

A Preliminary Study to Investigate the Potentials of Incorporating Medicinal Plants in to Dry Zone Homegardens.

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In Sri Lanka, More than 500 species of native flora have been used in traditional medicine and at least 189 are endemic. Medicinal plants are commonly used in the treatment of ailments. But the total collection meets only 40% of demand and the rest is imported. Medicinal plants are threatened by several means. To conserve them, cultivation is much important. Since a large number of medicinal plant species are naturally grown, a huge potential with dry zone.

For the preliminary survey, Bandarapuliyankulama village in Anuradhapura District was selected. Simple random sampling was done to select 20% of the households. A questionnaire survey was carried out together with direct field observations.

This is primarily an agricultural area where the main crop is paddy. The average family size is 4.2 and over 55% are receiving less than Rs.15000.00 per month. All are having some kind of knowledge on medicinal preparations and the main source for plants is homegardens. All are having a homegarden and majority is well matured. Most of the people spend more than one hour per day with their homegardens

All are interested in cultivating medicinal plants either in large scale (29%), small scale (21%) or both (14%). In homegarden analysis, only 21% are consist of less than 10 medicinal plant species, 29% are with 10-20 species, and 50% consist of over 30 medicinal plant species. Ginger was suggested as the best to be grown commercially. Lack of water, planting material and lack of technical knowledge were the constraints and their suggestions were to provide with knowledge, planting material and enough water supply.

It is clear that, cultivation of medicinal plants could be promoted if relevant needs are supplied. Since this is a preliminary survey, further information should be collected in other areas too.

***Key words:* Homegardens, Medicinal plants, Households**

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