



- Azolla is a freshwater fern seen in many of rice fields. But farmers failed to realize its importance in contributing soil fertility especial in N-supply.
- Azolla in association with blue green algae fix atmospheric nitrogen in the plant. This symbiotic relationship in nature is very well used in the farming systems.

## Azolla as substitute for N-fertilizer in rice farming

More than 5,000 Farmers in northern Kerala of south India have successfully developed the practice of cultivating Azolla as a nutrient supplement in rice fields. They have been practicing this since 1998. What they do is, after preparing seed bed for rice transplantation; they flood the paddy field with irrigation water for two weeks and put the Azolla seeds @ 1 kg seeds in 40 sqm.



Azolla in silpaulin tanks

After Azolla spreads fully in the field, the water is released from the field and the field is



Azolla in Rice field

again ploughed, so that Azolla thoroughly mixes with the soil. This method helps to reduce the application of fertilizers in the form of synthetic nitrogen to the soil. 50 kg Nitrogen can be transferred to the soil by cultivating Azolla in one hectare of land.

Azolla could be maintained in the field after transplanting, so that pest like leaf roller could be controlled. Azolla can also prevent rigorous weed growth in rice fields. Farmers should maintain **mother nursery** nearer to the paddy field to ensure availability through out the cropping season

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