

Invasive species along Maui roadsides to be catalogued

Kia'i Moku

By Lissa Fox



Chinese privet, English ivy, Spanish lavender, Mickey Mouse

where many alien plants are introduced and yet these are areas rarely surveyed by natural area managers. The Starrs will embark on a journey to see what we've left behind as we drive to work, school, and, of course, the beach.

This is the second round of roadside surveys the Starrs will complete on Maui. The first was begun in 2000 and was experimental in nature. They were attempting to determine a methodology for mapping species on an island-wide scale and provide information on the distribution of many invasive plants on Maui.

The plants included in the 2000 survey were chosen because they had been documented as being invasive elsewhere in the world. Some plants were widespread, some not, and any plant not recognized by the roving experts was collected and identified. As a result, the Starrs identified twenty-nine plants not known to be on Maui, eleven of which were not known to be in Hawaii. They were able to locate an impressive 94% of the targeted plants, of which 44% were widespread. Eight highly invasive plants found on the roadside surveys have since been eradicated, meaning none of these plants remain on Maui.

The 2009 target plant list includes many plants mapped in 2000 plus an additional fifty-three species, included because of their presence on other islands. Potential invasiveness was determined using the Hawaii Pacific Weed Risk Assessment and review-



ing literature about these plants' invasive tendencies in other parts of the world. Members of the conservation, agricultural, and horticultural industries were also consulted in developing the final target list.

After the surveys are complete the Starrs will create maps showing the current distribution for the 101 plants targeted on the survey. The maps will be readily available on the internet at www.hear.org/starr. These maps are an important tool for early detection. Detecting and removing invasive species before they are established costs substantially less than tackling a well entrenched species. Plants identified in limited distribution may be added to the Maui Invasive Species Committee's target list for eradication on Maui before they spread and become uncontrollable.

So as Forest and Kim drive slowly along the roadsides of Maui over the next eight months, slow down and wave — they'll be easy to spot with their flashing yellow light and

Forest (right) and Kim Starr, who are shown examining a native plant on Midway atoll, will be driving Maui roads looking for and recording invasive plants they see. (Photos by Forest & Kim Starr)

slow-moving vehicle sign. Every extra minute they spend behind the wheel will be helping protect the island from a new plant and keeping Maui the paradise we know. You could say they epitomize the bumper sticker slogan "Slow down, this ain't the mainland" both in terms of the speed they drive and the mainland "weeds" they will be looking for.

• *Lissa Fox is the public relations and education specialist representing the Maui Invasive Species Committee, or MISC. "Kia'i Moku," (Guarding the Island) is prepared by the Maui Invasive Species Committee to provide information on protecting the island from invasive plants and animals that can threaten the island's environment, economy and quality of life.*