

Pili

'Uki 'uki (Iris)

Nānū

'Ohai

Planting the Seed

Inspired by the success of a fourth-grade garden, Kamehameha Schools is using native Hawaiian plants to help educate students and beautify its campuses

“The group unwittingly planted the seeds for a vast learning opportunity for all Kamehameha students and a beautification effort that could be the Schools’ largest ever.”

Greg Lee is Kamehameha’s first full-time landscape architect.



Some Kamehameha Schools students and teachers have discovered that once a garden is planted, the harvest just might exceed all expectations. It all began some four years ago, when the Class of 2006 – then fourth-graders – together with several of their teachers created a simple garden on the Kapālama Campus featuring endemic and indigenous Hawaiian plants. Kapālama Campus elementary school teacher Sandra Tuitele said the garden was planted to teach students about native plants such as sweet potatoes and *kalo*, foods that helped sustain the early Hawaiians. Those lessons tie in with the fourth-grade social studies curriculum, which centers around the study of Hawaiian history, including the formation of the islands, and the arrival and evolution of plants and animals.

The hands-on learning experience generated such interest and attention from students, teachers and administrators that Kamehameha hired its first full-time landscape architect in September 2000.

Greg Lee '84 is now a driving force behind Kamehameha’s efforts to propagate native plants and establish learning gardens that are sprouting up institution-wide.

Kamehameha fourth-graders still care for the garden located near Kalama Dining Hall, seventh- and eighth-graders have begun their own plantings near Keawe Gymnasium and KS alumni and Kapalāma Campus high school students have staked out ground near Konia for yet another garden.

Lee is hoping to expand the program to Maui and Hawai’i and has even offered cuttings to a state Department of Education class at Jarrett Middle School taught by **David Dunaway '85** so that they too can start their own Hawaiian gardens.

“Part of the curriculum will be to learn about these plants, propagate them and finally plant and nurture them,” Lee said. “To this day, students have to go to off-campus sources – gardens – to see these native species. I think Kamehameha should have the best native gardens in this entire state.”

Lee, a state-certified expert on native plant species, served as a special consultant to the school during the planning of the fourth-grade garden. He said the benefits to students who participated in the project were infinite, from cultural understanding and