

Vetiver



What is it?

Scientific name: *Chrysopogon zizanioides*

Vetiver is a long living, clumping grass from India, similar to lemongrass. It is non-invasive and will not crowd out other crops. It tolerates contaminated soils, where pesticides and herbicides have been stored or used, and is useful for cleaning water. It holds soil on hillsides and areas that flood. Its leaves can be used for animal feed and thatching.

A recent study in Choiseul Province showed that using vetiver to stabilize hillslopes can increase crop yields and protect fields from flood damage caused by climate change.

FEATURES:

- Grows 2m high
- Roots grow deep but not wide, down to 2m and more
- Purple flowering, non-seed bearing, tough leaves
- Pest, salt, contaminant, flood, fire tolerant
- Grows well in the tropics.

How can I use it?

STABILIZATION:

Vetiver is excellent for hillsides where soil erosion is a problem. Its long roots hold soil steady, and it slows water runoff. It can also be used to stabilize riverbanks and beaches, where there is the chance of flooding, tidal surges or sand drift. It is useful for planting in roadsides where heavy rain can cause slips. This is important where climate change is making floods more severe.

INTERCROPPING:

It can be used between other crops, such as banana, sugarcane and pineapple, for water saving, cleaning soil and repelling pests. It can also act as a firebreak.

PEST CONTROL:

Vetiver oil is a natural way of controlling insect pests such as borers.

POLLUTION CONTROL:

Vetiver can reduce algae contamination in dams, ponds or rivers. It is highly tolerant of nitrogen and phosphorous, which feed algae and can build-up in water contaminated by human or animal waste.

WATER SAVING:

Vetiver helps retain soil moisture by reducing runoff.

MULCH:

Dried leaves can be laid on the ground to retain soil moisture and repel weeds. The leaves of vetiver can be cut off and laid on the ground for mulch.

FODDER:

Vetiver leaves can be used as food for sheep, goats and cattle.

THATCHING:

Use vetiver leaves for weaving roofing material and matting.

OIL:

Vetiver oil from the roots is used in aromatherapy and traditional medicine.



How can I grow it?

Vetiver can be separated by hand, using a knife.

Small clumps should be trimmed, leaving 15cm of leaves and 8cm of roots.

Plant in a small furrow with individual clumps 10-15 cm apart. Dig the furrow across any sloping ground for stabilization and control of water flow.

Small furrows can be dug between other crops, such as pineapple or banana.

Water new plants during dry periods. Weed around new plants.

After three months, leaves of vetiver plants can be trimmed to 30cm to encourage further growth.

Young vetiver plants prefer full sun rather than a shaded position.

