

POTENTIALITIES OF ARECANUT STEM AND LEAVES.

By

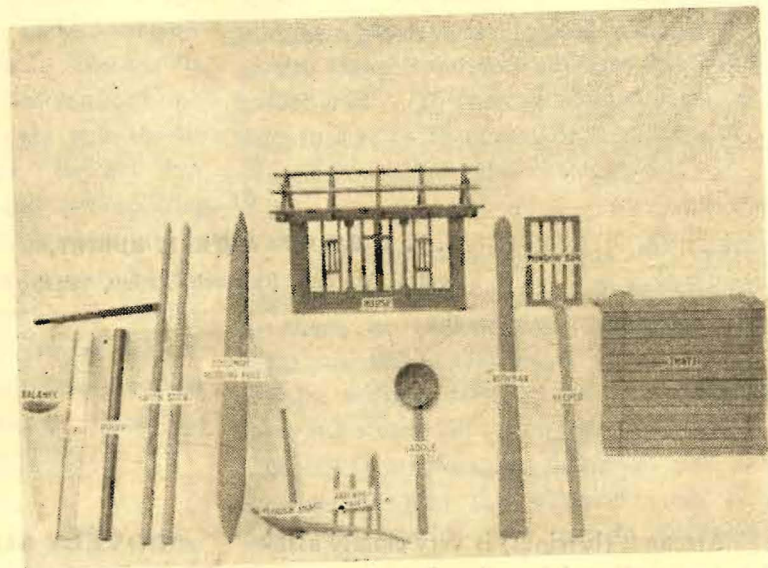
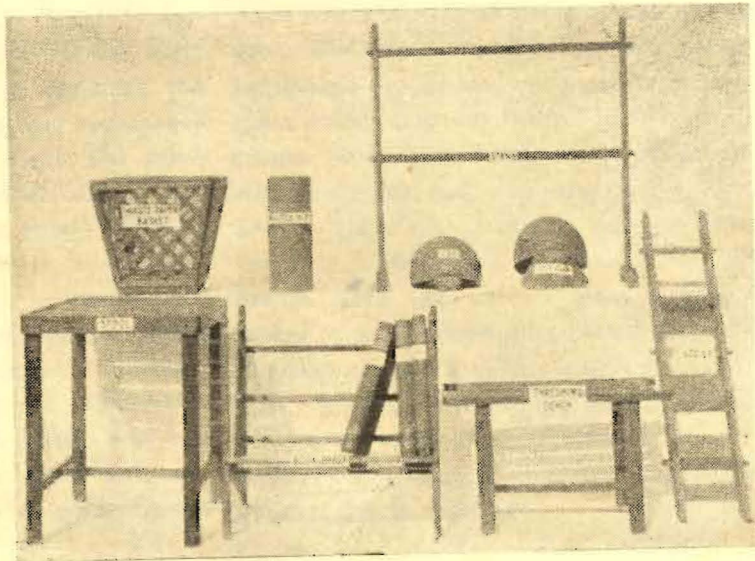
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Arecanut (betelnut) is very closely associated with all social and religious ceremonies of Indians. The palm is primarily known for its nuts which form the principle chewing material in India and in the Far Eastern countries. Arecanut stem, leaves, leaf-sheath and husk are some of the important raw products which can profitably be put into various uses.

LOVELY SUNDRIES FROM THE STEM.

Due to the hardness of the stem and the golden yellow colour it imparts to the finished products, the timber is ideally suited for making a variety of elegant utility articles. Stationery articles like scale, ruler, paper-cutter, book-shelf, waste paper basket,

etc., made out of the stem are durable and attractive. Coconut is generally husked with flat pointed arecanut poles specially made for the purpose. Baton sticks, balance beams, plough shaft, handle for the laddle, crow bars and walking sticks made out of arecanut timber are quite strong. The stem when split and sized gives good reepers for tiling purpose. These reepers when properly fastened together can be used as 'thatties'. In the furniture industry nails made out of arecanut stem are very widely used. Furniture like stools, and benches for thrashing cereals can also be made successfully. Co- at stands and ladders are other things in common use. Durable drainage and irrigation pipes can be had when the pith of the stem is removed.

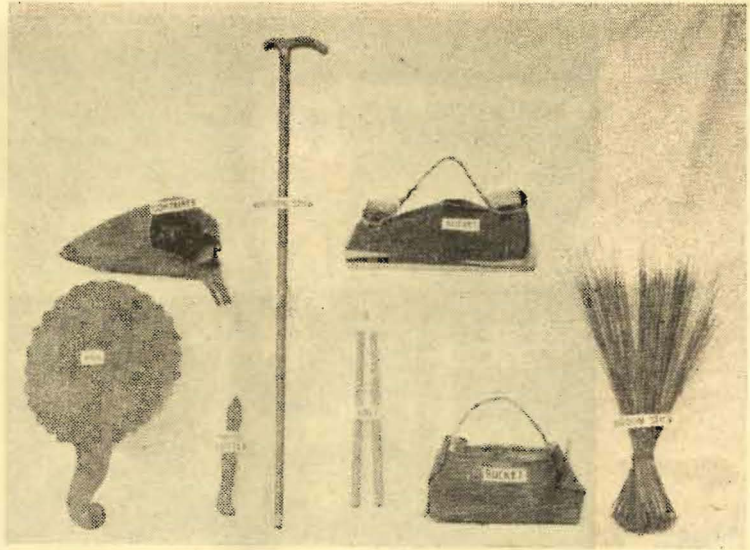


MANY MORE ARTICLES FROM LEAF AND LEAF-SHEATH.

Caps of different shapes can be made out of leaf-sheath after proper seasoning. In many of the arecanut growing areas par-

ticularly in Kerala, buckets made out of leaf-sheath are commonly used for drawing water. It is known as poor man's bucket. Containers of the various shapes for carrying vegetables, fish, etc., and for storing

things are also made out of the sheath. These cut into proper shape are used as fans and the rectangular pieces find use in the daily cleaning of the house. In certain parts, they are also used as substitutes for plantain leaves. The mid-rib of the leaflets in sufficient numbers are commonly used as broom-sticks.



A CATTLE FEED.

The spathe and leaf sheath are fed to animals. In certain parts of Kerala, the leaf sheaths are cut into small bits, sprinkled with brine solution and dried in the sun to

crispness. These processed bits are relished very much by animals.

THEY PROVIDE SHELTER.

It is a common sight in arecanut growing villages to see houses of various sizes being constructed out of arecanut stem and leaves since they provide cheap pillars, rafters, reepers, etc. for the frame work and leaves for thatching. House thatched with these leaves will be extremely cool in summer months. If properly thatched, leaves need be renewed only once in two or three years. In certain parts of the country, particularly in Malnad, big pandals made out





of arecanut steam are put up and the processed nuts spread over these pendals for sun drying.

THEY HAVE MANURIAL POTENTIALITIES TOO.

The quantity of dry arecanut husk, leaves and leaf-sheath available in the country is estimated to be 95,000 tons, 3,36,000 tons and 2,33,000 tons respectively. Their chemical analysis has revealed that they contain the following manurial ingredients.

Manurial ingredients.	Husk.	Leaf.	Leaf-sheath
Nitrogen (N_2) %	1.064	0.924	0.728
Phosphoric acid (P_2O_5) %	0.42	0.096	0.37
Potash (K_2O) %	1.48	1.00	0.78

Considering the fairly large quantity of the materials available, they will be a good source of organic manure when properly composted.