

Display of flora to greet airport visitors

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Dr Mat Cottam
Department of Environment

A project by the Cayman Islands Airports Authority (CIAA) will ensure that visitors to the Island are greeted by a display of indigenous Caymanian flora.

The CIAA has teamed up with Dr Mat Cottam of the Cayman Islands Department of Environment (DoE) to landscape the new terminal, which is part of the Owen Roberts International Airport expansion project, using a range of hardy trees and shrubs from the "Cayman Collection" – a hand-picked selection of local flora, specially chosen for its local significance and grown on island from seed.

The "Cayman Collection" is being grown at the Native Tree Nursery, which is currently under development at the Queen Elizabeth II (QEII) Botanic Park.

Established as part of an ongoing environmental project called the Darwin Initiative, the nursery is run by a partnership team from DoE, the QEII Botanic Park, the Shade Brigade and Cayman Nature.

John Martin, of CGMJ Architects, lead consultants for the terminal expansion project, said, by creating the partnership and working with the Darwin group on its first major landscaping assignment, the CIAA hoped to encourage other developers to do the same.

"The Darwin team is to be commended for introducing the Native Tree Nursery project and the CIAA recognizes and supports the long-term benefits of this initiative," he said. "This project is a significant step forward for both Government and private sector within the arena of landscaping the Public environment."

"Ordinarily development projects rely on fast-growing plants which are not from these Islands, and are less resilient to our climate and conditions," Mr Martin said.

"The Native Tree Nursery promotes the use of hardy and attractive indigenous plants and trees in landscaping, especially those which are unique to the Islands, are of conservation or cultural significance, and those which attract birds and other wildlife into the landscape."

Dr Cottam said he believed there was no better way to welcome visitors to Cayman than with a landscape designed to showcase the plants and trees which make it unique and are tied to its history.

"As Cayman becomes increasingly developed, it is important that we maximize the ecological value of the built environment through maintaining the presence of native trees and encouraging local wildlife," he said.

"By committing to native tree landscaping at the new terminal CIAA is leading by example," he said.

The CIAA commission is the first commercial project to be undertaken by the Native Tree Nursery and the organisation hopes that the partnership between the two Government agencies will highlight the importance of conserving the local environment and preserve that which is truly Caymanian.