

Status and distribution of wicker willow in Kashmir

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Studies were conducted on status and distribution of wicker willow, locally known as *Veer kani* in Kashmir. Wicker willow plantations were found in all districts of Kashmir except Kupwara. Pulwama district had maximum average land holding of 0.80 ha and minimum in Srinagar (0.40 ha/family), concentration of plantation varied from district to district; maximum in Eastern Srinagar and Northern district Baramulla. Maximum families (23) were involved in Srinagar and minimum in Budgam (7). Maximum land holding/family under wicker willow was highest in Srinagar (0.12 ha) and lowest in Pulwama (0.07 ha/family). Maximum yield/ha of wicker willow was in Srinagar (12.69 t/ha) and minimum in Anantnag 11.20 t/ha. Subsequently, wicker willow contributed about 35.34% to the farmers average income in Srinagar as against lowest of 1.27% in Pulwama. *Salix triandra* L. was found grown in all districts except Kupwara. In addition to *Salix triandra* L., two more species *Salix dickymat* L. and *Salix rubra* L. were also cultivated in district Srinagar. Number of processing units varied from district to district and was maximum in Srinagar and Baramulla as against the minimum in Budgam, Anantnag and Pulwama.

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Wicker willow, locally known as *Veer kani* in Kashmir is best known representative of family Salicaceae. Wicker is the name commonly given to the one year old sticks that result from the willow prune. Generally, it is grown in the cool, fertile, irrigated lands as it requires large quantities of water, though it can with stand cold winter frost¹. The willows hybridises between the trees of different types within species with complementary sex and thus makes the process of identification difficult so different species have different features in heights, bark colour, leaves, etc². The wicker willow is worked on short-rotation coppice for production of pliable branches used for baskets, hurdles and fascines, etc.³. The long branches of the wicker willow are cut out after one year growth and processed in boiling water, then their bark is peeled off to make the rod water proof and more durable and the wickers are provided as raw material to small scale industries of Kashmir for the manufacturing of chairs, tables, sofa sets, baskets of various shapes and designs, flower vases and a variety of other fancy items². So far no scientific documentation on wicker willow in Kashmir has been done. Therefore, the study was

under taken on status and distribution of wicker willow in Kashmir to know concentration, yield, processing units and species of wicker willow.

Methodology

The study was carried out in the Division of Forestry, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir, Shalimar Srinagar during 2005-06. Detailed survey at block level of all the districts of Kashmir valley was carried out and the observations regarding status, distribution, concentration, yield processing units and species of wicker willow in the area were recorded besides information was also collected for its socio-economic impact. Four blocks were randomly selected in each district which accounted for about 64.91% of the total sampling area in each block, four villages and subsequently 4 sites in each village were selected randomly for taking observations (4x4x4)=64 sampling units/district. The information was collected through questionnaire, transit walk and informal interview methods. Among these methods, transit walk gave more scope to discuss with farmers freely in their farm plantations while walking through their farms – problems and prospects of raising and processing up of raw material yield were discussed.

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In questionnaire method, both open and close ended questions were asked for getting the information other than informal interview method only open ended questions were asked for getting the information.

Results and discussion

Data of survey conducted of all the six districts of Kashmir on status and distribution of wicker willow in Kashmir is depicted (Tables 1&2). Wicker willow grows throughout valley except district Kupwara, although its concentration varied from place to place. The wicker willow plantation was found in wet lands as well as those pockets where chances of flood were prevalent; farmers cultivated these plantations in paddy lands where frequent irrigation was available. Besides, it was found on the boundaries of fruit orchards and on the bunds of paddy fields, so it clearly indicates that wicker willow has higher profitability than rice cultivation. The farmers also grew such cuttings as soil binding agents on the bunds of paddy fields which suggest that such cultivations can be used in agroforestry system.

Data also revealed that Pulwama district had maximum average land holding of (0.80 ha) and minimum in Srinagar (0.40 ha) per family but the annual income per ha was highest in Srinagar (Rs. 62, 890) followed by Baramulla (Rs. 56,190), Budgam (Rs. 54,289), Anantnag (Rs. 53,809), Pulwama (Rs. 52,890) and minimum in Kupwara (Rs. 44,285). This indicates that average income per family was not directly correlated with average land holding of the family, which suggested that agriculture farming system plays an important role in generating income. The data also revealed that in district Srinagar, maximum number of family (23) were involved in wicker willow cultivation, area (0.12 ha), rod/withies yield (12.69 t/ha), income and sale rate/tonne of wicker willow whereas, minimum number of families were found in Budgam (7), area in Pulwama (0.07 ha.), yield in Anantnag (11.20 t/ha), income in Pulwama (Rs. 5,436.49) and rate/tonne also in Pulwama and Anantnag (Rs. 30,000). The highest rate/tonne was obviously due to the fact that maximum cottage industrial units were located in Srinagar with readily available market. The average per cent of income contributed by wicker willow/family/year was found to be maximum for district Srinagar, where it contributed 35.34% and minimum in Pulwama 10.27% due to reason of having maximum average land holding/ ha under wicker willow and rate/tonne.

Table 1—Status of wicker willow plantation in Kashmir

Districts	*Av. land holding of surveyed family (ha)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
		Av. net estimated annual income/ (Rs/ha) of land holding	Family involved in wicker willow plantation	+Av. land holding under wicker willow (ha)	**Av. dry yield of wicker willow (t/ha)	+Av. dry yield (t / land holding)	Rate (Rs./t tonne)	Av. estimated income (Rs)	Av. estimated input (Rs)	Av net income/yr (Rs)	Av. % of income contributed by wicker willow/yr/ family	
1 Srinagar	0.40	62,890	23 (35.93%)	0.12	12.69	1.52	37,500	57,500	35,270.68	22,229.32	35.34	
Baramulla	0.48	56,190	16 (25%)	0.10	12.00	1.20	35,000	42,000	27,845.27	14,154.73	25.19	
Budgam	0.51	54,289	7 (10.93%)	0.09	11.43	1.02	35,000	35,700	23,668.48	12,031.52	22.16	
Anantnag	0.50	53,809	10 (15.62%)	0.10	11.20	1.12	30,000	33,600	25,988.92	7,611.08	14.14	
Pulwama	0.80	52,890	10 (15.62%)	0.07	11.50	0.80	30,000	24,000	18,563.50	5,436.49	10.27	
Kupwara	0.49	44,285	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

*Average of 64 families; + Average of those involved in wicker willow; **Average of 4 yrs

Table 2—Wicker willow plantation and processing units in Kashmir

Districts	Block surveyed	Willow cultivation in village	Species	Processing units	
Srinagar	Srinagar	Haran	<i>S. triandra</i> , <i>S. dickymat</i>	Existing	
		Batipora (Tailbal)	<i>S. triandra</i> , <i>S. rubra</i>	Not-existing	
	Ganderbal	Shalbugh	<i>S. triandra</i> , <i>S. dickymat</i>	Existing	
		Shuhama	<i>S. triandra</i>	Not-existing	
		Nunnar	<i>S. triandra</i>	Not-existing	
		Sehpura	<i>S. triandra</i> , <i>S. dickymat</i>	Existing	
	Lar	Theeru and Lar	<i>S. triandra</i>	Not-existing	
	Kangan	-	-	-	
	Baramulla	Hajan	Sadanar	<i>S. triandra</i>	Not-existing
		Sumbal	Ghat (Palhalan) Nasbal	<i>S. triandra</i>	Existing
Bandipora		Alosa (Ashtang)	<i>S. triandra</i>	Existing	
Pattan		-	-	-	
Budgam	Narbal	Malsundri	<i>S. triandra</i>	Not-existing	
	Budgam	Soibugh (Mir Mohalla)	<i>S. triandra</i>	Existing	
	Nagam	-	-	-	
	Khan Sahiab	-	-	-	
Anantnag	Kulgam	Oaki (locally known as <i>Waki</i>)	<i>S. triandra</i>	Existing	
	Achabal	-	-	-	
	Dachnipora	-	-	-	
	Qaimoh	-	-	-	
Pulwama	Kakapora	Kakapora (Vandakpora)	<i>S. triandra</i>	Existing	
	Pulwama	Malangpora (Padgampora Gurpora)	<i>S. triandra</i>	Not-existing	
	Tral	-	-	-	
	Shopian	-	-	-	
Kupwara	Rajwar (Sogam, Kupwara, Ramhal)	-	-	-	

During study, information with respect to present wicker willow plantations, species and processing units in Kashmir valley was collected which revealed that wicker willow plantation was found maximum in district Srinagar followed by Baramulla, Pulwama, Budgam, and Anantnag (Table 2). It was observed that *Salix triandra* L. (Almond willow) was the most commonly grown species of wicker willow in all districts of Kashmir. In addition to *Salix triandra* L., two more species, *Salix dickymat* L. and *Salix rubra* L. were also found growing in district Srinagar at Haran, Sehpura and Shalbugh and *Salix rubra* L. at Batipora (Tailbal). The concentration of processing units was found maximum in district Srinagar at Haran, Shalbugh and Sehpura followed by Baramulla at Ghat and Alosa while as, in district Budgam, Anantnag and Pulwama at Soibugh, Oaki, locally known as (*waki*) and Vandakpora. The maximum cultivation of wicker willow in district Srinagar is due to the reason that farmers are well versed with the cultivation of wicker willow due to the suitability of land and better avenues for marketing of wicker willow products. Also, irrigation is readily available in Ganderbal block in district Srinagar for cultivation of wicker willow than other districts. The lack of processing units in other districts except Srinagar is

due to the reason of not having general awareness in processing techniques. It was also observed that farmers wanted to grow wicker willow in Anantnag, Pulwama, Budgam, Baramulla and Kupwara districts but people were of the opinion that after cultivation of wicker willow the brokers gives small amount to the growers (farmers) and maximum benefits goes to those brokers. Wicker willow in the Kashmir valley needs proper information with respect to cultivation, fertilizer doses, pesticides, introduction of new hybrid clones and processing units.

Conclusion

Study conducted on status and distribution of wicker willow, locally known as *Veer kani* in Kashmir in the Division of Forestry SKUAST-K, Shalimar during 2005-06 revealed that wicker willow has been found in all the districts of Kashmir except Kupwara. Three species of wicker willow namely *Salix triandra* L., *Salix dickymat* L., *Salix rubra* L. are cultivated. However, Srinagar district was found in the forefront of the wicker willow cultivation (maximum families, area, yield, processing units and income). Wicker willow growers need proper awareness from cultivation to harvesting and readily available marketing facilities.

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