

Nirmala Gunapala^a and S.L. Amarasiri^b

^aCentral Agricultural Research Inst., Gannoruwa
^bRegional Agricultural Research Centre, Bandarawela

Green manuring of rice soils has been a common practice in Sri Lanka from ancient times. With the introduction of chemical fertilizers this practice has declined quite significantly. Yet a considerable awareness exists today on the need for increased use of organic matter to sustain the productivity of rice soils.

A research programme on green manures was therefore initiated with the initial objective of studying the current green manuring practices in the country.

Investigations in Kandy, Kegalle, Matale and Nuwara Eliya districts revealed that although many farmers regularly add green manures, as many as 90% of them add to rice nurseries only. At the present rate of application the direct plant nutrient contribution of green manures to the soil is very small.

More than 25 species of plants were identified as being used as green manures in rice cultivation. Following are a few, most favoured by farmers :- *Tithonia diversifolia* (Naththasooriya or Tiththa), *Gliricidia sepium* (Wetahira), *Aleurites moluccana* (Kekuna), *Thespesia populnea* (Gansooriya), *Erythrina* sp. (Erabadu), *Croton laccifer* (Keppetia).

The main purpose for the addition of green manures seems to be to facilitate nursery bed preparation and for easy uprooting of rice seedlings. *Microglossa ceylanica* (Pupala), *Wickstroemia canescens* (Nahadunu), and *Pongamia pinnata* (Karada) are some of the green manuring plants with insecticidal properties.