

Curly Leaf of the Papaw

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L.N.H. Larter, B.Sc., A.R.C.S.

and

T. A. Russell, B.Sc., A.R.C.S.
Dip. Agric.Sci.(Cantab.)

This disease which attacks both the leaves and the stem of the Papaw - Carica papaya - is common throughout Trinidad. It is very destructive but fortunately has so far only occurred sporadically, but this is probably due to the fact that the plant is only grown in gardens, hack yards etc.; though where two or three plants are growing together it is unusual for more than one of them to be diseased. Should however the cultivation of the papaw be placed on a commercial basis, curly leaf would become a serious inhibitory factor.

This disease has been known in Trinidad for several years and is probably the same as that briefly described by Nowell(3) under the name Stem and Fruit Rot of Papaw. The illustration which Nowell gives of this disease presents a striking resemblance to a case of Curly Leaf, but there are several serious discrepancies in the description in the text. What appears to be the same disease as that in Trinidad however, has been reported recently by Ciferri (1) from Santo Domingo and by F.E.V. Smith (4) from Jamaica. So far no account of its occurrence in any of the countries where the papaw is grown extensively on a commercial scale viz. Hawaii Ceylon etc., has been traced by us. Smith first reported the disease in 1928 and states that attack is commonest at the bearing stage; the leaves appear yellow and mottled and shrivel up, the lower leaves hang down and the top of the plant dies: adventitious buds push but later are also affected. Ciferri's description

agrees with this and adds that in one to two months all leaves turn yellow and fall, or else dry up and merely bend down; the plant, he says, dies in from a month to a year, rarely succumbing to the first attack. All these symptoms were found to occur on papaws in Trinidad, but the hypodermal suberisation towards the top of the plant also mentioned by Ciferri was not found. Neither Ciferri nor Smith had, up to the time of writing, elucidated the cause of the disease.