

## Praise for Tropical Gardens of Hawaii

HONOLULU, HAWAII – Paul Weissich, director emeritus and “father” of Honolulu’s modern botanical garden system, wrote the foreword for David Leaser’s photographic monograph, *Tropical Gardens of Hawaii*:

Upon arriving in Hawaii in 1950, I found that Foster Garden was the sole botanical garden in the Islands. As master planner for the City’s Park system, I was able to locate funds for needed improvements to the aging garden. Dr. Harold Lyon, then director of the garden as well as holding a highly responsible position with the Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association, had developed a far-sighted scheme to establish a comprehensive botanical garden system. Public meetings created strong public support, but unfortunately Dr. Lyon died before firm action could be taken. His foresight, however, was not for naught. His long-range plan was pursued by a committee of dedicated influential citizens and the result was the creation of the National Tropical Botanical Garden on Kaua`i.

To my complete surprise, I was notified on the day of Dr. Lyon’s death in 1957 that I was now the Director of Foster Botanical Garden, a position arranged by Dr. Lyon himself prior to his passing.

Beginning in 1957, a major influence in the formative years of my professional life was my association for five years with the internationally known Dr. Joseph C. Rock. His work on the Hawaiian flora is monumental. He propelled me into the world of serious botanical collecting, specifically the native endangered flora.

The following 33 years were almost violently action-packed. I was struck by the incredible opportunity of expanding the garden system to include areas of other growing environments. We had the historical lowland, warm Foster Garden and a developing cool, moist site in Wahiawa. We soon acquired 200-acre Koko Crater, the perfect site for a collection of drought-tolerant species.

Through the action of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a magnificent 400-acre site backed by almost vertical cliffs of the Ko`olau mountain range rising to three thousand feet, was developed as the Ho`omaluhia Botanical Garden, a repository of tropical warm, wetland species.

All that remained was the locating of an on-shore, salt wind site to receive a collection of tropical strand species. I did not manage to realize that.

I retired (my wife says I “only re-treaded”) at the end of 1989, but I am still active as a volunteer. I am delighted with the young people who are now on the Board of the Friends of Honolulu Botanical Gardens

and the realization that my passions as well as a higher level of community service will be realized by these wonderful young people. It's really my time to retire.

Today, Hawai'i's botanical gardens and native forests are a precious, living museum, a treasure of tropical plants for science, conservation, learning and recreation. Many emphasize the rare and endangered Hawaiian flora as well as similar species from the tropical parts of the globe, species that have found the Islands a conservation refuge; others emphasize more ornamental species and hybrids.

David Leaser has captured the spirit and fact of Hawai'i's gardens both visually through his fine photography and through his clear writing. It is a work long overdue. I am proud to be even a small part of his accomplishment.

Aloha and Mahalo nui loa,  
Paul R. Weissich  
Director Emeritus, Honolulu Botanical Gardens