

A TOUR OF FOREST NURSERIES IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS OF MICRONESIA AND AMERICAN SAMOA

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Forestry programs in the American-affiliated islands of Micronesia and American Samoa are relatively young, compared to those of mainland states. American Samoa and Guam have been American Flag Territories since 1899, but neither had a forestry program before 1970. American Samoa had no forestry program until 1987. After World War II, the United States was the *de facto* government in the Northern Marianas, Marshalls, and Eastern and Western Caroline Islands, many of which had been devastated by the battles. The United Nations made these islands "Trust Territories of the United States" under a formal trusteeship agreement that called for helping the islands to gain political and economic independence. By the early 1970s, things had normalized enough so that the Trust Territory Government was able to focus on natural resources management. It financed a crop of young Micronesian men to forestry school in

Papua New Guinea, and the graduates returned in 1974 to 76 to take up positions with their home island governments. Forestry in those days was oriented strongly toward production of timber, and forest nurseries were aimed at production of timber species, especially *Swietenia macrophylla* (Honduras mahogany), which was seen as the value species of the future. In 1978 the USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region, stepped up delivery of State & Private Forestry programs to the islands beyond Hawaii. Nursery improvements have been high on the lists of the island foresters, and significant investments were made in expansions and improvements. Tom Landis accepted invitations to teach nursery management and to visit Pacific island nurseries for consultation and critique. Today the islands have nurseries that produce a great variety of plants, including ornamentals, and the emphasis is ever more strongly on propagation of native trees.