

Guam Navy and University of Guam partner to conserve native tree

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UOG Professor Thomas Marler (left) and Navy Natural Resources Specialist Paul Wenninger inspect a healthy fadang plant growing safely in the Navy's conservation planting in Tinian. Credit: Thomas Marler

The University of Guam has completed the establishment of a conservation planting of Guam's endangered fadang tree on the island of Tinian. Guam Navy has funded the entire project and provided access to their lands in northern Tinian for implementing this important effort to help stave off the ongoing threats to survival of the species.

"The Navy has demonstrated exemplary commitment to the conservation of Guam's resources by funding this project," said UOG professor Thomas Marler. Dr. Marler has administered the project and is managing the conservation planting. "The novel idea was initiated

several years ago, long before we knew for sure that the death rate among Guam's fadang population would be so extreme," said Marler.

The fadang tree is called '*Cycas micronesica*' by scientists, and belongs to a unique group of plants called cycads. It has grown for thousands of years in the forests on Guam and Rota with no real threats. But two exotic insect species have recently invaded Guam and Rota, and their voracious appetite for fadang [trees](#) has pushed the tree into the endangered status.

"We felt that the remote locations on Tinian were ideal for establishing a safe haven for Guam's fadang plants," said Navy Natural Resources Program Manager Anne Brooke. Dr. Brooke was responsible for coming up with the initial idea and successfully establishing the project. The premise behind this sort of conservation effort is that the threats within the natural range of the endangered species are absent from the new location. This new safe zone then becomes a repository for the species even if the entire population is killed within its natural range.

"This project is a great example of a highly coordinated effort to conserve a valuable natural resource," said Marler. "It combined the contributions of UOG, the U.S. Navy, the CNMI government, and a private landowner." According to Marler, the CNMI Department of Lands and Natural Resources contributed extensively by fast-tracking the permitting process and providing materials and space for many of the activities, and the Fleming family in Tinian donated space for growing the fadang plants until they were ready for planting.

Fadang is the only plant of its kind in the Mariana Islands, and this extensive planting in Tinian has become a crucial component of the ongoing [conservation](#) efforts to save the species.

Source: University of Guam

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