



June 2010, No 175

Pruning Pitaya plants

The pitaya plant grows fast and if no pruning is done, a very dense mass of stems will rapidly develop and this will prevent light penetration. This will interfere with easy access to the flowers for pollination and harvesting. A dense mass of stems will also favour pests and diseases.

Two types of pruning are carried out in a pitaya plantation:

The **1st type** is carried out during the first year of growth, when the lateral stems start emerging from the main stem. As they are formed, these lateral stems should be removed until the main stem reaches the topmost wire on the trellis system. Then, the main stem should be allowed to branch and tied along the wire.

The **2nd type** is done on well-established plants to maintain the shape and size of the canopy to obtain maximum production of quality fruits



Plant with lateral stems



Plant with stems touching the ground



Plant with stems growing upwards

Use a lopper or pruning shears (sécateurs) to prune as follows:

<p>Step 1: Keep the main stem free from laterals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove all laterals from the main stem below the lower-most wire along the trellis system.
<p>Step 2: Cut back those that grow upwards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cut all branches that grow upwards from the top of the canopy
<p>Step 3: Remove unwanted growth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selectively remove unwanted, old, damaged and diseased branches from the underneath of the canopy Remove all branches that grow away from the trellis system and interfere with the passage between the pitaya rows Remove all branches that touch the soil to prevent pests such as ants and snails to move up the plant
<p>Step 4: Set canopy size</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depending on varieties, keep about 50-75 main branches forming the canopy and 2-3 sub branches per main branch

Note: Pruning must be carried out just after the last harvest, in May/June, before the application of fertilizers. Care must be taken to dispose of all the cuttings as they will soon start growing and quickly become a weed. They are also a breeding place for pests and diseases. Healthy cuttings may be kept to be used as planting materials.

Your attention is drawn that guideline and/or advice is restricted for the purpose for which it is recommended only. MSIRI board shall not be responsible for any act that may arise out outside the purview of these guidelines.

