



**National Agricultural Research Institute**

## **Mulching Vanilla Plants**



**NARI TOKTOK  
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Copies of this toktok and further information  
can be obtained from:



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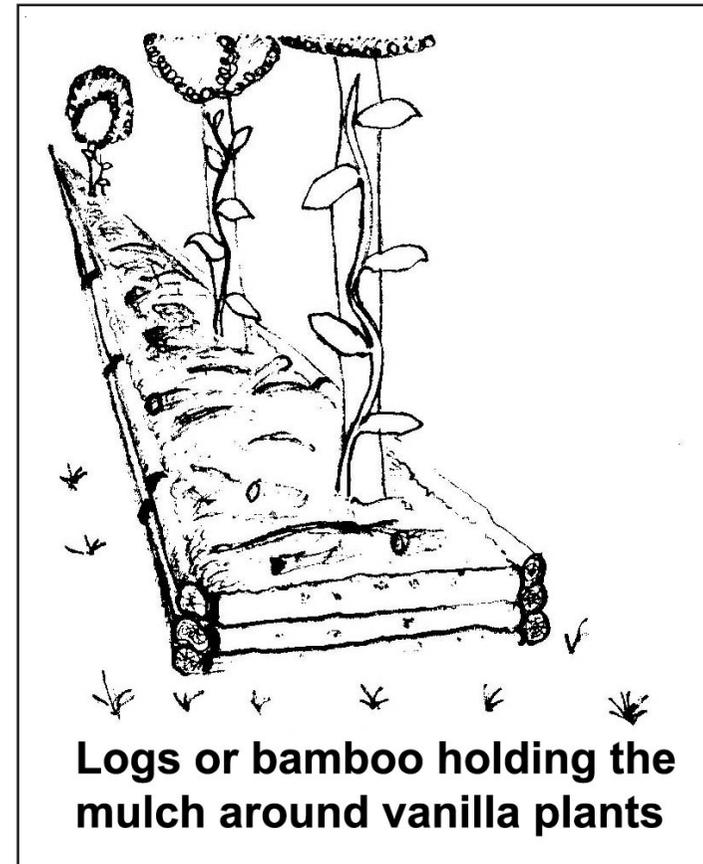
## THE INSTITUTE

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The mission of NARI is to contribute, through applied research and technical services, to the development of the agriculture sector and realisation of the national goals by identifying, adapting and transferring agricultural technologies and information, so as to:

- Enhance the productivity, efficiency and sustainability of the smallholder agriculture, and
- Improve farmer income, food security and welfare of Papua New Guineans and the nation.

**This toktok was written by Gadi Ling, NARI Wet Lowlands Islands Programme in June 2003. The material presented is based on the best information available at the time of printing (November 2003).**



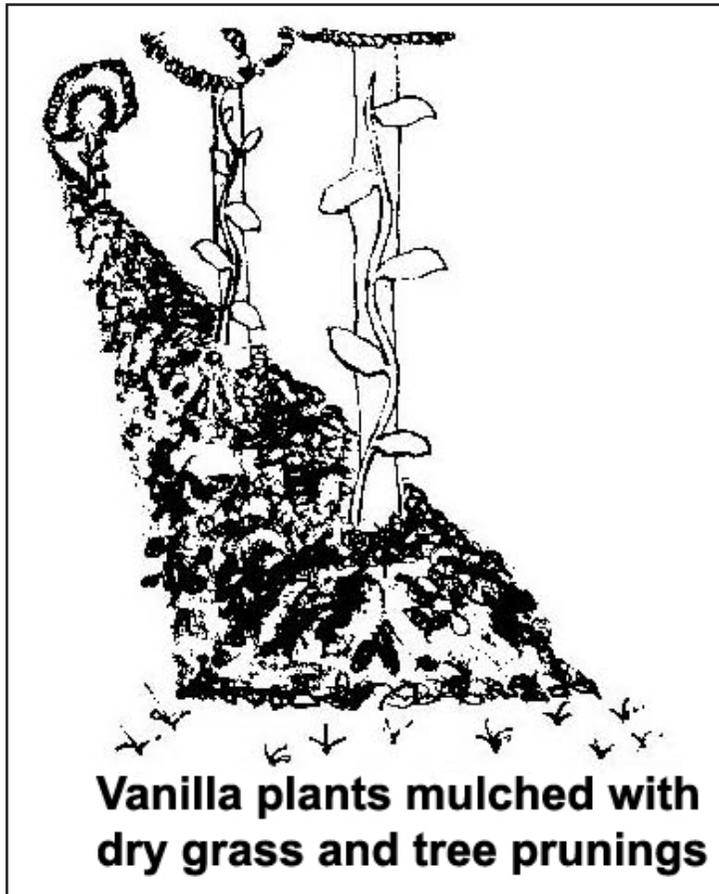
## Mulching Vanilla Plants

Mulching of vanilla is very important for good healthy growth of the vines and production of the beans. Work at NARI LAES Keravat has shown that mulched vanilla plants produce more beans than plants that are not mulched.

Mulching involves putting dried or decaying plant material on top of the soil around the base of the vines. The vanilla roots grow much faster and better in this mulch than in just soil and so get the food (nutrients) and water they need.

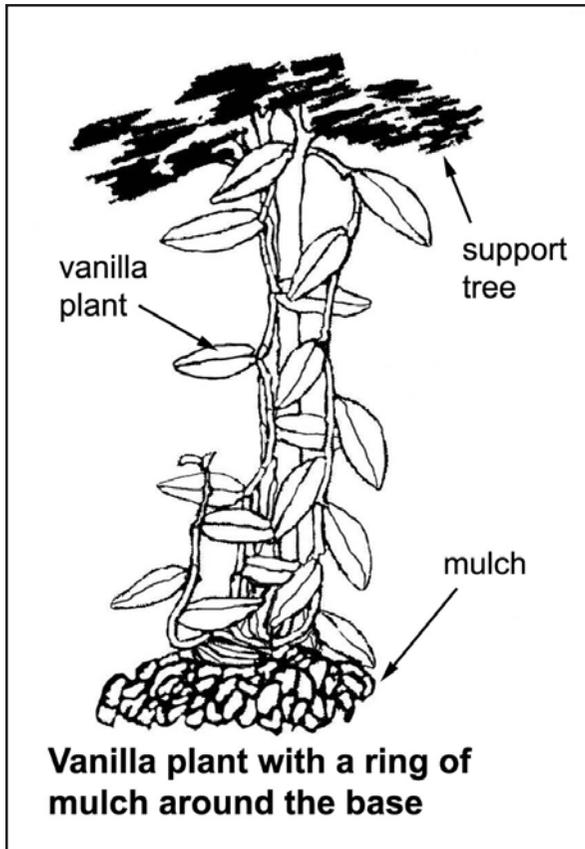
For best results mulching should be done regularly, say every three months. If the nutrient requirements of the vanilla are not looked after properly, the plant will be weak, bean yield will decrease and the plant is more likely to be attacked by diseases.

Any organic material that is readily available can be used as mulch, including coconut husks, leaves and branches from pruned shade trees, cut grass and wood. Care must be taken so that newly cut grass and branches do not touch the vanilla plant as these attract diseases that cause rotting. Also when green mulch begins to rot it gives a lot of heat. Both rot diseases and the



heat produced during the rotting process can cause damage to vanilla vines and roots when in contact with green mulch. So do not use green cut grass or leaves as mulch, let it dry before using it.

The mulch should initially be put as a ring around the base of the vine and the support tree when the vanilla is planted.



As the vines grow, more mulch is added. Eventually the area between the plants in the row should be covered with mulch. The area between the rows can be left unmulched and any weeds or grass that grow, will prevent soil erosion, but these must be kept short by regular cutting so they do not compete with the vanilla.

