

Scientists of IFGTB develop eucalyptus, punnai clones

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

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Coimbatore: The Institute of Forest Genetic and Tree Breeding (IFGTB) at RS Puram here has developed two clones of eucalyptus hybrids that would grow 10% more than the best eucalyptus clone available with the institute now.

The new clones are the result of several years of research by a team of scientists led by D Rajasugunasekar. They worked with interspecific hybrids from three different species - eucalyptus tereticornis, eucalyptus camaldulensis and eucalyptus grandis - to develop the new ones.

Rajasugunasekar said while they had developed 11 clones so far, this was the first time they developed hybrid clones through a means of controlled pollination. "The clones are developed from known father and mother tree species, technically called as full-sib selection."

Another group of scientists led by R Anandalakshmi has, meanwhile, developed six new clones of calop-



FROM LAB TO FARM: While punnai tree varieties from unimproved seed source could yield up to 4.3kg fruit per tree per year, the improved variety could yield up to 6kg fruit

hyllum inophyllum, commonly called as 'tamanu' or 'mastwood' or punnai tree (in Tamil). The trees are cultivated for their fruits that contain high oil content. They are used for skin treatment. While the tree variety from unimproved seed source could yield up to 4.3kg fruit per tree per year, the improved variety could yield up to 6kg fruit.

"Punnai is an environmentally friendly tree, which serves as a good bio-shield on beaches, grows in varied soil types and supports apiculture and agrofo-

restry. It is a beautiful tree for urban forestry and it can be grown along roadsides and highways," Anandalakshmi said.

The new punnai clones have 50% more oil content than the normal ones and starts yielding in six years, which is two years earlier than the normal ones. One litre of pure punnai oil could fetch ₹5,000 to ₹8,000.

CKunhikannan, director, IFGTB, said the variety releasing committee of the Indian Council of Forestry and Research Education approved the clones on Thursday.