PEANUT FARMING IN THE EAST COAST

Posted on



Acres of land are planted with peanuts on the Eastern Coast. The crunchy peanuts provide a favorite snack for all Sri Lankans. Time-tested methods are used to nurture the plants so that a bountiful harvest is produced. Laid out to dry in the sun, the peanuts create a mesmerizing sight.

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Photography and information provided by Sivabalan Sadasivam.

Peanut is a type of legume that is grown abundantly on the East Coast. Some farmers grow peanuts for an additional income in their gardens while also engaging in vegetable and paddy cultivations. Others grow peanuts on more exten- sive land as a business endeavor. The main factor that determines the growth of peanuts is water. Therefore, many farmers grow peanuts from November to January, when there is intermittent rain, which is ideal for the peanut plants to grow. If a farmer has his land closer to a water source such as a well or a lake, he can grow peanuts at least thrice a year. A duration of three months is required, from planting the seeds to the harvesting of peanuts.

Firstly, the land is cleared and pre- pared into rows. Peanuts require an excellent fertile muddy soil for their growth. Thus, if the land has sandy soil or is close to the beach, cow dug is added as fertilizer. However, if the soil is fertile with good minerals, then only water is required for peanuts. Pits of a depth of 1/2ft are dug, and the seeds are planted in the soil.

During the early days after planting the seeds, it is essential to take care of the peanut farm as peacocks and crows would nibble on the seeds from around 6.30 to 10.30 in the morning. At night, wild boar would come to the land and dig out the seeds. Therefore, during this stage, the peanut farmers are extra vigilant during day and night. The seeds will begin to sprout, and the leaves emerge from the soil. When the yellow blossoms start to bloom, after two months of planting the seeds, it is time to arrange the soil into mounds around the peanut plants. Once the plants are fully grown by 85-95 days, they are ready to be taken out of the soil.

The peanut plants are removed and, if the seeds are of a good variety, then each plant would have about 23-35 peanut pods. The women folk would cut the leaves and take the roots with the pods and sit together to pluck the peanuts while chatting to each other in the evenings. The peanut pods, once removed, are either

dried in the sun or used raw. The dried peanut kernels are crunchy, while the raw kernels have a creamy taste.

Two types of peanut varieties are grown; one is where the kernels are red in color, and in the other variety, the kernels are white. The shell of both types remains a light brown. The peanuts are spread on mats and laid out in the sun to dry. This is a sight that could be seen in many homes on the East Coast.

Once the peanut pods are dry, you would feel the kernels move within by shaking them, which means that the peanuts have been dried for the right amount of time. Some also dry the peanuts by roasting them over a fire, but the majority of the farmers dry the peanuts in the sun. The dried peanut kernels are ready to be consumed as a snack and they can also be used to make peanut butter.

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Interestingly on the East Coast, boiled peanuts are a favorite snack. The raw peanuts are boiled in saltwater, and families would enjoy this snack at any time of the day. Children would nibble on the boiled

peanuts while their mothers prepare lunch, which is also consumed during teatime. While peanuts are grown in Pottuvil and in surrounding areas, the best peanuts are grown in Komari, Kandiyadi, and Thambiluvil, where the conditions are ideal for growth.

During a trip to Arugambay or when driving along the East Coast roads, make sure to look out for peanut cultivations and enjoy the crunchy goodness of peanuts

either dried, roasted, boiled, or raw.











