

Cymbopogon pendulus (Nees ex Steud) Wats.



Family : Poaceae

Vernacular Names

English : Jammu lemongrass

Malayalam : Jammu inchippullu

Distribution and habitat: Plant is frost resistant and suited to Sub-Himalayan areas of North India.

Botany: It is white stemmed and dwarf in nature. Leaves linear and lanceolate.

Uses: It is used in flatulence, digestive disorders, fever, menstrual disorder, rheumatism and other joint pains.

Agro-technology:

Soil & Climate: Plant is frost resistant and suited to Sub-Himalayan areas of North India. Lemongrass flourishes in a wide variety of soil ranging from rich loam to poor laterite. In sandy loam and red soils, it requires good manuring. Calcareous and water-logged soils are unsuitable for its cultivation. Both species can be grown on a range of soils and it appears that good drainage is the most important factor. Plants growing in sandy soils have higher leaf oil yield and citral content.

Propagation: It is generally propagated through seeds. Lemongrass seeds have dormancy of a few weeks and they lose viability in a few months.

Manures and Fertilizers: Spent lemongrass compost at 10 t /ha and wood ash at 2 t /ha, which are obtained as by-products of grass distillation are applied at time of bed formation. Lemongrass requires 275 kg N, 50 kg P₂O₅ and 175 kg K₂O/ ha/ annum.

Irrigation: In case of drought, crop should be irrigated every alternate day for about a month after planting. It is recommended that 4 to 6 irrigations are given during February to June under North Indian conditions for optimum yield.

Harvesting: Harvesting is done by cutting grass 10 cm above ground level with sickles. Number of harvests in a year depends on climatological factors like temperature, rainfall and humidity and level of soil fertility. Generally crop thrives best in humid condition. Cutting can begin as soon as night dews have evaporated from plants, as wet grass left for later distillation quickly ferments. Sunny days are preferable, since cloudy and misty conditions tend to depress leaf oil content.

Pests & Diseases

A few pests are reported in this crop. Infestation by spindle bug (*Clovia bipunctata*) has been observed in Kerala and severe damage by a stem boring caterpillar of *Chilotrea* sp. under North Indian conditions is reported. Spraying mercaptothion (0.2%) controls insects. Nematodes like *Tylenchorhynchus vulgaris*, *Rotylenchulus reniformis*, *Helicotylenchus* spp. and *Pratylenchus* spp. also infect the grass.

Brown top disease causes browning and curling of affected leaves. This is a physiological disease resulting from low water content of grass at end of dry season. Symptoms of rust disease of lemongrass causing elongated, stripe like, dark brown lesions on both sides of leaf surfaces have been described. Leaves become smaller in size and flowers in inflorescence get converted to very small leaves in case of little leaf caused by virus. Removal and destruction of such plants should be resorted to, to reduce spread of disease and avoid collecting seeds from such plants.