

# GROW PEPPER ON ARECANUT PALMS

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Palm trees in general are found to be excellent standards for Pepper Vines. Of all the palms, the arecanut palm seems to be the best for training pepper especially under irrigated conditions. Arecanut trees provide enough shade required for pepper vines in the hot season. The pepper vines trained to arecanut trees can give at least 500 gms. of dried pepper per tree annually after about five years with proper manuring and plant protection. Therefore, from one hectare six quintals of dry pepper, valued Rs. 3600/- at the present market rate can be expected annually. Thus a sizeable income can be realised from arecanut plantation by growing pepper without incurring much additional expenditure.

The pepper vines are to be trained to the arecanut palms when the latter have attained a stem height of over three metres. Pits measuring 0.5 x 0.5 x 0.5 metres are dug about one metre away from the base of the arecanut trees, preferably to the north of the trees.

The pits should be filled up with soil which contains cattle manure or compost. Two rooted cuttings are to be planted in each pit with two or three nodes in the soil. The top portion of the pepper vines should be tied to a stake and the vines should not be allowed to trail on the ground. When the rooted cuttings planted have made



Pepper Vines on Arecanut Palm

sufficient growth, (about one metre) they should be detached carefully from the stake and trained to the arecanut trees. For this purpose, a trench about 10 c. m. deep and about 15 c. m. wide should be made connecting the base of the vines to the base of arecanut tree and the stem of the vines should be placed in the trench and the trench filled with soil and the terminal portion of the vines tied to the arecanut trees. As it is likely that the pepper vines may overgrow the arecanut tree, if the latter has only a height of three metres at the time of planting the pepper vines, the terminal portion of the pepper vine may have to be pruned back slightly every year in the first two years of planting. The pruning back may be done

before the south west monsoon. This treatment in addition to regulating the growth of vines in keeping with the height of the arecanut tree will induce better branching of the pepper vines.

All the cultural, manurial and plant protection operations given to the areca trees may also be given to the pepper vines.

For harvesting of bunches in arecanut plantations, the mazdoors do not climb each tree, but they transfer themselves from one tree to another from below the crown of the trees. So training pepper vines to a height of seven to eight metres will not interfere with the harvesting of arecanut bunches to any appreciable extent.

