

Profitable INVESTING Tips

Stock Market Investing Tips, Techniques, and Resources



Why Grow Coffee in the Shade?

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When you shop for coffee, you have a variety of options. You can buy mass produced ground coffee which is usually the cheapest or whole bean roasted coffee which gives you better freshness and flavor. You can even buy whole bean green coffee and just roast and grind enough for the day's requirements. This gives you one step up in freshness providing that you store the green coffee beans in a cool and dry place and use within three years of when they were picked. But what about organic versus regular coffee or coffee specifically grown in the shade. You may ask yourself why grow coffee in the shade?

How Coffee Grows Naturally

Coffee is a "woody perennial evergreen dicotyledon" and Arabica coffee originated in the highlands of Ethiopia in East Africa. Here it still grows in the southeastern evergreen forests of Harar and Sidarno provinces in the mountains. The plant grows most prolifically among the trees of the forest in partial to full shade. In countries like Colombia, they grow coffee in the shade as well but even when grown on open mountain slopes or with just a few plantain interspersed in the field it is so cloudy and rains so much that the coffee plants are effectively shaded part of the time.

Why Plant Plantain Among the Coffee Plants?

In the Colombian coffee growing axis, the Eje Cafetero, coffee growers commonly grow two crops, plantain and coffee. The plantain provides partial shade and helps prevent erosion on the steep upper slopes where the best Arabica coffee is grown. Coffee that is shaded grows more slowly and results in better flavor. When coffees have been developed to grow in full sun they require more water, fertilizer, herbicides, and pesticides. While the majority of Colombian coffees are not organic or designated as shade grown many are in reality if not in name.

Growing Coffee in the Forest

On the extreme end of the shade grown coffee spectrum are plants intentionally planted in upland forests. Living in a natural environment without the crowding too often seen in commercial coffee fields these plants are healthier. The environment and the water table are preserved. Plants do not dry out and die during dry spells because the forest canopy protects them from the sun and the accumulation of plant debris on the forest floor protects it from drying out too quickly. The spacing of coffee plants among the trees prevents the sort of insect infestations that spread rapidly in plant monocultures such as fields of commercially grown coffee.

Preserving the Ecosystem

When a forest is not clear cut to plant coffee but rather coffee growing there naturally is preserved or planted there the ecosystem of plants, birds, and small animals is not disturbed. The ground water is undisturbed and the birds and animals of the forest help protect the coffee by consuming the pests that would otherwise feast on the coffee. If you would like great coffee and coffee that is grown in such a way as to preserve the natural environment look for shade grown coffee. It is generally a bit more expensive but you will typically be buying a better tasting coffee.

For more insights and useful information about organic coffee, visit www.BuyOrganicCoffee.org.

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