Tree based farming or agroforestry

Agroforestry is the planting of forest trees along with routine crops.

Agroforestry has advantages like providing firewood, green manure, dry leaves for compost, fodder, food and shelter for birds, nectar for honey bees and others. Cutting down mature trees later fetches more money for the farmer. Trees chosen for agroforestry must grow fast, straight and without much canopy, should have deep rooted system to prevent competition with crops for water and nutrients. Leguminous trees, plants contributing to biodiversity and those of economic value are given priority in agroforestry system.

Agroforestry trees

Teak is a popular plant on the boundaries of farms. Keep on trimming the side branches to make it grow tall and straight. Cutting the trees after 6 to 8 years will enable you make sizable income and enables the remaining trees to grow thicker. Teak does not cause the problem of shading and produce valuable timber after 25 to 30 years.

Subabul (Leucaena) is another important agroforestry tree. It is a protein containing palatable fodder, and grows into a big tree in just 6 to 8 years. This withstands continuous removal of branches as fodder or green manure and multiplies easily by seed.

Silver oak is one more important agroforestry tree in use found on boundaries of farms as well as in coffee plantations for partial shade. Timber from silver oak fetches a good price due to its pulp quality.

Gasoline tree is grown on boundaries and also in separate

plantations. Gasoline produces straight poles useful for timber and poles at maturity.

Fodder trees are one of the major components of agroforestry and these include Gliricidia, Sesbania and Calliandra. In sole agroforestry plantations, seasonal crops may be planted between rows until they develop full canopy.

Other agroforestry trees include neem, acacia and eucalyptus.