

SEASONAL NOTES

FEBRUARY, MARCH AND APRIL IN COCONUT LANDS

This period of the year is mostly dry except during the latter part of April when inter-monsoonal showers can be expected.

During these months the kind of attention that a coconut land should receive is similar to that which should be given in the months of August, September and October—for details please refer to *Planters' Review*, Volume I, No. 1.

For instance, soil and moisture conservation drains should be cleaned and the bunds repaired. Seedlings which have been planted during the previous North/East monsoon should whenever necessary be watered, as this will be the first dry period that the young plants would experience. Mulching round young seedlings with coconut husks too, is particularly advantageous under such conditions. Any dead or unwanted palms that have been removed should be cut, piled and burnt as the stems would otherwise decay during rainy weather and function as breeding places of the Black-Beetle pest of coconuts. Coconut trunks for this same reason, should never be used as fence posts.

Drains, for draining out excess water in low-lying or water logged areas are best cut during dry months. In making these drains care should be taken to see that the sides of the drains are cut slanting outwards as otherwise there would be a tendency for the drains to break away. In heavy water logged lands it is best if sods of grass could be placed along the edges of the drains to prevent surface break off. The soil from the drains may either be put round the base of the palm or spread on the surface. Straight long drains down the slope should be avoided as these could, owing to the heavy flow of water during the rainy season widen out and ultimately form gullies.

Lining, for planting and Husk burying for moisture conservation as recommended in the Seasonal Notes of *Planters' Review*, Vol. I, No. 1 could also be practised in preparation for the Yala or May/June rains.

Some of the commoner pests of coconuts are White Ants; Black-Beetle; Red-weevil; Coconut Scale and Coconut Caterpillar.

White Ants

Seedlings planted in lands infested with White Ants should be treated with one of the following chemicals, by pouring one gallon of the prepared solution round the base of the seedling with a watering can. The recom-

Recommended chemicals are Aldrex 2 — diluted at the rate of 1 table spoonful in 15 gallons of water or Chlordox, Aldrin, Intox 8 at a dilution of 1 table spoonful in 6 gallons of water. For further information please refer to leaflet No. 35.

Black-beetle

In young plantations, it is necessary to engage a beetle catcher to inspect plants periodically and look for beetles in the crown. An attack may be noticed by the frass or chewed fibre that is seen outside the hole made by the beetles. If a beetle is found, it should be extracted by means of a speared hook and the wound treated with an insecticide such as 10% D.D.T., 6.5% B.H.C., Dieldrin or Dieldrex. By proper Estate sanitation this pest can be controlled to a very great extent. Cattle dung and compost heaps should be examined periodically and grubs destroyed. Coconut stumps and logs should be split and burnt and not allowed to decay on the land. Coconut logs should never be used as fence posts. Beetle grubs, in their breeding places can also be killed by the application of an insecticide such as Gammexane. Dieldrex extra is an insecticide that is applied on the 'cabbage' of the crown of the palm to kill or repel adult beetles. Applications of the above chemicals may be done as recommended by the manufacturers. Please refer to leaflet No. 31 for further information.

Red Weevil

This is a serious pest of coconuts and if not detected in time will kill the palm. The Weevil lays its eggs in wounds on palms. This may be caused by ploughs, harrows or knives or there may be cracks on the stem especially common at the base of palms in situations where the water table is high and the soil usually sandy or may be wounds inflicted by the Black-beetle in the crowns. It is therefore necessary that such wounds are periodically treated with tar or any such antiseptic. If any palm is found to be in a very serious stage of attack for which curative methods are not possible, then such a palm should be cut and burnt. Red-Weevil attacks are generally common on young palms up to about 15 years of age as they are more sappy than mature palms. It is therefore very necessary that young and under plantations are regularly inspected. Chemical control by the injection of chemicals is recommended for palms attacked by Red Weevil. In case you come across such palms you are requested to immediately contact the Advisory Field Officer of your area or write directly to the Crop Protection Division of the Coconut Research Institute for necessary advice and instructions on the injection technique and the chemical to be used. For further details please refer to article in the previous issue of this magazine.

Coconut Caterpillar

This is a dry weather pest and attacks the leaves of coconut palms. It can seriously affect the health of the palms and yield. This can be controlled biologically by the use of parasites. These parasites are available at the Crop Protection Division of this Institute. If an infestation of caterpillar occurs on your land you are advised to inform the Advisory Field Officer of your area or write directly to the Crop Protection Officer of this Institute who will supply you with the necessary parasites and instructions on how to release them. Please refer to the article appearing in the first issue of the Coconut Planters' Review.

New Clearings

Jungle lands that are to be planted with coconuts during Yala should be felled in February, allowed to dry and burnt before the onset of the rains.

As, wood ash, is rich in potash it is best that the ash is prevented from being washed away during the next rains, by construction of contour bunds and drains.

The cleared land should then be lined for planting so that holes could be cut and seedlings planted with the first showers in April.

Catch crops could also be established with the commencement of the early rains.

If you desire to have advice on any of the above operations or a demonstration of lining for planting, or tracing for contour drains please contact the Advisory Field Officer of your area (a list of their names and addresses is given elsewhere in this Journal), or write direct to the Advisory Division, Coconut Research Institute, Lunuwila.

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