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PALM QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. The trunks of my coconut palms appear to be bleeding. What is wrong?

A. The stem bleeding disease of the coconut palm is more common in South Florida than most people realize. The fungus, *Endoconidiophora paradoxa* (Dade), is associated with the stem bleeding disease and is reported to be a wound parasite entering the host plant through wounds or growth cracks on the stem. Stem injuries such as those inflicted by knives or those produced by steel climbing spikes are important areas of entry for the fungus. It is also believed that the activity of termites can serve as an entry area for the fungus. Palms damaged physiologically by heavy fertilization followed by a drought or excessive rains followed by a drought also tend to be more susceptible to disease entry. This disease has also been reported in the palmyra palm and the arecanut palm.

The actual bleeding is characterized by the exudation of a dark reddish-brown liquid from the growth cracks and wounds on the stem trickling down for a distance of several inches to several feet.

One of the recommendations for control of the stem bleeding disease is to completely excise the infected area on the trunk followed by dressing with pruning paint and a copper fungicide. The use of steel climbing spikes should be avoided where possible in order to reduce the mechanical wounds that serve as a primary means of entrance for the fungus.

Applications of a fungicide to the stem of a coconut may provide adequate protection. Also, thoroughly disinfecting climbing spikes with Lysol, Clorox, etc., between trees should help reduce the spread of the disease. Reducing stem cracks can bring about a reasonable degree of disease control by judicious attention to horticultural practices by avoiding extremes in moisture and fertilization which influence the quality and quantity of stem cracks of the coconut palm.

REFERENCE

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