

Ornamental Aquatic plant culture as a cottage industry

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Ornamental aquatic plant export is a developing industry in Sri Lanka. However there is a problem of catering to the demand as there are very few propagators. The former practice was to collect from the wild and export. This created several environmental problems including a threat of extinction for some endemic aquatic plant species. Therefore present regulations have banned the export of wild collected plants.

Since aquatic plant culture is not a very difficult practice it could be promoted as a cottage industry specially for low income groups. The major need is a good water supply and some space for plant culture. It could be an abandoned paddy field or marsh land or even a home garden or in cement tanks.

The common organic fertilizers cowdung, chicken manure, compost etc or commercial fertilizers can be used. Compost however produces better quality plants compared to other organic fertilizers.

The propagation methods are easy for most plants. Cuttings or small plants occurring from the mother plant can be used for most aquatic plants. For species like *Aponogetons* seed propagation is easy.

Light conditions necessary may vary with the plant species. However if easily culturable species eg. *Echinadorus*, *Ceratophyllum*, *Aponogeton*, *Bacopa*, are used for early trials it would lead to development of a good cottage industry.