



# Green & Gold

## Planting Tips For New Orchards



The BIG Three crops returning the **"Gold"** to Limpopo are Avocado, soft Citrus and Macadamia where vast planting of these have changed the landscape to resemble the biblical **"Garden of Eden."**

So, what are the basics to sustain the business success of farming tree crops in this region?

For new plantings, the "long-term" business success and return on the high initial capital investments in farming tree crops, like buying land, putting in the infrastructure and building soil fertility should sustain the generations to follow. These are not like a "cash crop" where short term thinking can cause crop failures that can be corrected in the next planting cycle. These tips can help new projects to bear good fruits for the future.

### SELECT A SUITABLE SITE

Do a proper evaluation of suitable conditions required for your crop before buying land. Check soil structure, depth for good root development, rich and fertile soils, uncontaminated by mining residues nor depleted by past poor farming methods. Avoid planting orchards in wetland and river flood plains with soil structure problems like heavy clay or with sandy soils on top and clay hardpan in deep root zone. This prevents good drainage of rain and irrigation water, where anaerobic (no oxygen) conditions cause root rot pathogens and stressed trees.

### WATER RIGHTS AND ACCESS TO GOOD QUANTITY & QUALITY

This is the most crucial factor for farming success, and with increasing droughts and the poorer quality of river and dam water make sure your water source is sustainable, clean and that the correct permits, contracts, and affordable irrigation infrastructure is in place.

### ORCHARDS PLANTED ON FERTILE SOILS

Before planting, the soil preparation plan must focus on increasing the carbon levels to restore soil life and bring structure to dead and depleted soils. Regenerate soils by adding compost and planting green manure or cover crops long before planting. Consider diversifying your farming income by intercropping to maximize yields on your land (E.g., Macadamia and Coffee) or include animals

as the regenerators of soil life through tilling and breaking up of hard soil surfaces, grazing and returning microbially rich manure to establish living soils.

### CORRECT BALANCES & SUFFICIENT NUTRIENTS

The soil analysis will determine the nutrient requirements to optimize yields of tree crops. Focus should not only be on Nitrogen(N): Phosphate(P): Potassium(K), but if deficient Calcium (Ca): Magnesium (Mg) and micro-nutrients like Iron (Fe): Zinc (ZN): Manganese (Mg): Copper (Cu): Boron(B) can limit yield, abort flower and fruits and increase incidence of pest and disease. Talborne Organics fertilizer ranges offer high nutrient, formulated blends with Major, Minor and Micronutrients to meet most crop requirements. Regular leaf and or sap analysis will identify nutrient deficiencies and corrective foliar or fertigation applications can resolve this quickly to prevent stress and reduced crop yields.

#### DID YOU KNOW:

Heavy aphid infestation can be a Magnesium deficiency. Citrus Psylla is a sign of soft leaf cells symptomatic of low levels of Calcium (Ca), Potassium (K) and tree stress.

### WEED, PEST & DISEASE CONTROL

Prevention is easier than cure. Try to avoid using herbicides, fungicides, and pesticides because the toxic residues kill the living soil ecosystem (microbial diversity), leave residues in fruits and nuts, and cause soil, air, and water pollution. The solution is in planting Cover Crops (Living mulch) to reduce weed pressure while building soil Carbon and feeding the living microbial ecosystem that sustain healthy soils. Correcting soil chemistry is an effective way to control persistent weeds, pests and disease which are all indicators of soil imbalance, poor structure, low nutrient or carbon levels and poorly drained soils.

See the links to preventing some of the biggest

threats to tree crops such as:

#### CITRUS GREENING:

Click here to READ article



#### LIFE CYCLE OF CITRUS BLACK SPOT

Click here to WATCH video



Control weeds before seed heads form or seeds will increase the seedbed and grow the next crop of weeds. Use other methods like mowing, cutting or grazing animals to control weeds between rows and on the dripline under trees, or covering with mulch from crop residues such as pruning waste, straw, wood chips, leaf material, growing mulch such as natural vegetation or planting suitable cover crops, or a secondary commercial crop to suppress weed germination and growth.

### RESILIENCE IS BEST INSURANCE FOR TREE CROPS:

Climate change and extreme weather cycles of droughts, floods, hail damage, hot or cold temperatures in peak periods, unpredictable flowering, bud drop, poor pollination and fruit formation or aborting after hot and dry winds. Consideration of future climatic and growing conditions are vital in planning new tree orchards, select the best varieties for seasons, rain patterns and to mitigate risk by spreading the growing and harvesting periods to ensure a constant income stream and efficient utilization of farm and contract labour.

May your future GOLD grow on trees!

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Growing Health

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