



COMMUNICATIONS BRANCH

Level 1, 117 Great Eastern Highway
Rivervale 6103

Phone: (08) 9475 8888

Fax: (08) 9475 8899

Email: paul.semple@fpc.wa.gov.au

Media statement

5 June 2009

Indian sandalwood shows potential as Gascoyne cash crop

Encouraging rates of growth in trials of Indian sandalwood (*Santalum album*) established by the Forest Products Commission (FPC) near Carnarvon are showing early signs of becoming a commercial crop prospect for the Gascoyne Region.

Speaking at an Arbor Day planting at Denham Primary School today, FPC Operations Officer Dave Evans said he was encouraged by a three-hectare trial at the Gascoyne Research Station.

“The average height of the sandalwood is more than 2.8 metres at just three years of age. In particular, the stems on the sandalwood are relatively thick and that is where the valuable heartwood and oil will be produced at between ten and twenty years of age,” he said.

Western Australia exports the high value sandalwood to South-East Asia where it is used in the manufacture of incense or joss sticks. India imports sandalwood timber for the production of oil.

Indian sandalwood is a tropical species and requires irrigation in the semi-arid environment at Carnarvon

“Our trials near Carnarvon are examining factors affecting sandalwood establishment, including irrigation and host species. Drip irrigation is used because it is far more efficient than using sprinklers or flood irrigation.

“We know that water quality greatly affects sandalwood growth performance so our experiments include the use of fresh and relatively saline water,” Mr Evans said.

Sandalwood trees are root hemi-parasites and require host plants throughout their lifecycle to supply them with specific nutrients and water.

Mr Evans said that as host species have a significant affect on sandalwood survival and growth rates, it was necessary to trial different plants to determine their suitability as host plants.

“The hosts have been selected and planted so as to protect the sandalwood from the strong prevailing winds experienced at Carnarvon,” Mr Evans said.

Please note; pix of Denham Primary School students planting sandalwood hosts on Arbor Day are available on request.

For more information contact:
Paul Semple
Communications Branch
Phone: 9475 8888 or 0438 858 850