

RESEARCH NEWS

CURRY LEAF PLANT - KARAPINCHA (*Murraya koenigii*) DOUBLE HEDGEROWS AS A BIOLOGICAL SOIL CONSERVATION METHOD

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Double hedgerow (known as SALT) is a popular biological soil conservation method used in dry, intermediate and wet zones of Sri Lanka. *Gliricidia* (*Gliricidia maculata*) is widely used for double hedgerow planting but creates some problems in dry and intermediate zones. Main problems are long recovery period, cost of establishing hedgerows, low drought resistance, slow growth rate after pruning and lack of seedlings for planting material. Hence it causes irreplaceable damage to land. After few years the land has to be vacated. Natural Resources Management Center (NRMC) of DOA conducted a field study to find suitable plants for double hedgerow planting. Curry leaf plant (*Karapincha-Murraya koenigii*) grows in the dry, intermediate and wet zones and observed to be drought resistance. Other advantages are good growth after pruning which, produces plentiful seedlings and is also not damaged by animals.

In addition, it gives a fair income four to five times per year to the farmer. The plant was established in double hedgerows in 3 sites of dry, intermediate and wet zones. As in the SALT method spacing between plants was 30cm and between rows 45cm. Planting was done in a zig-zag manner.

Observations were collected at establishing, plant growth, recovering after pruning, yield, market price and problems encountered. All sites took 10-12 weeks to establish and 6-7 weeks to recover after pruning. Number of harvest was 4-5 times per year. About 1m length of double hedgerow gives 300-400g curry leaves per pick. Farm gate price of curry leaves was Rs 6-7 at all sites.

From dry and intermediate sites (3%-8% slopes) where there were 420-500m of double hedgerows, an income over Rs. 10,000.00 can be earned per acre per year. Wet zone site (30% slope) which had 720m length of hedgerows gave over Rs. 12,000.00. No serious problems were encountered in dry and intermediate zones sites, but in wet zone site, there were some insect and pest damages. Compared to *Gliricidia*, curry leaf plant is disadvantages as it does not provide organic matter to the soil.