

THE CULTIVATION OF AMARANTHUS AT REGA

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In the Vizianagaram market, what is known as 'Rega thotakura' (a kind of amaranthus) is a speciality. It comes down from Rega, a small village adjoining the town. The variety cultivated is known as 'Pedda thotakura' and is grown for its stalk which is allowed to mature. This variety is distinct from 'Mokka thotakura' of which the whole plant is used as a green when comparatively tender. The special merit of 'Rega thotakura' is that while the outer layer of the stem is hard, the inner portion is soft, non-fibrous and sweet when cooked, these qualities not being developed to anything like the same extent in the amaranthus grown elsewhere. Even at Rega, the above qualities are said to develop best on only high lying dark red loams, the plants grown on other soils being said to be inferior. The poorer the soil the better is the quality. Sheep penning combined with the application of 'penta' which consists mostly of ashes is also said to give the best quality.

2. The seed is sown in a nursery in the latter half of May, in beds about 4 to 6 feet square, and transplanted in about 2 to 3 weeks. The seedbed is heavily manured with 'penta'. $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ seer of seed is sown in about 200 to 300 square yards of nursery to plant an acre. The land to be planted is thoroughly ploughed for about two months previously, manured with about 50 to 100 cartloads of 'penta' per acre, and further penned with sheep at about a thousand per acre. Tannery refuse is sometimes applied but this is said to invariably result in the poor quality of the produce. The seedlings are planted about $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 feet apart and are allowed to grow for about 3 to 4 months by which time they get fit for sale. During this period the soil is kept free from weeds by occasional hoeing and weeding.

3. The crop is sold wholesale to vendors at about Rs. 100 to Rs. 200 per acre, while the retail price in the Vizianagaram market is about 3 pies per plant. A few plants are left to mature seed for the following season. The seed is sold at about a rupee per seer.

4. Many people who took the seed from Rega and tried it elsewhere, state that the quality of stems was never so good as of those grown at Rega. What the special quality of the crop grown at this place is due to, is a matter for investigation. The soil, the manure, as well as the transplanting which is not done elsewhere, may all be responsible.