

Specific qualities of Inga Edulis for alley cropping practice

A row of Inga Edulis will:

- withstand annual severe pruning (chest height for Inga)
- close the canopy in a year, having been pruned 12 months before
- grow in acid tropical soil,
- tolerate some drought and flooding
- survive on and re-fertilize severely degraded soil,
- grow fast enough to be pruned annually,
- withstand repeated annual pruning for many years and keep on and on producing a good amount of mulch
- have thick leaves that don't rot down too fast so that they form a permanent mulch to protect the soil so it is never left bare
- have good resistance to pests and diseases
- have excellent resistance to erosion – Inga plantations in Honduras survived Hurricane Mitch. Otherwise the tree would be no use on hills.
- are not poisonous,
- provide good firewood (or some other equally valuable by-product, though it is hard to match firewood. Leaves that are good to feed to cattle might do, but you cannot both feed them all to cattle and have them fertilise the soil.)
- have edible pulp or seeds (or some other characteristic that the farmers like. Desirable though not essential. Inga is grown in fruit gardens in both Ecuador and Peru)

Inga plots have produced consistent high yields for over 10 successive years with no external inputs.

The benefits for the farmer include:

- Higher yields compared to slash and burn, and comparable to intensive farming
- No need to buy fertiliser or other chemicals
- No need for a tractor
- Can all be done with a machete
- Debt-free farming!
- No need to clear new land
- No need to burn, with all the risks and danger
- Crops close by the house can be guarded and tended easily
- All the family can work close by
- Cooking fuel from the prunings
- Good system for steep slopes, and prevents erosion.

The benefits for the world - what is in it for Rainforest Saver supporters - include:

- Less land cleared for burning means more forest preserved
- Rainforest can regenerate fully
- Reduced carbon emissions

- Better rainfall
- People can stay on the land and not migrate to city poverty
- Degraded land can be regenerated using Inga, and re-established as rainforest.
- More forest means more wildlife and diversity.