

Sandalwood aroma fills Saurashtra

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SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS

- Cultivation of sandalwood does not require permission

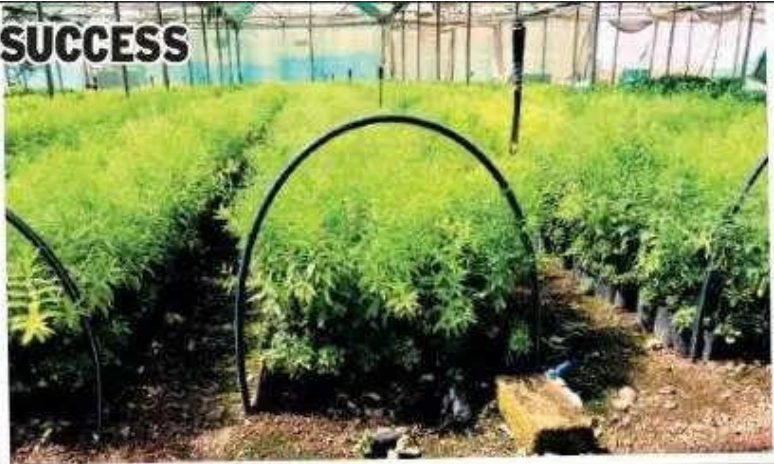
- Harvesting of fully grown tree requires forest department's nod

- Permission is granted easily for trees grown in non-forest private land

- Sandalwood is a parasite plant drawing nutrition from other trees

- Farmers, therefore, cultivate other trees between two sandalwood trees

- A mature tree's height is around 16 meter and it's girth is around 150cms



- It can tolerate high salinity and requires high water intake in first two years only

- Its heartwood gets the highest price, but the softwood too is expensive

- Both wood and oil used in cosmetic, perfume, pharma and soap industry worldwide

Rajkot: Soon, the globe will bask in the fragrance of Saurashtra's sandalwood. While it may still take sometime for the region to compete with the sandalwood basket down South, but promises of its popularity already wafts in the efforts.

In the past years, Rajkot, Jamnagar and Devbhumi Dwarka district farmers started to experiment with sandalwood farming. While they will have to wait for a decade more to smell success, the efforts seem to be going in the right direction. And going by nursery peoples' claims, at least 2,000 farmers in Saurashtra region are expecting to fill their coffers with sweet fragrances.

Madhu Changani has been running a nursery of sandalwood in Dhutarpar village of Jamnagar district for the past few years. He brings seeds from Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and nurtures these in a greenhouse within controlled environment. The saplings are transplanted later in the field.

"Nearly 2,000 farmers in Saurashtra who brought saplings from me and are successfully cultivating sandalwood are connected with me. In forests, sandalwood tree takes 30 years to mature, but if it is cultivated in a planned manner, the tree matures in half the time in 15 years," Changani told TOI.

Sandalwood occupies a premium place in Indian culture and has wide usage in various rituals. Not only the wood, but oil extracted from it too enjoys a huge market in cosmetic, pharmaceutical, aromatherapy and perfumery industry. According to farmers, there are special market yards in Karnataka for the sale of sandalwood. One kilo wood fetches anything between Rs 5,000 and 7,000 price while its oil sells for Rs 1.5 lakh per kg.

Dandalwood cultivation cost is, however, very high. Gordhan Lakkad, farmer of Dhoraji taluka who was honoured by the social forestry circle of forest department said, "Once sowing is completed, it requires only Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000 every year for maintenance." Suresh Moradiya, a farmer of Patanvav village of Dhoraji taluka in Rajkot district has cultivated 600 sandalwood trees in the past five years. "It's a one-time cultivation investment that costs around Rs 20,000 per acre — from digging pits to providing fertilizer. However, farmers who have proper irrigation facility can only take up sandalwood farming, not those who are dependent on monsoon," said Moradiya, Farmer Bhogabhai Dharevada of Lalpur taluka in Jamnagar district has planted 700 sandalwood trees. He said, "For farmers who have vast barren land, this tree comes as a blessing. Even horticulture farmers can cultivate it provided they can spare a few acres for this tree."

Deputy conservator of forest, Rajkot Ravi Prasad Radhakrishna told TOI, "This tree needs special care because it's prone to environmental fluctuation. Even if a few trees don't develop the heartwood, the normal wood too has a good market as it's used in rituals."

Source:<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/rajkot/sandalwood-aroma-fills-saurashtra/articleshow/86435123.cms>