

Pruning *Jatropha curcas*

Introduction

The pruning regime described here is based on experience from mainly Asia and South America. Take it as a guideline only. Always adapt to local conditions.

Always use sharp tools to get a clean cut. That will reduce problems with fungi and pests entering the plant.

It is good practise to clean the tools when one field is finished. That reduces the risk of tranfering virus between plants. If water is not available a knife can be cleaned by sticking it into the soil several times.

Why prune?

1. To keep the plants to a size that makes it easy to harvest. Un-pruned *Jatropha* easily grows three to five meters tall depending on the growing conditions.
2. To increase the yield by encouraging branching.

Fruits are produced at the end of each branch. Without pruning the *Jatropha* plant will only develop few branches and therefore low yield. In some locations in Mozambique pest damage to the terminal buds result in branching. However, this is unpredictable so pruning should still be done. Well managed *Jatropha* plants should have around 25 branches at the end of the first year and 40 branches after two years.

The Best Season for Pruning?

Pruning should be done in dry conditions to avoid fungal attacks. In some locations in Mozambique severe damaged has resulted from pruning during the rainy season.

Best Height of Pruning

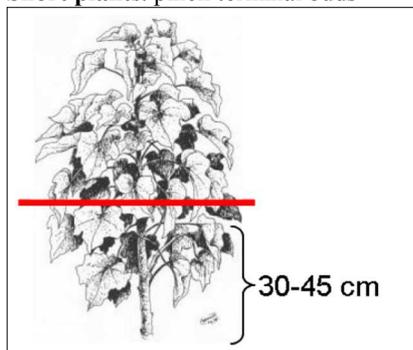
The aim of most pruning regimes are plants that are 1.5 m tall because plants of this size are easy to harvest and mange.

However, if for instance tall hedges are desirable then pinching of the terminal buds can be done instead of pruning as this will also encourage development of lateral branches.

Pruning Schedule

6 Month after Planting

- **Tall plants:** cut back to 30-45 cm.
- **Short plants:** pinch terminal buds



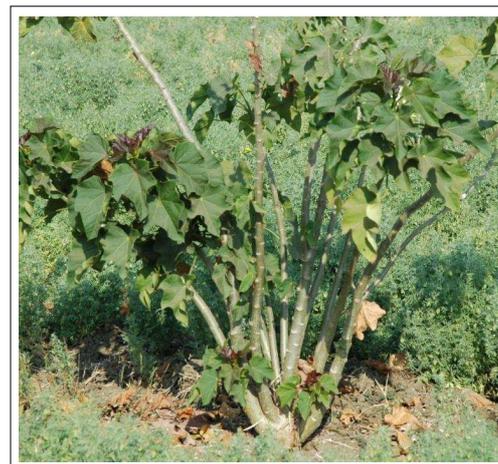
12 Months after Planting

- Pinch the buds or prune a few centimeters of the secondary branches.



During 2nd and ongoing years

- All side branches are pruned, retaining $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ of each branch.



Every 10 Years

- Cut plants back to ca. 45 cm. They regrow fast and produce fruits within a year.