



Home > Newspaper Catalogue > The Straits Times > 1929 > April > 8 > Page 16 > TEA CULTIVATION IN MALAYA.



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TEA CULTIVATION IN MALAYA.

VIEWS OF PLANTERS.

Experimental Work to Be Extended.

AN ENCOURAGING OUTLOOK.

The current issue of the Malayan Agricultural Journal published at Kuala Lumpur has a memorandum by Mr. B. Bunting on tea experiments conducted by the Department of Agriculture, F.M.S., and S.S. It was prepared for a special meeting of the Advisory Committee which was held at the Offices of the Department of Agriculture on Nov. 28, 1928, to consider the possibilities of tea cultivation in Malaya and whether it was necessary for the Department to carry out any further experiments with tea other than those now being undertaken.

Several experienced tea planters, in addition to members of the Advisory Committee, were invited to attend this meeting and give the committee the benefit of their advice as to the possibility of growing tea both on the plains and the highlands in this country.

While the majority of the committee was in favour of the general development of tea planting in the highlands it was decided that the potentialities of the lowlands should be thoroughly investigated and that the experimental work already in progress at the Experimental Plantation, Serdang, be extended where possible.

The memorandum gives an account of experiments at Gunong Angsi commencing at the end of 1914 and also those at Serdang started five years ago. Last August the tea plants at Serdang were again heavily pruned and two months later a regular seven-day round of plucking was commenced and the yields of fresh leaf have been recorded since this date.

Manufacture.

The method of manufacture at present employed is somewhat primitive. A portable withering vat has been constructed and is now in use, but the results so far obtained are not altogether satisfactory.

Recommended Articles

The Straits Times / Article , Illustration

A TRIUMPH AT CAMERON HIGHLANDS.

26 June 1936 - IT was a little over three years ago that I wrote in these columns an account of a visit to the Boh Estate, the property of Boh Plantations Ltd., which I described as a highland, agricultural enterprise unique of its kind in Malaya. In this...

The Straits Times / Article

"A WIDER SCOPE FOR AGRICULTURE."

15 August 1931 - Acting Director Talks To L.S.P. Members. POSSIBLE CROPS. MORE ABOUT COFFEE, TEA AND TOBACCO. The annual conference (if the Incorporated Society of Planters opened at Fort Didum this morning, when Mr. P. W. South, the acting Director of Agriculture, gave the following address on A...

The Straits Times / Article , Illustration

MODEL TEA FACTORY IN MOUNTAINS.

3 July 1936 - High Yields On Boh Estate— "Very Useful Type Leaf" How Tea Is Processed.—Ceylon Comparison. By Our Planting Correspondent. LAST week our Planting Correspondent dealt with the remarkable results achieved at plantations in the Cameron Highlands. In this issue he describes a visit to...

The Straits Times / Article

M.A.J. ON BLACK AND GREEN TEA.

22 April 1933 - Market Among Chinese In Malaya. The article by J. N. Milsuni, Acting Agriculturalist and T. D. Marsh, Assistant Agriculturalist, which is included in the April number of the Malayan Agricultural Journal under the title of "Lowland Tea in Malaya" records the result...

The Straits Times / Article , Illustration

NEMESIS OF MISTAKEN SOIL POLICY ON MALAYAN PLANTATIONS.

2 October 1936 - Retiring R.R.I. Director On The Present Position. "FORESTRY" COVERS BETTER UNDERSTOOD. "I SHOULD like to emphasise the fact that we are now only beginning to realise the



There are no facilities at present for artificial withering, consequently it is almost impossible to obtain good tea during the wet season since practically no drying of the leaf takes place. The air being saturated with moisture the leaf structures, instead of withering naturally, begin to decompose.

The rolling is being carried out by hand, which is not very satisfactory. A small hand-power roller has, however, been ordered from Colombo, while a small-drying kiln is now under construction, so

that considerable improvement in the manufacture may shortly be expected.

Experiments are being conducted with the planting of cover plants so that observations can be made on the growth of the tea under cover plants compared with growth on clean-weeded areas. The cover plants under trial at present include *Cenrosema pubescens*, *Dolichos Hosei* and *Indigofera endecaphylla*.

Diseases and Pests.—Although isolated cases of a root disease, causing a rot, have occurred from time to time no serious diseases or pests have so far been recorded on these experimental plots.

Vegetative Propagation.—Experiments are now being conducted at Serdang with the object of multiplying stocks of tea by means of vegetative reproduction and the following methods are being adopted for this purpose:—The striking of cuttings from prunings and "Gootee" layering of the outside lower branches of the tea bushes.

The experiments have already been attended with a certain amount of success and may prove of considerable value in connection with the propagation of high yielding types.

Experiments at Cameron's Highlands.

In January, 1925, a small consignment of seed of three varieties of tea was received from Assam for planting at the Experimental Plantation, Serdang, and 200 seeds of each variety were taken up to Cameron's Highlands by Mr. J. N. Mills, Assistant Agriculturist, when on a visit of inspection towards the end of that month. These seeds were sown in prepared nursery beds on low-lying land at the Experimental Plantation, Tanah Rata. Germination was good and in January, 1926, 437 seedlings raised from this stock of seed were planted out on a small plot of land. The elevation of these plots is approximately 4,650 feet above sea level and the distance of planting is 4 ft. x 4 ft., which gives 2,722 plants per acre.

The following measurements were taken of the four largest plants in January, 1927, which was exactly one year after planting out in the field:—

Bush No. 1	4 ft. 10 ins. high	2 ft. 6 ins. spread
" 2	4 ft. 10 ins. "	3 ft. 0 ins. "
" 3	4 ft. 4 ins. "	2 ft. 3 ins. "
" 4	3 ft. 11 ins. "	2 ft. 8 ins. "

The pruning of the above plots prior to plucking was undertaken in April, 1927, and actual plucking operations commenced on July 24, 1927. The bushes were cropped regularly from this date at intervals of 9 to 10 days. During the twelve months ending July 23, 1928, the total weight of dry tea harvested amounted to 78 lb. 6 oz. Taking the area of these plots as 1/6 of an acre this is equivalent to a yield of 470 lb. of made tea per acre during the first year of cropping.

Although it is somewhat dangerous to place much reliance on the figures quoted they are sufficiently high to allow of a big margin of error in estimating the probable yields which may reasonably be expected on the highlands.

In January, 1927, a consignment of a ¼ maund of seed of the Muttapong Manipuri variety was received from Assam, through Messrs. E. S. Stewart and Co., Calcutta, and contained 4,756 seeds, which were planted in baskets on Jan. 15. This

deterioration which has been in progress for some 30 years due to unsuitable Agricultural practice...

The Straits Times / Article

BUDED ESTATES IN THREE YEARS?

29 September 1933 - New Forcing Method Outlined. Bedded rubber trees, which normally require an average period of six to seven years to yield, can now be grown within two years. Instead of growing stumps, the potentialities of which are uncertain and problematical, rubber trees of the future...

The Straits Times / Article

Rubber in the F.M.S.

5 September 1914 - REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE. A Comprehensive Survey. Mr. Lewton Brain, Director of Agriculture, F.M.S., in reporting on the activities of his department during 1913, devotes a great deal of space to the rubber industry in the States. The urtater part of his remarks are...

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is a dark leaf Manipuri variety. The seeds were planted up in baskets and germination commenced on Feb. 20.

At the end of June, 1927, only 1,115 seedlings had been established in baskets, which was a very poor rate of germination. Owing to the bamboo baskets showing signs of falling away from the plants, with a consequent drying out of the soil, these seedlings were planted out in July, 1927, on terraced land with satisfactory results.

In March, 1927, another consignment of seed was received from Assam, through Messrs. E. S. Stewart and Co., Calcutta, and comprised the following varieties:—

- (1) Charali Manipuri.—A pure Manipuri plant having a dark leaf.
- (2) Charali Assam.—A pure Assam variety having broad leaves of medium colour.
- (3) Amulguri.—Pure indigenous dark leaf Assam plant.
- (4) Dutea Manipuri.—A pure Manipuri variety.

The above seeds were sown direct in nursery beds in March, 1927, and the following results of germination were obtained:—

Jat.	Quantity of seed received.	No. of seedlings established.
Charali Manipuri	¼ maund	2,620
Charali Assam	"	2,608
Amulguri	"	2,780
Dutea Manipuri	"	1,957

All these seedlings were planted out during the interval between the middle of November and end of December, 1927. The first pruning operation took place on these plots during August, 1928.

Particulars of additional tea seed received at the end of 1927 and beginning of 1928, which comprises the present stock of 60,000 seedlings in the nurseries are then given.

The plants have not yet suffered from any serious diseases or pests, but one or two cases of root disease have been observed, specimens of which have been submitted to the Mycologist for investigation.

A sample of hand made tea produced from 4 year-old plants growing at the Experimental Plantation, Serdang, was recently submitted to Messrs. Whittall and Co., Colombo, who made the following report and valuation on the sample in question:—

Liquor.—Has good colour, but tastes somewhat burnt.

Leaf.—Even leaf, fairly well twisted has a good show of tip.

Special Comment.—This sample represents good merchantable tea and is probably worth about 1s. 6d. to 1s. 7d. if sold in London. The quality of the tea is similar to an Indian tea from the Cachar district.

A sample of 8 lb. of hand-made tea produced from three-year-old plants grown at the Experimental Plantation, Cameron's Highlands, was forwarded to the Agent, Malay States Information Agency, London, on Dec. 18, 1928, with a request that he would submit samples to one or two London Tea Brokers with a view to obtaining a valuation and report on the quality, as compared with similar tea produced on the higher ranges in India and Ceylon.

Tea Growing in Sungei Besi.

Mr. J. N. Milsum contributes to the Bulletin a brief description of the cultivation of tea and preparation of the product for consumption, by Chinese settlers. In the Sungei Besi District of Selangor, small

areas of tea are frequently seen. In the Sungei Balak Chinese Settlement, which is an area of 360 acres adjoining the Sungei Besi—Cheras Road, a considerable amount of land is under cultivation with tea, approximating 140 acres. Some tea

is also cultivated at the Bukit Serdang Chinese Settlement at Sungei Ramal in the Kajang district.

The settlement is situated on sharply undulating land with some steep hills. No silt-pitting or drains have been constructed with the result that considerable erosion of surface soil has taken place. On some of the steepest slopes the tea bushes are planted on narrow terraces. The soil may be described as a clay loam and is similar in appearance to the usual "Bukit" land obtaining in Selangor.

Inquiries as to the origin of seed from which the tea bushes were raised elicited the reply that the original seed was brought over from China and planted in various districts in the locality, from whence the seed had been obtained. It was stated that seeds were sometimes collected for sale and realized about 18 cents per catty (13½ cents per lb.). A fair sample of such seeds was stated to give 50 per cent. germination under favourable conditions.

Appearance of Bushes.

The appearance of the bushes varies considerably, due to a certain extent to soil erosion. Further, plucking is coarse and irregular resulting in poor flushes. There was evidence, however, that many mixed "jats" comprised the bushes under cultivation. The mature leaf of the majority of bushes is small and the tips often of a reddish colour resembling what is known in Ceylon as "China jat." The leaf of others is considerably larger and in certain cases measure 5.5 ins. in length and 2.25 ins. in breadth. These bushes are robust and vigorous growing.

Method of Planting.

The land for planting is usually brought into cultivation from "lalang" and "blukar," there being little or no timber to burn off. The usual planting distance is 3½ ft. by 3½ ft. though frequently quite irregular planting is undertaken. Weeding is done as necessary, but "lalang" is evident and apparently only removed when it becomes heavy.

Pruning during the early stages of the seedling's growth is usually undertaken, but as plucking often commences when the seedlings are eighteen months old, the bushes have small chance of becoming well-formed. When the bushes grow to some size and commence to flower they are cut back to within 2 to 3 feet from the ground. This form of pruning was stated to be undertaken about every two years.

Plucking is said to commence when the bushes have been planted out for one year. This operation is usually done by Chinese women, who receive payment at the rate of 5 cents per catty (about 4 cents per lb.) of green leaf collected. Plucking appears to be done about every ten days.

Yield of Dry Tea.

Very variable crops are obtained, but it appeared that about 30 catties (40 lb.) of made tea per acre per month is an average crop throughout the year. It is considered that about 3½ piculs (446 lbs.) of dried tea per acre per annum is an average yield. The present price received locally for this tea is stated to be 68-75 cents per catty (51-56 cents per lb.) for the first quality leaf and 28-45 cents per catty (28-34 cts. per lb.) for the second quality. The price of this tea is stated to be lower than formerly owing to the present condition of the tin and rubber markets.

The principal buyers of locally produced tea are Chinese tin mine owners, who prepare and supply tea to their coolies working on the mines. It is stated that a demand for this tea exists in Penang and Seremban, where large quantities are forwarded.

Quality of Tea.

The prepared tea is greyish-green in colour and very rough in appearance. The first quality is composed of rolled tips, the first leaf and some stalks. The smell of the leaf is faint and rather smoky. The tea would pass through a half-inch mesh sieve. The infusion is light brownish-green in colour. Taste harsh and bitter. The second grade is mainly composed of portions of large leaf and stalks which would pass through an inch mesh sieve. The infusion is weaker than that from the first grade tea.