

Farmers asked to help write booklet about biotechnology

In response to activists fighting against genetically modified organisms, the Hawaii Farm Bureau and the Hawaii Crop Improvement Association are asking for help in educating those around the country about how biotechnology helps farmers.

Farmers are being asked to submit, in 1,000 words or less, how biotechnology has positively affected the agriculture operations on their farm. Suggested topics are reduced pesticide use, increased yield, drought protection and enhanced environmental stewardship. A short description of the farmer's operation is also requested.

Many do not know that Hawaii, with an almost perfect growing climate, is home to the seed industry of groups like Monsanto,

Syngenta, Pioneer, Dow AgroSciences and BASF. These groups contribute more than \$250 million per year to the local economy.

For many years, biotechnology has been a tool critical to all farmers by developing seeds that can increase yield, reduce pesticide use, provide drought tolerance and enhance environmental stewardship.

"Education about the positive role biotechnology plays in agriculture is crucial," said Steve Bacus, Kansas Farm Bureau president.

"You need look no further than this year's drought to know that safely making plants work better in all conditions, and allowing farmers and ranchers to be even better stewards of the land, is something that should not be

sidetracked."

Submitted stories will be published in a "Views from the Farm" booklet to help educate the public about the role of biotechnology as a tool to help farmers remain viable.

Farmers with the top five most compelling stories will receive a one-week trip for two to Hawaii in February. A portion of the time will be to speak personally about their stories to business leaders, lawmakers and the media.

Farmers can submit stories online before the deadline of Friday, Nov. 30, at www.hciaonline.com/why-biotech/farmers/.

For questions, contact Alicia Maluafiti, executive director of the Hawaii Crop Improvement Association, at director@hciaonline.com or (808) 224-3648.

Coming up: books



LAURA KREJCI/Sacred Heart School
Sacred Heart kindergartner Carson Cook (front) and third grader Aiden Cook paid for books at the school's Scholastic Book Fair last week. Home and School co-president Christina Jaeger scanned the books while librarian Sister Loretta Podlena rang up the sale.

Color of autumn foliage depends on weather conditions year round

Fall ushers in many seasonal delights, such as hay rides, apple cider, and pumpkin patches – not the least of which is the deep changing colors of foliage.

K-State Research and Extension horticulturalist Ward Upham said the weather has a significant effect on the vibrance of fall colors.

"Cloudy days and warm nights prevent some of the sugar accumulation in the leaves and result in less vibrant colors," he said. "Warm, sunny days and cool nights are ideal for good color."

Even weather during the rest of the year can affect fall colors, Upham said. Heavy spring rains and hot, dry summers are damaging to fall foliage.

"The long, hot summer we had certainly makes it more likely that colors will be muted this fall, but fall weather also plays a part," he said. "If we have warm days with plenty of sunshine and cool nights, we could still have decent colors."

Cheryl Boyer, horticulturalist with K-State Research and Extension,

recommended mums as a good option.

"Mums come in almost every color imaginable," she said. "They are also perennials, meaning they will survive most winters and come back repeatedly."

However, maintaining mums throughout the year takes time. Boyer said she prefers to treat mums like annuals when she's looking for seasonal color.

She also recommended pansies, kale and asters.

Fall the right time to prepare garden

Gardeners should begin working their soil now in order to improve the health of their soil for spring planting.

Fall is the best time to prepare garden soil, according to K-State Research and Extension horticulturalist Ward Upham. The soil is often too wet in the spring to work without forming clods that will be present the rest of the growing season.

"Even if you work wet soil in the fall and form clods, the freezing and thawing that takes place in the winter will break them down, leaving a mellow soil the follow-

ing spring," Upham said.

He also recommended working leftover garden debris into the soil, which reduces the chances of insects surviving the winter and decreases the risk of diseases overwintering.

"Working the debris into the soil is easier if you mow the old vegetable plants several times to reduce the size of the debris," he said.

Tilling old plant materials into the soil increases the organic matter content, although it is usually a good idea to add in additional organic materials as well, such

as leaves, grass clippings or rotten hay. Adding these materials in the fall allows more time for them to be broken down before spring planting. Upham recommended adding two inches of organic matter to the soil surface before tilling.

He also warned against over-tilling the soil.

"You should end up with particles the size of grape nuts or larger," he said. "If you work garden soil into the consistency of dust, you have destroyed the soil structure."

Cat hitchhikes ride to Florida in owner's bag

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) – When an Ohio woman packed her bags for a Disney vacation, her cat didn't want to stay behind.

Sometime Sept. 17, Bob-bob the cat found his way into Ethel Maze's suitcase, made it through screening at Port Columbus International Airport and was loaded

into an airplane for a flight to Orlando.

The *Orlando Sentinel* (bit.ly/RTXXKh) reports the black cat popped out when Maze unzipped her bag after checking into her hotel that night. Maze, of Circleville, Ohio, says the 14-month-old cat was shaken but still purring.

Maze was part of a group of disabled veterans and volunteers making an annual trip to Orlando.

Mike Groleau, who handled the bags for the group, says he thought he saw the bag move, but loaded it along with the other bags heading to Orlando.

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