

TOPIC: DEFINITION AND IMPORTANCE OF NURSERY.

What is a nursery?

A nursery is a place where young plants are raised under intensive management for later transplanting into the field. Many horticultural crops can be grown insitu but, experience has shown that raising seedlings in the nursery has a number of advantages. These may include –

- 1) Economy of propagules
- 2) Intensive care for the seedlings – protection against animals, diseases, insects and rodents, regular maintenance practices, watering / irrigation and manuring in the nursery.
- 3) Raising seedlings in the nursery affords selection of vigorous and disease-free seedlings for transplanting into the field.
- 4) Ease of genetic activities.
- 5) The nursery allows for a better medium of growth for the plants than when directly seeded on the field.
- 6) Nursery affords ease of carrying out propagation techniques like, budding, grafting and even marcutting / air-layering.

However, the disadvantages of raising seedlings in the nursery before transplanting into the field include –

- 1) Increased cost of production of a particular crop.
- 2) Specialized labour requirements in the nursery, especially skilled budders and grafters.
- 3) Skilled personnel required for transplanting operations.

Types of nurseries.

Types of nurseries depend on the size, scope and investments put in place. Therefore, there are 3 types of nursery under 2 groups –

- 1) Temporary / shifting nurseries –

a) Peasant nursery: These include spots / places where peasant farmers raise tree crop seedlings like cocoa, kola, coconut, citrus, coffee, mango or vegetables. They are normally located within the compound or along river banks, streams, swamps or family bathroom sheds or any other place with regular source of water. The site is normally under brushed leaving the trees standing for shade provision. The soil is loosened with hoes, seeds sown and covered with palm fronds. Little care is given to the nursery materials. Such a nursery can be shifted at any time.

b) Intermediate nursery: An improved type of peasant nursery. They are established very close to field in order to avoid the cost and attendant problems on long distant transportation of seedlings. Here, there are no permanent installations and it can be used for one or more seasons. It can also serve as a resting station for transported seedlings.

2) Permanent / Standard / Central nurseries: Permanent nurseries are larger and more intensively managed. Although, proximity to field is important, but centralization with respect to the total area the nursery is expected to serve, nearness to source of labour and supervision minimize transportation cost in the long run and thus bring greater economic benefits.