

History of Christian Valley

The Christian Valley Plant Propagation Station was started in 1973. It was owned by a number of owners and then purchased by the Government in 1940's – 50's.

The project was spear headed by Betty Lake – Director of Agriculture and Mr. Cedric Henry the manager of the project. Fundings were provided by the funding **agencies**, the British Government and the Baptist Organization.

There were planting of orchards, avocado, citrus, and minor fruits of all kind, flowers and forestry trees, and Palms. The Christian Valley Plant Propagation is a very historic place.



MANGOES ...PINEAPPLES

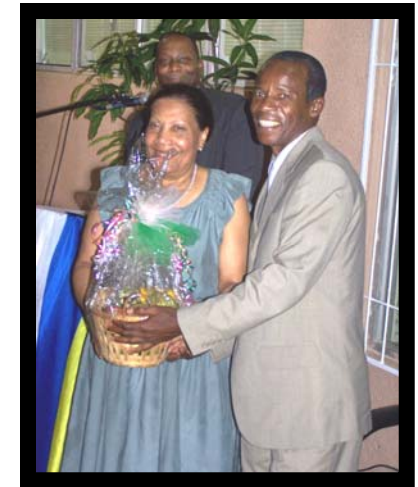


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CHRISTIAN VALLEY-



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Christian Valley Station, The Pearl of the South

Hidden away in the forested folds of the Shekery Mountain Range of southern Antigua, Christian Valley Station is the country's premiere collection of mature fruit tree varieties. Here, the average rainfall of more than 50 inches per annum is twenty percent higher than the national average, lies a 40 acre orchard of mango, citrus fruits, avocado, guava, Malay apple, cashew, breadfruit, soursop, and many curious tropical fruits. The soil which flows down from the peaks is an excellent, slightly acidic, sandy loam that is more suitable for fruit trees than is the limestone of north-east of the island.



In the beginning

Starting in the early 1970s a local farmer (the late Sir Robert Hall) served as the Minister of Agriculture, and championed a programme of agricultural diversification away from dependence on sugar cane. In 1971, ten years before Independence, some 25 mango varieties were introduced as grafts using material taken from Florida collections. Pumpkins which were planted among the young mango trees yielded a bountiful harvest. An orchard of soursop flourished beneath coconut trees.

As you enter the gate, you will encounter a large planting of mango. On the right hand side, across the stream bed, there is also the front line of 4 acre of mango trees. Beyond and up the slopes there are Brazil cashews which produce large nuts.

MANGOES & HEALTH

The mango enjoys a unique status among the fruits. It is the most popular fruit of the tropics and is called 'The King of Asiatic fruits'. It is regarded as a valuable item of diet and a household remedy. The mango is fleshy drupe, variable in size and shape, with varying mixtures of green, yellow and red color. Inside the fruit is stony endocarp, variable in size. Mango grows on a large, erect, branched, evergreen tree. The leaves, when fully grown, are stiff, pointed and deep glossy green. These are used in ceremonia decorations. The dry twigs are used to light sacred fires. The worst type of mangoes are very fibrous with a turpentine flavor, but the best are juicy, sweet, with very little fibre and a deliciously piquant flavor.



MANGO FOLLY

A fable By RACHEL Collis

It was late February and most mango trees were just beginning to bloom and send out their buttery yellow blossoms. The wind played among these blossoms and blew them to the ground under the trees, where they lay like thick yellow carpets. It was indeed a wondrous sight and a fine time to be a mango tree.



Mr. Henry had a beautiful mango tree in his front yard. This was a large tree. Its trunk was as thick as the bodies of five powerful men put together, and its branches reached across the yard and over the fence, spreading its shiny green leaves to within reach of all who walked along the street. It was a fine tree. Its most arresting feature was the single branch which held the only mangoes on the tree. There were five of them, and they ranged in sizes and degrees of maturity.

Mr. Henry's tree was the only one in the area that actually was bearing fruit. Of the five mangoes, there was that special one that appeared to be lovelier than the others. It was big and shiny and its skin was olive green with a few yellow streaks, which showed promise that it was going to be a prize-winning mango when it was fully ripe.