

Indigenous techniques to boost acid lime



The acid lime responded well to drip irrigation and the organic package of nutrition and plant protection.

ACID LIME is a profitable crop, and it can be made more promising by adopting some ingenious techniques, according to a farmer-scientist Mr. V. Antonysamy of Chintamani, Puliangudi in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu. He has worked on this crop for well over two decades, and has successfully developed an organic package for getting higher yields from acid lime. "I selected hardy and drought-tolerant wild varieties for the rootstock, and grafted scions of high quality plants of proven performance. A spacing of 7 m by 5 m is adopted, and all the plantings are done following a east-west orientation to harness the full potential of solar incidence," explained Mr. Antonysamy.

The seeds of wild varieties of acid lime, collected from the neighbouring forests, were sown in polythene packets, and when the seedlings were about a year old, the scions from the chosen parents were grafted on them. After conditioning the grafts in the fields, they were planted in the main fields in pits of 60 cm by 60 cm by 60cm. Liberal quantities of organic manure were added to fill the pits. Ideal planting times are February and September. About 260 to 270 plants will be required to cover a hectare.

The progressive farmer has designed his own drip system to deliver 4 litres of water per day per plant in the initial stages of establishment. The water delivery is gradually increased to 30 litres a day as the crop reaches peak yielding from the fifth year of planting. It should go to 100 litres a day during peak summer, according to him. He planted country onion and Giant African marigold around each plant to repel nematodes and other foliar pests.

There were no intercrops, and the fields were weeded regularly. He used organic pest repellents once a fortnight followed by a spray of fish ensilage and cow's urine to promote plant growth. He added about 7 kg compost per plant every six months in the initial stages of crop growth, and it was gradually increased to 10 kg per tree from the second year onwards. The crop began to yield from the third year of planting, and initially an average of only 20 fruits were got from each tree. From the fourth year, each tree yielded 100 fruits on an average. From the seventh year, each tree produced about 2000 fruits a year.

There was fruiting all round the year in his farm and peak yields were got in April-May and August-September, when there were premium prices in the market. "I have trained my trees to synchronized bearing to get the best market price," he said.

The cost of cultivation of acid lime worked out to Rs. 37,500 per hectare in the first year, and cost for maintenance in the second and subsequent years would be about Rs. 15,000 per hectare. The trees can be kept in good stead for about 25 years. The market price for the fruits varied from Rs. 200 per 1000 fruits in peak season and Rs. 500 in the off-season, according to Mr. Antonysamy.

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