

THE COMMISSION NEWSLETTER

Conserve nature, preserve life



TOP NEWS OF THE MONTH

RESTORATION OF SECURITY STATION IS UNDERWAY

THE RESTORATION OF the security station at the entrance of the National Conservation Commission's (NCC) Codrington Headquarters is underway, following the removal of previous structure.

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SCORES OF BARBADIANS visited the National Conservation Commission's (NCC) Headquarters to celebrate National Arbor Day on Sunday, September 22nd, 2024.

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**NATIONAL
ARBOR DAY 2024
WAS A SUCCESS**

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NCC’S FACILITIES
CONTACT INFORMATION

Codrington House’s PBX	536-0600
NCC’s Garden Center	536-0641
Bath Facility	572-0691
Bathsheba Facility	536-0717
Batts Rock Facility	536-0690
Brandon’s Facility	536-0691
Browne’s Beach Facility	536-0692
Enterprise Beach Facility	536-0694
Farley Hill National Park	536-0699
Folkestone Marine Park	536-0654
Hastings Facility	536-0701
King George V Memorial Park	536-0703
Oistins Bay Garden	536-0704
Pebbles Facility	536-0705
Queen’s Park	536-0706
Rockley Facility	536-0708
Silver Sands Facility	536-0709
Three Houses Park	572-0437
Worthing Facility	536-0711

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GM'S MESSAGE

A PERSON WHO plants a tree, aware that they may never enjoy its fruit or find respite in its shade, typically embodies selflessness and generosity.

At its essence, Arbor Day honours both trees and the very essence of life.

Arbor Day in Barbados is celebrated on September 22nd to commemorate the anniversary of Hurricane Janet, which destroyed many trees in the country. The date was chosen to highlight the importance of trees and sustainability in the wake of the hurricane's devastation. Arbor Day was established to encourage tree planting and environmental awareness among Barbadians.

The celebration has grown over the years to include various activities and initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable environmental practices.

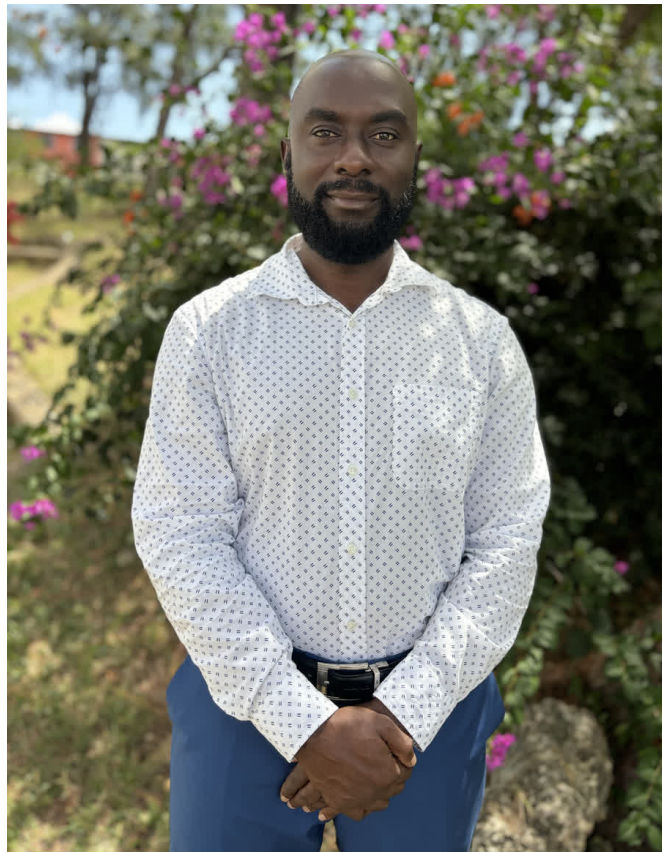
Those of us who participate with genuine enthusiasm embrace and celebrate the hope within us.

The spirit of our nation is reflected in these individuals as we earnestly strive to create a better world for future generations.

Although our country has transformed over the decades, we remain committed to foundational values of hard work, respect for others, and pride in our environment. These traits also characterise the ideal gardener.

Anyone who has cultivated a landscape or developed a beautiful home garden truly appreciates the love, effort, and dedication needed for success.

The fulfilment and joy derived from a job well done will elevate the spirit.



Mr. Ryan Als

Acting General Manager

National Conservation Commission

Now, more than ever, we must intensify our efforts to create beautiful spaces around us, and the NCC Garden Centre offers everything necessary for success. Our ongoing support of schools in their agricultural and gardening programmes has inspired the young people involved, and we actively encourage youth groups to collaborate with us.

While our limited resources may sometimes restrict our reach, we remain dedicated to empowering young gardeners, environmentalists and conservationists.

In her insightful article, Ms. Woletta Isreal-Yaicob prompts us to pause, reflect, and instills hope for our future.

I urge you to read her thought-provoking Case for Agriculture and contemplate its message.

Restoration of security station is underway



The NCC's Codrington Headquarters security station is under reconstruction.

THE RESTORATION OF the security station - at the entrance of the National Conservation Commission's (NCC) Codrington Headquarters - is underway following the removal of the previous structure.

The station, which is operated by personnel of the Ranger/Warden Service, is the first point of contact for visitors to the Commission.

In recognition of its significance, the NCC's management opted to construct the new station following the refurbishment and restoration of Codrington House - the NCC's main office building.

The station's restoration team comprises staff from the Building and Works Department.

The members include Carpenter, Randolph Johnson, and Artisans, Junior Sealy and Patrick Hinds.

Johnson and Sealy have been working assiduously to construct the station, which is being built on a concrete foundation.

The team has also utilized concrete board and lumber for the construction process.

Meanwhile, the application of the shingles on the station's roof is at an advance stage.

"The next steps [of phase one] include the building being panelled. The focus before that was the installation of the windows and we will soon put on the door," Johnson explained.

The Artisans have also been working closely with the painters, who are committed to maintaining the timeline of the project, despite minor delays caused by the inclement weather.

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New security station to enhance operations



Artisan, Junior Sealy, cutting the materials for the shingles application on the roof.

Senior Electrician, William Husbands, indicated that the new station will be double the size of the previous structure and has new features that aim to make the work space more comfortable.

“The new security station is wired more adequately in comparison [to the previous station] and as a result, it can accommodate additional electrical appliances such as a small fridge,” he said.

The installation of an air conditioner unit is on the cards, which aims to bring much needed relief for the staff.

“We will also be introducing a renewable energy component to the security station. This will see the installation of emergency lighting on the station and all of its security lights will be solar powered,”

Husbands confirmed.

A counter with lockers has also been included in the station’s design to secure the staff’s personal belongings.

Over the past year, 40 staff members of the Building and Works Department have also executed the refurbishment and restoration of Codrington House. The project was executed in three phases, with preparatory work and the removal of the building’s roof comprising phase one. The other two phases entailed the replacement of sections of the floor, the resurfacing of the walls, electrical and plumbing upgrades as well as the replacement of the doors, windows and window hoods.

Sections of the building’s staircase were also replaced, as part of the project.

RESTORATION HIGHLIGHTS

Codrington headquarters security station



Concrete board and lumber have been utilized to construct the station.



Shingles have been applied to the roof as part of the construction process.

RESTORATION HIGHLIGHTS

Codrington headquarters security station



The next phase of the project includes the installation of the windows.



The new security station will have seven windows and one door.

RESTORATION HIGHLIGHTS

Codrington headquarters security station



The electrical work has commenced on the interior of the security station.



The electrical wires will be concealed during the panelling of the interior.

RESTORATION HIGHLIGHTS

Codrington headquarters security station



The painters have primed the security station ahead of the next phase.



The electrical isolator has also been installed for the air conditioner unit.

National Arbor Day 2024 was a success



Jeff Chandler's plant propagation workshop at the National Arbor Day celebrations was well received by the participation (Pictures by N. Harrigan).

SCORES OF BARBADIANS visited the National Conservation Commission's (NCC) Headquarters at Codrington, St. Michael to celebrate National Arbor Day on Sunday, September 22nd, 2024.

The day of significance, which is dedicated to promoting tree planting, environmental conservation, and raising public awareness about the importance of trees, commenced with a plant sale, a hive of activity in the kids zone and, glucose and blood pressure checks. The highly anticipated scavenger hunt, which saw the participation of 25 teams, was keenly contested.

The NCC partnered with Kindspire to execute the invigorating activity.

KindSpire is a global platform designed to inspire, encourage, and reward acts

of kindness.

They aim to create a ripple effect of positive change around the world, fostering a more empathetic and understanding society.

The Insurance Corporation of Barbados Limited (ICBL) was also on hand to provide pivotal financial advice, while the Tuk Band and Mother Sally added rhythm and agility to spice up the afternoon's proceedings.

This paved the way for the karaoke competition which offered three top prizes for the contestants.

There was no shortage of talent on display during this segment, as some of the contestants effortlessly belted their notes, much to the delight of the captivated audience.

Equally engaging was the Plant Propagation Workshop that was conducted by Jeff

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Soca ride spin class tested stamina levels

Chandler.

He planted seeds of knowledge during the workshop that were watered with practical tips and techniques.

The Tissue Culture Demonstration also piqued the interests of the participants, all of whom walked away with more knowledge about the process.

The Plant Swap tent was another highlight of the event.

This activity gave plant lovers the opportunity to trade plants with each other or the NCC's Plant Nursery.

And just when persons thought that the evening was winding down, the exact opposite occurred.

The organisers shifted gears to commence the energizing soca ride spin class that tested the stamina of the participants, most of whom were females.

All participants proved that they were up to the task, as they moved in sync with the rhythmic melodies of the DJ's selections.

Mikey and Mr. Blood kept the pace after this activity concluded and treated those in attendance to some of their soca hits.

From all accounts, the National Arbor Day 2024 celebrations exceeded expectations and was well executed by officials at the NCC.

The event attracted several sponsors including Kooyman, Kindspire, ICBL, ARC Irrigation Inc., DC Office People, ReCycle Lifestyle, Servall Inc., the National Cultural Foundation, Sign Station, Ellco Rentals Limited, DJ Gerald B Sounds, Hilton Barbados Resort, SOL Warrens and SOL Wildey Gas Stations and the NCC extends heartfelt gratitude for their support.



The Soca Ride Spin Class was conducted by Fitness Trainer, Shaz of ReCycle Lifestyle.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Meet NCC's Senior Electrician, William Husbands



William Husbands, the NCC's Senior Electrician, joined the team in 1996.

PATIENCE, PERSISTENCE AND purpose are the three proverbial pillars of William Husbands' life.

With God at the center, the Senior Electrician at the National Conservation Commission (NCC) is intentional about living purposefully and leaving a legacy that will make his family proud. Filled with humility, the father of two alluded to joining the NCC as the first full-time electrician in 1996.

"I had to adapt quickly to the design of the job which included the management of electrical inventory. There was no one here at the time that was versed in electrical work," he disclosed. Modernising the NCC's electrical operations was among Husbands'

primary objectives on his assumption of this role.

"This was necessary because I found a lot of things that were just about to expire or on the road to being out of operation, therefore I sought to design the electrical jobs to ensure that there were more effective. I also had to expand my knowledge, which resulted in further consultations with other electricians," he explained.

Husbands' electrical engineering experience has proven to be an asset for the Commission.

"This was very fulfilling to me... the skills I brought to the NCC were key and my experience had to be applied throughout the jobs," he added.

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Husbands is intentional about a purpose-driven life

Empathy and emotional intelligence were among the non-technical skills that Husbands brought to the NCC that have borne fruit. “Throughout the journey, I sat among workers such as artisans and mechanics... Although I was younger at the time, spending time with them allowed me to listen, understand and address their concerns in a professional manner. I was able to better develop that empathic part of my character,” he opined.

Today, the Plumbing and Electrical Division, which Husbands has oversight, is even better equipped to execute their tasks as a result of his proactive and solutions-oriented approach - in addition to his empathic nature.

“My team has seven staff members and they have the tools and equipment to help conduct their jobs easier. They also provide practical solutions to problems. But most of all, being in this role has fully allowed me to see them as human beings that have a need for balance in their lives,” he disclosed.

Armed with this knowledge, Husbands seizes every opportunity to host social events for members of the Division - and the Building and Works Department by extension - to enhance the team’s camaraderie.

“People need to be recognised and celebrated for their work. They need to also be motivated to do their work and commended for the good job that they are doing,” he affirmed.



Husbands has a deep appreciation for the mutual exchange of knowledge among his colleagues.

The mutual exchange of knowledge has been heartwarming to Husbands, who openly embraces the pearls of wisdom shared by members of the team.

While he acknowledged that some staff members are exposed to more complex tasks, Husbands noted that this factor has provided numerous opportunities for him to learn more from the team, as they have demonstrated comfort with working collaboratively.

With a high level of efficiency and a strong commitment to completing tasks to the best of his ability, Husbands emphasised the importance of his purpose-driven approach to life.

“My life must be driven by purpose. I do not do it to impress, it is just my way of cultivating a legacy that I will always be known for. Everyone is not purpose-driven but when you live in a purpose-driven manner, you can inspire others to realise and capitalise on their potential. My life must be a testimony by my purpose-driven approach,” he asserted.

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No job at the NCC is ‘too small or low’ for Husbands

This approach has been anchored by Husbands’ stance that ‘no job at the NCC is too small or too low for me to do’. “I assist in as many areas as necessary to be a team player and this directly extends to my plumbers and electricians. I am always willing to go the extra mile,” he stressed.

Transparency and honesty are supporting elements of Husbands’ thrust to always lend support to his colleagues. “I am also one to avoid conflict but if there is a problem, I use the knowledge at my disposal to find a solution to resolve the issue. In some situations, you cannot find a solution so in those cases, I leave it up to God and accept His way,” he added. Consultations with God have been instrumental to Husbands’

disposition in the NCC’s dynamic work environment.

“I often talk to God while I am driving and now that I have a designated space at the office, I would close the door and have a little word with Him and ask Him to go ahead of me and prepare me for the day with the necessary tools. This also works to refresh my electrical skills and plumbing knowledge so I can adequately advise my colleagues,” he explained.

Husbands’ spiritual connection with God and empathic nature have also made him a prime candidate to offer appropriate and timely words of comfort and nuggets of advice to his colleagues.

He added: “People often use me as a source of counselling. They confide in me and I



Husbands has an unwavering commitment to his family and executing his work at the NCC.

find God also uses me in that sense to help persons. Once they are willing to accept the truth, I give it to them. Even when I am tired, I still find the time and energy to assist.”

Husbands’ children have been the primary recipients of his love and devotion, both of whom he loves dearly and equally.

“I don’t care how old they are, I will always see them as my children, and going on what is in practice, they will always come first,” he emphasised. His son and daughter - the apples of his eyes - are kept at the forefront of his purpose-driven approach to life, in keeping with his strong desire to create a legacy that will make them proud.

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Husbands sow seeds with pride to reap in purpose



The Cubana Monument at Paynes Bay has a special place in Husbands' heart.

At the core of this legacy are several projects that Husbands is proud to be a part of - from conceptualisation to execution.

One such project is the Cubana Monument at Paynes Bay, St. James.

“Mr. Als asked me to do this project. He felt that no one should be parking close to the monument and I thought of having bollards installed to deter persons from parking close to it,” he indicated.

The ground level lights - that were positioned to illuminate the monument - were another area of focus for Husbands. He explained: “People often walked on them and I decided to install them within the bollards instead, to prevent future damage.”

With a meticulous approach, Husbands’

purposeful execution yielded satisfactory results and the Monument holds a special place in his heart.

“I decided to do this project a little different from others because I wanted it to be outstanding. I chose grey to memorialise the significance of the monument’s symbolism. I also wanted the natural vegetation along the stepping stones to complement it and make the monument look as natural as possible,” he disclosed.

The Monument’s utility bollards concept, Husbands added, was developed from an idea he had for Queen’s Park, which was also brought to fruition.

Sowing seeds with pride to reap in purpose is how Husbands intends to continue building his legacy.

ENVIRONMENT CHAMPION

Woletta-Israel Yaicob's Decolonising our land and our economy: A case for agriculture

FOR A SHORT while, release your mind from the tight hold of our current reality and allow it to journey with me into a new Barbados, where we find crop fields, people laughing in their gardens and sharing among neighbours.

It is not quite a new Barbados but draws from the old.

It appears that at some point in our recent history, progress was thought to necessitate prioritising corporate jobs and phasing out domestic agriculture.

However, while this domestic crop-rearing was once a bigger part of our society, it is important to remember that our nation importing large amounts of food is nothing new.

Our history of importing food at high rates has long been woven into the modus operandum of our country.

It was not uncommon during chattel slavery for smaller territories and, especially, flat ones, such as ours, to cultivate sugarcane and other cash crops so extensively that the amount of land dedicated to the growth of food paled in comparison and failed to suffice.

Nevertheless, the small plots allotted to enslaved Africans for food crop cultivation were utilised and our market culture was born.



Woletta-Israel Yaicob

Let us now advance to the post emancipation period, in which subsistence farming was a privilege that many in Barbados could not afford, due to the limited amount of land available and the tight grasp which the planter class had on it.

Time passed and in the 1980s, the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act was passed, allowing tenants of plantation tenancies for over five years to purchase the land on which they lived. The government also subsidised the cost of land, allowing more Barbadians to own land and have agency over their use of it.

During this period, domestic agriculture was customary.

One household may not

have grown enough to sustain themselves, but the collective efforts of the community and communal attitude brought them closer to subsistence farming.

It was almost like an unofficial community garden without the sharing of a piece of land. However, this aspect of small-scale farming present in old Barbadianna has declined significantly.

While the effects have been drastic in the past few decades, this downward trend began more than a century ago, with the migration from rural to urban areas in search of

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ENVIRONMENT CHAMPION

Agriculture, migration and industrialisation

upwards social mobility.

This was even seen across Caribbean territories; people migrated from territories with agriculturally focused economies to those with more diverse and “modern” development.

Trinidad and Tobago are an example of the latter.

While this was done out of necessity, and I am by no means criticising the efforts of these people, whom I consider to be nation builders, it should be noted that current attitudes towards agriculture and its place in economic development have likely been influenced by this history, among other things.

Another component of our tumultuous history with agriculture is industrialisation of the 1970s in Barbados, which involved investment from overseas entities in factories such as garment factories.

This period also saw the introduction of work assembling electronics in companies such as Intel.

Both initiatives were and are very useful to our society, but balance is key in any economy and in life.

For those who worked shifts during the day and night, it would have been quite difficult to practise any form of domestic agriculture.

A report from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) entitled ‘Current status of agriculture in the Caribbean and implications for agriculture policy and strategy’ posits that it is a well-known part of structural transformation that as an economy develops, the agricultural



sector becomes less prominent.

While this has been the case in the past, it may not have to be.

Notably, neither the migration nor industrialisation dealt a fatal blow to subsistence farming in Barbados, as even in urban areas in the 1970s and 1980s, the practice of growing and sharing food among neighbours was still alive and well.

It must be acknowledged that this custom is not dead but is weak and shaky in 21st Century Barbados.

An effort to change this is currently being made by organisations such as the National Conservation Commission (NCC), the 4H club, the Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (BADMCO), the Barbados Agricultural Society (BAS) and various school clubs but we need all hands-on deck, or rather, put to the plough, to transform societal mindsets.

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ENVIRONMENT CHAMPION

How does our society view agriculture?



We must therefore endeavour to answer the question - how does our society view agriculture and why?

Could it be an attitude of agriculture being considered a use of time which is beneath someone with a degree? Maybe the legacy of slavery is rearing its ugly head again as we seek to detach ourselves from a painful past.

Whatever the reason, our nation is not food secure, and this is especially concerning in light of the impacts climate change is having and has been scientifically projected to have on agriculture throughout the world. According to an article posted on the website of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in November 2021, average global maize yields could decrease by 24 per cent towards the end of the 21st Century. On the other hand, wheat yields may

increase by approximately 17 per cent.

These and more changes are expected to occur because of increased temperatures, increased carbon emissions and shifts in rainfall patterns.

On a local level, the reduced availability of the juicy corn, a nutritious crop rich with vitamin C and high in fibre and iron, from which we get cornflakes and popcorn, by extension affects our ability to prepare our national dish - Cou Cou and flying fish. Cornmeal cou cou, a treasure inherited from our African ancestors, is high in fibre and does not have the quickly digested sugars present in white flour, a key ingredient of many of our choice dishes nowadays.

Of course, accompanying this is a pool of gravy, walled on all sides by the cou cou. The gravy spills over the sides and trickles down to the ceramic, only to be mopped up by the absorbent cou cou.

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ENVIRONMENT CHAMPION

The impact of climate change on agriculture

Sitting in the gravy appears flying fish with a myriad of nutritional benefits, such as micronutrients, similarly to many other types of fish, which we unfortunately must substitute for flying fish at times.

A journal article entitled 'Climate change impacts on agriculture in 2050 under a range of plausible socioeconomic and emissions scenarios' uses various projection models to present possible changes in yields of certain crops by 2050. One graph in this journal shows five possible scenarios of the impacts of climate change on crop yields and other aspects of economy across 13 regions.

Three out of these five scenarios predict a decrease in exogenous and final yields and an increase in prices. Despite variations in projections, this

source found that 'direct climate impacts in 2050 are stronger than the differences between the underlying socioeconomic trends, at least at the global level'.

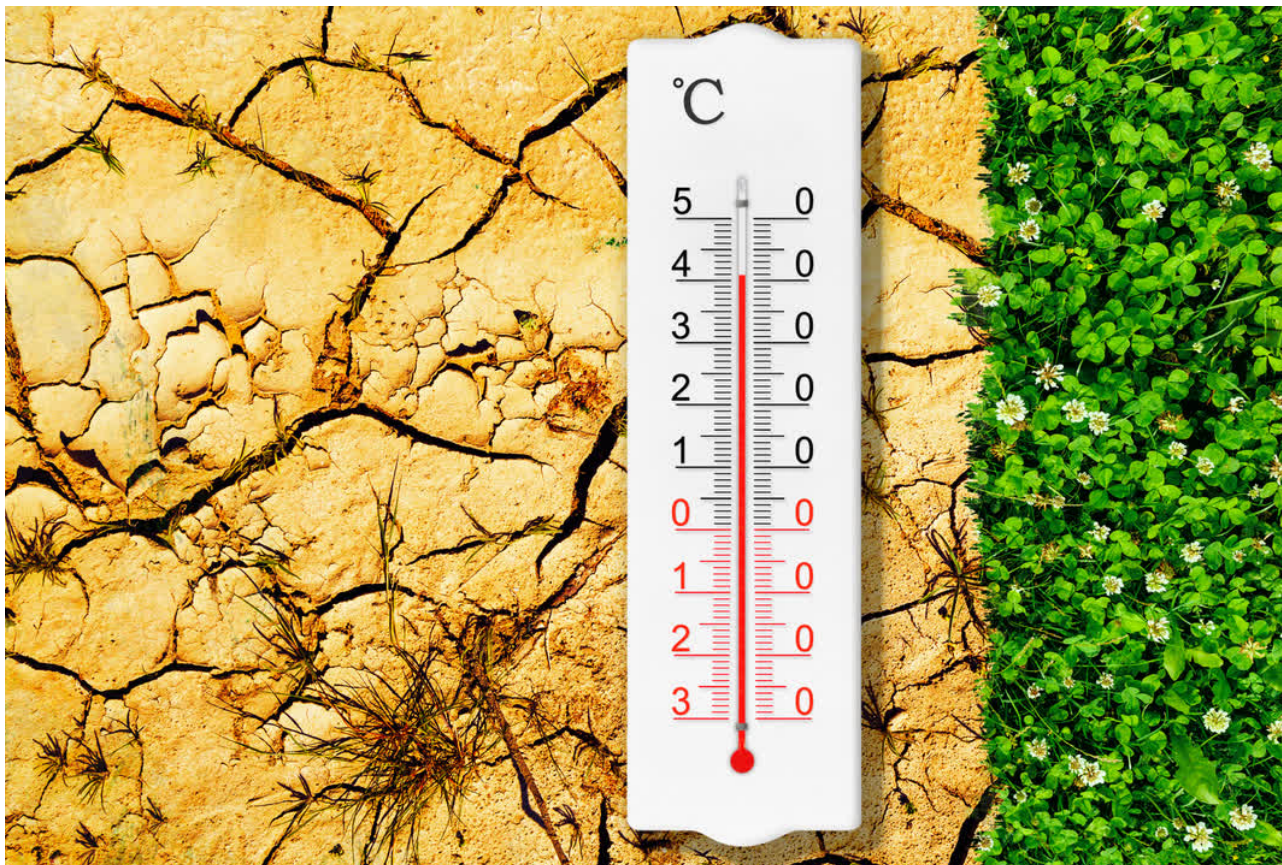
This source also predicts: 'Land-scarce countries with a low land supply response will lose relative competitiveness and increase net imports as increased demand leads to higher land prices (and therefore agricultural prices)'.

It should be noted, however, that due to the complexity of the possibilities, the writers of this study have admitted that in some ways, their projections may err on the pessimistic side, and in others, on the optimistic side.

Moreover, the effects of climate change in agriculture are not simply future problems but affect us in the present.

In 2023, the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology was involved

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ENVIRONMENT CHAMPION

Increase promotion of agriculture in schools

in a project involving tomatoes, but it failed. It was discovered that tomatoes drop their flowers when nighttime temperatures remain above 25 degrees Celsius. These are quite daunting possibilities, but we must take heart to progress towards food security. It is widely known that Barbados imports a large portion of our food. While promising programmes have been instituted to remedy this, such as the Farmers'

Empowerment and Enfranchisement Drive (FEED), I would like to add to the pool of ideas and promote growing food to those who may not have any inclination towards agriculture. We are in what almost presents as a paradox.

The cost expended on necessities could be reduced if we grew more of our own food, but our people are faced with great difficulty in acquiring land on which to grow food due to the high cost of living.

Well, I find it difficult to accept the existence of such a paradox; we are not faced with problems that have no solutions.

We know how to plant food in tyres and plastic barrels, which many of us formerly used as garbage cans.

Thus, we are left with a question - Why do more of our citizens do not engage



in this practice?

I empathise with those who are constrained by time.

This constraint may be the biggest obstacle preventing many people from growing a substantial amount of food.

Some say that time is money; I think that time is an investment.

If you have the physical means to grow food, go for it.

If all goes well, in the future, you may have

more time available.

For example, if someone with two jobs successfully cultivates a few crops, even on a very small scale, eventually, this person may be relieved of the necessity to work two jobs and may be able to decrease the number of hours that they work in a modern conventional setting. If one is of the view that growing crops is just like taking on another job, I would agree that it is work but would encourage us to be open to the therapeutic effects of being surrounded by plants and the rewarding feeling of reaping what we sow. Bear with me as I suggest another possible solution, although it is so often proposed that it may seem to be a cliché.

I must suggest that agricultural sciences and practice in agriculture see an increased level of promotion across schools, both primary and secondary.

However, I do not think that it is wise to

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ENVIRONMENT CHAMPION

What about community agricultural fields?

wait for the maturation of the current or the next generation of children.

Perhaps, communities in urban areas could be allotted nearby plots of land to be divided among the residents for planting.

You have heard of community playing fields, what about community agricultural fields?

In places where this is not feasible, residents could be encouraged to plant using tyres, plastic barrels and plastic bottles.

Demonstrations and basic education in agricultural science and organic farming could be provided in community centres or at open-air events.

Of course, a topic such as this cannot be exhausted without advocating for more Barbadians to be able to acquire 'piece o' de rock'.

Reparations are owed in several ways, land being one of them, and with them, our quest for food security could be made easier.

Globally, we must work together to draw up our plans for resilience in the face of climate change but how can we, if our colleague has taken our pencils and not yet returned them? In the interim, we must persevere.

'If yuh ain' got horse, ride cow.'

Therefore, once we are successfully growing more of our own food with the land we have now, what do we do next?

One crucial step is to safeguard our plants, both food crops and wild, and to increase our knowledge of how to use them.

Unfortunately, we have not always done this well.

Akin to a dog grasping at the reflection in the river of the bone in his own mouth, we lost our indigenous species of cucumber, through our desire for higher yielding hybrids once foreign to our island.

Someone may retort, 'If the yield is higher, it is not merely a reflection of our own'.

I would then remind this person that the reflection in a body of water, especially a moving one, such as a river, is often distorted.

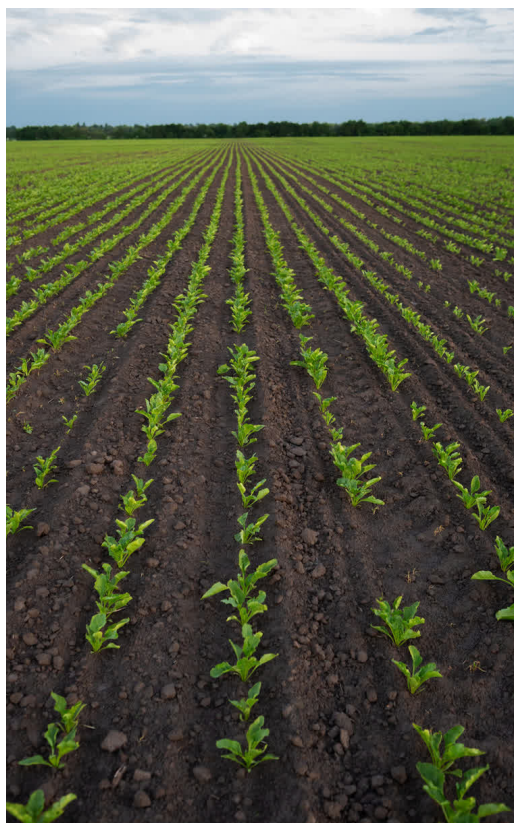
Likewise, our cucumbers were undervalued due to a sole focus on yield.

I believe that part of the value of our own

things is in its just being our own.

In addition to this, in Professor Sean Carrington's book 'Wild Plants of Barbados', he mentioned a few plants that were once 'used as spinach' in our region or that are 'used as spinach' in Ghana.

Regarding our use of the crops we have, we have talked about the nutritional benefits of our national dish but there are more dishes, some that survived the



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ENVIRONMENT CHAMPION

Trees: Beyond the consumption of fruits

trans-Atlantic voyage centuries ago, and some that did not, from which we can learn.

First, we have conkies.

Two of the main ingredients being sweet potato and pumpkin indicate the health benefits but many of us only eat them once a year.

Appearing like our conkies is koki corn, a Cameroonian dish made primarily of fresh corn and spinach.

There are many other foods in different parts of Africa prepared in a similar way, involving pounding, which are healthy and, due to climate similarities, make use of crops very familiar to us.

A prime example is matoke, a traditional Ugandan dish which can be made of mashed green banana or plantain.

While green banana is cooked and eaten here in Barbados, this is an example of how we can do more with what we have.

Another example is plantain fufu, which demonstrates how plantain, which is usually a small side dish for us, can take a more prominent role in our meals.

We also have, in our neighbouring Caribbean territories, dishes such as mango amchar (sometimes called curried mango) made of the fruit of our own land.

As we know, the usefulness of plants extends far beyond consumption.

For example, banana leaves, coconut leaves and other palm leaves can be used to make plates.

Every part of the coconut tree is useful, but lack of knowledge is not our problem in this case, it is lack of action.



Khus khus grass (*Vetiveria zizanioides*) was once used in Barbados to stuff mattresses and is still used as a windbreaker and to reduce soil erosion.

But did you know that it is said to repel flies and cockroaches and that its roots can be used to make perfume?

It is necessary to acknowledge that there are Barbadians who successfully use plants in ways that may seem unconventional to many.

What is lacking is investment to expand these projects and make them beneficial to the whole nation.

If you have read this far and are wondering what all of this has to do with decolonising our economy, stay with me a little while longer.

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ENVIRONMENT CHAMPION

Forests, fields of crops and greener plates



In Barbados, the economy did not diversify after slavery because of the planters' hold on land and labour. In his 1969 thesis, Winston Nicholls, after explaining the movement away from plantations in Jamaica, states: "In Barbados, such was not to be the case. Blessed with abundant supplies of cheap labour, the Barbadian planter was able to reduce his labour costs in what had become a labour-intensive activity... The Barbados economy, just prior to World War II, was fundamentally the same as it had been three hundred years earlier." While our economy is no longer dependent on sugar cultivation, we have a new monoculture problem but now, the focus is not on a crop.

It therefore stands to reason: to decolonise our economy, we must diversify it.

Decolonising our economy also involves an element of self-sufficiency. Agricultural development is a step to achieving both goals.

A 2019 report from the Food and Agriculture Organisation, with reference to the Caribbean, advises: "There is much untapped potential of agriculture for development and poverty reduction in the region."

To conclude, we have seen, dear friends, that there is much to learn from the past and from those around us.

It is imperative that while we utilise what we get from others, we do not neglect the useful things that we have among us.

There are many plants in Barbados which are plentiful, but we underutilise.

We can change this by reclaiming our ancestors' use of crops, as well as integrating proper practices from various parts of our global community.

I do not dream of greener pastures but of forests, fields of crops and greener plates for our people.

Woletta-Israel Yaicob is a sixth form student of Harrison College with a passion for achieving food security, preserving the natural environment and using it appropriately.

Her interests in social and scientific development, coupled with care for her nation and its people, prompted her to write an essay during her summer vacation.

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