

'INJI GRAMAM', A NEW SCHEME TO CULTIVATE GINGER IN KULATHOOR GRAMA PANCHAYAT IN THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, YIELDS A BUMPER HARVEST

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Ginger harvested from a plot in Kulathoor grama panchayat. The spice was grown under the panchayat's 'Inji Gramam' scheme | Photo Credit: Aswin V N

An agrarian village well known for its paddy and banana, 35 kilometres from Thiruvananthapuram, is rooting for ginger. For the first time, VK Girijanadhan Nair had to dig up his fields to harvest the fruits of his labour. After growing plantain, coconut and varieties of vegetables on his two-and-a-half acre plot, this year he added a new crop — ginger.

Although the fire and punch of ginger is widely used in the cuisine of Kerala, it is not a widely cultivated crop in Thiruvananthapuram district. It is mostly grown in Idukki and there are hundreds of farmers in Wayanad, Palakkad, Kozhikode and Kannur who are growing cultivate it on leased lands in Karnataka.

This year, as a pilot project, 250 farmers of Kulathoor grama panchayat, were selected to cultivate ginger. The scheme, 'Inji gramam' (Ginger village), was an initiative of the panchayat and Kulathoor Krishi Bhavan. Nearly 10 tonnes (10,000 kilograms) have been harvested from the first crop.

Anoop SP, agriculture assistant, Kulathoor Krishi Bhavan, Sudharjunan G, panchayat president, Suresh Kumar, ward member, Santhoshkumar T, development standing committee chairman and Chandralekha CS, agriculture officer, Kulathoor Krishi Bhavan, with the ginger harvested from one of the plots in the panchayat. The panchayat and Krishi Bhavan implemented 'Inji gramam' scheme to promote ginger cultivation | Photo Credit: ASWIN VN

With its long leaves and thin stalks, ginger fields look picturesque. But once the ginger is dug up, the plants die and the cultivation has to begin anew.

At Arivalloor in the panchayat, Girijanadhan's employee, Thankaraj has piled up the freshly-harvested pungent ginger. "I have been working here for over 20 years now but have never cultivated ginger. Such a good harvest came as a surprise," says the sexagenarian as he fills baskets with the produce.

V K Girijanadhan Nair with the ginger plants on his plot | Photo Credit: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Girijanadhan adds: “It didn’t incur any additional cost and has been a hassle-free experience. I planted five kilograms of the seed [rhizomes] in between plantain and coconut trees and harvested over 100 kilograms. I plan to grow it again on a small scale.”

Ginger harvested from a plot in Kulathoor grama panchayat. The spice was grown under the panchayat's 'Inji Gramam' scheme | Photo Credit: Aswin V N

S George, another farmer from the panchayat, is pleased having harvested over 300 kilograms of ginger. “I have grown only *kappa pazham* (red banana), paddy and vegetables on my two-acre plot. Growing ginger was never in my scheme of things. It fetched me a good price in the market, 80 per kilogram. I will be planting the next batch in March-April,” says 65-year-old George.

Sudharjunan G, panchayat president, says that the panchayat has always been cultivating plantain, paddy, vegetables and fruits. “This year we zeroed in on ginger. That’s how the ‘Inji gramam’ project was launched in March 2022 under the Panchayat’s People’s Plan. It has turned out to be a prestigious initiative of the panchayat and the Krishi Bhavan.”

Ginger harvested from a plot in Kulathoor grama panchayat. The spice was grown under the panchayat's 'Inji Gramam' scheme | Photo Credit: Aswin V N

Ginger is propagated through seed rhizomes and the chosen variety for this scheme was Rio de Janeiro, a cultivar from Brazil, which was found to have a better yield than local varieties. Five kilograms of rhizomes was distributed to each farmer in March.

“The total area under cultivation came to around two hectares (nearly five acres). This figure is inclusive of those households where the crop was grown in grow bags and pots. Among them were farmers with two cents and others with 10 or 15 cents. The aim was to encourage as many people as possible to take up ginger farming,” says Chandralekha CS, agriculture officer, Kulathoor Krishi Bhavan, and assistant director of agriculture, Parassala block panchayat.

It takes eight to 10 months to harvest the crop. Poultry manure, cow dung and dry leaves are used as manure. “Thankfully there were no pest attacks and natural calamities. There were farmers who cultivated more than one unit of rhizomes. Those who planted it in grow bags could harvest two kilograms from each bag and most of them distributed the produce among their neighbours and relatives. The rest of the harvest was sold through the A Grade cluster markets run by the Krishi Bhavan at Nalloorvattom and Mavilakkadavu,” Chandralekha says.

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