

The most prevalent insect pests are white flies and aphids and these are sometimes accompanied by moulds on leaves. If severe, they can be controlled by insecticidal sprays. Leaf moulds and leaf spots can be controlled by copper based fungicides. Only apply insecticides or fungicides when the damage to the dasheen leaves is over 10-15%.

HARVESTING

Up-land dasheen varieties will mature in 7-8 months. Upon maturity, the rate of wilting leaves is quicker and the large corms tend to move upwards and can sometimes push its top above the ground. Sample a few plants to make sure the harvest is ready. Forks are used to dip out the corms but extreme care must be taken to avoid damage to corms but extreme care must be taken to avoid damage to corms at this stage. Cut, bruised and battered corms rot faster during the 1-3 weeks trips for export. Sound corms will keep up to 4 weeks if a fungicide dip is done immediately after harvest. Use rigid containers like wooden or plastic crates and basket to move dasheen corms.

FOR FUNGICIDAL DIP

1. Wash dasheen corms in clean running water to remove all soil, roots and dead tissues, rubbing with a rough rag or medium hard scrubbing brush will help.
2. Discard rotted corms, abnormally shaped corms less than 2 lbs in weight.
3. Cut off tail end of corms to leave about 1/4 to 1/2 inch on the corm. Cut the top to leave 1 inch-long "STALK" attached to the dasheen corm.
4. Dip corms for 2-3 seconds in a solution of 6 gals water + 1/2 of Ridomil mbc 60 WP. Mix well with a wooden stick. **Cont...**

Use dip until the level drops too low or the mixture becomes discolored, whichever ever come first.

5. After dipping, place corms in 30-40 lbs containers for shipment. If cartons boxes or crates are used they can be lined with plastic to retain moisture released from the corms without any effects.
6. Packing in coconut fibre dust (coir) can also be used to keep dasheen corms moist fresh.

CAN BE CONSIDERED

An acre of dasheen (10,000 plants) cultivated carefully will cost up to EC \$3,000.00. Assuming wholesale prices around EC \$0.35 per pound, and average yields of graded marketable corms around 20,000 lbs per acre, a profit of around EC\$ 3,000., per acre can be expected.



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DASHEEN



A PRODUCTION GUIDE

INTRODUCTION:

The islands of the Eastern Caribbean are well suited for growing dasheen (*Colocasia esculenta* var. *esculenta* (L. Schott) particularly where there is more than 70 inches (175 cm) rainfall a year well distributed.

A GUIDE TO PRODUCING DASHEEN FOR EXPORT:

Farmers should ensure the following before planting:

1. Availability of markets.
2. Regularity of supply to satisfy exporters.
3. Planting at the right time to meet the demand.
4. Availability of a good quality planting material in sufficient quantities.
5. Sufficient fertilizers, weedicides, slug bait, fungicides etc.

VARIETAL SELECTION

The export market requires round, oblong or cylindrical corms about 2-5 lbs in weight. The variety which produces a good yield and the right kind of corms is the one called "Upland Dasheen." The main traits of this variety are:

-The corms are of regular round, oblong or cylindrical shape without forks."

-Corm pulp is white and turns bluish upon cooking.

PLANTING MATERIAL SELECTION AND TREATMENT

The suckers should be harvested from only the most vigorous and healthy plant, cleaned of all roots and mildly disinfected in a mixture of 1 gal + 6 tablespoons or 90 ml bleach.

PLANTING SYSTEM

About 7-10,000 plants per acre of pure stand dasheen will give a quick ground cover and the best yields. Space planting holes 2 ft apart in rows. Good quality dasheen can also be obtained when intercropped with string beans, first planting of banana or bananas and other vegetables using a wider spacing.

Avoid continuous cropping of the same field with dasheen so as to prevent a build up of pests and diseases.

Fork land to a depth of 10-20 inches, which allows a dasheen to be planted to a favorable depth of 4-7 inches. No ridging is necessary since dasheen thrives under moist conditions.

STRIATION

Striation or corky fibrous strings which is the hardening of the xylem vessels, appear in the dasheen corms when there is not enough water supplied to the developing corms. To reduce striations, plant in the wet areas. Avoid planting the crop in dry areas or around coastal areas if irrigation is not provided. Also, plant dasheen in holes rather than on ridges. Holes retain soil moisture.

FERTILIZER APPLICATION

In some soils, it may be desirable to spread dolomitic limestone at a rate of 1 ton per acre, once in every year. After the limestone application, leave the land to weather for a few weeks.

Compound (NPK) fertilizer used on bananas gives good dasheen yields. The suggested rate of applications is 1 oz per plant at 1-2 weeks after planting and again at 2-3 months.

The fertilizer is best applied in a band running along the row on the up-hill side about 5-12 inches away from the base of the plants. Work the fertilizer into the soil with the hoe. Fertilizer left on the surface will be washed away by heavy rains.

WEED CONTROL

Use pre-emergence herbicide Gesapax, followed by post-planting applications of Fusilade or Gramoxone. Fusilade is useful where the weeds are predominantly true grasses but Gramoxone will kill both grass and broad leaf weeds. Fusilade sprayed over the top of the crop kill grasses in 2-3 weeks and the dasheen is not affected, but the broad leaf weeds then have to be hand weeded.

Gramoxone will kill all weeds and the crop also and therefore it must be applied with a spray shield to prevent drift onto the dasheen leaves.

PEST AND DISEASE

A crop rotation programme helps to keep down pests and diseases. Sporadic attacks of slugs and snails should be dealt with immediately with the use of slug baits.

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