



SUCCESS STORIES



Invasive Plant Program

Region 5

Asking Albizia to Go Controlling Invasive Species Molokai Style



Albizia, before treatment, July 2008

The Forest Service's Forest Health Protection Invasive Plant program which funds control of forest invaders in Hawaii provided essential funding, while staff from The Nature Conservancy, Hawai'i Department of Land & Natural Resources, U.S. Department of Agriculture - Plant Materials Center, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Maui Invasive Species Committee participated in the field work. A total of 25 community members joined in the project, some working in the forest, and others providing food, training, access, and housing.

Before any work was conducted, MoMISC consulted with Kumu Miki'ala Pescaia, a cultural caretaker of the site. She addressed the albizia tree population, thanked the trees for their contribution to the environment thus far but explained that it was time for them to go. She established protocols for the workers such as asking permission from ancestors before entering the site. Finally, she asked the ancestors for help in keeping the work crew safe and ensuring the successful removal of the albizia and native plant restoration.



Girdling an albizia tree



Albizia 6 months after treatment

The Problem: Albizia (*Falcataria moluccana*) is a large, fast-growing, nitrogen-fixing tree that is transforming native-dominated lowland wet forests in Hawai'i. Its fragile branches are a hazard, often breaking and causing damage to people and property. On the island of Molokai where albizia is not established, a 15 acre stand was discovered in 2008 growing on private land.

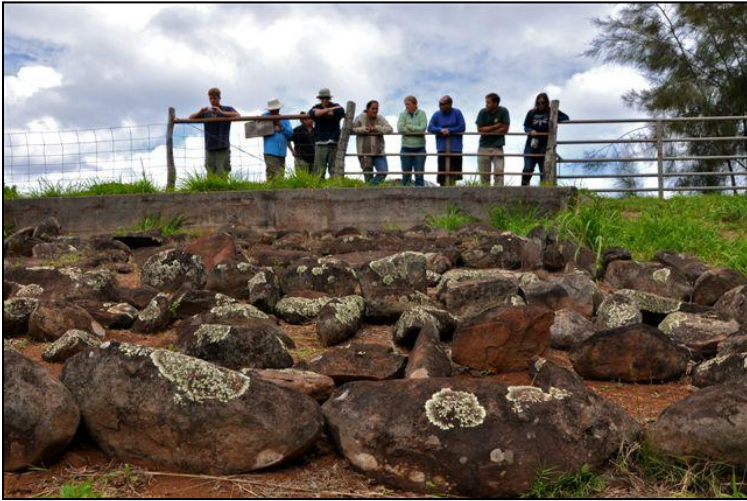
The Challenge: MoMISC, a partnership of private, government and non-profit organizations whose mission is to prevent new pest species from becoming established on Molokai, consists of just two staff. The project site is located in close proximity to significant Hawaiian cultural sites, requiring assistance from Hawaiian cultural practitioners.

The Solution: Get help – from partner agencies, community members, and cultural consultants.

The Work: Preparations included establishing baseline photo points, clearing the area for access, marking albizia trees for fast identification, and sowing several pounds of native seed from the USDA Plant Materials Center. Trees were girdled and Garlon 3A in forest crop oil was applied. Initial suppression took three days and required rappelling down a steep-sided gulch. Significant canopy defoliation was sighted within weeks of treatment, and one year after treatment, 98% of trees showed significant die-off.

Lessons Learned: The old adage of "many hands" would not adequately capture the essence of this project's success. The Molokai albizia project brought together community members, field staff, and cultural practitioners. Field staff reported that it was an exceptional opportunity to practice traditional Hawaiian protocols while working to protect Molokai's native forests from an aggressive invader. Future invasive species efforts on Maui and Molokai plan to use this project as a model for involving the community and enhancing the sense of place in everyday work.

For more information, contact David Bakke at (707) 562-8916. April 6, 2010



Explaining the significance of a cultural site near the albizia project.



Preparing for work at the site.



The power of two - participants on the albizia project