

# WEEDS ON COCONUT LANDS

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THERE are still people who waste time, money and labour on the operation known as "clean-weeding." People of this school of thought maintain their gardens always in a very clean and tidy condition; their lands are kept free of all weeds, and any weeds which appear are removed and burnt, together with all fallen coconut fronds. In the writer's opinion, clean-weeding is a waste of money and the burning of vegetation and plant debris is a crime.

Such people do not realise that weeds can be kept under control and the estate kept in a neat condition simply by slashing and regular cultivation. Nor are they aware that if weeds and plant debris are incorporated in the soil instead of being burnt, that the soil is improved much more than if the plant ash only is returned to the soil. The incorporation of vegetable matter into the soil increases its moisture-holding capacity and improves soil texture, whereas a soil which is lacking in vegetable humus and has been scorched by fire is lifeless and infertile and more subject to erosion.

Clean-weeding and the burning of weeds and fronds do irreparable damage to a property. The only return for the money spent on these operations is a few pounds of plant ashes, while the colour of the palms and their yields will steadily deteriorate as a result of faulty agricultural practices.

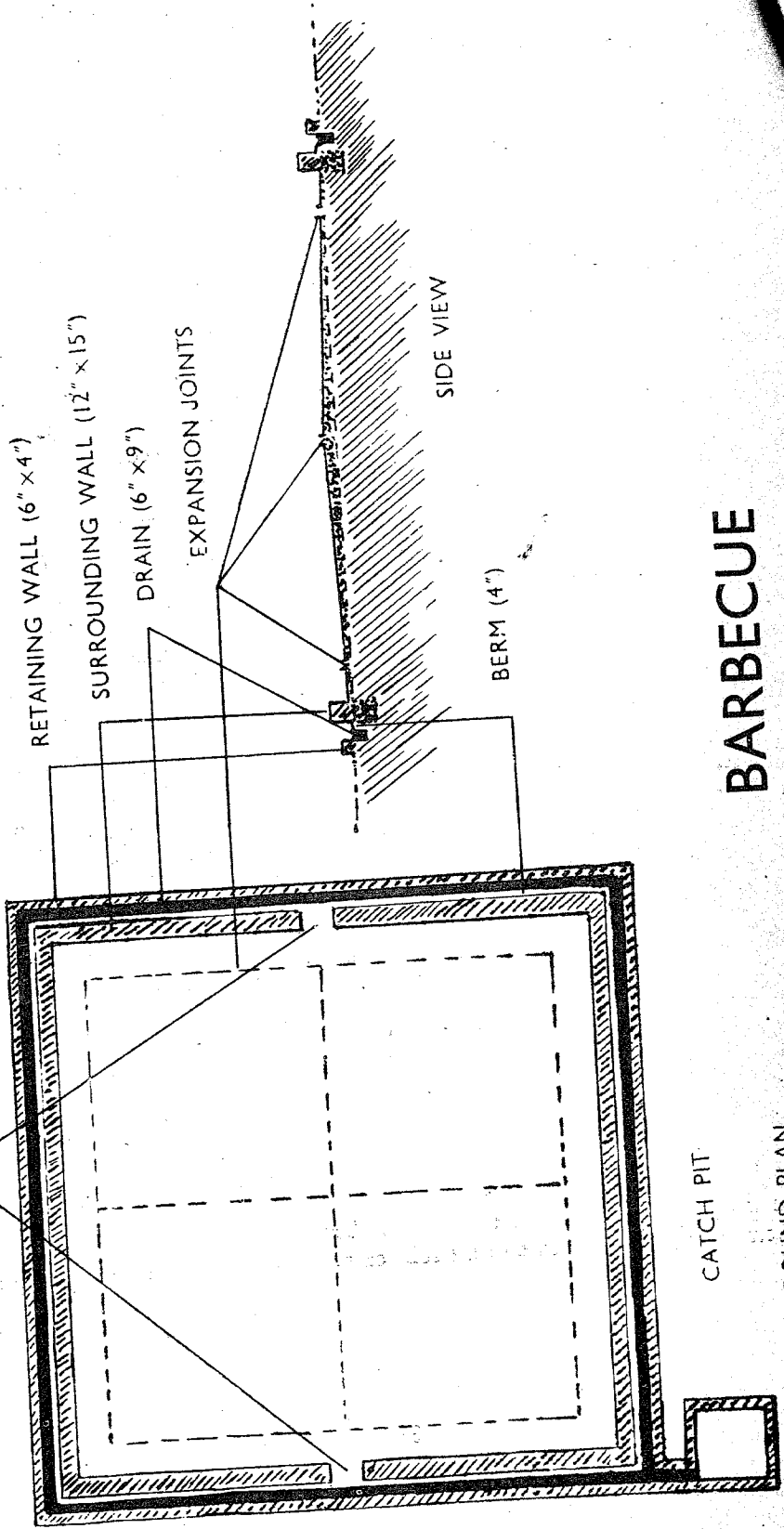
The growth of weeds should be encouraged, but controlled; shrubby growths should be removed by selective weeding or kept down by slashing. Weeds should be encouraged for the following reasons :—

(a) Some of the weeds are legumes with nodules on the roots, capable of assimilating and fixing nitrogen from the atmosphere.

(b) A carpet of weeds protects the soil from the heat of the tropical sun. Where there is clean-weeding the soil is hotter and there is a greater loss of moisture by evaporation and of soil-humus by oxidation.

(c) The weeds break the force of falling rain. Thus there is little loss of soil by erosion and the soil structure is not broken down or the soil compacted by the force of the driving rain.

OPENINGS



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