BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION

Salago, Wikstroemia Spp. of the family Thymelaeceae is a sturdy slow-growing shrub in primary and secondary forest throughout the Philippines at low and medium altitudes. The plant description varies according to species of which four are well identified, growing successfully under local conditions. These are:

1. **Small-leaf Salago** - *Wikstroemia indica (L) C.E. Mey.,* possesses 1-3 m in height. Leaves are opposite, leathery, widest near the middle, rounded at the top, pointed at the base and 1.5 to 7 cm long. Flowers are small and yellow; fruits are small and red. This grows from the Northern Luzon to Southern Mindanao.

2. **Lance-leaf Salago** - *W. lanceolata Merr.* possesses 1-2 m in height. Leaves are opposite, smooth, pointed at both ends, and 4 to 8 cm in length. Flowers are red and less than a centimeter long. This variety grows in Northern and Southern Luzon.

3. **Round-leaf Salago** - *W. ovata C.E. Mey.*, possesses 1-3 m in height. Leaves are against each other, smooth, rounded at the base, pointed at the apex, and 5-10 cm long. Flowers are yellow, clustered and about 1.5 cm long. This type is distributed from Luzon to Mindanao.

4. **Large-leaf Salago** - *W. meyeniana Warb.,* possesses 1-2 m in height. Leaves are abreast with each other, smooth, rounded at the base, pointed at the apex and 5-10 cm long. Flowers are greenish yellow, 1.5-2 cm in length and are in small clusters. It is widely distributed from Northern Luzon and to Mindanao.

CULTURAL MANAGEMENT

Soil Requirement

Salago plants thrive on any kind of soil in logged-over areas, hills, mountain sides and along seashores. However, fertile lands with good drainage are best suited for salago production.

Climatic Requirement

Being sturdy, salago grows well even under varying climatic conditions and can withstand long drought, rainy season and even typhoons.

Method of Propagation

Propagation by seeds has recently been proven to be the most effective. Mature seeds, usually abundant during the month of May, are first sown in seeds plots. They are also sown in seed boxes using 50% sand and 50% lime soil mixture as soil medium. Salago seeds usually germinate at 7-15 days after sowing. After germination, seedlings are pricked to lower population density to enhance growth while at the same time prevent the developing seedlings from possible soil-borne disease by damping-off. Seedlings are ready for transplanting at 2-4 months from pricking.

Planting

The best time for planting salago is at the onset of the rainy season. An ideal planting distance is 1m x 1m.

Fertilizer Requirement

For the fertilizer requirements of cultivated salago, further trials have to be undertaken yet.

Cultivation and Weeding

Weeding is essential at the intial stage of the plant growth to prevent the occurrence of diseases. However, when the plant exceeded the growth of weeds, weeding is no longer necessary except under heavy vegetation.

INSECT PESTS AND DISEASES

Insect Pests - Squash and grasshopper (nymph) are two prominent pests feeding on salago although mites and sucking insects such as aphids were also observed attacking the plant.

Control Measure: Spray the plant with recommended insecticides.

Diseases - Brown rot and leaf spot are caused by still unidentified fungi and are the only visible diseases of salago.

Control Measure: Field sanitation; remove infected plants and spray with fungicides.

BAGONG PILIPINAS

Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority
For Inquiries:
Email us at tad@philfida.da.gov.ph (Technical Assistance Division)
Website: philfida.da.gov.ph

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MATURITY AND HARVESTING

Maturity/harvesting of non-cultured salago depends on the size of the stem and height of the plant. For cultured salago, the plants are ready for harvest when they reach two years after planting. Succeeding shoots after each harvest will again be harvested after two years thereafter. An initial harvest of salago could yield as much as 4,282 kgs dry fiber per hectare.

METHODS OF FIBER EXTRACTION

Direct or Hand Cleaned Method - Peel-off half side of the bark from the butt end of the stem and follow the same with the remaining side of the bark. With bare hands or with blunt instrument, scrape the scales attached to the fiber until it is clean. Place cleaned fiber under the sun for complete drying.

Boiling or Steaming Method - Arrange stems in upright position in a drum filled with 4 inches of water with a platform of bamboo slats to avoid the lower bark of the stem to come in contact with the boiling water and prevent uneven discoloration. Cover the upper portion of the drum with banana leaves and place on top of a suitable cover (plain GI sheet preferred) as weight. Boil for about two hours or until outer scales become soft and can easily be removed. To remove outer scales, grip the stem firmly with the use of jute sack or synthetic overlaps with one hand and slide it through the palm of the hand with the use of other hand. Place clean fibers under the sun for complete drying.

GRADING AND CLASSIFICATION

HAND-CLEANED SALAGO

NORMAL GRADES

SG-1 Salago Superior
SG-2 Salago Good
SG-3 Salago Fair

RESIDUAL GRADE

SG-X Salago Residual

STEAMED SALAGO

NORMAL GRADES

S-SG-1 Steamed Salago Superior
S-SG-2 Steamed Salago Good
S-SG-3 Steamed Salago Fair

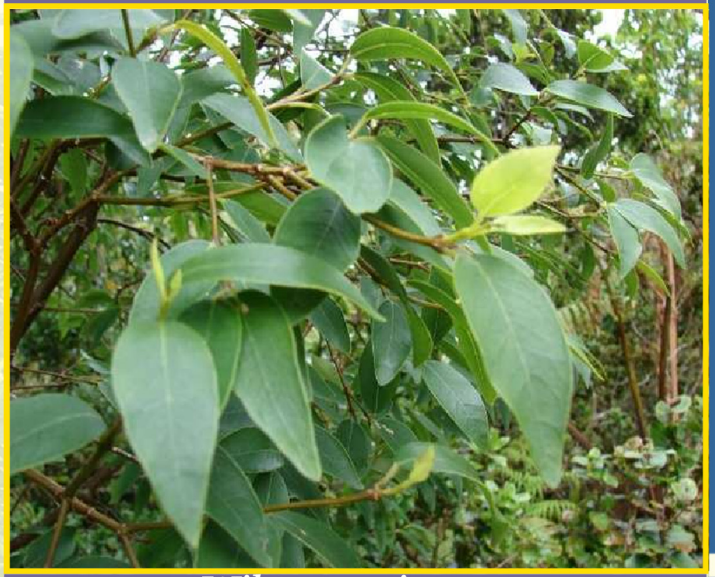
RESIDUAL GRADE

SG-X Hand-cleaned Salago
S-SG-X Steamed Salago Residual

FIBER UTILIZATION

Excellent material for the manufacture of currency paper, banknotes, check, documentary papers, stencils, handmade papers for art purposes, calligraphy papers, and other paper materials where a certain degree of permanence, strength and durability is desired. Salago is also used for rope making, fishing lines and nets, clotheslines, sashes, strainers, wallets, colorful hats and other raw materials in making Japanese sliding doors (shoji), kimono, and components for radio and microcomputers.

SALAGO TECHNOGUIDE



Wikstroemia spp.

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Republic of the Philippines
Department of Agriculture
PHILIPPINE FIBER INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
FPUL, BAI Compound, Visayas Ave., Vasra, Quezon City.