

## **B-145: A new method for large scale multiplication of citronella**

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Citronella industry in Sri Lanka is facing a crisis due to lack of demand in the world trade as well as in the local market owing to the low quality of oil (<75% of total geraniol) obtained from the present cultivation of 'Heen pengiri" (*Cymbopogon nardus*). The productivity of these is very low. Therefore to uplift the citronella industry the Department of Export Agriculture has launched a programme of replanting the uneconomic Heen pengiri lands with high quality Maha pengiri type (Ks 11). A problem encountered in promoting this variety was the lack of planting material. In the traditional method of propagation 2-3 suckers are directly planted in a single planting point. From a 2 year old citronella clump about 100 suckers could be obtained and only 40 planting points could be filled by the traditional method. Therefore this propagation study was carried out in order to find out a suitable method of multiplying the Ks 11 Maha pengiri type from its limited stock of planting material available.

Use of pre-rooted stem cuttings and the traditional method of propagating citronella was tested in Kundasale and Matara Research Stations. The percentage establishment and the growth rate were recorded. The results of the study showed that 2-4 cm long stem cuttings kept in moistened coir dust about 5 days for rooting and propagated in a nursery bed for 8 weeks, could be field planted successfully with a higher rate of establishment (98%) than in the traditional method (91.7%). By this new method 400 plants could be raised by one clump of citronella within 8 weeks.