

Project Update: March 2011

The project team started the cultivation process with *Balanites aegyptiaca* which commonly growing in upstream part of Allaqi and rarely found in project target area. Although the economic value of *Balanites aegyptiaca* has been known in Egypt since ancient times, it is practically unused in Egypt, probably because its natural growth is relatively small and scattered, making it difficult to establish a *Balanites* industry. Seeds or sexual propagation are the most frequently used means for producing new plants. It offers several advantages over other methods in plant cultivation that little effort is needed, massive production of seedlings and fewer diseases are transmitted. The ripe fruits of *Balanites* were collected by the work team from midstream part of Allaqi, from area called *Wadi Murra*, 80 km from Lake Nasser shores. To overcome the seeds' dormancy, fruits were soaked in water for at least 3 days to remove the hard coat that it may inhibit water movement into the seed or it may physically restrict embryo expansion. Mechanical scarification using electric grinder was used for seeds as a combined treatment to stimulate the seeds germination.

It is true that most plants can be propagated from seeds but the success of this is dependent mainly on the availability of favourable conditions for seeds germination which can be insured by the nursery. The prepared seeds were distributed uniformly in polythene bags containing moist soil, two seeds per bag were planted at 2 cm depth and placed in wooden nursery. To protect the seedlings from rodents and locusts the cultivated seeds were covered by plastic net.



