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BRINGING YOUNG TEA INTO BEARING

(This Circular cancels the Circular No. R1, Serial No. 24/71 issued in July 1971.)

1. Objectives

The objectives of bringing young tea into bearing is to form a low spreading bush with a dense canopy that will result in as many plucking points as possible and also enable convenient harvesting. Accordingly, it aims at modifying the growth of a single-stemmed plant into a multi-stemmed bush with sturdy branches. This is sometimes referred to as bush formation. To achieve this goal, the plants should be subjected to minimum stress.

As a result of the formation of an early ground cover, a successful bringing into bearing operation leads to early plucking, retards weed growth and also facilitates soil conservation. It must, however, be noted that the root growth of young plants can be adversely affected and easily succumb to drought, if they are brought into bearing very early.

2. Methods

There are two methods of bringing young tea into bearing. They are cut-across and bending and pegging. The practice of bending and pegging is discouraged for reasons of frame debilitation arising from sun scorch, canker and wood rot. The more suitable method of bringing young tea into bearing is cut-across, and this is also known as centering.

3. Cut-across (Centering)

- Plants are allowed to be well established in the field and grow as healthy plants with a strong leader and lateral branches, for a period of 9-12 months.
- The main stem is cut at a height of 20-25 cm from ground level, depending on the branching habit of the clone, leaving as many side branches as possible.
- After a lapse of about 4-6 months, a second cut is given at a height of 35-40 cm across all branches.
- Once the plant is adequately regenerated, shoots are tipped at a height of 45-50 cm and the mini bush is brought into light plucking.

A sharp knife or a secateur can be used for these operations. While centering is done, peripheral branches or horizontally growing side shoots should not be removed so that an early ground cover is established. Dry periods should be avoided for centering to minimize environmental stress on bud break and subsequent growth of shoots.

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