

* PLUCKING—THE CASE FOR LONGER ROUNDS IN UVA.

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The following note from the pen of an Uva planter is published in the hope that it will stimulate interest in an aspect of plucking which is too often lightly dismissed as of no agricultural significance except in relation to immediate crop returns. This tacit assumption is contested by the writer of this note, who is of the opinion that too short plucking rounds may result in bush deterioration. Whether he has proved his point or not the suggestion is one which merits consideration.

Weather obviously governs growth, and the differences in climatic conditions between those prevalent in Uva and in certain other parts of the Island are all too seldom allowed for when the length of plucking rounds comes in for criticism.

The importance to the bush of adequate foliage has been stressed in the Tea Research Institute article on page 66 of the *Planters' Association of Ceylon Review*, Vol. 17, No. 1.

If the bushes are plucked less often, the pluckers are likely to leave more below the level, which means a healthier bush, and, in the long run more crop.

In Uva, growth is slow in January and February owing to the cold and, therefore, in spite of blister blight, quick rounds are unnecessary.

From March to June growth is certainly more rapid, but it is important that the foliage lost during the very severe attack of blister blight (which occurs from December to February) should be made good throughout the depth and breadth of the bush; and this is obviously more easily accomplished by allowing a longer interval of rest between rounds.

From July to September, owing to the usual Uva drought, there is very little growth, and therefore short rounds are both unnecessary and costly.

In October and November long rounds give the bushes a chance to replace the foliage lost, or never made, during the preceding drought (May or June to September).

In December, which is a cold, misty month, growth is very slow, and therefore, in spite of blister blight quick rounds are still unnecessary.

Clearly no rule can be laid down for length of rounds, though 11—13 days generally seems about right, going up to as much as 18 days after drought, blister blight, sunless or cold weather. Only the superintendent is in a position to decide, taking into consideration, as he can, the situation of his estate, the varying climatic conditions and the availability of labour. Finally, the quality of the made tea has been proved to be not adversely affected by longer rounds.

* The Institute does not necessarily endorse the views expressed in papers contributed by persons other than members of the staff.