

Results of the trial showed that boron deficiency in young coconut could be easily corrected at the incipient stages by application of borax to the soil at the rate of 28-56 g/palm.

The boron requirement of adult coconut is low, compared to other macro- and micro-nutrients. Also, with the extensive and deep root system, adult coconut palms could extract the boron available in the deeper layers of soil. Although boron deficiency in young coconuts may be observed in localised high rainfall areas where the soil is acidic and in lands that are intensively intercropped, we have not observed boron deficiency symptoms in adult coconut palms.

The coconut growers are kindly requested to bring to the notice of the Coconut Research Institute any suspected cases of boron deficiency to provide the necessary assistance.



THE COCONUT TREE

Visitors to this lovely island of Sri Lanka are bound to be struck by the natural beauty of our palm-fringed coasts, while the traditional "coconut oil lamp" and "Gokkola" decorations portray the cultural and historical significance of the coconut tree to the indigenous population. This graceful palm gained prominence in Sri Lanka as a commercial plantation in the eighteen forties, and now comprises about a third of our cultivated land. As it is the source of many useful products it is also referred to as the "tree of heaven".

For instance, the trunk is used for timber and the leaves as thatch, and it yields a fibre that makes it a textile plant of much value. House-hold items like baskets, mats, brooms and rope are manufactured from coir of the husk. The deliciously refreshing coconut water is a nutritious drink, and coconut treacle and jaggery are favourites with both young and old. Further, it is inextricably linked with traditional Sri Lankan cooking, supplying essential food adjuncts of high dietetic value.

The coconut industry ranks high in affording employment opportunities and a means of livelihood to many. It also offers wide scope for expanding our future economy. Copra, desiccated coconut and coconut oil find export markets, while arrack is a popular alcoholic beverage produced for local consumption. Crude sugar could be recovered from fresh coconut toddy, and the effluents could be used as a fertilizer. Products like soap and margarine prepared from coconut oil find extensive use locally, with a great potential for export.

The coconut palm is unique in Sri Lanka, and closely linked with the life of its inhabitants. This "tree of a hundred uses" is really symbolic of our nation, and could well be given pride of place in the future.

Shirani Nathanael
Kandy