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**EVALUATION OF ORGANIC MATERIALS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT
OF SOIL FERTILITY IN RUBBER CULTIVATION**

BY

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We certify that the above statement made by the candidate is true and that this thesis is suitable for submission to the university for the purpose of evaluation.

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ABSTRACT

Possibility of using organic materials for enhancement of soil fertility in rubber plantation was investigated in this study by assessing soil chemical properties and its influence on the performance of *Hevea* during its nursery and immature period.

In general it was observed that addition of organic manures has increased the soil pH. Addition of rubber factory effluent sludge gave a significantly higher soil pH value of 6.1 compared to 4.5 of the initial soil. Also many organic manures were found to enhance soil organic carbon content by 10-25 %. Addition of organic manure like paddy straw, refused tea and coir dust increased the organic carbon content significantly. *Pueraria* leaves and refused tea brought a significant increase in soil ammonium nitrogen (N). The highest increase was recorded for mulching with *Pueraria* leaves and that was 140 ppm. Moreover application of organic manures favourably influenced the availability of phosphorus (P) level in the soil. Addition of rubber factory effluent sludge to the soil increased the soil P content to 1202 ppm, the highest available P level. Also the addition of *Pueraria* leaves, poultry manure and refused tea recorded significantly high P levels in the soil. Mulching with *Pueraria* leaves and refused tea have improved the soil exchangeable potassium (K) to 450 ppm, which was eight times greater than the K content of the initial soil. Application of sludge as a mulch gave 150-250 ppm the highest exchangeable magnesium (Mg) content and it was 10-14 times greater than the soil Mg

content before application of sludge. *Pueraria* leaves, poultry manure and cowdung also gave significantly higher values for soil Mg.

It was concluded that organic materials such as refused tea, poultry manure and coir dust in combination with infertile soil (sub soil) have favourable effect similar to that of good fertile top soil, which can be used to fill poly bags for *Hevea* nursery plants.

Possibility of using controlled release fertilizer technology using coir dust encapsulated block was also investigated in this study. Fertilizer encapsulated with coir dust was found to release nitrogen, potassium and magnesium slowly over an extended period of time and was of no advantage for P fertilizers

The growth was better with encapsulated fertilizers for both nursery and 1st year of rubber plants. It can therefore be concluded that there is a possibility of using controlled released fertilizer for rubber.

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CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	iii
Contents	iv
List of tables	vii
List of figures	xiii
1 Introduction	1
2 Literature Review	6
2.1 Rubber in Sri Lankan agriculture	6
2.2 Rubber growing areas in Sri Lanka	8
2.3 History of manuring	8
2.4 Manuring of rubber cultivation	10
2.4.1 Natural nutrient cycling	14
2.4.2 Use of inorganic manures	17
2.4.2.1 Application of inorganic manures	18
2.4.3 Use of organic manures	19
2.4.3.1 Application of organic manures	21
2.4.3.2 Mulching	33
2.5 Importance of organic manures	35
2.5.1 Effect of organic manures on soil physical properties	36

2.5.2.	Effect of organic manures on soil chemical properties	38
2.5.3.	Effect of organic manures on soil biological properties	40
2.5.4.	Effect of organic manures on plant nutrition status and growth parameters.	41
3.	Materials and methods	43
3.1	Experiment 1	43
3.1.1	Materials and methods	43
3.1.2	Assessment of chemical characteristics of soil	46
3.2	Experiment 2	48
3.2.1	Materials and methods	48
3.2.2	Growth assessments	51
3.2.3	Assessments of mineral composition of leaves	51
3.3	Experiment 3	53
3.3.1	Materials and methods	53
3.3.2	Growth assessments	56
3.3.3	Assessments of mineral composition of leaves, stems, petioles and roots	56
3.4	Experiment 4	56
3.4.1	Materials and methods	57
3.4.2	Assessment of nutrient contents of the soil	58

3.5	Experiment 5	59
3.5.1	Materials and methods	60
3.5.2	Growth assessments	63
3.5.3	Assessments of mineral composition of leaves, bark, petioles and roots	63
4	Results	64
4.1	Experiment 1	64
4.1.1	Chemical characteristics of soil	64
4.2	Experiment 2	73
4.2.1	Growth measurements	73
4.2.2	Mineral composition of leaves	88
4.3	Experiment 3	89
4.3.1	Growth measurements	89
4.3.2	Mineral composition of leaves	107
4.4	Experiment 4	109
4.4.1	Chemical characteristics of soil	109
4.5	Experiment 5	123
4.5.1	Growth measurements	123
4.5.2	Mineral composition of leaves	137
5	Discussion	139
6.	Bibliography	151

LIST OF TABLES

Table No.		Page
1.1	Effect of different fertilizer applications on pH of the soil.	64
1.2	Effect of different fertilizer applications on Nitrogen content of the soil.	66
1.3	Effect of different fertilizer applications on available Phosphorus content of the soil.	68
1.4	Effect of different fertilizer applications on exchangeable Potassium content of the soil.	69
1.5	Effect of different fertilizer applications on exchangeable Magnesium content of the soil.	71
1.6	Effect of different fertilizer applications (Mixtures and Straight fertilizers) on exchangeable Potassium content of the soil.	72

Table No.	Page
2.1 Effect of different form of fertilizer applications on lateral spread of brown budding polybag plants.	80
2.2 Effect of different form of fertilizer applications on No. of leaves of brown budding poly bag plants.	81
2.3 Effect of different form of fertilizer applications on fresh and dry leaf weight of brown budding poly bag plants.	84
2.4 Effect of different form of fertilizer applications on fresh and dry shoot weight of brown budding poly bag plants.	85
2.5 Effect of different form of fertilizer applications on nutrient contents of leaf of brown budding poly bag plants.	88
3.1 Effect of different soil combinations on diameter of <i>Hevea</i> seedling before budding.	91
3.2 Effect of different soil combinations on height of <i>Hevea</i> seedlings before and after budding.	93

Table No.	Page
3.3 Effect of different soil combinations on lateral spread of <i>Hevea</i> seedlings before and after budding.	94
3.4 Effect of different soil combinations on number of whorls of <i>Hevea</i> seedlings before and after budding.	95
3.5 Effect of different soil combinations on No. of leaves of <i>Hevea</i> seedlings before and after budding.	97
3.6 Effect of different soil combinations on leaf area of <i>Hevea</i> seedlings before and after budding.	98
3.7 Effect of different soil combinations on fresh and dry weight of leaves of <i>Hevea</i> seedlings before and after budding.	99
3.8 Effect of different soil combinations on fresh weight and dry weight of petioles of <i>Hevea</i> seedlings before budding.	100
3.9 Effect of different soil combinations on fresh weight and dry weight of petioles <i>Hevea</i> seedlings after budding.	101

Table No.	Page
3.10 Effect of different soil combinations on fresh weight and dry weight of stem of <i>Hevea</i> seedlings before budding.	102
3.11 Effect of different soil combinations on fresh weight and dry weight of stem of <i>Hevea</i> seedlings after budding.	103
3.12 Effect of different soil combinations on fresh weight and dry weight of roots of <i>Hevea</i> seedlings before budding.	105
3.13 Effect of different soil combinations on fresh weight and dry weight of roots of <i>Hevea</i> seedlings after budding.	106
3.14 Effect of different soil combinations on root length of <i>Hevea</i> seedlings before and after budding.	107
3.15 Effect of different soil combinations on leaf nutrient contents of <i>Hevea</i> seedlings before budding.	108
4.1 Effect of different organic materials on organic carbon content of the soil after 24 weeks.	111

Table No.	Page
4.2 Effect of different organic materials on exchangeable NH_4^+ content of the soil after 14 days.	112
5.1 Effect of different form of fertilizer applications on number of whorls of immature rubber plants.	126
5.2 Effect of different form of fertilizer applications on leaf area of immature rubber plants.	127
5.3 Effect of different form of fertilizer applications on fresh and dry weight of leaves of immature rubber plants.	128
5.4 Effect of different form of fertilizer applications on fresh and dry weight of petioles of immature rubber plants.	129
5.5 Effect of different form of fertilizer applications on fresh and dry weight of stem of immature rubber plants.	130
5.6 Effect of different form of fertilizer applications on root length of immature rubber plants.	132