

# \*A METHOD OF BRINGING TEA PLANTS INTO BEARING WITHOUT CENTERING

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To many planters, particularly in the dry zone, who, like me, have seen large numbers of young tea plants die back after centering, the following experiment undertaken throughout a recently opened clearing of 120 acres, planted  $3\frac{1}{2}$  ft. x 2 ft. on the contour, may be of interest.

Each plant, as it reaches the height of a foot or over and pencil thickness at the base, is bent over parallel to the ground and along the contour and is pinned down with a forked stick (not layered). From the bent-over stem numerous young shoots burst forth in a few weeks time, many of them from the base of the plant. (See plate). Later, as each shoot matures, it is tipped at a suitable height to form a plucking table. In addition, if it is required to increase the spread of the bush still further, the shoot nearest to the base of the plant can be bent over in the opposite direction and pegged down — with the same results as obtained from the original bent-over stem.

This, I maintain, has great advantages. Firstly, it eliminates the need to centre, which is a risky business in dry districts and one responsible for many deaths, and also a consideration of some importance in wet districts where the new shoots from centred plants are very susceptible to damage from blister blight. Each plant is allowed to retain all the leaf it produces. Growth receives no check as it does when centering is undertaken. With more leaf retained in the early stages, root growth is promoted, a plant matures much more quickly, and a good ground cover of tea is achieved sooner.

The clearing mentioned above which was planted only two years ago and was treated in this way is now in light plucking, with many bushes having a two-foot spread at plucking level and already nearly meeting in a continuous hedge along the contour. This tea is being brought into bearing with the advantage of being entirely free from any cuts or wounds. Supplies in old tea have been similarly treated, with good results.

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Photograph showing effect of bending over of young plant.  
Note the large number of new shoots developed.