

The Queen's Challenge Taro Competition
Saturday, April 20, 2013 at the East Maui Taro Festival

The Queen's Challenge is **open to all taro farmers on Maui growing Hawaiian taro varieties in two categories - wetland or dryland.** Entries must be Hawaiian taro varieties found in *Bulletin 84: Taro Varieties in Hawaii* (1939) and a two point advantage will go to taro grown organically in honor of Queen Emma's proficiency in growing kalo and caring for the soil. Maui Lehua and other hybrids *will not* qualify for this competition category. You may wish to consult Bulletin 84 or www.kupunakalo.com where you will find photographs of many of the varieties listed in the Bulletin to help you verify your varieties prior to entry.

There is no cost to enter. If you can not be there, you may have someone represent you with your kalo (it is your responsibility to get the kalo to the festival). The whole plant will be judged. The corm must be free of 'ohā, roots and dirt. The hā and lau (stems and leaves) should be free of insects and soil.

You or your representative will need to provide the following information at entry no later than 11am to the contest table:

1. Name of the grower, phone and email contact
2. Place grown/ahupuaa/island
3. Soil inputs and/or fertilizers used to grow the kalo entered in the contest
4. Wetland or dryland
5. Age of the taro at harvest (months), and, answer the following question:
6. Why do you grow kalo?

Anything received after 11am will not be accepted in the competition.

Questions can be directed to the Taro Security and Purity Task Force or E kūpaku ka 'āina at:

tsptfhi@gmail.com (808) 754-7395

ekupaku@gmail.com (808) 285-3947

The Queen's Challenge

Prize: \$500 for a kalo grown in lo‘i; \$500 for a kalo grown dryland.

Criteria for entrance:

1. Hawaiian variety (as described in *Bulletin 84: Taro Varieties in Hawaii*)
2. Whole plant (including top; free of ‘ohā, roots and dirt)



Kalo will be judged for weight and quality (not overripe or loli, uniformity, lack of scars or rots; plant vigor). Scoring will be a combination of these elements. Kalo grown organically, as Queen Emma did, will receive a 2 point additional score.

Queen Emma Kalanikaumakaamano Kaleleonālani Na‘ea Rooke, born in 1836, was much loved by the people of Hawai‘i. Most are familiar with the work of the Queen and her husband, King Kamehameha IV, Alexander Liholiho, which resulted in the creation of what is now Queen’s Medical Center. After the death of her son in 1862 and her husband a year later, Queen Emma became involved in many humanitarian efforts. She died at the age of 49, in 1885.

Emma has been described as a devout Christian, a Victorian woman who wore widow’s weeds, gardened, patronized charities, gave dinner parties, and a skilled horsewoman. “Yet, she remained quintessentially Hawaiian. She wrote exquisite chants of lament in Hawaiian, craved Hawaiian food when she was away from it, loved to fish, hike, ride and camp out (activities she kept up to the end of her life) and, throughout her life, took very seriously her role as a protector of the people’s welfare” (G. Kanahele, 2000, *Queen Emma: Hawaii’s remarkable queen*).

Queen Emma was also an expert in the planting and growing of kalo.

In an unpublished manuscript (nd) written by the Queen perhaps in the 1860’s entitled *Observations on Varieties and Culture of Taro* (Bishop Museum Archives), she describes in detail the planting methods, varieties favored at the time, the harvesting of kalo and preparing of poi, as well as an important discussion on the “productiveness” of the kalo. It is here that her knowledge of the conditions and practices of growing kalo shine. And, it is here that the challenge to the taro farmers of today lays wait, for she is clear that it is in the caring of the soil that the greatest of taro sizes can be achieved.

No chemical fertilizers were used. Hawaiians were skilled practitioners of mulching and fallowing production systems.

By her own hand, Queen Emma writes:

“The size of the roots depend upon the depth of loose soil, and the care bestowed on its cultivation. I have produced kalo which averaged twenty-two inches in length and the same in circumference when it was cultivated under my own eye, but far less in the same locality when the cultivation was somewhat neglected by my konohiki.”

Who among the taro farmers of today can meet the challenge? Let them be known!