

Despite few disease and insect problems, the South Pacific's endless growing season poses a special mission to Jonathan Kajiwarra, entomologist at Hickam Air Force Base on the Hawaiian island of Oahu.

An Unrelenting Challenge

by Maureen Hrehocik, managing editor

If you squint as the plane touches down on the coral reef runway at Honolulu International Airport you can see golfers teeing off at Hickam Air Force Base.

The roar of commercial as well as military jets overhead doesn't seem to bother the steady stream of people waiting to line up their shot down the fairway.

It's almost as if every golf course is located right alongside one of the country's busiest airports.

The amount of play on the two courses (one is a Par 3) keeps general manager Sammy Souza and his crews busy. The courses as well as all other landscaping on the base also fall under the domain of Jonathan Kajiwarra, entomologist of the Pacific Air Command,

Air Force unit on the island of Oahu.

His responsibilities encompass bases in Hawaii, Guam, Japan, Korea, the Philippines and other South Pacific islands—seven in all.

Kajiwarra, a slight, unassuming man, acts as a consultant to the seven bases and oversees all functions "necessary to run a small city."

Based in the engineering depart-



Mowing along median strips is a contracted job.

ment, Kajiwarra says he supports the engineering function at each base, which includes the landscape work.

Extremely mild tropical temperatures all year, few disease and insect problems and breathtaking vistas of ocean and mountains would make it seem Kajiwarra was sitting in a landscaper's paradise.

Not quite.

It's the beautiful weather that, ironically, poses Kajiwarra's main agronomic problem.

"Because of our year-round almost constant warm temperatures, everything grows well here," Kajiwarra attests. "Maintenance is a year-round job. Coconut tree trimming alone is tremendously time consuming and expensive. We do it twice a year."

The climate is technically subtropical, but in reality, it's more tropical.

The "winter" season is from late September through February. The temperatures are lower in the nighttime (60s) and it rains more. Grass-growing is diminished, but turf in Hawaii never really goes dormant.

\$1 million contract

Management Technical Services, a California-based company, holds the more than \$1 million contract to maintain 400 acres of "high visibility" areas on base.

Landscaping work at the base has been contracted out for the past 20 years.

Enlisted personnel maintain non-contracted areas.

The entire base is 4,000 acres and is an Air Force major command and the principal air arm of the United States Pacific Command.

Most of the turf is bermudagrass with some St. Augustine and kikuyugrass.

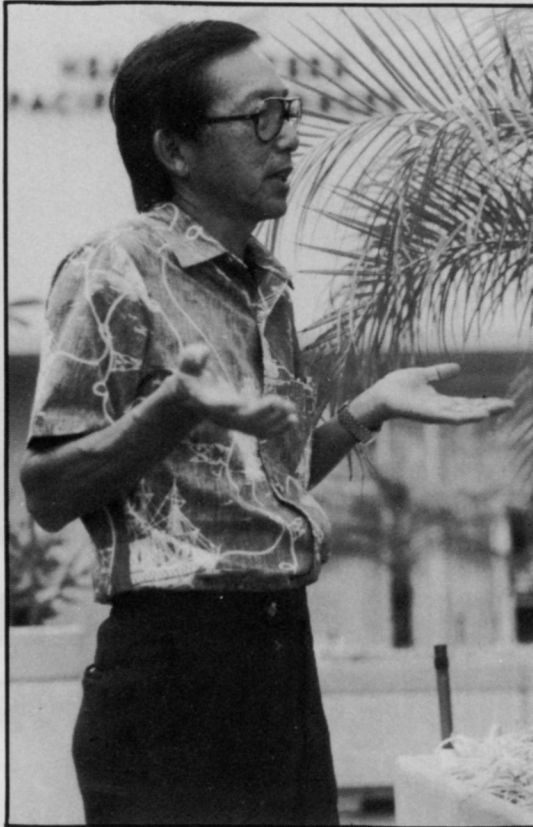
"Our disease problems are mainly on the golf course (helminthosporium was cited), and are pretty similar to those on the mainland," Kajiwarra said. "Diseases in general are not a problem."

Major weed problems come in the form of crabgrass and purple nut-sedge.

What is a problem, according to Ka-

jiwarra, is finding qualified help.

"It's not an easy thing here in the islands," he says. "We even have trouble keeping a contractor once they start working on the contract. They find the job is much more demanding than they thought it would be."



Jonathan Kajiwarra, Hickam AFB entomologist

The contractor's work is enforced by a military inspector who makes sure what needs to be done is getting done. If it's not, a fine is levied.

Tree trimming is the only maintenance job that goes out to local bid.

Underground irrigation has been installed in lawns in the high visibility areas. If the Air Force irrigation system is not sufficient for the needs of a particular area, the contractor is responsible for irrigating it.

"Water is a big problem, here," Kajiwarra says, "more so than maintenance. Some contractors use water guns and hoses. The leeward side of the island is a particularly dry area."

Every summer usually sees mandatory water restrictions on the entire island of Oahu.

The area where Hickam is located gets about eight inches of rain annually. A mere five miles toward the mountain, that figure jumps to a staggering 130 inches of rainfall a year.

Plant selection

Kajiwarra's criteria for plant selection is simple—it must survive under any condition with minimal maintenance.

Because of the structure and budgeting of the military, landscaping is not an over-endowed area of the budget. What doesn't fall under the contractor's realm the military takes care of. Often, experience and expertise in agronomy is limited.

Around the front of the base headquarters building, Kajiwarra has chosen Phoenix and MacArthur palms planted in large containers in a courtyard-like front entrance. In the planters with the palms is variegated mondo grass, Hawaiian fern and lawai fern. The self-contained planters provide a neat appearance for the front entrance while adding a touch of native green vegetation.

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Jim McMurtrey of B. Hayman Co., Inc., a Jacobsen distributor, says machinery in Hawaii gets a workout six to seven days a week, up to 365 days a year.

"It's a fix-it situation rather than a preventive maintenance situation," he says. "You really must inform the customer on how to get utility out of his equipment."

One of the high maintenance areas of the base are the nine athletic fields. Baseball fields, especially, are one of the most popular spots with as many as three games a day being played. All the baseball fields are bermudagrass.

"I'd say our fields get more play than most public fields," Kajiwarra says.

The majority of landscaping at Hickam is Spartan; the military has a way of cutting to the bone. In the constraints of a military setting, though, the base is well manicured.

Kajiwarra assesses the situation pragmatically.

"In Hawaii, you learn to work with what nature gives you—and then to expect surprises." **WT&T**