub members sold a wide variety of student-grown fresh produce, including everything from breadfruit to macadamia nuts to poinsettias for the holidays. Made-to-order coconuts were another popular item. Students will continue to offer fresh produce from the farm and from the AG 230 students’ sustainable gardens for sale this semester. Honey products from Dr. Tsutsumi’s honey bee project will also be up for sale. This Market Day will also serve as a backdrop to the Chancellor’s 2012 Spring Gathering for UH Hilo updates and introduction of new faculty and staff.

Please stop by to support AgClub!

New composting publication available

A new booklet about composting, “Tea Time in the Tropics: A handbook for compost tea production and use”, is available for purchase from the Sustainable and Organic Program at UH Manoa. Edited by Dr. Theodore Radovich and UH Hilo Assistant Professor of Horticulture Dr. Norman Arancon, the 72-page publication provides readers with information about how to judge compost quality, how compost tea is produced, and how to use compost tea to increase plant growth, suppress pests and diseases, and improve plant quality. The booklet includes case studies from “Master Brewers”, on-farm trials, reviews the history and future outlook of compost tea from an industry perspective, and answers frequently asked questions.

Whether you are a backyard gardener or commercial farmer, you are sure to learn something new. To order a copy of the booklet, contact Jody Smith (smithjos@hawaii.edu). The booklet costs $10, and checks can be made payable to RCUH 02425. A limited supply is available so get yours today!
Crop of the month: Hala
By Kim Kido

The native hala (*Pandanus tectorius*) provided early Hawaiians with everything from medicine to building materials.

Aerial roots were combined with eucalyptus to treat colds, and with sugar cane and other plants to treat chest pains, urinary tract infections, and other ailments.

Besides medicinal uses, hard wood from male trees was used in construction of houses, canoe rollers, and bowls. From the softer wood of the female tree, irrigation piping was made to transport water between *lo'i* (taro patches). *Lau hala* (the leaves) were stripped of their spines and softened to be woven into mats, hats, and many other useful items, a craft that is still practiced today. The edible fruit, ranging in color from yellow to red, is still used in lei making today.

The edible fruit was eaten in Hawaii, but only in times of famine. Elsewhere in the Pacific, however, *Pandanus* fruits are a staple food. In parts of Micronesia, the fruit comprises as much as 50 percent of a person’s energy intake. The fruit pulp is often preserved by making a paste, juice, or jam. In Pohnpei, the paste (*jaankun*) is combined with coconut cream and water to make a pudding. In the Marshall Islands, the fruit juice is sold commercially. A good source of vitamin A, the fruit also contains calcium oxalate crystals to varying degrees. The wild varieties perhaps tend to have higher amounts of oxalate, and must be cooked to be edible, whereas improved varieties can be eaten raw.

A perennial evergreen, hala can grow up to 50 feet tall. Hala thrives on ocean-facing slopes or sand dunes where its roots can help stabilize the slopes and prevent erosion. The plant also tolerates salt spray and exposure to high winds and sun, making it a useful buffer between the harsh coastal environment and interior. The buoyant fruit, also tolerant of salt water, spreads to new land by ocean currents.

Resolution

(Continued from page 1)

- Use your notebook from last semester (I do) instead of buying new ones.
- Save gas and walk if you live near school. It’s good exercise, too. Or, catch the bus.
- Plant a garden (vegetables, fruits) near your house. Make good use of soil. Save time and money to run to KTA or Safeway.
- Buy organic products or eat organic food once in a while (since they’re expensive).
- Turn off unused lights, unplug unused appliances.
- Save water.
- Support local farmers (farmer’s market in downtown or the Monthly Ag Club farmer’s market day). Buying locally raised food keeps money in our local economy.
- Keep on adding to your list of anything sustainable.

These are a few SMART (Sustainable Management Agricultural Resources Today) goals. Making goals and staying committed to them makes life easier.