VASE LIFE STUDIES ON *Dracaena reflexa* CUT DECORATIVE SHOOTS

S T J Rupika[1], M P Jayatilleke[1] & G K K Priyantha Kumara[2]
[1]Department of Crop Science, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ruhuna
[2]Green Farm Ltd. Pahala, Walahapitiya Road, Marawila

Wilting and color change of *Dracaena* leaves are major post harvest problems in exportation. This study is an attempt to overcome these problems and to improve vase life of Dracaena cut stems. Experiments were done at Green Farms Ltd. Marawila to investigate post harvest handling of *Dracaena reflexa* to maintain export quality and freshness. Series of experiments were conducted to investigate management practices; effect of glycerol solution (pure glycerol in 1, 3 & 5hrs); effect of immersing one hour (using $KMnO_4$ 2, 5 & 10pmm); effect of sucrose solution (2, 5 & 10%); effect of $KMnO_4$ (2, 5 & 10ppm) for cultivars of *Dracaena reflexa* "Reflexa Green", "Song of Jamaica" and "Song of India". Treatments were arranged in complete randomized design with 4 replicates each. Data were analyzed using SAS statistical programme with analysis of variances. Mean separation was done using LSD on parametric procedures.

The results revealed that wilting, color change and rotting, of *Dracaena reflexa* cultivars were not significantly affected by post harvest solutions of $KMnO_4$ and sucrose compared to the control (tap water). However, pure glycerol (dipped for 1hr) and tap water maintained vase life of "Song of Jamaica" for 21days. Damaged cuttings showed *Erwinia* infection after 10-12 days during vase period (CV = 05.628813). Results in general show avoiding injury to specimens, and this helps to maintain the quality of the products. Many infections can be avoided by keeping the specimens dry. Experiments proved that maximum vase life of *Dracaena* cuttings could be achieved by maintaining proper management practices and sanitation conditions in a cold room.