Articles

Agriculture and Soils of the U.S. Virgin Islands

Mary E. Collins and Ellen Craft

The U.S. Virgin Islands, known as “American Paradise,” were purchased from Denmark in 1917. The islands consist of St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix, plus approximately 50 smaller islands. They are located about 1,900 km (1,200 mi) southeast of Miami, FL on the northwest edge of the Lesser Antilles (Fig. 1).

St. Thomas is approximately 80 km² (30 mi²) in size. This island is characterized by irregular coastlines, numerous bays, and steep mountain slopes. Charlotte Amalie, the largest city in the Virgin Islands, is located on St. Thomas (Fig. 2). St. Croix at 220 km² (85 mi²) in size is the largest of the islands. This island is mountainous in the north with a rolling plain in the south. St. John is the smallest of the three main islands (50 km², 20 mi²). The Virgin Islands National Park comprises about two-thirds of St.

Fig. 1. Location of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Source: Hupp (1978).

1Associate professor, G-159 McCarty Hall, Soil Science Dep., Univ. of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611; and extension agronomist, Univ. of the Virgin Islands, St. Thomas, USVI 00802.