

RESEARCH NEWS

GROWTH CHARACTERS AND IMPORTANCE OF APALA (*ARUNDO DONAX*) AS BEAN AND TOMATO STAKES IN SRI LANKA

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Apala, *Arundo donax*, which belongs to the family Poaceae, is an introduced plant to Sri Lanka and originated in the warmer regions of old world. Generally growing to 6m height; in ideal conditions can exceed 10m and having hollow stems of 2-3cm in diameter. Leaves are alternate, 30-60cm long and 2-6cm broad with tapered tip, grey-green in color and have a hairy tuft at the base. It is among the fastest growing terrestrial plants in the world with a growth rate of 10cm per day. This plant grows vigorously and wild in the upcountry wet (UWZ) and intermediate zones (UIZ) and widely used as stakes for pole bean and tomato. The stem can be used as one or two bean stakes after six months growth and can be reused two to three times. Cost of apala stake is less than the cost for other alternatives. The objectives of this study were to investigate the growth factors of this plant and adaptability in up country intermediate and mid country wet zones.

Growth and other characters were studied in UIZ (RARDC, Bandarawela) and MCW2 (HORDI, Gannoruwa). The observed average increase in plant height was 4.39 ± 2.2 cm per day in UIZ and 3.12 ± 2.5 cm was observed in MCW2. Cost of apala stakes for bean for two seasons is less than Rs. 40000 per ha. This species could be also grown in the MWZ to solve the problem of shortage of bean and tomato stakes in the area.