Upper Kula Update
E. Fujitani

Persimmon season is right around the corner for growers and homeowners. As the season draws near, growers are looking forward to a good harvest, increased sales and more fruit fly-free persimmons to share with friends and family. The start of the persimmon season begins around the end of September and continues to November/December, depending on orchard elevation, climatic conditions and the amount of TLC (Tender Loving Care) given to trees. Persimmon trees require year-round maintenance work such as, pruning, fixing of braces, fertilizer, irrigation, and weed control. During the months of January to August, mass trapping with Bio-lure and GF-120 sprays are implemented on alternate host trees for Medfly suppression. As the persimmon matures, full implementation of the Bio-lure traps is established in orchards for suppression. Currently, med fly populations numbers are low, a good indication of a great persimmon season ahead.

Some growers have commented that an economic analysis of persimmon farming would result in un-profitable findings, due to the amount man-hours involved. However, many persimmon growers in the business enjoy farming as a “hobby,” because it allows them to keep physically fit. Others value persimmon farming because of its history and deep Maui heritage; many trees in Upper Kula have been passed down from generations to generations. The tradition does not exist only with persimmon growers: year after year, loyal customers travel from Kahului to as far as Honolulu, Oahu just to buy Maui persimmons. During persimmon season, there is an abundance of traffic in Upper Kula as tourists and locals drive out of their way to purchase these persimmons. Growing the delicious fruit may take patience and much care, but it is a labor of love and a local tradition.

Lower Kula Update
E. Fujitani

Twenty-three weeks have gone by since the Kula Area Wide Crew began releasing sterile male melon flies in the lower Kula area from Pulehu to Maui Agricultural Park. Shipments of 625 to 860 thousand flies are sent weekly from Oahu, reared and released in the implementation zone. Fruit collections and egging surveys indicate infertile mating, resulting in unhatched eggs, thus, reduced future offspring. Area Wide Crew workers are having a difficult time finding infested fruits and vegetables for egging surveys. This is great news because the egging survey provides vital evidence that the SIT technique is working. HAW-FLYPM is making further headway in the suppression of the melon fruit fly in the Lower Kula area. General consensus among melon host crop producers is that there is very little infestation from fruit flies. The dry summer climatic conditions and scorched vegetation in and around the farms have also added to the low melon fruit fly populations. The latest Maui Baseline (on farm) melon fly catch per trap day (CPTD, for short) is 2.15, a decline over the past months. Monitoring traps revealed that the sterile melon fruit flies have made their way into the Omaopio area, a distances up to 1-½ miles away from the release site at the Agricultural Park. This suggests possible infertile mating maybe occurring outside the grid area.
HAW-FLYPM’s Kula Enthusiasts
L. Fujitani

Ask community cooperator Flora Umeno what she thinks of the HAW-FLYPM program and she’ll tell you “it really works!” A long time Kula resident, Flora has firsthand knowledge of the destructive nature of fruit flies. Using Biolure traps, Flora considerably reduced the Medfly population in her backyard of persimmon, loquat, and coffee trees. To protect her flourishing pumpkin patch, Flora used plastic cuelure in her traps and sprayed GF-120, resulting in a bumper crop of fruit fly free pumpkins. At one point during the season, she harvested over thirty pumpkins. Smiling, Flora says, “I like to give away to my friends.” Having fruits and vegetables to share with friends and neighbors is important to backyard farmers like Flora Umeno. **Continued**