



NATIONAL TROPICAL BOTANICAL GARDEN AWARDED LEVEL IV ACCREDITATION BY ARBNET ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

KALĀHEO, Hawai‘i (September 9, 2016) – National Tropical Botanical Garden (NTBG), a nonprofit institution with four gardens and five preserves in Hawai‘i and a garden in Florida, has been awarded a Level IV Accreditation by The ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program and The Morton Arboretum, for achieving particular standards of professional practices deemed important for arboreta and botanic gardens. The ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program is the only global initiative to officially recognize arboreta at various levels of development, capacity, and professionalism. NTBG is also now recognized as an accredited arboretum in the Morton Register of Arboreta, a database of the world’s arboreta and gardens dedicated to woody plants.

With an emphasis on plants of the Pacific Islands, NTBG’s Hawai‘i locations hold the largest assemblage of native Hawaiian species. Many are listed as Threatened or Endangered for conservation and recovery under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, or have already disappeared from their native habitats. Collections are intended to include representatives of most or all known populations, with a number of plants of each, and the widest possible genetic diversity of plants in each taxon. NTBG has also created the world’s largest collection of breadfruit varieties (*Artocarpus altilis*), a germplasm resource that is being used for the organization’s global hunger initiative. Some of these varieties no longer exist in their islands of origin. In its preserves and beyond its properties, the NTBG is actively working to restore degraded habitats, further expanding its efforts to save plants that are otherwise faced with extinction.

NTBG curates over 230 taxa of palms, including 20 out of 24 taxa of Hawaiian *Pritchardia* palms, the majority of which are federally listed. *Pritchardia* spp. (loulou) are the only palm species endemic to the Hawaiian archipelago and, as such, are iconic of native Hawaiian culture and landscape. With their fan-shaped leaves, yellow flowers, and black fruits they can be difficult to tell apart for the untrained eye. However, each Hawaiian island has at least one distinct *Pritchardia* species with some islands having distinct species or forms restricted to individual valleys or mountains. In addition to protecting and restoring wild habitat, NTBG’s *ex situ* conservation plays a vital role in *Pritchardia* conservation because loulou seeds are sensitive to the drying/freezing storage conditions in seed banks.

NTBG is also home to 57 taxa of *Erythrina* spp. in the legume/pea family. Commonly known as coral trees, *Erythrina* are found on every continent except Europe and Antarctica, as well as on many Pacific Island nations. In Hawai‘i the wiliwili tree, *Erythrina sandwicensis*, is an attractive dryland forest tree with orange, green or white flowers and rough brown seed pods that twist open to reveal shiny bright red seeds. An important part of ecosystem function, wiliwili provides nectar for birds and insects, shade and erosion control. The seeds are used to make lei and the low density wood is used for a variety of products such as surfboards and canoes. Since 2004, an outbreak of tiny wasps has caused extensive damage to these trees, which were already under stress from other pressures such as habitat degradation. In partnership with San Diego Zoo Global and Waimea Arboretum, NTBG continues to collaborate to propagate and protect these beautiful trees.

“We are extremely pleased that the National Tropical Botanical Garden has received Level IV accreditation from ArbNet. This highest level of accreditation is based on many factors but recognizes not only the scope and diversity of our living collections of trees and woody plants, but also our institutional capacity, professional staff, collections database, and strengths of our educational, scientific, and conservation programs. Being recognized as a Level IV institution is truly an honor and brings us into the international community of arboreta. Clearly we have the responsibility to maintain or exceed our present level of excellence into the future, and I believe that being a member of Arbnet will help facilitate this,” said Dr. Dave Lorence, Director of Science and Conservation at NTBG.

“NTBG is excited to be part of this important global network and honored to receive this accreditation. We look forward to continuing our work to conserve tropical trees of the Pacific,” added NTBG President and Director Chipper Wichman.

About National Tropical Botanical Garden

Established by Congressional Charter in 1964 as a non-governmental, not-for-profit institution, the National Tropical Botanical Garden is headquartered on the Hawaiian island of Kaua‘i. An extensive research library and herbarium is located at NTBG’s headquarters. Its adjacent McBryde Garden includes a conservation and horticulture center, the main facility for plant propagation.

NTBG is dedicated to preserving tropical plant diversity and stemming the tide of extinction - through plant exploration, propagation, habitat restoration, scientific research, and education. NTBG’s gardens and preserves are safe havens for at-risk species that otherwise might disappear forever. In just over 50 years, the NTBG has grown to encompass nearly 2,000 acres of gardens and preserves. Thousands of species have been gathered from throughout the tropical world, through field expeditions by staff and through collaborations with other institutions and researchers, to form a living collection that is unparalleled anywhere.

NTBG’s gardens are not only havens for imperiled plants - they are living laboratories for both staff scientists and visiting researchers from all over the world. Specialized collections at each of NTBG’s gardens, which contain a variety of microclimates as well as significant historical and cultural features, afford in-depth research in a number of plant disciplines.

The gardens are living classrooms. Courses and activities - for students, teachers, laypersons, and professionals - reach a wide range of age groups and interests. Publications and tours of each of NTBG’s gardens increase the public’s awareness of the fragile state of many ecosystems and plant populations.

About ArbNet

ArbNet is an interactive, collaborative, international community of arboreta. ArbNet facilitates the sharing of knowledge, experience, and other resources to help arboreta meet their institutional goals and works to raise professional standards through the ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program. The accreditation program, sponsored and coordinated by [The Morton Arboretum](#) in Lisle, Illinois in cooperation with [American Public Gardens Association](#) and [Botanic Gardens Conservation International](#), is the only global initiative to officially recognize arboreta based on a set of professional standards. The program offers four levels of accreditation, recognizing arboreta of various degrees of development, capacity and professionalism. Standards include planning, governance, public access, programming and tree science, planting and conservation. More information is available at www.arbnet.org.

###

Media Contact: Janet L. Leopold, 808-332-7324 ext. 213, administration@ntbg.org