BEST FARMER PRACTICES

TEA

Inputi

11 TEA

ECOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS

Tea performs best in acidic soils of volcanic origin which are well drained and aerated. It also requires well distributed rainfall throughout the year.

1. LAND PREPARATION

Land needs to be set ***prior to planting*** through ***clearing of vegetation in*** case there is any there which may involve use of herbicides, tools like pangas which may then be followed by ploughing by help of a tractor or hoes to loosen or break the hard pans and loosen the soils.

2. PLANTING

Tea is mainly vegetatively propagated using single internode cuttings and these are taken immediately above a leaf and a cutting should have an axillary bud. It is the green cutting that roots better.

The cuttings can first be planted in shaded beds and watered thoroughly

- *Rooted cuttings can then be planted directly in the prepared field or in nursery beds. Tea cuttings take around 1 year to be raised and attain a height of about 45cm.*

On steep slopes, ploughing should be done along the contour

Paths through which the tractor can pass well while collecting harvest should be left during planting

Incase the space is not enough, then trench planting is used where trenches of 30cm wide and 45cm deep are dug along the rows. The excavated soil can still be mixed with manure and returned to the soil and then follow it with ***30g of SSP***

If there is enough space in the field, pit planting can be done which involves digging of individual pits of proper size and without much difficulty. The ***dimensions should be*** 45cm wide and 45cm deep.

The excavated soil can be mixed with ***4-5kg of well decomposed manure*** and returned to the pits. This can then be followed by 30g of SSP

It should take place ***at the start of rainy season*** and temporary shade should be provided during planting

A spacing of 105-110cm between the rows and one of 60-75cm between the plants is recommended.

Continued on next page

3. WEED CONTROL

Young tea should be kept from weeds either through intercropping it with cover crops like beans or by use of herbicides

4. SHADE PROVISION

Planting of leguminous trees near tea fields is encouraged to help reduce the excessive heat and light radiation which enables the trees to grow well. The trees can also add organic matter through leaf fall, prevention of soil moisture loss during dry periods, reduction of red spider incidences among others.

5. FERTILIZER APPLICATION

At Least ***80-100kg of Nitrogen is required per hectare*** by tea. The application can be done in ***2 splits*** during the rainy seasons i.e between March and May and between August and December each year.

6. SHAPING OF THE TEA BUSH

This is done to turn the naturally growing shrub into a wide spreading bush that will offer a convenient height for plucking of tea.

It involves forming a flat topped table that consists of tipping of branches and thinning of lateral shoots.

Pruning is also done at this stage to induce vegetative growth

The shaping is aimed at ensuring a continuous supply of young flushes. It is these flushes i.e first 3 leaves

Continued on next page

7. PRODUCTION PRUNING

This happens ***every 3-5 years*** and is aimed at ***rehabilitating over-grown tea bushes*** and this means cutting the entire plant at collar level slightly above the ground and allowing new growth to commence.

Continued from prev page

8. PEGGING

It is the first step in frame formation and it is ***done to stimulate growth*** of several branches on each plant. It is done to ensure that the young stems always point slightly upwards.

This is done by the help of pegs. When the growing points are too horizontal, the lower buds remain dormant and you can't get a spreading frame. Pegging thus produces a wide healthy frame.

9. TIPPING

It is the setting of the tea bush ready for picking. It is done in order to have a straight plucking table.

The table should be leveled. The best tea is from flushes with 2 leaf buds. Tipping is also aimed at removing the tip so that the lower buds sprout and the number of flushes keep on multiplying. This process of tipping is continuous until the desired table is obtained. The tips that are cut off can also be processed into tea for drinking.

10. REHABILITATION

This is done to overgrown tea bushes and it involves cutting away the entire plant.

HARVESTING & POST HARVEST HANDLING

- Harvesting

  This is done by plucking of tender apical shoots growing above the predetermined plucking table.

  Besides giving crop, it encourages regeneration of new shoots, checks vertical growth of bushes and keeps them in the vegetative stage. It can be either through use of a machine or by hand with the use of hand being the best in terms of resulting in good quality leaves harvested.

- Post harvest handling

  Post harvest involves processes like sorting and grading, drying, withering, rolling, fermentation and storage and packing. Majority of the farmers in tea in Uganda supply their produce to factories where the processing is done.

INFO AND CREDITS

REFERENCES

Infonet Biovision, 2019. Tea.
Infonet Biovision.
https://infonet-biovision.org/PlantHealth/Crops/Tea

CREDITS

COVER PHOTO
https://cdn.sanity.io/images/f8x3x8ic/dev/0e6e6ad21f4068653709cd23f82fc22ae6e3c467-1920x900.jpg?w=1600

FOR FURTHER ADVICE AND INFOMATION **DIAL *284*68#**