

A Study of the Planting of Zoysia Tenuifolia for Unirrigated Orchard Cover

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Abstract

A series of trials combining biological and mechanical approaches showed that a specially managed ground cover of the slow growing grass *Zoysia tenuifolia* has a potential for enabling substantial savings of labour for weeding while giving excellent erosion protection in tropical orchards on lands where the use of machines or herbicides would be unsafe or impractical. Spot planting of the *Zoysia* using ZT cells (plants grown in small containers) or plugs of mature sod was recommended.

The *Zoysia* planting method was tested at a site in Jamaica having 1900mm average annual rainfall, but no irrigation. The planting method was found to be nearly 100% reliable. Early growth of the *Zoysia* was only slightly influenced by the time of planting in the cases of sod plugs and two- and three-month old ZT cells, but four-month cells were unaffected. The exact nature of the seasonal influences was not clear.

Three months appeared to be the desirable minimum age for the planting out of ZT cells prepared as in this study. In situations similar to those of the study, such ZT cells or suitable sod plugs may be planted out at any time convenient to a farmer.