



LANDSCAPING

The award-winning landscaping for the Imiloa Astronomy Center of Hawai'i, located on the grounds of the University of Hawaii at Hilo on the Big Island of Hawai'i, offers visitors a unique experience to the islands: an opportunity to see and appreciate the native and “canoe plants” of Hawai'i.

Designed by Honolulu landscape architect Randall Monaghan, the plantings on the Center's 9.1 acres mimic the changes in vegetations at different elevations on the ascent up Maunakea volcano. The Imiloa gardens represent one of the largest and most diverse collections of native Hawaiian and canoe plants found in Hawai'i.

The plantings are designed to simulate five regions of vegetation that range from sea level to the mountains. At the entrance to the Center are *kabakai*, or shoreline plants, such as *milo*, *naupaka* and *loulou* palms (*Pritchardia*). Next is the *kula* (plains) division, which represents the long, sloping plains on Hawai'i's volcanoes, where the *hala* plant (pandanus) and *Hoawa* (*Pittosporum*) are common. The third region is *wao kanaka* (“garden of Man”), which contains *kamani* trees, *ulu* (breadfruit), and *kukui*. Near the top of the site is *wao akua*, the upland “gardens of the gods.” Here one finds *koa* and *‘öbi‘a lehua* trees and *hāpu‘u* ferns. The fifth region at the summit is *kua lono*, and the *wao ma ukele* also is sparsely planted to simulate the harsh windswept areas where hardy plants, such as *a‘alii* and *nai‘o* survive. This area features fields of cinder and rock outcropping.

In constructing the gardens, existing lava rock outcroppings and plants (such as *hala* and *‘öbi‘a*) were incorporated into the landscape design to preserve the intrinsic features of the land. The grounds also include two “canoe gardens,” which exhibit plants brought by the early Polynesians. These gardens include edible and useful plants: *keo*, original Hawaiian cane, two types of taro; Hawaiian sweet potato; ginger; and breadfruit, as well as *uki uki* (blue lirioppe), which was used for dye.

In January 2006, the Hawai'i Island Landscaping Association recognized the significance of the gardens by awarding Mr. Monaghan and the Center two awards for excellence in design and implementation.