

Institute develops guide to raise saplings of great pedigree

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Saplings seen in a mother bed inside the chambers at the IFGTB campus in Coimbatore. Photo courtesy: IFGTB.

It identifies 15 species and develops products to protect them from pests. Pure breed and pedigree species are normally confined to the world of pets. Now, from the Coimbatore-based Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB), one can get high-quality saplings, whose lineage could be traced to great ancestors.

Talking about the 'Seed Bank', a new initiative, institute Director N. Krishnakumar told *The Hindu* that his institute identified mother trees and collected seeds and branches from them. The collected branches are then raised in beds, using fertigation (fertilisers mixed in water). Once they grow, branches are periodically cut and transplanted. By adopting this technique, more shoots could be produced and raising the saplings in a bed could reduce the space requirement for nursery and time for production, Dr. Krishnakumar said.

A total of 15 species of trees outside the forests such as Ailanthus, Kumizh, Malai Vembu, Moongil, Poovarasu, Kadhambam

and Thekku to name a few, were identified by the institute for raising the saplings.

With the available beds, the institute would be able to produce 5 lakh seedlings in three months. The institute would also raise seedlings on request from farmers or industry.

Citing the example of Malai Vembu, Dr. Krishnakumar said there was a great demand for this species for making plywood veneers. So the farmers could take the saplings from us without bothering about their quality, he said.

Normally when saplings of trees such as teak or malai vembu are raised no guidance is available for farmers in case the trees are attacked by pests or insects. In order to overcome this problem, the institute has developed half-a-dozen products such as bio-pesticides, bio-boosters, bio-fertilizers, Fixers and Mobilizers. All these products were made organically and with a view to enhancing the growth of seedlings, he said. Most of the research work finds a mention in a scientific publication or presented at a workshop or seminar. In order to directly reach out to farmers, the institute had started the seed bank initiative, which would also help in creating a link with industry.

Those interested in the seedlings can contact 0422-2484100 or write to: dir_ifgtb@icfre.org

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