

WEED OF THE WEEK
JULY 23 2008

FEATURED SPECIES: GRAPE IVY/JAVANESE TREEBINE
Cissus Nodosa

We have all heard the old adage "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." When, it comes to preventing invasive species, what is it really worth?

Hundreds of thousands of dollars and countless hours have been spent on Maui to deal with the rapidly spreading Miconia (Weed of the Week #1). If someone would have removed the original garden plant before it began its movement into the forest, it may have taken about a day and \$60 to do the job. In addition to saving us some time and money, prevention of invasive species benefits our local agriculture, our quality of life, our natural resources for future generations, and our native biodiversity. All of these things are so valuable to our community.

So how do we do it? With new species arriving in Hawai'i on an almost daily basis from all over the world, how do we prevent invasive ones from spreading? Two words: Early Detection. A phrase often referred to in the field of human health, early detection can also be helpful in keeping our environment healthy. KISC's new Early Detection Program, also called Kia`i Moku, meaning "Guardians of the Island," will be a community-based effort, tapping into the many ears, eyes, and expertise on our island. Too often, we don't realize that a species has become invasive until it is out of control and out of balance, and at that point, it is very difficult to remove. But, it is possible to stop them before they start. Tools like the "Weed Risk Assessment" can help us to predict which species will become weedy, based on their characteristics and behavior on neighbor islands and other similar places on the planet. Also, it is always extremely important to identify something that seems new and strange.

When the Erythrina Gall Wasp was first seen on just one tree on O`ahu, it was a known documented species in the world for only a couple of years. Within months, it had spread to all of the islands, devastating our native and non-native wiliwili. Now, the valuable farm windbreaks, the beautiful ornamental used in landscaping, and the native wiliwili, found nowhere else in the world and prized for its red seeds in lei and wood for the very first surfboards, is in grave danger. To wiliwili and all of our native and agricultural species, invasive species prevention is worth a whole lot.

KISC now has an Early Detection list of species that are either

1. Present on other islands, but not yet known to Kaua'i,
2. Known on Kaua'i in very limited distribution, and therefore possible to remove, or
3. Not yet known to Hawai'i, but likely to arrive.

Today's featured Weed of the Week falls into Category Two. After conducting an island-wide roadside survey in cooperation with the National Tropical Botanical Garden, KISC found several species that would be good candidates for Early Detection. Grape Ivy, also known as Javanese Treebine, has some classic invasive characteristics. Looking around Kaua'i, we can see the impacts that an aggressive vine can have on its surroundings. Smothering trees, banana patches, utility poles, you name it, invasive vines can really take over. Also, like Miconia and Octopus tree, non-native birds eat its fruit, dispersing it farther and farther from its original source. Grape Ivy's green leaves are between 2.5-7 inches long, and it has reddish-purple flowers. Its fruits are green in the beginning, becoming dark red when ripe. So far, it has only been found in small numbers at two locations: one in Lihue, and another in Kalaheo, which gives us the perfect opportunity to prevent the spread.

Together, we are all Kia`i Moku, Guardians of this Garden Island. If you see something new or a species on the Early Detection List (found on the KISC website), please call 643-PEST (7378). Your kokua is priceless.

GARDEN ALTERNATIVE: Still want a beautiful, climbing vine for your garden? No need to plant Grape Ivy! Try our native awikiwiki. The gorgeous flowers are white and deep purple, and together with the seeds, make a spectacular lei. Check out Rick Barboza's column in the Star Bulletin on awikiwiki at <http://starbulletin.com/2008/03/21/features/garden.html>.