

# Fast growing Red Sanders to be developed

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**Coimbatore:** The Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB) is attempting to come up with superior models of red sanders, an endangered and native species in the Eastern Ghats, which grow faster and have a better heartwood, providing better timber and dyes.

Since red sanders is under severe threat in its native range, because of exploitation and poor regeneration, several state forest departments including that of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, have taken efforts to raise plantations of red sanders in several places other than its natural ranges in the last 50 years.

Though good growth was reported, heartwood content was very. Heartwood is the main economic part in red sanders. The tree is a slow-growing species, taking between 75

## GREEN TREASURE | Red sanders is under severe threat due to exploitation and poor regeneration

**Scientific name**  
*Pterocarpus santalinus*

### Characteristics

- ▶ Rich red colored wood
- ▶ 8m to 11m tall
- ▶ Girth is between 50cm to 150cm

### Time taken to attain maturity

- ▶ 75 to 100 years

**Found in:** Eastern Ghats of South India



### Medicinal properties:

- ▶ Acts as anticoagulant
- ▶ Improves blood circulation
- ▶ Has anti-hyperglycemic properties
- ▶ Used in astringents administered for bleeding, dysentery, piles

and 100 years before it can be harvested. (It must reach a girth of at least 70 to 80cm to avail its red coloured heartwood).

IFGTB scientists are selecting trees to find a variety of the species that would mature with in half that period. "It is possible to bring down the duration to 35-40 years with the combination of tree breeding and silviculture. In many plantations we have seen trees reach har-

vestable girth with in 40 years. But we are trying to reduce the growth period even further," said Dr. Maheshwar Hegde, senior scientist and red sanders researcher at IFGTB.

"This is the only way we can make red sander plantations attractive to farmers. Nobody wants to invest in something which will not yield with in their lifetime," said R S Prashanth, director, IFGTB.

Red Sanders grows in wild and is native to five regions in Andhra Pradesh, namely Chittoor, Kadappa, Nellore, Prakasam and Karnool. However, it is globally valued with some countries like Japan and China willing to pay up to ₹70lakh per tonne. Given its value, its felling became rampant, leading to the quality and quantity of the species dropping.

A survey commissioned by the Ministry of Forests and Environment and conducted by IFGTB between 2011 and 2012, found that good quality red sanders trees had disappeared over time in its natural ranges.

"We found that natural population exists in four lakh hectares in Andhra Pradesh. However, natural regeneration has been affected due to fires, grazing and illegal felling of mature trees," said Dr. Hegde.

"Plantations of red sanders to the extent of more than 2500 hectares

have also been raised by Tamil Nadu Forest Department over the last 50-60 years and similarly Andhra Pradesh Forest Department also has raised plantations in various locations over many years.," said Dr. Hegde, who had taken up this study.

"However, higher girth class trees had gone, in many areas natural regeneration is affected due to fires, grazing and illegal felling of mature trees."

The IFGTB study recommended that "Any future plan of harvest of red sander wood and export should be from cultivated sources like forest department plantations and trees growing in farm land. Therefore, systematic tree improvement programs need to be initiated to make the cultivation of this slow growing tree highly profitable," said Prashanth.

Red sanders seedlings can be bought from the forest department nurseries.