INTRODUCTION

Among the number of plants falling in the category of "Ground Provisions", yams are probably the most widely cultivated in the humid tropics.

As a crop, yams are remarkably free from pests and diseases. They can be a very profitable venture: Data from I.C.T.A. Crop Records for the decade 1930-1940 show that yams gave a profit of $2.78 per crop week as against $0.22 realized for Plant Cane and a loss of $0.25 in respect of Sweet Potatoes.

The concentration of populations in urban areas of the more developed tropical countries, together with the increasing prices of imported foodstuffs, create an expanding market for yams where previously none or only limited ones may have existed. The situation has already become apparent in most of the Caribbean islands, and in Trinidad a Food Production Committee was set up in 1952 for the expressed purpose of encouraging and assisting peasants in augmenting local food supplies.

These modern economic conditions justify further studies into yam cultivation in order that its productive efficiency may be more precisely evaluated.

Previous work has been conducted to test:-

(1) The need for staking,

(2) The yield of different varieties,

(3) The use of organic manures at different spacings,

(4) Time of planting and mulching.

In addition, Brown (1931) has given a comprehensive description of the ordinary methods of cultivation.

The general aims of the present study include:-

(i) A study of growth habit and yield.

(ii) The preparation of land for yam planting: a study of the methods of trenching.

(iii) Quality (nature) of trash.

Recommendations will be made for further lines of research based on the experience gained in conducting these investigations.

One species - the Lisbon yam - was used throughout.