

FARMER TO FARMER - PRACTICES FOR RESILIENCE SERIES

TARO MULCHED BED

Taro planted in raised mulched beds are a sight to see in Cook Islands. Farmers recycle used cardboard cartons and coconut leaves to mulch their taro patch. The mulch prevents weed growth and helps the farmer with the maintenance of his crop. It is a resilient technique as well; helping taro patches to maintain their moistness during droughts by keeping the soil moist and makes for delicious tasting taro. The raised bed method is useful for planting taro in swampy areas.

Step 1: Prepare the Beds

Clearing

Clear the grass on a previously used raised bed. The raised beds are usually passed down through family generations of farmers. A farmer can take up to two days clearing the bed.



A planted raised bed. This farmer, Julie Uka is clearing, a previously used one beside it.

A

Burying Weeds

Do not throw the green grass away. It is useful manure or 'feeds the taro patch'. Dig a hole, place green grass inside, and cover back with soil. It takes up to four days to cover the weeds/grass from clearing the patch in holes all over the patch. There is no waste. No need to burn them.

Digging holes for placing green weeds/grass



B

Weeds not thrown away or burnt but used to feed the soil.



C



Placing weeds in holes

D



Cover weeds with soil

E

Step 2: Mulching

At this point, the bed can be covered in cardboards or used cartons. *Kikau* or coconut leaves are placed on top of it as well. The mulch suppresses weed growth. This saves the farmer much time and effort or even labour costs in continuously weeding the taro bed.



Step 3: Planting

Dig holes into the mulch. Farmers' believe the bigger the hole, the bigger the taro.



Plant Taro



The taro is ready about seven months later.

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