



PACIFIC ISLANDS AREA



PROFILES IN soil health

Cheryl Carden

Kona, Hawaii

Operation: forestry

Practice: tree establishment

Local Farmer Reaching Heights with Soil Health

Cheryl Carden originally came from Mesa, Arizona where it's hot dry desert and the ground is clay. When she relocated to Hawaii County, she became interested in learning what grew best in her new climate.

Making the Change

Cheryl realized how little she knew about the tropics so she joined the Master Gardener program and completed their 16-week class. Soon after, she heard about a forestry program through the University of Hawaii at Manoa and she took a three-day course to learn more. Cheryl quickly found that she could grow plants herself, so she collected seeds on her property such as aalii, mamaki, and kopiko to propagate for her forest where she lives.

"I'm a believer. Build up the soil, make it a healthy happy place with good micro-organisms and it just makes a world of difference."

- Cheryl Carden, Hawaii Farmer

The Practices

The core practices that Cheryl implements on her property are removal of invasive species and planting native species such as aweoweo, hapuu fern, hibiscus, ilima, maile, mamane, pohinahina, ulei, naio, and ohia. Her efforts for wildlife habitat improvement, will benefit the endangered Hawaiian Hawk and the Hoary bat on her property. Since she started the project, she is seeing a lot more bats.



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Healthy Results

Cheryl's goal is to enhance her soil health through management because she really didn't have much soil to begin with. She had rocks and boulders originally, so she brought in compost to increase the organic matter.

She learned about practices for enhancing soil and native forest reforestation through assistance from NRCS and classes she took on Korean natural farming, composting with worms, bio-char, and just seeing what worked for her situation. Cheryl is excited to find new ways to reduce her water demand. She discovered that mulching helps her accomplish that.

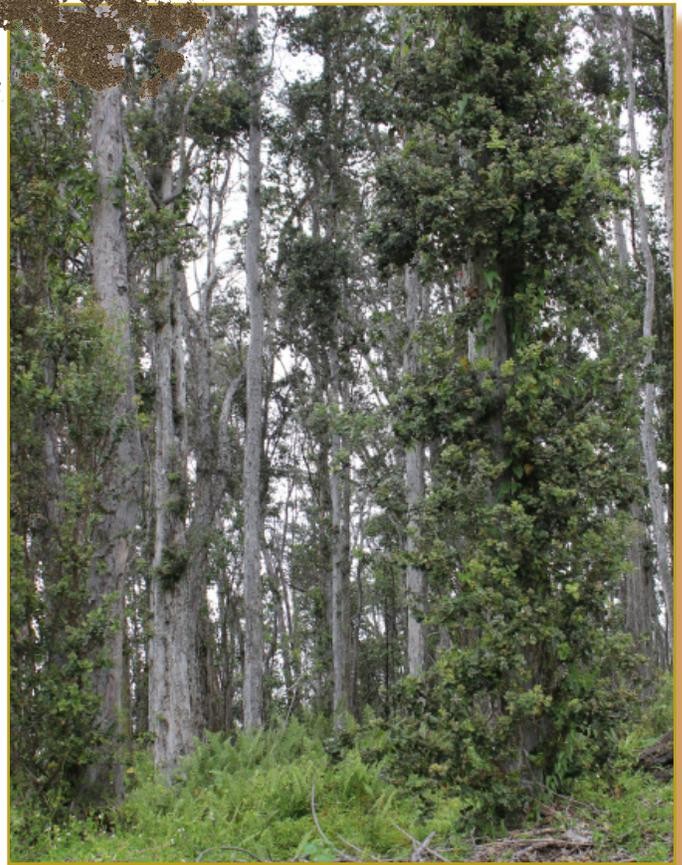
Without mulch to hold in moisture, tree and shrub seedlings and beneficial soil micro-organism populations were inhibited. Whether she harvests with materials from her property such as fallen ohia leaves, or if she brings it from somewhere else, she realizes that mulch is essential.

Cheryl also found on her farm that enhancing soil organic matter makes a tremendous difference. She planted an area where compost was spread around planted seedlings and at the same time she planted a little area that did not get compost. Within five months, she saw a difference. Plants receiving compost were tall and full compared to the other plants that did not receive compost.

Cheryl is convinced that without enhancing her soil health, she would not be experiencing such vibrant growth of her beautiful native plants. Reintroduction and vigorous growth of key species that were missing such as mamane, ho'awa, and other native plants is adding diversity and enhancing her wildlife habitat for the native Hawaiian forest birds that depend upon the understory species she is restoring.

Contact

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Healthy native Ohia trees in Carden's Gardens.



Close up of native koa trees being established.


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