

The Faces of Urban Forestry



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Kailua-Kona,
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Tree Planting Helps Preserve Culture

When Evan Matszuyama was 8, he would accompany his mother to classes at the University of Hawaii. There he came to know Dr. Richard Stevens who spent years bringing Hawaiian communities together to plant native trees throughout the islands. Dr. Stevens' influence was so great that Evan is now working to become a university professor and follow in the footsteps of his mentor. He has also gained an understanding of the significance of natural habitats in cultural traditions and the need to preserve or restore native vegetation.

“Aside from physically giving back to my community by planting, I've gained an understanding of the value of diverse indigenous species that are fragile and need to be preserved,” says Evan. Through the work of Dr. Stevens more than 10,000 trees have been planted by students, veterans and citizens around veterans' memorials, in communities, and in rural landscapes. Most of these projects would not have been possible without funding and technical assistance provided by Hawaii's Urban and Community Forestry Program.

As Evan continues his education, Dr. Stevens' good influence lives on and bodes well for the future. Through the connection of teaching and tree planting, indigenous trees are being restored and preservation of Hawaiian culture is helping to enrich the land and its people.

“The planting of trees helps our people remember why the past is important, understand what has been lost, and what needs to be saved for the future.”

— Evan Matszuyama



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A joint project of U.S. Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry, the National Association of State Foresters, and the Arbor Day Foundation. For more information visit arborday.org/faces