



'Red Banana' fruits are excellent for dessert. Although this cultivar produces smaller-sized bunches, as an intercrop it fetched the maximum net profit of Rs 5,190/ha.

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## BANANA VARIETIES FOR INTERCROPPING IN ARECANUT GARDENS

*INDIAN HORT. 33(1) P. 2-3*

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Banana cultivars 'Mysorepoovan', 'Robusta', 'Karpuravally' and 'Kappavazha' perform well as intercrops in the arecanut gardens. While the banana plants provide shade to the young areca saplings, the areca palms act as props to which the banana plants can be tied with.

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**B**ANANA, a common and profitable intercrop in arecanut gardens, is raised mainly to serve as a nurse crop providing shade to the arecanut saplings.

In mature arecanut gardens banana is grown for some additional return to the farmer. Banana varieties differ in their ability to yield in the partially-shaded

arecanut gardens. At the Kannara Research Station of the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, it was established, that to get maximum return from the

Banana intercropped in arecanut gardens, the right varieties must be chosen and the recommended package of practices followed.

## PERFORMANCE OF BANANA VARIETIES IN ARECANUT GARDENS

### 'Mysorepoovan'

The cultivar 'Mysorepoovan' ('Palayanadan') gave the maximum mean yield of 12 kg/plant. It is a dual purpose variety, since the raw fruits can be cooked as vegetable and the fully ripe fruits eaten as dessert. In the local markets throughout Kerala, this variety is greatly in demand.

### 'Robusta'

'Robusta' with a mean bunch weight of 12 kg/plant, is preferred for export. Due to its semi-tall stature, it is less susceptible to wind damage.

### 'Karpuravally'

This cultivar is highly tolerant to the bunchy-top disease, and can be ideally planted in areas where this disease is a serious problem. The quality of 'Karpuravally' fruits for dessert purpose is on a par with that of 'Mysorepoovan' fruits.

### 'Red Banana' ('Kappavazha')

This cultivar produced smaller-sized bunches (9.6 kg/plant) but gave the

'Mysorepoovan' banana, suitable both as a vegetable and as dessert, is popular in Kerala. As an intercrop of arecanut, this cultivar yields 14 kg/plant.



maximum net profit of Rs 5,190/ha. The variety is superior for dessert and fetches higher price in the urban markets.

## AGROTECHNIQUE

### Selection of planting material

Disease-free, 3-4 months old sword suckers should be planted with the onset of south-west monsoon in April-May. In areas with assured irrigation facility, planting can be done during September-October also. The banana suckers are to be planted in pits of 50 cm<sup>3</sup> dug in the middle of arecanut rows, keeping a spacing of 5.4 m × 2.7 m.

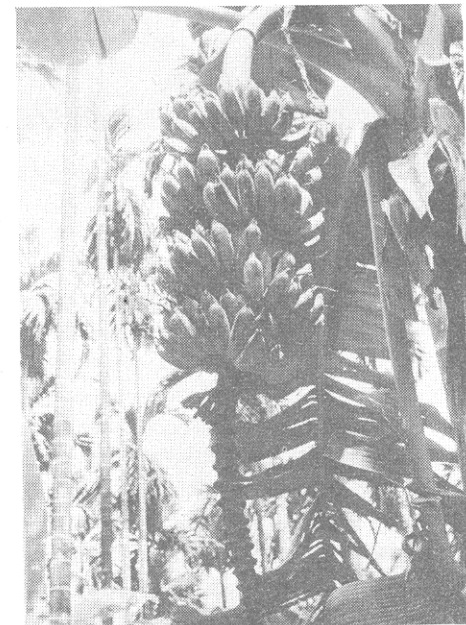
### Manuring

In each pit, at the time of planting, a basal dose of 10 kg compost or green leaf and 5 kg wood-ash may be applied. Fertilizers, to provide 160 g nitrogen (urea 530 g), 160 g phosphorus (superphosphate 1,000 g) and 320 g potassium (muriate of potash 530 g) should be applied to each plant in 2 equal split doses. The first dose may be given 2 months after planting and the next 4 months after planting.

### Aftercare

During summer, the banana plants

Chiefly a dessert variety, 'Karpuravally' is highly tolerant to the bunchy-top disease. The quality of its fruits is on a par with 'Mysorepoovan' fruits.



The semi-tall 'Robusta' cultivar is preferred for export. As an intercrop in the areca gardens, it yields 12 kg/plant.

may also be irrigated at 6 days interval along with areca palms. All the side suckers which arise till the emergence of inflorescence, should be removed. Once the plant throws the bunch, 1 healthy sucker should be retained to be raised as the ratoon crop. Proping is expensive in banana cultivation. But in these gardens with the help of coir ropes, they can be propped to the nearby arecanut palm.

### Taking the ratoon crop

Once the plant crop is harvested, earthing up is done for the sucker retained on the plant. Apply the first dose of fertilizers also the same time. Further management practices to be followed are similar to that for the plant crop. From the 4 varieties suggested, besides the plant crop, 2 ratoon crops can be taken in 3-3½ years. After harvesting, the second ratoon crop replanting should be done in pits dug at different sites in the middle of the arecanut rows.

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