

Mango ginger: a suitable crop for the islands

Introduction

Commonly known as *Aam haldi* or *aam adrak*, mango ginger is a multipurpose species with use as spice, condiment, vegetable, medicine and in perfumery and cosmetic industry. It is characterized by presence of raw mango like aroma, due to which it is known as mango ginger. It is made into culinary preparations such as pickles, chutneys, sauces and salad. It is reportedly used in the treatment of asthma, bronchitis, hiccoughs and skin diseases in traditional systems of medicine including Ayurveda. Two species are found growing in different parts of the islands, which are known as mango ginger. Being naturally distributed in Andaman islands there is a good potential for cultivation of this crop.

Site selection

Mango ginger is found growing on variety of soils including marginal lands. Selected soil should be porous with good drainage. It performs well in open as well as shady conditions and hence, it is a suitable species for intercropping in the existing coconut and arecanut plantations.

Propagation and planting

Healthy seed rhizomes are taken out of soil/ storage and are used for planting. Small pieces of 20 to 25g are used for planting (1.5 to 2.0 t of seed rhizomes per hectare area). Raised beds of about 1.2 m wide, 15-20 cm height and of suitable length should be prepared during March-April. Well decomposed farmyard manure is applied at the rate of 20-25 t/ ha and mixed into the soil while preparing the beds. Rhizome bits are planted at a spacing of 25 to 30 cm and 4-5 cm depth before onset of rainy season and are covered with soil.

Aftercare

Crop grows well with the application of organic manures. About 20-25 t/ha of farm yard manure could be used during planting. For homestead farming, fallen leaves, kitchen wastes and other biomass could be recycled. Irrigation is not required as the crop completes its active life during rainy season itself. If established properly, plants grow vigorously and weed growth is limited to a considerable extent. However, to support the rhizome growth, two hand weeding are required. To prevent exposure of rhizomes to sun, earthing up is followed to cover up the exposed rhizomes, especially during the heavy rains.

Harvesting and yield

Crop comes to harvest after about 6-8 months and the maturity of crop is judged by the drying of leaves. When all the leaves are dried, rhizomes are carefully lifted out using a spade to avoid any damage. Yields vary with growing conditions and about 20-30 t/ha fresh rhizomes could be harvested. The harvested rhizomes are washed with water to remove any dirt and shade dried for 2-3 days so that the outer layer dries up and helps in extending the shelf life. For seed rhizome purpose, rhizomes could be left un-harvested in the soil till next season or could be stored in sand beds and protected from water to avoid any rotting.

