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CLAM CULTURE AS PRACTISED ON PONHAM AND MONK
ISLANDS, MANUS

by

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Clams are collected for food in most coastal areas and in several parts of Manus, Ponham Island on the north coast and Monk to the south, they are planted in suitable bays close to the village where they grow quickly and form a food reserve. In time of need, they are also sold in the market for cash.

COLLECTING

During the day, people collect clams 3" - 4" long from near the edge of the reef. Although there are four types of clam, only three are suitable for culture as they may be lifted off the reef; the great clam is best, as it grows fastest, the posser clam and the spotted clam also grow well. Clams taken from the reef are put into the canoe and care is taken to keep them in the shade otherwise the sun may kill them.

PLANTING

As soon as possible after collecting, the clams are taken to the planting site. The clams suitable for planting are put on the bottom in 5' - 6' of water, surrounded by dead coral. Those which are not healthy or have died are kept for food. The clams are planted deep so people don't walk on them and injure themselves or the clams. Sunlight also affects the clam less in deep water.

CULTIVATION

Each man looks after his own clams which are planted in line with well defined land marks. Local names for clams and the size they reach in gardens are: Massal, 13", Hoowi, 8" and Parnoft, 7". A massal 13" long will supply enough meat for about 20 people.

USE

Long green seaweed which grows with the black spot clam may have value in keeping the water well oxygenated and the clams healthy. It is also used as a food. The big muscles of the clam are white and tender, but the mantle meat, of which a part is dark green, has a stronger flavour. It is not used in hotels.

There is a demand in most local markets for clam meat and the use of clams in the local restaurants and hotels here and overseas is increasing. Clam culture has good potential as a cash crop.

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