



# TRI UPDATE

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## **Sesbania sesban CAN BE PLANTED IN TEA LANDS**

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*Sesbania sesban* (Family-Leguminosae) is a tropical green manure crop. It is used as a medicinal herb in indigenous medicine. It is referred to as Vel murunga in Sinhala and it has several Tamil names: Asnapanni, Chittakatti, Sembai, Segudae and Kurunjemi. The botany of the plant was described by several authors adopting several names: viz. *Aeschynomene sesban* Linn., *Aeschynomene indica* Burr f., *Coronilla sesban* Willd., *Sesbania aegyptiaca* Poir. and *Emerus sesban* O.Kuntze. The closest relatives of this plant in Sri Lanka are *S. grandiflora* (Kathurumurunga) and *S. cinerescence*.

*S. sesban* is a tree growing to a height of 2-3 m with a lot of spreading branches, without prickles but with silky parts. The characteristic feature to identify the plant is the pale yellow flower which has its standard (boat shaped) petal dotted at the back with purple. This plant has multiple use in tea lands. It can be used as a green-manure crop and also to protect young tea plants from wind and the sun.

The use of *Sesbania* was discouraged at tea plantations in high elevations due to susceptibility to nematodes. This was based on the work done in 1959 on *Sesbania cinerescens*, which is a different species of *Sesbania*. Subsequent work at the TRI in 1992 had shown that *S. sesban* could be planted in areas where root-lesion nematode, *Pratylenchus loosi* and the burrowing nematode,

*Radopholus similis* are active.

*S. sesban* has been re-tested for its susceptibility to the above nematodes from 1998 to 2000. This work has confirmed that *S. sesban* assists light build up of either nematode, whereas susceptible tea clones and *Tephrosia vogelli* enhance the parasitic nematode population to very high levels. Thus, it can be concluded that *S. sesban* would not be a threat to the tea grown in its vicinity.

The recent studies also showed that wherever this species has been planted, particularly in the Up country and Uva, the plants are growing well. It shows that the species can be grown even in the nematode active areas without any difficulty as a green manure crop and also to protect young tea plants from wind damage.

## **CHANGE OF TELEPHONE NUMBERS - TRI LOW COUNTRY STATION RATNAPURA**

<u>Old Number</u>	<u>New Number</u>
045-22014	045-28514
045-32350	045-28550
045-32351	045-28851
045-32352	045-28852
045-31928	045-28928
045-32348	045-28748
045-22428	045-28628(Fax)