

## THE LOPPING OF GLIRICIDIA SHADE

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*Gliricidia sepium* (synonym *G. maculata*) is a fast growing, leguminous, medium-sized, thornless tree which reaches up to 10 m (30 ft) in height. This tree is a native of Mexico and South America and has been introduced to various regions of Africa and Asia; it has become naturalized in the Philippines.

The main advantage of *Gliricidia* is the ease with which it can be established. *Gliricidia* is commonly established from cuttings though it can be grown from seeds as well.

Management of the tree varies according to the form of utilization. It is used throughout the tropics as a source of fodder. It is also used extensively for living fences. *Gliricidia* is valued for a variety of protective benefits. It is used as a shade tree and green manure in tea, coffee and cocoa plantations throughout the tropics. It serves as a diversionary host to control the spread of termite infestations in tea plantations. *Gliricidia* coppices easily, producing much branch wood.

The management of *Gliricidia* shade in the low country is considered very important and if the growing *Gliricidia* trees are not lopped at the right time, and properly trained from the initial stages, it is not possible to expect a satisfactory cover of shade during the latter stages.

Initially, *Gliricidia* stumps usually produce shoots from various points of the stem. Only the shoots

which are at the upper end of the stump about 01 - 02 ft should be encouraged to grow and all the other shoots which are below this level should be removed with a sharp knife without damaging the bark of the stump.

The shoots which have been allowed to grow (first growth) will have to be lopped before the tree becomes top heavy and liable to be blown down. The first cut on the branches should be done about 01 1/2 - 02 ft from the main stem. At every subsequent lopping a crown of branches should be encouraged to grow from the point of lopping.

It is very necessary that the growing *Gilricidias* should be lopped at regular intervals usually at the commencement of the monsoons. The most suitable time to lop the *Gilricidia* is when the branches show maturity on the bark of the stem and not when the branches are green and tender. When lopped at this stage, the recovery after lopping is very satisfactory with a completely branched-out canopy. Late or too early lopping causes poor recovery, and die-back which will result in producing less shade and gradual deterioration of the shade tree.

*Gilricidias* could be generally lopped in the low country 3 times a year depending on the growth. The first lopping could be done around March/April, the second by the end of July or August after the dry period is over and the third around November. Lopping at the above intervals should produce satisfactory recovery and adequate shade during the drier months. Although the approximate time of lopping is mentioned in this article, it must be clearly noted that, it is only a guide to help estates to make their own programme of lopping according to the prevailing weather conditions in their respective areas. However it should be clearly noted that lopping has to be done only after the rains have commenced and when the soils are moist but not when the dry period is being continued.

The level of lopping should be about one foot from the previous cut. All new shoots which grow between the plucking table of the tea bushes and the crown of the *Gliricidia* should be carefully cut and removed with a sharp knife without damaging the bark of the tree. Never strip the branches by hand when removing. This will damage the bark of the main trunk of the tree and finally retard the growth of the shade tree. The shoots growing from the bottom of the tree should also be removed as early as possible. Thining-out branches at the crown should be discouraged and allow all branches at this point to grow freely at all loppings.

### Pollarding

Pollarding will be necessary when the *Gliricidia* trees grow up to about 20 ft and when the recovery after loppings become poor. It is at this stage when too many crowns are found on the tree due to continuous lopping over a prolonged period that the tree needs re-juvenation.

Pollarding should be done during the assured monsoon May/June season at a point about 06 - 08 inches below the first crown so as to remove the entire crown. The new shoots will again grow from the remaining stump and these should be trained again in the same manner as earlier to form a satisfactory canopy.