

Wescorp Joins Hands with Sri Jayewardenepura University on Sandalwood Research in Sri Lanka

Wescorp Sandalwood Ltd and Sri Jayewardenepura University, Sri Lanka have collaborated in a research project to study the oil formation of Sri Lankan Sandalwood (*Santalum album* Linn.). This research is a part of much larger study aimed at selecting suitable strains and nursery development to support the Sri Lankan sandalwood industry. Recently the private sector in Sri Lanka commenced growing commercial sandalwood plantations in order to increase the Sandalwood oil production. Remote villagers from Sri Lanka's hill country have been seeking for a Sandalwood market for a long time and these findings will help establish themselves as authentic suppliers of natural Sandalwood, utilizing their own garden plantations. Unfortunately, a limited amount of research has been conducted in Sri Lanka on Sandalwood and therefore the information and the knowledge is not readily available.

In order to fill the knowledge gap mentioned above, a research titled "Nursery establishment and oil formation of sandalwood" has been started at the Department of Forestry and Environmental Science of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura of Sri Lanka in collaboration with Wescorp Sandalwood Pty Ltd of Australia. This research is initiated as an honours research project conducted by Ms. Manuri Gamage who is a BSc Special Degree Student in Forestry and Environmental Science under the supervision of Dr. Upul Subasinghe (Senior Lecturer, Department of Forestry and Environmental Science) and Mr. Dhanushka Hettiarachchi (Research Scientist, Wescorp Sandalwood Pty Limited). Achievements of this early study will lead the pathway to postgraduate and industrial research projects in future.

This research is conducted to achieve the following objectives:

- i. Variations of oil formation within sandalwood trees and between geographic regions in Sri Lanka
- ii. Seed germination capacity vs. seed storage time
- iii. Effectiveness of different seed treatments on germination
- iv. Effectiveness of seedling host species in the nursery stage

There is a belief in Sri Lanka that all Sandalwood trees do not produce Sandal oil. Moreover, the oil percentage of mature trees growing in different geographical conditions is not known. The first objective of this research will provide the answers for these matters. Wescorp Sandalwood provides the technical advices/support in finding the most suitable oil extraction method to achieve this objective. Wescorp Sandalwood has been a known research contributor to Sandalwood industries around the world, especially in Western Australia.

The other three objectives have been formulated to identify the best nursery practices for Sandalwood. Finally it is expected that the present study will generate valuable information that can be effectively used in establishing commercial Sandalwood plantations in Sri Lanka.