

## Kashmiri saffron grown in Pune! CSIR lab pulls off a surprise triumph

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research's (CSIR) National Chemical Laboratory (NCL) has successfully grown saffron crocus in a greenhouse in Pune and seen flowering almost like that in Kashmir.

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The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research's (CSIR) National Chemical Laboratory (NCL) has successfully grown saffron crocus in a greenhouse in Pune and seen flowering almost like that in Kashmir. The method for high-density greenhouse cultivation of saffron being developed by CSIR-NCL is expected to benefit progressive farmers and agri-biotech industries.

C K John, senior scientist from Biochemical Sciences Division at NCL, and his team have been working on developing a biotechnological alternative to the cultivation of saffron, producing a new variety of saffron crocus suitable for wider environmental conditions and standardising the parameters for high-density greenhouse cultivation outside the crop's present range.

The soil and environment requirements were addressed to grow saffron in a greenhouse in Pune.



Soil from a saffron field from Kashmir was studied for details and a suitable planting medium was formulated. A modified greenhouse was established for cost reduction and energy saving. Saffron corms were procured from Kashmir and were planted in a greenhouse cooled by natural processes, without a fan, pad system or ACs. A simple irrigation method was devised to minimise the use of water and give cold/ice cold water directly to the roots as required.

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Flowering was synchronised as in Kashmir, but delayed by two-three weeks. The stigmas were collected from the flowers and dried to produce saffron. The saffron from the CSIR-NCL greenhouse is being compared with the Kashmir saffron.

The method is suitable for places where the cool deficit is not too much as compared with Kashmir and can be managed by some degree of environmental control, using natural processes for cooling and some amount of freezing.