

Trees for improving profitability, sustainability, and resource conservation
on farms and ranches

Field tours Tuesday, May 16 (Day 1)

1. Ohia Forest Farm

Trisha and Denver Leaman

POB 937, Kealahou, Hawaii, 96750

87-2440 Mamalahou Hwy, Captain Cook, HI, 96704

Coffee grown under 'ohi'a lehua and other native trees (see description on reverse side)

2. Mother Goose Farms

Vicki and John Swift

89-755 Lani Kona Road, Captain Cook, HI 96704

Tel: 808-328-2306

E-mail: swifts@mothergoosefarms.com

Coffee with understory grazed by geese and sheep. Overstory of various shade trees. Coffee retailed direct to consumers. Certified organic by Demeter.

OHIA FOREST FARM

POB 937, Kealahou, Hawaii, 96750
87-2440 Mamalahou Hwy, Captain Cook, Hawaii, 96704

The dryland forests of Kona contain some of the rarest plants on Earth and are listed as one of the most endangered habitats in Hawaii. *Ohia Forest Farm* is proof that you do not have to destroy the native habitat to produce a world-class cup of coffee. The use of agroforestry techniques has allowed us to create a working farm and at the same time has let us improve and enhance native plant populations that so desperately need our protection. We live in the South Kona district of the Big Island of Hawaii at an elevation of about 1300 ft. The farm is a six acre parcel with two acres of that in understory coffee. The preservation and enhancement of the dryland ohia forest that provides the shade for our coffee is as important to us as the quality of our coffee beans. Our development strategy is simple, straight forward and made up of several parts.

- Survey and identify all native, indigenous and invasive species.
- Remove the invasive species without harming the native and indigenous plants.
- Supplement the remaining canopy with missing endangered dryland forest species.
- Intercrop and integrate coffee, cacao, citrus and other fruiting species into the native understory canopy.
- Native species have automatic priority.

While the clearing of the native ohia forest was never an option and some sort of development was always a given, the Ohia Forest Farm “project” officially began in 1999. We knew that the property needed to be used as a source of future supplemental income but were not ready to sacrifice the existing forest structure in order to do this. Since we were concerned about the increasing development and destruction of native habitat that we were seeing in the Kona districts, we decided a new approach was in order. After quite a bit of research about endangered Hawaiian habitat and species we did an inventory and found that the property contained a large number of native “species of concern”. Areas were also overrun with invasive species that were in some cases killing the adjacent native trees. Christmasberry trees were so dense in some places that you literally had to crawl and squeeze your way through it. Some of the christmasberry had trunk structures larger than the native ohia trees. Thousands of man-hours have been expended in the process of destroying these trees without disturbing the original forest. We initially chainsawed and chipped the christmasberry but soon discovered that the sheer volume of wood required us to burn large quantities. To clear out about half an acre we would establish a central firepit and then chainsaw and drag all the surrounding wood to it. Some of the burns lasted for days. In the end we had a more open ohia forest with understory trees that include kopiko, lama, several species of akia, kolea, ho’awa, hama and alahe’e trees. After we cleared, other native understory plants like mamaki and alali’i started appearing. We also had a fair amount of indigenous plants like awapuhi and ti. We found and left a few desirable non-natives scattered through the forest. These included allspice, two kinds of guava, wild citrus and loquat trees. Over the next few years we planted stands of coffee along with a few brazilian cherries, soursop, cinnamon, cacao and bananas. We also started supplementing the ohia forest with other native and indigenous species like awa, iliahi (sandalwood), uki uki, ohe makai, naio, halapepe, kokio, ko’oko’olau, loulu, ma’o, ihi molokini, and maiapilo. We now have about two acres of understory coffee and have started the process of planting more cacao.