EFFECT OF PLANTING RATE ON FIBER YIELD OF
URENA LOBATA L. AS COMPARED WITH
KENAF, HIBISCUS CANNABINUS L.¹

JULIAN C. CRANE AND JULIÁN B. ACUNA²

Urena lobata L., a plant which is widely distributed in the tropics and sub-tropics, has aroused much interest from time to time for many years in regard to its being utilized as a source of soft fiber suitable for uses in which jute fiber is employed. This plant belongs to the Mallow family (Malvaceae) and it produces a bast fiber which is light in color, soft, silky, and very flexible. The fiber has been utilized for coarse bagging and cloth materials and has been produced in comparatively small amounts in Madagascar, Belgian Congo, Brazil, and other South and Central American countries. Urena lobata in Cuba is called malva blanca, meaning white mallow; while in a localized area of Santa Clara Province it is called Guizazo. In Florida the plant is commonly known as ceasar weed, and is termed by some people French cockle burl.

In December, 1942, a contract was signed by a representative of the Defense Supplies Corporation and the Hershey Corporation for the experimental planting of approximately 5 acres of malva blanca at one of the latter’s sugar centrals. During the first part of August, 1943, when the plantings were approximately 2½ months old, the experiment appeared to be a failure due to irregular seed germination and plant growth; but the field was left undisturbed. In September, however, the plantings were inspected and they presented an entirely different appearance in that plant height was more uniform and seed in all parts of the field had germinated. By December, the plants had attained an average height of 5 feet. When the plots were ready for harvesting, facilities for large-scale retting were not available, but small areas of plants were cut from each of the various plots

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²Associate Agronomist, Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, and Head, Department of Botany, Cuban Agricultural Experiment Station, respectively.