



Issued in: June 2013

Serial No.02/2013

REJUVENATION PRUNING*(This replaces the Circular No. P 2 Serial No. 13/92)*

The removal of the inhibitory effects of old age and the restoration of the vigour of the young is rejuvenation. Sections of the ageing old tea fields become weakened to a state of being no longer able to withstand the rigours of normal cultivation and the adverse impacts of the environment, including the changes of the weather as well as that of the attack by pests and diseases. Such ill effects lead to:

1. Poor or non- recovery from prune and eventual death of bushes, with resulting vacancies
2. An increase in the existence of economically non-viable "passenger" tea bushes
3. Increased susceptibility to pests and diseases affecting the frame and roots

Objectives

The overall rejuvenation programme aims at arresting the decline outlined above and to restore, at least in part, the vigour of the afflicted sections of the field by rejuvenation pruning as well as by infilling, to help bring back the field to a state of being economically viable. The indiscriminate uprooting of deep-rooted old seedling tea bushes for purposes of large scale replanting, lead to enormous amounts of soil disturbance and losses, especially on sloping terrain. In order to avert such disturbances and losses on such sloping terrain, the fields in these locations could possibly be taken themselves to rejuvenation pruning and consolidation by infilling.

Fields with potential for rejuvenation

Fields that are marginal and non-retrievable to a state of economic viability as well as fields that are earmarked for replanting within the next ten years, should be left out. The selection criteria for the remaining fields are based on the following:

1. There should not be a widespread incidence of root disease such as *Poria* or root pests such as heavy incidence of plant parasitic nematodes or the up- country live-wood tea termites
2. The collar/base of the bushes to be renovated should not be debilitated
3. At least 50% of the stand should be taken themselves to rejuvenation pruning
4. There should be a good depth of soil with the absence of surface gravel or rocks and boulders

Preparation of the selected field

1. The field should be fully rested for a period not less than six months.
2. A minimum of two fertilizer applications should be given during the rest phase bush by bush, providing the equivalent of 60 kg N per ha per application from the recommended mixture.
3. It is preferable to give a quantity of about 6 to 8 metric tons of well decomposed compost (a mixture of well decomposed refuse tea and any other suitable green matter) per hectare.
4. The rejuvenation pruning should be carried out with the onset of the wet weather (Western Sector - S.W. monsoon and Eastern Sector - N.E. monsoon). The pruned litter (brushwood) should be immediately buried in shallow trenches (20 to 30 cm depth), cut in alternate contour rows.
5. The cut surfaces and shaved off wounds on the stumps should be painted over with a recommended wound-dressing. Please refer Advisory Circular Nos. PU2 and PU4 and on chemical control of diseases and chemical control of insect, mite and nematode pests respectively.
6. Dolomitic limestone is recommended to be applied at the rate of about 1 to 2.5 metric tons/ha (depending on soil acidity) prior to pruning (please refer Advisory Circular No. SP 3 on Fertilizer recommendations for mature tea)
7. In areas prone to Blister Blight leaf disease, special care should be taken to prevent the outbreaks on the recovering shoots, by strictly adhering to the recommendations given in Advisory Circulars No. DM 1 and PU 2 on protection of tea from blister blight and Chemical control of diseases respectively.

8. During recovery of the pruned field, a concerted infilling programme needs to be carried out with specifically grown 18-month-old nursery plants of the appropriate cultivars raised in jumbo polythene sleeves.
9. Infilling should commence soon after pruning, within the monsoon that immediately follows the prune. Infilling of casualties may continue during the following monsoon as well. The plants for infilling should be raised well on time by proper programming. The infilling programme of the rejuvenated field should aim at a target bush population of at least 8000 bushes per ha.
10. Tipping should be done at a height of about 60 cm (24 inches) from ground level with the main objective of developing thick and healthy pruning frames.

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