

B-16: Use of callused cuttings on growth and performance of tea (*Camellia sinensis* L.) nursery plants

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The recommended method of direct planting of single node cuttings in nursery bags is often a problem particularly in the tea smallholding sector, as they have to depend on tea shoots from outside sources. Shoots may be damaged during transportation and also, when the shoots are available, nursery bags may not be ready for planting as a relatively longer period is required for fumigation of soil and filling bags etc.

An experiment was conducted at the TSHDA Central Regional Extension Centre, Sooriyagoda nursery, to study the suitability of callused cuttings for propagation of tea nursery plants. Two clones i.e. TRI 2023 and TRI 2025, were compared at 4 duration of callusing i.e. 0, 6, 8 and 10 weeks before transplanting callused cuttings in nursery bags, they were left out for different time periods in specially prepared cadjan baskets to simulate different transport intervals i.e. 8, 12 and 24 h.

Callusing for 6 weeks in the callus bed was not significantly different from direct planting of cuttings. Also, simulated transport time did not have any significant effect on the growth of tea nursery plants. Callused cuttings were distributed among some tea smallholding nurseries in the mid country and the performances of these cuttings regularly monitored. The results were very encouraging. Therefore, use of callused cuttings may be a solution to raise good quality planting material, particularly in the tea smallholdings sector.