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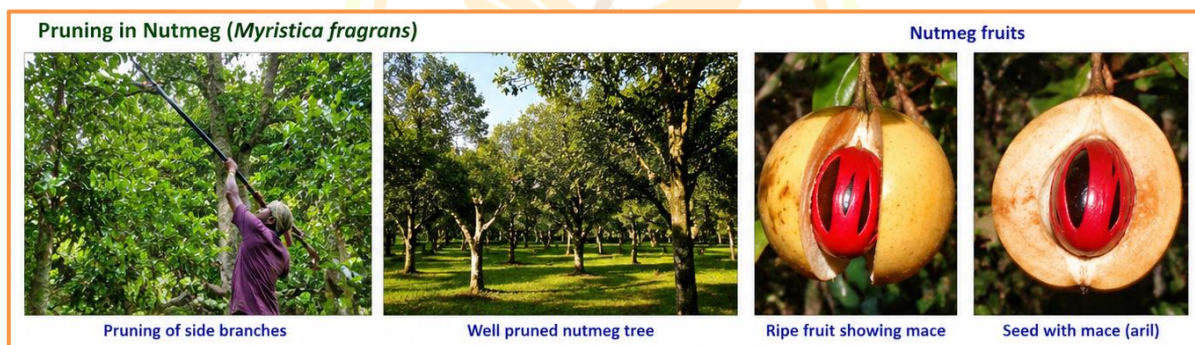
Pruning in Nutmeg: An Effective Practice for Better Yield and Easy Harvesting

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Nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans* Houtt.) is one of the most valuable spice crops cultivated in tropical regions for its aromatic products, nutmeg and mace. The crop is widely used in food processing, confectionery, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and traditional medicine because of its pleasant aroma and medicinal properties. In India, nutmeg cultivation is gaining importance due to increasing domestic demand and export potential. Nutmeg is an evergreen tree that grows vigorously under tropical conditions. As the trees age, they develop dense and overcrowded canopies with excessive vegetative growth. Such unmanaged growth reduces sunlight penetration and air circulation within the canopy, resulting in poor flowering, irregular fruit set, higher pest and disease incidence, and difficulty in harvesting. In many old plantations, harvesting becomes laborious because trees attain excessive height. Proper canopy management through pruning is an important cultural practice to maintain tree vigour, improve productivity, and facilitate easy harvesting. Pruning helps regulate the growth of branches, removes unwanted shoots, and maintains a balanced canopy structure for better light interception and efficient utilization of nutrients.



Importance of Pruning in Nutmeg

Pruning plays a vital role in improving the overall performance of nutmeg trees. Removal of overcrowded, weak, diseased, and unproductive branches helps maintain healthy canopy architecture and promotes the development of productive shoots.

The major benefits of pruning in nutmeg include:

- Improved penetration of sunlight into the canopy
- Better air circulation around branches
- Reduction in pest and disease incidence
- Enhanced flowering and fruit set
- Improved fruit size and quality
- Easy harvesting and crop management
- Rejuvenation of old and unproductive trees

Proper pruning also helps synchronize flowering and fruiting, thereby reducing repeated harvesting operations and improving labour efficiency.

Effect of Pruning on Growth and Yield

Scientific studies have shown that proper canopy management significantly improves nutmeg productivity. Moderate pruning encourages healthy vegetative growth and stimulates the emergence of productive branches. Improved light distribution within the canopy enhances photosynthetic activity, which ultimately increases flowering and fruit development.

Pruned trees generally produce:

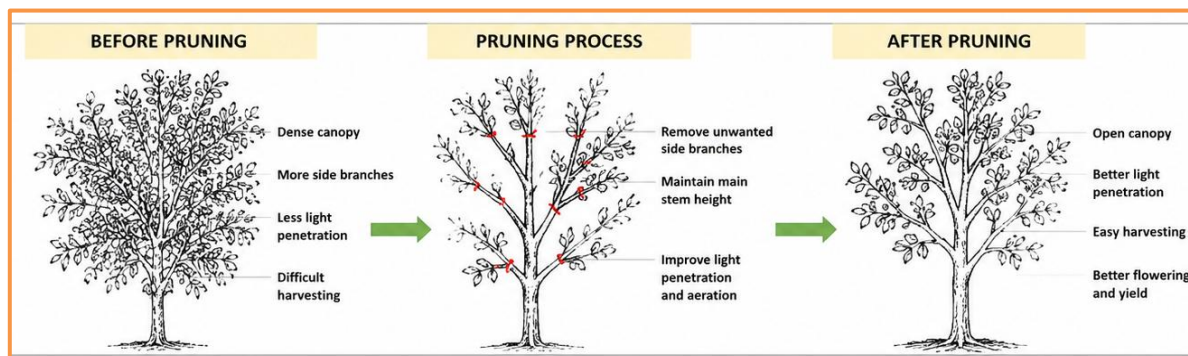
- Higher number of fruits
- Better nut and mace recovery
- Improved fruit size and quality
- Increased dry nut yield
- Enhanced overall productivity

Pruning also helps reduce branch congestion and minimizes competition among branches for light, moisture, and nutrients. Better canopy aeration reduces humidity buildup, which is favourable for minimizing fungal diseases and maintaining healthy tree growth.

Pruning Practices in Nutmeg

Pruning in nutmeg mainly involves:

- Removal of dried and diseased branches
- Elimination of overcrowded shoots
- Maintenance of manageable tree height
- Opening of canopy for better light penetration
- Removal of crossing and weak branches



Detopping of excessively tall trees may also be carried out to facilitate easy harvesting and improve canopy spread. After pruning, proper nutrient management and irrigation support quick recovery and healthy regrowth of branches.

Precautions During Pruning

While pruning is beneficial, excessive or improper pruning may adversely affect tree growth and yield. Therefore, care should be taken to:

- Avoid severe cutting of productive branches
- Maintain balanced canopy structure
- Use clean and sharp pruning tools
- Carry out pruning during suitable climatic conditions
- Apply protective measures to prevent infection through cut surfaces

Proper post-pruning care, including nutrient application and irrigation, helps trees recover rapidly and maintain productivity.

Conclusion

Pruning is an essential canopy management practice for sustainable nutmeg cultivation. Proper pruning improves sunlight penetration, air circulation, flowering, and fruit development while reducing harvesting difficulties in tall trees. Scientific canopy management not only enhances nut and mace yield but also improves fruit quality and plantation health.

Adoption of proper pruning practices in nutmeg plantations can greatly improve productivity, reduce labour requirements, and increase profitability for farmers. Therefore, regular and scientific pruning should be considered an integral component of modern nutmeg cultivation practices.

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