

By NGURE K. N.

THE purple passion fruit, a native plant of southern Brazil is one of its kind in the world. It has a wide variety of uses including juice extraction for making cold juices. Extracted juice can be bottled to make syrup. Other uses are making sauce, gelatin, desserts, candy, ice cream and cake icing.

The seeds have been used for the extraction of a rare and delicate oil. The shells, which are the by-products are used as livestock feed. The passion fruit juice is very popular because of its strong, unique and appealing flavour. The juice has a cheering effect not found in any other fruit juices. It is a stimulating drink without the ill effect of alcohol or that of a drug.

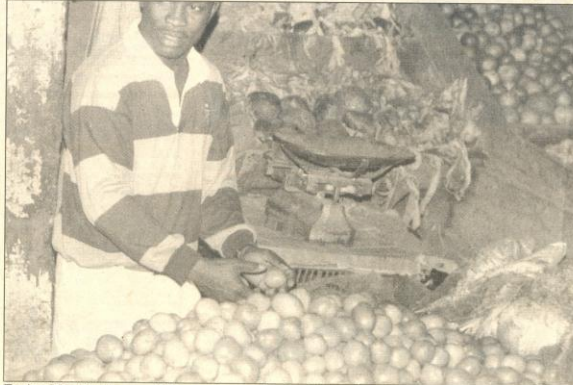
Climate and soils

Passion fruit will grow anywhere in Kenya where there is a minimum rainfall of 900mm per annum. To some extent, passion fruit is drought resistant. It will grow in a wide range of soils provided there is a high organic matter content. The soils should be well-drained with pH of about 6.2.

Making a fruit yard propagation

An important factor in making

Steps for a healthy crop of passion



Fruits: Most fruits, especially passion, need a lot of attention a fruit yard is obtaining healthy seedlings. Propagation using seeds is most convenient as it allows for large number of seedlings to be formed. To make your own fruit

yard requires healthy seeds as the first step. The seeds are obtained from well-filled, fully ripe fruits that are free from disease and pest. The mother plant should be healthy and of high bearing capacity. Cut the fruit in half using disinfected hands and knife. Scoop out the pulp and dry seeds in shade. Then rub by hand to remove

the dried pulp. You now have healthy seeds that should be planted within three months otherwise they'll lose their viability. Sow the seeds in a nursery bed that is one metre wide. Bury them 6mm deep with interrow spacing of 25cm. Apply irrigation water after planting and a layer of mulch. Erect a shade roof before germination which occurs 2-3 weeks after sowing. When the seedlings are 5cm high, do thinning to leave 5cm between them. Top dress at 75 gm per m² of CAN fertiliser. After three months the seedlings are about 15 cm tall and are ready for transplanting. Transplanting should coincide with the beginning of the rains.

Transplanting

Dig planting holes at least one month before transplanting. They should be 60cm deep with an interplant spacing of 2m and 3m interrow spacing. For each hole topsoil is mixed with about 10kg of decomposed organic manure and 120gm of DSP fertiliser. The mixture is filled back in the hole and the seedlings transplanted at the same depth.

The passion fruit will need support to climb on using its tendrils. Support increases yield and reduces incidence of disease attack. Erect posts that are 3m long and 15cm in diameter soon after transplanting. Dig them 2ft deep and space them 6m apart in the row. A single strand of wire is stretched tightly over the top of the posts. Select two healthy shoots at the base of the seedlings and train them along sisal strands by twinning them until they reach the wire at the top. Prune all the other shoots. At the wire, train the two shoots in opposite direction.

Diseases

Look out for the woodiness disease. If your crop has suffered suppressed growth and fruits are malformed with hardened pericarp, then they've been attacked by the woodiness disease causing virus. The pericarp gets thickened thus reducing the pulp cavity.

Control is by proper selection of healthy seeds and destruction of diseased vines through burning. Hands and pruning knives should be disinfected too when handling

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