



A TRIBUTE TO ERNEST H. REZENTS

Ernest (Ernie) H. Rezens, who passed away on June 13, 2023, was a tree expert, an ISA Certified Arborist, an American Society of Consulting Arborists (ASCA) Registered Consulting Arborist, a Professor Emeritus Agriculture University of Hawaii Maui College, a recipient of the ISATrue Professional of Arboriculture award, a mentor, and a friend. He mentioned recently, as he was reflecting on his age and the loss of his beloved wife, Alene, that he must still be here because he has more to do. Now that he has passed away, it will be up to his many former students and friends, affectionately called “Ernie’s Tree Army,” to carry on his work.

Maui County Arborist & Maui County Arborist Committee:

Ernie was the driving force to establish the Maui County arborist position and the Maui County Arborist Committee in 1983. The committee focuses on the legally protected Exceptional Trees of Maui County.

The Arborist Certification Prep Course:

Ernie taught the class “All About Trees” from 1995 until 2015, teaching with passion and motivating his students. He challenged and encouraged them because he wanted them to succeed and to be recognized as educated professionals by getting their certifications and following the ANSI Standards for pruning. The majority of Certified Arborists in Maui County are Ernie’s former students.

Writer & Speaker:

Ernie wrote more than one hundred articles on horticulture and arboriculture as an unpaid author for the Maui News. Ernie’s philosophy was simple: “Treat trees as you want to be treated; they will reward you with benefits you could not find elsewhere.” Ernie rarely said no to a speaking engagement because he wanted to share his knowledge, from events such as Trees for Honolulu’s Future, Arbor Day at Maui Nui Botanical Gardens, and Maui Green & Beautiful’s Malama the Trees workshops and treetours.

Volunteering & More:

Ernie was on the board of the D. T. Fleming Arboretum (DTFA) at Pu’u Mahoe in upcountry Maui for over 20 years, lending his expertise to the preservation and protection of Hawai’i’s native plants. The most important challenge was to get the critically endangered endemic alani tree (*Melicopeknudsenii*) to produce viable seeds. Per Cathy Davenport, a DTFA board director, Ernie, along with Anna Palomino, manager of Olinda Rare Plant Propagation Facility, brought the alani tree back to health and vigor, enabling it to produce viable seeds. Forty young alani trees are now growing across Hawai’i, with additional seeds at the USDA National Seed Storage Lab in Colorado, thanks to the persistence of Ernie and Anna.

The Maui County Planting Plan:

The crowning jewel of his career, Ernie assisted in the three editions of the Maui County Planting Plan (MCP), an excellent reference that is referred to statewide. In Ernie’s own words, “The Maui County Planting Plan is a guide

that can help anyone select a tree to fit their environment and needs, and learn how to plant, stake, prune, water and maintain plants. There are no invasive species in this guide and people can use this guide to find helpful information about installing parking lot trees, planting, and pruning trees with illustrated pictures.” The MCPP is intended to be used by design and landscape professionals, government officials, and the public. Ernie’s goal was to establish the MCPP as an official statewide document. Steps are being taken by “Ernie’s Tree Army” to fulfill this goal. The State of Hawaii Planting Plan has a “tree-mendous” sound to it!

How do we honor Ernie? The answer is trees: planting them and caring for them properly. In doing so, we receive their endless benefits.

Please contact Maui Green & Beautiful at mauigreenbeautiful@gmail.com if you are interested in assisting with the goal of making the MCPP a State of Hawaii official document.

Written by Elaine Malina, ISA Certified Arborist, past president & current Board member of Maui Green & Beautiful, member of Aloha Arborist Association, and Ernie’s friend. This article is dedicated to the family of Ernest H. Rezens as thanks for sharing their dad with the Maui community and beyond.

