

INTRODUCTION *WHAT IT IS*



Backed-up traffic through Kapa'a town reflects Kauai's lingering backlog of unfunded highway improvements. Perhaps Kauaians' more relaxed and friendly attitude makes this form of congestion somewhat more bearable.

"It is the responsibility of the gardener to never plant a sun-loving flower in the shade."

Chauncey Gardener



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WHY WE ARE GARDENERS

Aside from its relevance to our island's mythic moniker, the metaphor of citizen-as-gardener seems especially apt for reasons that have as much to do with the Kauaian character as with the Kaua'i environment.

When on the garden island, do as the gardeners do, and all that.

The gardener is part artist, part engineer, combination economist and ecologist, alternately master and slave, sometimes a grand schemer, often a stickler for detail.

The gardener's simple secrets and deep awareness are thoroughly blended through a long line of practitioners whose priceless knowledge is continuously advanced, prudently preserved and appropriately applied.

From soils to sightlines, the gardener's never-ending holistic task is shaping the myriad garden parts with an eye to some grander, more fruitful integration.

Just so, the Kauaian way of seeing our island, with all its inter-linked challenges, reflects a gardener's sensibility drawn from indigenous roots and immigrant dreams. This caretaker role is familiar to Hawaiians in the concept of kuleana (responsibility).

Kauaians have been acting like gardeners long since, and malihini (newcomers) quickly find that it makes sense, because the whole island is a garden with no inside and outside. We live

in it, work in it and play in it, our footprints are all over it, and we come to know something about common garden tasks.

Rather than try to wall it in for a special few, we work openly to maintain its specialness for all.

Kauaians are likewise seldom satisfied with the simple cycles of regeneration whose natural rewards are enhanced by the gardener's toil.

We like to smarten our shaping of species and spaces, and seek to blend the parts as we grow.

Kauaians and guests alike can gain from the gardener metaphor as a sharp focus for reflection and a firm launch pad for generating new knowledge.

We use the metaphor of citizen-as-gardener to underscore our civic roles in the nourishment of our community.

The soil these gardeners prepare is the infostructure of networks and know-how, trust and initiative. Citizens are the seeds ready to be planted in an appropriate environment and nourished with information, discourse and community learning.

And the harvest is community-based management of our ecosystems—a new millenium governance process in which each household shares the load.

Kauaians are also raising new generations of gardeners who will inherit these tasks, and caring for elder gardeners who bequeathed this lushness to us.



Live-in gardening

Here are three propositions regarding how the metaphor works for Kauaians. Perhaps our live-in style gives us a leg up and a reason to lead on.

- **Live In:** Our development model is more about making a living in our garden rather than making a garden to live in.

There are only five ways to make a living in a garden. One is to subsist, another is to sell its fruits, and another is to support the gardeners and the keepers of gardening knowledge. A fourth is to serve those whose business is elsewhere but who live in our garden, and a fifth is to solicit visitors who will pay for the privilege of coming into our garden.

And because we also live in our garden, a lot of extra mending is required as well as regular tending as we bring natural areas more into our communities rather than walling them out.

Kauaians also have a long history of mutual support and an attitude of the heart that stretches from the old families to newcomers, from ancient ahupua`a to the post-plantation subdivision era.

- **Leg Up:** "Paying attention" through a gardener's eye, Kauaians find it easier to see the whole garden. Unlike the other islands, we have a single central mountain. Kaua`i is so small we can get our arms around its wholeness.

Moreover, our ecosystems are so diverse and relatively intact and small-scale that we have a perfect laboratory for working out the rules of sustainability.

And our communities are so diverse and intricately networked that we have a perfect arena for refining the rules of consensus.

- **Lead On:** Moving forward with a gardener's initiative, Kauaians are rising to the challenges of managing our ecosystems.

As the rest of the world comes back to concepts of capacity and community, we wake up each Kaua`i morning with an undying sense of the importance of both concepts. Islands are, after all, more self-reliant and cohesive.

The new Kauaian is all about relearning to live lightly on our lands and manage our ecosystems on the fly.

The Kauaian "just-do-it" style of initiative reflects a very old sense of responsibility and a new sense of frustration with waiting for "someone else" to act.

What lies ahead

We must cover important ground before getting to the kernel of argument. This book focuses on two of the three fundamental tasks that will shape Kauai's success or failure in the future. The first task, shared vision, is a given; we are all gardeners. The other two, appropriate analysis and creative implementation, are presented here from a gardener's perspective.

In the first section, we present appropriate analysis under the slogan: "What it is---->is." Chapters 1, 2 and 3 present some of the best available data on where we are now, where we have been, and where we are headed on Kaua`i, together with a discussion of how to make sense of this information. One aspect that we'll focus on is links between issues and the impulse to "close the loops"—a key feature of the new paradigm as ecology and economics converge.

In the second section, we explore creative implementation under the slogan: "is---->up to us." Chapters 4, 5 and 6 summarize some of the hottest available ideas we can use to measure our progress, avoid the worst mistakes, and nurture the best in our communities.

One aspect we will focus on is the latent power of citizens and the impulse to "push the envelope"—which is a key feature of bottom-up governance. [See Appendix A for more on these slogans.]

Along the way, in a string of exhibits and sidebars, we will take a look at maps and charts that depict the factors and forces that we are trying to grasp and the practices and principles that can guide our community work.

About the concept of "new Kauaian governance," honest folks must consider the possibility that we might be mistaken—that Kauaians "nevuh like do nothing."

So in the final chapter, we invite the most penetrating criticism by laying out as boldly and confidently as we can the guiding principles and personal motivations that seem to be leading Kauaians to "just do it."

This is the kernel of our work-in-progress as gardeners learning how to integrate the tasks of visioning, analyzing and implementing. If you find this vision of new governance compelling, then you can set this book aside...and be about the business of integrating these three tasks.

