

► AGRICULTURE

Putting students in the field



STUDENTS on tour of the Redland Farm. (GP)

EVERY YEAR, the Department of Biological & Chemical Sciences of the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill hosts a Horticultural Summer School and I have the pleasure of conducting one of the field tours.

This year the course took on a "new look" as Cave Hill collaborated with McGill University to host the first Barbados Interdisciplinary Tropical Studies (BITS) Programme, a 14-week-long session jointly coordinated by McGill University, the UWI Cave Hill Campus, and the National Conservation Commission. It was made possible by an MOU signed between all three institutions.

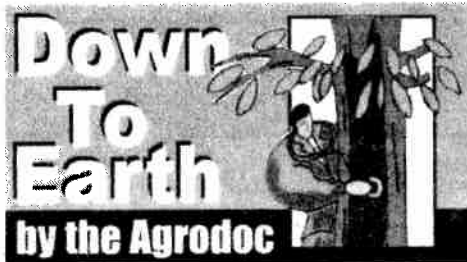
The participants comprised 13 international students from McGill University, two from Barbados and one from St Lucia. The Canadian students are from diverse areas (engineering, dietetics, agriculture, international development, social sciences, psychology and arts). The course involves weeks of intensive study, as well as laboratory and field work and students will be assessed via a written examination, field research, laboratory, demonstration and field visit reports, a case-study essay and a presentation.

Students are being trained in plant propagation, seed technology, vegetative propagation techniques, the plant's growth environment, vegetable and fruit crops in the Barbados environment, quality and post-harvest physiology, select ornamental, coastal and nursery plants of Barbados, turf establishment and management; tree establishment and management; plant protection (weeds, pests, diseases) and horticultural research techniques.

The training also includes practical sessions where experiments are being conducted on propagation from seed as well as vegetative materials, comparisons of mulching methods and the effect of plant density on vegetable performance.

In addition, students are expected to prepare case studies on a number of crops, including coconut, eddoe, pawpaw, loquat, sweet potato, asparagus, pineapple, christophene, jackfruit and cassava.

The field tours were wide ranging, including plant quarantine at the Port, flower production at Hunte's and



Andromeda Gardens, the tissue culture laboratory at the Home Station, the plant propagation unit at Haggatts, St Andrew, C.O. Williams

Flowers in St Thomas, Durants Golf Course, Nature's Produce hydroponic farm in St Peter, the National Conservation

Commission at Codrington, Super Centre Supermarket at Warrens and Redland Farm in St John.

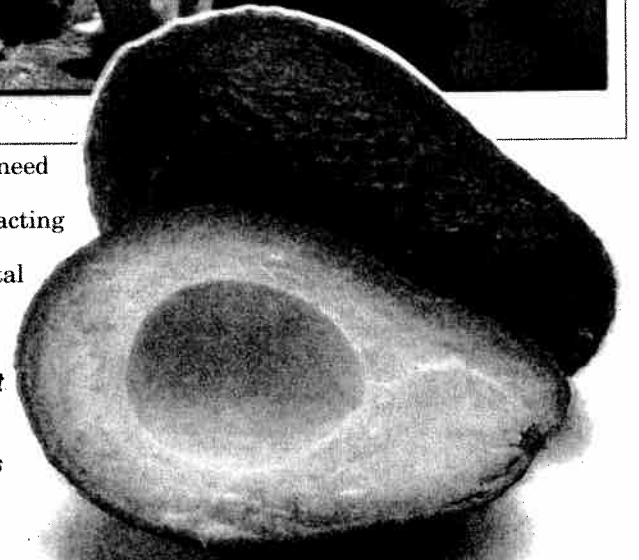
At Redland, I drew the students' attention to the Bunchy Top problem on pawpaws and pointed out the measures which were being taken to avoid the disease and to harvest an economical yield of fruit. These measures included repelling insects using chemicals such as bioneem, intercropping with marigolds, the application of Symbex to the soil in an attempt to improve the level of soil mycorrhizae and the maintenance of an adequate level of boron in the soil.

Other crops seen at Redland were cucumber, zucchini squash, tomato, yams, bean and pigeon pea as well as variety of fruit crop such as coconut, mango and avocado. The collection of run-off rainwater in the wet season for use in irrigation during the dry season was also demonstrated.

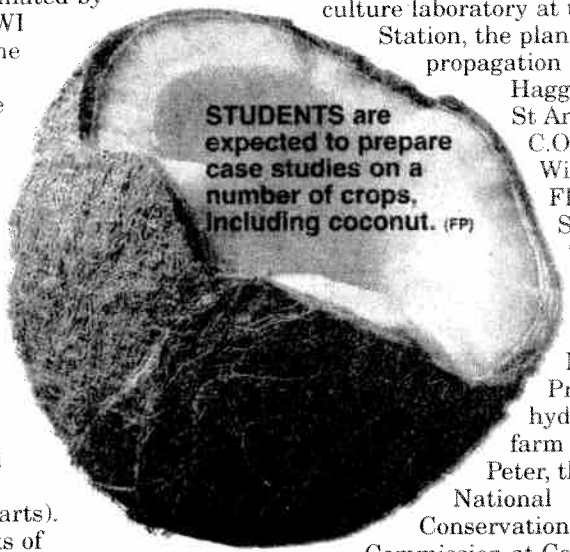
The Tropical Horticulture course is taught by Dr Rajindra Maurya, lecturer at UWI, with contributions by Dr D. Donnelly, Professor S. Carrington, Francis Lopez and others, and is well supported by Jeff Chandler of the Biological and Chemical Sciences Department at UWI. It's aim is to contribute to the formation of professionals with planning, managing, decision-making, and communication

skills and addresses a global need for experienced international professionals capable of interacting with various levels of Government, non-governmental organisations and the private sector.

● *The Agro-doc has almost 40 years' experience in agriculture in Barbados, operating at different levels of the sector. Send any questions or comments to: The Agro-doc, C/o Nation Publishing Co. Ltd, Fontabelle, St Michael.*



THE AVOCADO TREE at Redland caught the students attention. (FP)



STUDENTS are expected to prepare case studies on a number of crops, including coconut. (FP)

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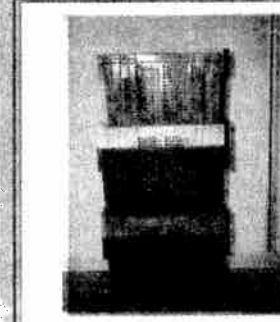
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