

Coconut Research Board



Leaflet No. 21

PLANTING COCONUTS ON OLD RUBBER LANDS

Rubber lands which have become uneconomic due to old age or neglect or which do not give an adequate yield of rubber, due to unfavourable conditions, can successfully be replanted with coconuts, provided the soil and climatic conditions are suitable for this crop. For the successful cultivation of coconuts the following conditions should be satisfied.

1. A well distributed rainfall of at least cm 127 (50") per annum.
2. A well drained soil with at least average fertility. Shallow soils where the parent rock or hard clay pan is near the surface and stiff clayey soils should be avoided.
3. An elevation of less than 610 metres (2,000 feet). Above this elevation yields are reduced.
4. Temperature of about 26.7°C (80° F). The palm however tolerates diurnal fluctuations of about (10° F). 12.2° C.
5. The terrain should not be too steep.

There are two methods of replanting coconuts on old rubber lands.

- A. Underplanting the old stand of rubber with coconuts.
- B. Removing the rubber completely before planting with coconuts.

The former method has several disadvantages.

- a. Shade — Under heavy shade of standing rubber, coconut seedlings become leggy, lack vigour and their flowering will be considerably delayed.

- b. Injury to seedlings—coconut seedlings are liable to be damaged by rubber branches falling and later when rubber is felled the damage to seedlings can be very severe, unless costly and elaborate precautions are taken.
- c. Pests and Diseases—Decaying stumps and branches of rubber trees are liable to breed Black Beetle and termites. *Phytophthora palmivora* a fungus which causes 'Bud Rot' disease in coconuts is also known to occur in rubber lands.

Rubber should therefore be completely uprooted, prior to planting the land with coconut. Rubber makes good fuel and the timber could be disposed of as firewood. Brush wood and twigs should also be collected and burned, as these would otherwise attract termites. The resulting ash containing about 12% Potash and 7% Phosphoric acid, could be used with advantage as a manure in planting holes.

After clearing the land of rubber, the next step that should be taken is the adoption of suitable soil and moisture conservation measures. If the land already has contour drains, bunds and terraces, these should be repaired and strengthened. Where these have not been provided, the necessary bunds, drains or terraces should be constructed, depending on the terrain of the land. In low-lying areas, drains for draining out excess water should be cut.

In areas subject to heavy rainfall, particularly on steep lands, the growing of leguminous cover crops would in addition be beneficial in preventing soil erosion and improving the fertility of the soil.

The land should next be lined for planting. Planting may be done on the triangular, square or rectangular methods and on steep lands contour planting may be done. A density of 64 palms to the acre is recommended provisionally. On completion of lining, planting holes should be cut and suitably prepared. The seedlings should then be planted, manured and maintained as described in C. R. I. leaflet Nos. 4 and 8. The common pests and diseases of coconut seedlings include termites, Black Beetle, Red Weevil, Leaf Blight and Bud Rot. The control of these pests and diseases are dealt with in C. R. I. leaflet Nos. 35, 37, 39, 41 and 42.

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