Care of young palms

Sufficient attention will have to be paid to the young palms in the early years of growth. The field planted seedlings should be shaded and irrigated properly during the summer months. Irrigation with 45 liters of water once in 4 days has been found to be satisfactory in all soil types. Provision of proper drainage is also equally important in areas subject to water logging. The pits should be cleared of weeds periodically. Soil washed down by the rains and covering the collar of the seedlings should also be removed. The pits should be widened everyyear before the application of manure. The pits should be graduallyfilled up as the seedlings grow. The palms should be frequently examined for any insect or fungal attack and necessary remedial measures should be taken up promptly. Regular manuring right from the first year of planting is essential for good vegetative growth, early flowering and bearing and high yield of coconut palms.

Soil and moisture conservation

Proper soil and moisture conservation practices are vital for better performance of coconut palms; especially in sloppy and undulating terrains.

Regular ploughing or digging of the interspaces of coconut palms twice in a year helps in moisture conservation.

The coconut basins can be mulched with coir dust, coconut husks, green leaves, dried leaves, organic wastes, and dried coconut leaves. Mulching should be done before the end of monsoon and before the top soil dries up.

Application of sufficient quantity of organic manure by way of cattle manure, farmyard manure, compost or green leaves improves the soil characteristics and provides nutrients to coconut palms.

Coconut husk incorporation in the soil helps to absorb and retain large quantities of water for use by the coconut palms. Husk burial can be done in coconut basins or in the interspace. The husk can be buried either in linear trenches taken 3 m away from the trunk between rows of palms or in circular trenches taken around the palm at a distance of 2 m from the trunk. The trenches maybe dug with 50 cm width and 50 cm depth. The husks are to be arranged in layers with concave surface facing upwards and covered with soil.

Measures such as contour binding, terracing etc. can be taken up in sloppy lands for soil and moisture conservation.

Harvesting

For matured nuts, meant for fresh consumption and for copra making, 11-12 month old fruits are to be harvested. For tender coconuts, the fruits are harvested at 5 or 6 or 7 months stage with varied levels of eater and tender kernel maturity. Usually, the mature nuts are harvested 6 to 10 times in a year where the production is only for mature nut production. In well maintained and high yielding gardens, bunches are produced regularly, and harvesting is done once in a month.

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Andaman Orange Dwarf - Promising dwarf coconut cultivar

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Andaman Orange Dwarf

The coconut palm is known to be the most important of all cultivated palms in the world and is the most extensively grown and used nut in the world. Coconut palm is the predominantly grown crop in the Islands used for varied purposes, is popularly called '*Kalpavriksha*' as all parts of the palm are useful. The coconut fruits provide food, edible oil, sweet water and milk for consumption and industrial uses.

Coconut is the predominant crop of Andaman& NicobarIslands and the crop is closely associated with the socio-culture of island communities. Coconut is considered as one of the remunerative cropsof these islands and the main economy of the Islands directly depend on the fortunes of the crop. Traditionally, tall coconut cultivars of these island are used for copra making and now for many other kernel-based products such as desiccated coconut, VCO. The tall and dwarf cultivars are used for neera extortion in

Nicobar Islands. The native dwarf cultivars of these islands which include Andaman Green Dwarf, Andaman Yellow Dwarf and Andaman Orange Dwarf are popularly used for tender coconut purpose and conserved at ICAR-CIARI, Port Blair. Selections from these conserved dwarf accessions are recommended as better cultivar for higher tender coconut yield, dwarfness, ornamental value and earliness.

ANDAMAN ORANGE DWARF

Andaman Orange Dwarf cultivar is a very attractive with moderately thin stem, closely arranged leaf scars over the stem, short and erect leaves with orange petiole colour, very attractive bright orange-coloured fruits, high number of female flowers per bunch, very good taste of tender coconut water, higher tender water quantity (300 to 400 ml per nut), high yielding (80 to 150 fruits per palm per year). It is predominantly grown in home gardens and preferred in landscapes As often the fruit fetches good price owing to the demand in the market, keeping few trees of

this promising cultivar in home gardens ensure good additional income and provide delicious tender coconuts to the family.

The seedlings of this cultivar are early splitting, vigorous and the palms are early flowering (about 36 to 40 months after planting) with regular bunch production over the years. The cultivar has not by any major pests under field conditions but observed to be susceptible to spiraling whitefly and rhinoceros beetles when compared to other dwarf cultivars and varieties. The palms give better performance with summer irrigation or else the bunch production may get affected. This cultivar is popularly called as 'King coconut' by the islanders.

Planting material and selection of seedlings

The seedlings are selected based on uniform and vigourous growth in terms of leaf production and early leaf splitting. The vigorous seedlings which are one year old, having minimum of six leaves and girth of over 10 cm at the collar should be selected for planting.

Selection of the site

Soil with a minimum depth of 1.2 meters and fairly good water holding capacity is preferred for coconut cultivation. Shallow soils with underlying hard rock, low lying areas subject to water stagnation and clayey soils are to be avoided.

Preparation of land and planting

Preparation of land for planting depends to a large extent on soil type and environmental factors. If the land is uneven and full of shrubs, the shrubs have to be cleared and land leveled before taking pits. The depth of pits will depend upon the type of soil. In laterite soil with rocky substratum, deeper and wider pits, 1.2 x 1.2 x 1.2 m, may be dug and filled up with loose soil, powdered cow dung and ash up to a depth of 60 cm before planting. In loamy soils with low water table, planting in pit size of 1 x 1 x 1 m filled with top soil to height of 50 cm is recommended. Two layers of coconut husk can be arranged at the bottom of the pit before filling up the soil. This will help in conserving the soil moisture.

Time of planting

In well drained soils where water stagnation is not a problem, seedlings can be transplanted with the beginning of rainy season. If irrigation facilities are available, it is advisable to take up planting at least a month before the rainy season so that the seedlings get well established before the onset of heavy rains.

Spacing

A spacing of 7.5 x 7.5 m is to be followed. This will accommodate 177 palms per ha under the square system of planting. If the triangular system is adopted, an additional 20 to 25 palms can be planted. Wider spacing of 10 m x 10 m provides ample opportunity to accommodate a number of perennial and annual crops in the interspaces.