

A novel source of organic manure

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A progressive farmer and environmentalist of Rampur in the taluk cultivates velvet beans, the waste of which serves as organic manure.

Velvet beans is traditionally used as an important forage, fallow and green manure crop.

Velvet bean is an annual climbing vine that grows 3-18 m in height. It is indigenous to tropical regions, especially Africa, India, and the West Indies. Its flowers are white to dark purple and hang in long clusters. The plant also produces clusters of pods which contain seeds known as mucuna beans. The seed pods are covered with reddish-orange hairs that are readily dislodged and can cause intense irritation to the skin.

Velvet beans is a multi utility vine. It can control pests, cools the surroundings and retains moisture for a longer time. To a certain extent it also controls soil erosion during monsoon. Besides being a natural fence, it also provides fodder for cattle.

Ashok Kumar, the progressive farmer and environmentalist, who grows velvet beans in his farm says that it does not require much water for its growth. It sprouts with very little moisture. It can grow in barren lands and it clings to any tree or spreads on the ground if there are no trees around.

The beans can be grown between crops. As the vine attracts pests, it protects other main crops. It can be grown successfully in Malnad and Bayaluseeme region and is the ideal plant for Kolar and Chikkaballapur districts where soil fertility has declined due to cultivation of tomatoes and other vegetables.

It can be grown by the side of the fence in many taluks of the district and between mango trees in Srinivaspur taluk. By planting velvet beans along the fence and in between other trees, Ashok Kumar has obtained good results for his other crops.