

## Rumani mango: a farmer's efforts bear fruit



**Mr. Veerabhadran, a mango farmer in Mampakkam village in Tamil Nadu in his orchard.**

MANGO IS a biennial bearer. The tree gives good yield in the first year, which slightly declines in the ensuing year.

Though the tree grows well in a variety of soils, with proper fertilizer applications and good irrigation techniques, the tree can be made to bear fruits every year. Mr. P. Veerabhadran, a farmer from Mampakkam village, Chengalpattu district, Tamil Nadu is a mango farmer who has planted both Banganapalli and Rumani mango varieties in his 0.7 hectares land.

### **Water shortage**

"A decade back I was growing crops such as paddy and vegetables," he said. "Because of severe water shortage and successive monsoon failures I lost a major portion of my crop. "To overcome this problem, I thought of planting alternative crops, which would require less water unlike paddy and decided to plant mango in my field.

At present I have about 250 Banganapalli and 400 Rumani varieties planted in my field. Both the varieties are able to fetch me a tidy income every year," he said.

### **Growing intercrops**

"For the first four years after planting the mango seedlings, I grew a variety of intercrops such as vegetables and groundnuts to supplement income. After harvest the intercrops were ploughed into the soil as green manure," he said. The fruits were plucked only from the fifth year. He had procured the grafts from a local farm and had planted them at a spacing of about 6 feet in straight lines. Before planting, the land was ploughed well by mixing rotten farmyard manure. About 3 cubic m pits were dug

and three-fourth of each pit was filled with about 20 kg of farmyard manure. The mango seedlings were planted in a way that the grafted portion was above the soil surface and the pits were closed with sand and irrigated. Irrigation was mainly done from a tube well and the young seedlings were irrigated once every 5 days. After 3 years of planting, irrigation was done once every 15 days, according to Mr. Veerabhadran.

### **Regular manuring**

The trees were regularly manured during August-September every year with liberal quantities of well rotten farmyard manure and neem cake. Other common practices required for mangoes such as pruning the shoots below the grafted portion, weeding and ploughing the interspaces were also done. For the first 3-4 years the trees were not allowed to flower and if flowering was noticed it was removed manually, Mr. Veerabhadran explained. To protect the trees from pests such as fruit fly and fruit borer, the farmer adopted an indigenous plant protection method. A paste made from the leaves of *Neem*, *Adathoda*, *Pungai*, *Nochi*, and *Perandai* (Tamil names) was soaked in cow's urine for 15-20 days. After 15 days the solution was filtered and then diluted in water (1ml of the paste in 10 ml of water) and sprayed over the crown of the trees.

### **Panchagavya spray**

The fruits were allowed to ripen from the fifth year of planting. When the trees started flowering in the fifth year, liberal quantities of diluted *Panchgavya* were sprayed over the crown, and on the trunks of the trees. Farmyard manure and powdered neem cake were added around the base at a distance of about two feet of the tree trunk in circular pits during the monsoon, explained Mr. Veerabhadran.

### **Total expenditure**

"I had spent about Rs 15,000 per hectare for growing, harvesting the intercrops, tree maintenance, and labour. I am expecting a harvest of 8-10 tonnes of Rumani fruits this year," he said. Rumani mangoes come to the market usually at the end of the mango season and fetch a good price when most of the other varieties lapse.

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