

Patchouli

Harvesting

The first harvest of the crop is taken about 5 months after transplanting. The stage at which crop has to be harvested is very important for good yield and better quality of oil. It has to be harvested when the foliage becomes pale green to light brownish and when the stand emits characteristic patchouli odour, which could be easily smelt by a passer-by, especially in the morning hours. Subsequent harvest can be taken after every 3-4 months depending upon the local conditions and management practices. The crop can be maintained for about 3 years. The first 2 or 3 harvests of newly planted plantation give good yield and high quality oil. Harvesting is done with the help of small sharp shear or secateur. Usually the length of the harvested portion ranges from 40-60 cm. It is necessary to leave 4-6 juvenile sprouting buds at the basal region for fast regeneration, while harvesting. The crop should not be harvested prematurely as it gives less yield and oil of inferior quality.

Yield :

The oil is found mainly in the leaf and small quantity is present in the ender parts of the stem. The yield of fresh leaves/ha/year from three harvests is about 8,000kg which on shade drying reduces to 1600kg and on distillation yields about 40kg of oil. The yield of oil varies from 2.5 to 3.5% on shade dry basis of the leaves and an average yield of 2.5% may be considered satisfactory in commercial distillations.

Uses :

The oil of patchouli is used so extensively it is very difficult to specify its field of application. It blends well with sandalwood, germanium, vetiver, ionones, cedar wood derivatives, clove oil, lavender, bergamot and many others. The oil is almost a perfume by itself. It is widely used in soap, cosmetic, tobacco and incense. The oil gives one of the finest attars when blended with sandalwood oil. The oil possesses antibacterial activity and it is used as an ingredient in insect repellent preparations. The leaves and tops are added in bath for their anti-rheumatic action. It is also used as a masking agent for alcoholic breath. Tenacity of odour is one of the virtues of patchouli oil and is one of the reasons for its versatility.