



Western SARE Program

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<http://wsare.usu.edu>

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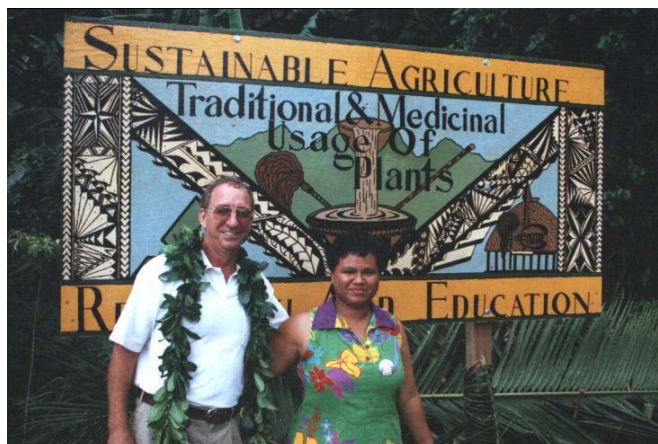
MEDICINAL PLANTS FOR SAMOA

Situation

A number of plants native to Samoa have long been used for medicinal and other purposes. To assure that the plants – and knowledge of their traditional uses – are not lost in an age of increased use of modern medicines, this Professional Development Program grants seeks to educate interested individuals about the plants and collect specimens for a variety of uses.

Objectives

1. Conduct a workshop on the botany of native Samoan plants traditionally used for medicines and other purposes, focusing on the cultural, biological and economic importance of these plants.
2. Establish a herbarium at the American Samoa Community College Land Grants Pro-



Jim Currie and Totoa Currie, both involved in the project, during the opening ceremonies for the Medicinal Garden in July 1999.

- gram with permanent specimens for use in identifying plants with medicinal and other traditional uses.
3. Establish a collection of living specimens of native plants, used for medicinal and other purposes, as a bo-

tanical garden at the college Agricultural Experiment Station.

4. Prepare a plant key that includes descriptions, slides and prints of the plants.



Staff members at the Medicinal Gardens inspect the aromatic fern.

Professional Development Program Grant

Project Number: EW97-018

Project Title: Constructing a Herbarium, Collection and Key to Medicinal Plants and Other Traditional Plants of Samoa

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Major Participant:

Arthur Whistler, University of Hawaii Ethnobotanist

SARE Grant: \$15,510



Western SARE, a USDA organization, funds grants for research and education that develop or promote some aspect of agricultural sustainability, which embraces

- *profitable farms and ranches*
- *a healthy environment*
- *strong families and communities.*

The Western Region, one of four SARE regions nationwide, is administered through Utah State University.

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5. Prepare a booklet for local use that features the key, descriptions and photographs of the plants.

Actions

The project coordinators held an eight-day botanical workshop Dec. 2-11, 1997, under the direction of Arthur Whistler, a noted ethnobotanist with the University of Hawaii and an expert in the flora of Polynesia. Whistler, who has broad experience in Samoa, taught 19 participants who attended the full workshop and a handful of others who attended selected sessions.

Two of the participants, from the American Samoa Department of Education, subsequently conducted mini-workshops for teachers in elementary and secondary schools, with the goal of making environmental education more pertinent and interesting to schoolchildren of American Samoa.

Results

The project resulted in the establishment of a herbarium and botanical garden and the preparation of a guide to Samoan medicinal and traditional plants, a botanical taxonomic key and a guide to the most commonly used medicinal plants of Samoa.

Vargo reports (email Aug. 2, 2007) that the Medicinal Garden continues to be a draw during campus tours by schoolchildren and traditional healers. The healers are allowed to harvest small amounts of needed materials as long as



The herbarium collection is available to professionals.



The Medicinal Garden draws schoolchildren and traditional healers alike.

they also contribute to the garden's collection by bringing in plants and explaining their uses.

Because some plants are not well adapted to the conditions at the garden site, the

collection will never be all-inclusive. However, at any given time, about 50 species can be found in the garden, each signed by Samoan and botanical names.

The herbarium collection is available to professionals, who may examine mounted specimens in the climate-controlled room housing the collection.

Potential Benefits

The garden provides a valuable resource on the use of plants for traditional medicine and a source of such plants for island traditional healers, and the herbarium provides a resource for professionals to study of plants found in Samoa's rain forest.