Tea Cultivation Guide

Introduction

Tea (*Camellia sinensis*) is one of the most popular beverages worldwide, known for its refreshing taste and health benefits. It is primarily grown in tropical and subtropical regions with high humidity and well-distributed rainfall. Tea cultivation requires careful management to produce high-quality leaves for processing.

Steps of Cultivation

1. Variety Selection

- Choose high-yielding and disease-resistant varieties suitable for the region.
- Common varieties include Assam Tea, Darjeeling Tea, and Chinese Tea.

2. Soil Preparation

- Prefers well-drained, slightly acidic soil with a pH of 4.5–6.0.
- Deep plowing and addition of organic matter improve soil fertility.
- Terracing is practiced in hilly regions to prevent soil erosion.

3. Planting and Spacing

- Tea plants are propagated through seeds or cuttings.
- Seedlings are raised in nurseries and transplanted after 6–12 months.
- Maintain a spacing of 1–1.5 meters between plants to ensure healthy growth.

4. Irrigation and Water Management

- Requires frequent irrigation, especially during dry seasons.
- Drip irrigation helps maintain soil moisture and improves water efficiency.
- Mulching around plants conserves moisture and controls weeds.

5. Fertilization and Nutrient Management

- Apply organic manure, compost, and chemical fertilizers as per soil requirements.
- Balanced fertilizers containing nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium promote healthy growth.
- Micronutrients such as magnesium and sulfur enhance leaf quality.

6. Weeding and Pest Control

- Regular weeding prevents competition for nutrients and improves plant health.
- Common pests: Tea mosquito bug, aphids, and caterpillars. Use biological control methods and neem-based pesticides.
- Common diseases: Blister blight, root rot, and dieback. Apply fungicides and maintain proper field hygiene.

7. Harvesting and Processing

- Tea plants are ready for harvesting 3–4 years after planting.
- Harvesting is done by plucking the top two leaves and a bud at regular intervals.
- Leaves are processed through withering, rolling, oxidation, and drying to produce different types of tea (black, green, oolong, and white tea).

Conclusion

Tea cultivation is a profitable agricultural venture with growing global demand. Proper soil management, irrigation, pest control, and timely harvesting ensure high-quality tea leaves. Sustainable farming practices and post-harvest processing techniques help enhance the value and flavour of the final product.