

Pacific Business News (Honolulu) - May 22, 2006

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PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

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UH teacher to study leaf hydraulics

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An assistant professor of botany at the [University of Hawaii Manoa](#) has won a grant to study the hydraulic design of leaves.

Lawren Sack has won an \$887,989 [National Science Foundation](#) grant that UH describes as one of the largest biology awards ever given to support the early career development of scholars.

The grant, for five years of study, comes under the imprimatur of NSF's Faculty Early Career Development program, UH Manoa said Monday.

Sack and his colleagues have recently found that the leaf is a major bottleneck in the movement of water through a whole plant, and that leaf hydraulic properties may presage growth rates and responses to the environment.

"We are after general principles of leaf design that have developed as optimality solutions during evolution," Sack said.

He said Hawaii is a good place to study this because the state has dramatic gradients of soil moisture and soil age, as well as a broad spectrum of leaf types because of the existence of both native Hawaiian species and invasive species.

Sack came to UH in 2003 after getting his doctorate at Cambridge University and doing post-doctoral work at Harvard.

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