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Posted: Sunday, Apr 25, 2004 - 04:40:02 am HST

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ARCHIVES

Scott Young's Kipapa nursery business provides plants for all

By JON LETMAN - Special to The Garden Island

Posted: Sunday, Apr 25, 2004 - 04:40:02 am HST

Scott Young likes good stick of ti.

Young, a 27-year resident of Kauai, owns and maintains two half-acre nursery sites in Kapa'a. With two separate locations, one on the banks of the Kealia river and the other in rainy Kapahi, the Kipapa nursery is able to divide the plants by environment.



Jon Letman Photo
ng holds a plant at nursery.



At the Kipapa nursery, Young grows a wide variety of plants, from the beach to the forest. Young focuses on plants like cycads, bromeliads and landscaping shrubs such as dazzling oak-leaf croton and Tongatabu with its fragrant white blossoms. Young notes that Kipapa nursery does a brisk business in seaside plants like giant spider lily, naupaka, jade and aloe vera.

Drawing a light green strap leaf hala (pandanus) close, Young jokes, "look at this, it's bullet proof." Indeed, all these plants are ideal for shoreline environments due to their resistance to sand, salt and wind.

Before founding Kipapa nursery in 1990, Young was a property maintenance foreman. Today he maintains close contact with his clients, employees and the plants. "I am not in front of a computer all day. I am out there getting my hands dirty," Young says, having just returned from propagating in the nursery.



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Kipapa nursery works with everyone from high-end homes on the north shore to ordinary home owners all over Kaua'i looking to spruce up their own backyards. "Some people come to get 300 ti plants at a time and others only want three. I am happy to help out the whole range."

Walking along dozens of miniature dwarf date palms aligned in propagation pots, Young explains that Kipapa nursery not only provides plants, but also landscape consulting, contract growing, estate maintenance and custom dry stack lava rock projects.

Stopping beside an elephantine staghorn fern, Young recalls, "six years ago we provided location foliage during the shooting of Six Days, Seven Nights." Young's repertoire also includes creating tropical staged sets for Disney Productions and providing plants for local Japanese restaurant Kintaro.

Even as a small, privately-owned nursery, Kipapa offers a wide-range of palms including cocothrynax, bottle palms, licuala fan palms, fish tail palms, Macarthur palms, queen, royal, lady and the highly coveted red sealing wax palm (Cyrstostachys renda) which Young has raised from seed.

At Kipapa's second site in Kapahi, a side road leads back to a plot of land overlooking waterfalls on the Makaleha mountains. Here Young grows his collection of 60 hybrid varieties of ti (Cordylone fruticosa), known in Hawaiian as ki. One of the most common Polynesian introduced plants, ti is also one of the most useful. A member of the agave family, with the alternate name la'i (a contraction of lau ki), ti was traditionally used for serving food, making sandals, rain capes, temporary thatching, slides, fly whisks, sweets, cooling a feverish forehead, wrapping hot stones and, of course, for cooking laulau.

Ti plants were sacred to Hawaiian deities Lono and Laka, and were used to border huts dedicated to them as well as in religious offerings, leis, symbols of truce and early in the evolution of the kahili (royal standard).

In the late 18th century the underground stem of ti was found to be useful in making okolehao (a kind of home brew alcohol) and is also known for ti leaf skirts, an idea introduced by immigrants from the Gilbert islands.

If all this weren't enough, ti is a beautiful, hearty plant.

With a father's pride, Young shows off dozens of hybrid ti varieties of all color, size and form including Hawaiian flag, Chong giant, Auntie Lou, Dr. Brown, painter's pallet, black magic, lovely hula hands, baby spoon, purple haze, sharkskin, Juno, Melvin, Cameroonand Wili's gold. Others seem tailor made for Kaua'i— Kilaeueared, Wailua purple and rooster tail.

For those looking to start their own ti collection, Kipapa offers ti variety packs in three different sizes: Menehune (small), Wahine (medium) and Big Kahuna (large). Young, who trades unusual hybrids with other collectors can also fill custom orders for ti.

"Today some people like to propagate ti by seed because they get more plants," Young says, "but I only use cane cuttings to ensure the integrity of the hybrid. You get a better plant this way."

As their owner takes squishy steps across Kapahi's muddy ground, three hungry (goat) kids nearby bleat at the site of Young as he throws them some ti leaves.

"My goat's favorite snack is ti. They love it. And that is what it's all about. You give something good, and it comes back to you."

On the Web: www.kipapanursery.com/

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