

INTRUCTION:

Ashoka(*Saroca asoca*) is a native of Indo-Malaysian and Srilanka. It is a evergreen tree, reaching to an height of 6 to 9mts. It is noted for its medicinal value. Ashoka bark is used for urinary and gynecological disorders. Karnataka Indian systems of Medicine Manufactures of Association(KIMMA) claims to use 30,000kg of Ashoka bark per year in Karnataka alone in the preparations of various medicinal formulations. Because of high demand and other ecological reasons *Saroca asoca* has attained the status of 'Endangered' as per IUCN. Till date it was thought that the mode of propagation is through seeds. During visit to Kadra Range of Karwar division it was observed that even from the cuttings of 10 cm girth of *Saroca asoca* can be used for propagation.

Rising demand and depleting natural habitat has caused decrease in *Saroca asoca* population. However, limited efforts have been made to rise the plantation of Ashoka . Hence, newly found means of vegetative propagation can be adopted for raising more Ashoka plantations.

Saroca (Roxb.) De Wilde

Syn; *Saraca indica* sensu Baker, auct. Non.L.

Family: Caesalpinaceae

Asokah, Gatasokah(San.)

Asokamara, seethemara (kan.)

DISTRIBUTION

Moist deciduous to evergreen forests especially, along shady slopes and riversides. Globally distributed in the Indo-Malaysian region and Srilanka. Within India its distribution is confined to the moist zones of Western and Eastern Ghats (Peninsular India), sub-Himalayan tracts (Uttar Pradesh to Arunachal Pradesh) and Eastern India (Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and North Eastern states). Altitude from 400 to 1000mts.

DESCRIPTION

A handsome tree, reaching a height of 6-9 m or more. Crown dense with horizontally spreading branches. Bark dark-brown to almost black, rough with raised horizontal lines of lenticels, fibrous inside. Leaves alternate, paripinnate, glabrous, leafy almost to the base, red when young, leaflets 3-6 pairs, oblong-lanceolate to ablong, dropping when young, margin entire, glabrous. Flowers bisexual, fragrant, orange on opening, turning scarlet, calyx yellowish orange to scarlet, petals usually none. Pods black, compressed, tapering at both ends. Coriaceous or almost woody glabrous, veined, continuous within. Seeds 4-8, slightly compressed, shiny and glabrous.

Flowering: February to June; Fruiting: August to September. Stray flowers seen almost throughout the year.

MEDICINAL USES

A decoction of the bark is reported to be used in treating uterine affections and gynecological problems. Bark is also used in treating dysentery, pimples and fever. Leaves are used as blood purifier. Flowers are useful in treating burning sensation, bleeding piles, dysentery and scabies. The seeds taken with water is supposed to alleviate suppression of urine, calculus and bone fractures.

TRADE INFORMATION

Pieces of stem bark are sold under the name Ashoka or Ashoka chaal at Rs.150 to 300. Stem bark of *Shorea robusta* and *Polyalthia longifolia* are used as common adulterants.

PROPOGATION

It can be propagated through seeds and vegetative.

Seed propagation

Seeds are collected from mature pods, as soon as they are fully developed and when they are still green., i.e., in September. The seeds retain viability for about 2 months and so should be sown soon after collection. Fresh seeds are dibbled into raised nursery beds. Germination takes about 15 to 20 days and varies from 50 to 100 percent. About 80 percent of the seedlings establish.

Vegetative propagation

A farmer by name Shri. Govindappa in Kadra range has used the cuttings of 10cms girth as live hedge around his house and agricultural field. The results are found encouraging. It is not reported in any literature regarding propagation of *Saraca indica* through cuttings, this may be the first report for this species.

TRANSPLANTING AND AFTERCARE

The seedling in the first year grow only 25 to 30 cm high. These one year old seedlings can be planted during rainy season in pits of 45 cm³. The growth in the field is slow in the first two years, increasing about 30 to 45 cm in height in the meantime. In the third season, there is a spurt in growth and increase in height. Protection should be ensured against frost and insect pest attacks

THREAT STATUS

Its Red list Status has been assessed as “Endangered” for Karnataka .