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RAISING *GREVILLEA* PLANTS IN THE NURSERY

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The planting of *Grevillea* as shade has been emphasized at all times. The initial maintenance of the young plant in mature tea has become a problem due to factors such as smothering by tea weeds, chemical and mechanical damage and deliberate causes. The conventional method of establishing *Grevillea* in the field has been by seedlings, raised in polythene sleeves of 9" in height in the nursery for about 12-18 months till a height of about 12-18" is achieved.

Once planted in mature tea in the field, staking, protecting with urea bags, etc., have to be carried out for successful establishment. It is this period between planting and growth till about a height of 36" when it would be above the tea canopy, that becomes the most critical period and accounts for the most amount of casualties.

To overcome this problem in mature tea, an adaptive system of raising *Grevillea* seedlings in the nursery was carried out at Hauteville Estate by the writer. In this system, in place of the conventional 9x6" polythene sleeve, the seedlings were raised in polybags of 15 x 12". After an initial growth in seed beds for about 3 months, the seedlings were transplanted to the 15 x 12" polybags in the nursery. The growth of these plants along with plants raised in the conventional manner were monitored for a further 15 months.

The *Grevillea* plants raised in polybags attained a height of 36 -48" as against the control, which were about 12 - 18" in height during this period. The faster growth of the polybag raised plants allowed for easier after care operations subsequent to field planting, and also obviated the need to stake and use urea for protecting the plants, etc.

A comparison of the costs involved for the 2 methods is given below calculated at prices and wages obtaining in 1991:

Labour wages calculated at Rs 50/-
Cost of polythene at Rs 65/- per kilo

No cost for transporting soil for the polybags were incurred as the soil used for filling was obtained from the coarse sand fraction which remained after sieving soil for filling of polythene bags to raise tea cuttings.

	9"	Unit Cost	15"	Unit Cost
No of bags per kilo of polythene	380	-/17	70	-/93
No of bags filled per labourer	500	-/10	300	-/17
holing - per labourer	80	-/63	50	1/-
Planting - per labourer	100	-/50	60	-/83
Cutting stakes - per labourer	1000	-/05	-	-
Cost of stakes (4 Nos) at 5 cts. each	-	-/20	-	-
Supplying Urea bags - per labourer (including staking and cutting sides of tea bushes)	100	-/50	-	-
Cost of urea bag	-	4/-	-	-
Cost on fertilizer, watering, weeding etc. in nursery	-	1/25	-	1/75
Total		Rs 7/85		Rs 4/68

The advantage of this adaptive system is that it provides for a reduction in cost since no staking and use of protection bags are needed and above all, it provides for the successful establishment of *Grevillea* plants in mature tea as the constraining factors which hampered the initial establishment are eliminated.

Fig. 1 – Raising *Grevillea* plants in large polybags