

Micro-irrigation ideal for jasmine cultivation



An enterprising flower grower, Mr. P.Chinnadurai of Thedavur village, Gengavalli taluk of Salem district in Tamil Nadu has laid an ingeniously designed drip system in 25 cents of land for raising jasmine (*Jasminum sambac*) flowers.

"Drip irrigation came in handy to save my jasmine (*Gundu Malli* in Tamil) crop from the drought, and helped in getting higher returns as well," says Chinnadurai. The system, costing about Rs. 2800, helped in conserving water and arresting weeds. The crop, which was planted in June 2001, grew well and gave good yield. "The next year, I could not support the crop due to lack of water in the well, and the impact of drought was so severe that the crop was almost scorched. There was virtually no flowering at all," explains Mr. Chinnadurai.

But in 2003 when the conditions were even worse, he decided to go in for drip system and it had worked well. "After irrigating the jasmine using drip system, I had sufficient water to irrigate another 0.4 hectares of tapioca also," he says. The jasmine crop flowered almost all through the year, except December and January, when the dewfall was high, according to him. The progressive farmer had planted about 1100 plants in 25 cents at an espacement of 1.5 m by 1.5 m. They were planted in pits of 15 cm by 15 cm by 15 cm, and liberal quantities of farmyard manure were added to fill the pits.

Small quantities of major nutrients were added at monthly intervals to encourage plant growth. Micronutrients and plant growth regulators were applied as foliar spray once a month. The plants grew to spreading bushes of 0.5 to 1.0 metres tall, and started flowering from February. Initial yields were about 10 kg a day. The yield gradually increased to a peak of 60 kg in July. It started to decline from August and in December and January, there was no flowering at all, according to him. He got an average price of Rs. 80 a kg of flowers.

The cost of cultivation of jasmine in 25 cents was about Rs. 10,000. If maintained well, the crop could be made to yield regularly for about 15 years. The drip system could also be kept without much damage till

that period, according to him. "One important strategy to get a good price in the market is to manure the crop at least thirty days ahead of the festival season.

Synchronisation of flowering to peak market price is crucial in flower farming. Similarly, if we manure the crop during the waxing phase of the moon, we will get higher flower yields than the normal season," points out Mr. Chinnadurai.

His jasmine crop was growing luxuriantly, and he did not face any pest and disease problems during the last few years of the crop.

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