

July 12, 1995

MEMORANDUM

TO: MICHAEL S. KRISTIENSEN

FROM: NATHAN M.S. WONG
COMMUNITY GARDEN COORDINATOR

SUBJECT: MAKIKI COMMUNITY GARDEN

Agenda for the 20th Anniverary Event:

- 11:00 Welcome by Community Garden Officers:
Makiki Community Garden President Nalani Boon
Garden Council President Mike Klein
Community Garden Coordinator Nathan Wong
- 11:15 Introduction of Guests:
Hon. Bot. Gdn. Director Michael S. Kristiansen
DPR Director Dona Hanaike
Mayor Jeremy Harris
- 11:45 Invocation by Mr. Wei
Potluck lunch
- 1:30 Oral History by original Makiki Gardeners and Lila Gardner,
presentation

NATHAN M.S. WONG

Community Garden Coordinator

Makiki Garden Memories: Reflections on Its Beginnings

by Lila Gardner, 7/10/95

(Note that the following barely touches on the fun and insights about gardening which this writer learned while researching the early history of the Makiki Garden Association.

A lot of the following comments were gathered at several different meetings with some of the early gardeners just "talking story" about what it was like in 1975 when the pilot project at Makiki- the first community garden in Honolulu, was begun. Some of the gardeners interviewed were Mahilani, Charles, Murial, Stella, Hinao and Mitsue, among other.)

What? No bugs, Nah!! True enough, by all accounts, before the word got around, there were no bugs.

Mahilani was retiring from the university and teaching hula at the Makiki Park and Robert Snakenberg told her they were starting a garden there. She asked about the sugar cane and he told her that it was being cut down and individual garden plots were being made for people in the community. She was very excited and said she wanted one. She thought there would be lots of locals but turned out that in those early days, it was mostly haoles. Snakenberg was the first president and the early organizational meetings were held at the church up on Mott-Smith -- Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. Mahilani was the first treasurer of the club.

Mitsue recalls how the dues were a dollar a year and there were frequent potlucks, often held in the evening, with rice cookers, music and sitting out on the grass. Everyone mentioned enjoying Charlie's wife dancing the hula, how great the potlucks were, so much "ono" food that you hardly knew what to eat, and "talking story" with the Fasi's who would walk over to join them some evenings.

Charlie said there was some opposition to the garden and some thought that it would only be a temporary thing - gardening. There were lots of meetings at the beginning to just get the garden organized and Charlie was remembered as one who worked hard to help with the early organization of it.

Stella said that she recalls the first garden went from A through E-10 and plots were measured off with string and wooden pegs. Mitsue said there were no fences till they started having problems with theft and then they built fences and had no more problems with theft.

Everyone recalls that the Halloween scarecrow contests were fun and were events that got the whole garden involved. Charlie was remembered for his early tomato crops of over 100 tomatoes and a lot that were really large. They had fun weighing their fruits and vegetables and had fruit trees, few rules and regs in those days. Great papayas!

Murial Lee was remembered by everyone as the person who would remember most of the details about where things were, where the water lines ran, and Murial shared a lot of her early experiences with this writer. What stands out about the gardens is the spirit of enjoyment, community, sharing, laughter which these gardeners felt in the early days and which shines through in their faces as they talk about the garden then and now.

Little Known or Perhaps Long Forgotten "Facts" About the Early History
of the Makiki Garden Association

by Lila Gardner
7/10/95

The park site was used by King Kalakaua for picnics and the mauka end along Wilder Avenue was where he had a flower garden. (from Makiki Park Master Plan prepared for City and County, Honolulu, 1977)

According to early newspaper accounts of the garden site, the gardens were for the lonely condo dweller, especially seniors and children.

The gardens were referred to as "victory gardens and survival gardens. There was some discussion about what to call the gardeners, i.e., City Farmers, Fasi's Farmers, Farmers or what. (also from articles in newspapers, 9/28/75) And two different newspaper accounts said that for \$10 worth of seeds, the yield would be \$400, while the other one said for \$10 the yield would be \$40. Wonder which was more correct?

The rules developed at Makiki became a model for all the gardens.

~~As sugar cane was grown there before,~~ the individual gardeners who got the first plots found that the soil was really hard and had to use picks to dig it up.

The program began in August 1975 with a pilot project of 70 plots in Makiki District Park. The purpose was to give people with no yards of their own the chance to grow vegetables and flowers on a 10 x 10 foot plot on public land. The surprise was that people of all ages turned out and continue to work well side-by-side, people from all walks of life and all nationalities.

Bonnie Goodell was the first coordinator for the parks and the garden club and Robert Snakenberg was the first president of the Makiki Garden (this information according to some of the gardeners who were with the garden association from the beginning)

Agriculture has an important function as recreation. The City developed this project as "recreation gardening" and the program was officially called "The Mayor's Community Recreational Gardening Program" with the first program coordinated by Cliff Arquette with the Mayor's Beautification Advisory Committee (from Hono. Advertiser, Sept. 4, 1975, D-2)

It was also thought that this program would be of particular interest and assistance for people with fixed incomes.

Maybe you can help us add to these facts by including some of your own.