

What makes Puna's Environment so Special?

Whether your land is on the coast, up the mountain, or somewhere in between, raw land will have bird, insect and plant species found nowhere else on earth. Some may very well be endangered or rare. It is your moral obligation and responsibility to be a good steward, building and living in harmony with this special place. That is the meaning of “Mālama ka ‘āina”.

“Wildlife Corridors”

Most parcels of land in Puna either abut or are close to protected areas such as Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, Wao Kele 'O Puna, Keau'ohana Forest Reserve, Nānāwale Forest Reserve and several others. These areas are highly sensitive, ecologically. Development usually breaks the continuity of critical habitat: bird and plant populations become genetically isolated and at greater risk. By clearing minimally, removing invasive species and landscaping with native plants or non-invasive non-native plants, you can help to maintain the biological integrity of our at risk native species. That's being a good neighbor!

HELP for Forest-Friendly Building & Forest Restoration

You're not Alone:



Resource List for Building in the Forest

The Resource list includes businesses who assist with “forest-friendly” land preparation; local nurseries; native forest landscapers; information on native and invasive species; etc. It's available with this brochure and on the PCDP website.

Mahalo Nui Loa

The agencies listed below have contributed information used in the development of this brochure.

- County of Hawai'i Planning Department
- Volcano Community Association (VCA@volcanocommunity.org)
- Malama O Puna (malamaopuna@yahoo.com)
- K Johnson, dba Community (tempK@hawaii.rr.com)

BUILDING IN PUNA



A guide to building in Puna, Hawai'i

Produced by the Puna Community
Development Plan – Action Committee

Common Misunderstandings

Some lot owners believe that completely clearing and grading their property offers attractive benefits, such as apparent cost savings, flexible landscaping, or ease of using standard house designs.



Suggestions for Preparing your Lot

- **Preserve existing native forest.** Clear as little land as possible, never clearing the lot “pin-to-pin.” (Mature trees make the lot appear larger.)
- **Plan your house to fit in harmony with your existing intact forest.** Your house may go well in already clear spaces; preserve areas with the healthiest forest. Advisors can walk your land with you as a first step. Make sure to view our Building In Puna Resource List for the appropriate points of contact.
- **“Hand-clear”** as much as possible. See the Resource List for ideas and a few local hand-clearing professionals.
- **Always have someone present to supervise** when having your lot cleared commercially... heartbreaking misunderstandings and unwanted clearing can occur.
- **If machine clearing or grading parts of your lot,** use small excavators front loaders, or small, maneuverable dozers.
- **Stay warm and dry:** clearing a bit on the south side & selective thinning on other sides lets in enough warmth and light to limit household mold.
- **Remove existing “invasive species” during land preparation** (such as Albizia, myricafaya, strawberry guava, tibouchina, Himalayan raspberry and ginger.)



Some Benefits of Saving Your Forest:

- **Visual and noise buffers** are provided free, and increase cherished privacy.
- **Natural landscaping** provided by native forest is both valuable and appealing.
- **Essential habitat is saved** for attractive and useful native birds, trees and other plants.
- **Aggressive “invasive species”** spread quickly on cleared land, and are not introduced if dozing and clearing are limited, saving you time and money and the use of herbicides.
- **Serious flooding problems** can be avoided for yourself and your neighbors, which is often created by improper or excessive grading.

Landscape “with” the Forest

- **Much “native forest” is heavily degraded.** Restoring your native forest, guided by your personal aesthetic sense, is a win-win plan.
- **If landscaping, choose native species appropriate** to YOUR local climate so your planting will thrive.
- **Beware of invasive species.** Nursery plants can carry hitchhikers like coqui frogs, fire ants, and stinging-nettle caterpillars. Check all plants!
- **Remove aggressive invasive plants.** Possible resources can be found in our “Building In Puna Resource List”
- **Prevent standing water.** Mosquitoes breed in containers of standing water, and the avian malaria they carry is deadly to native birds. Turn over empty pots, buckets & tires. Stock ornamental ponds with fish like “comet fish” AKA Goldfish.
- **Reduce “light-pollution.”** Keep native seabirds safe by limiting exterior lighting, which disorients birds as they overfly forest at night to feed their young. Observatories on Mauna Kea are also benefited. All outdoor lights should face the ground (by law), not outward or upward.
- **Puna is on the windward side of the island with high rainfall and humidity –** ideal conditions for mold growth. Keep interiors dry with south-facing windows, skylights & through ensuring good indoor air circulation. Build well off the ground or on proper concrete slabs (with insulation)