

"SLASH" for Flower and Vegetable Production in the Informal Sector in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

In South Africa, as with many other developing countries, both recently urbanized and rural communities are characterized by a high rate of unemployment and a poor resource base. The objective of the SLASH programme (use of a mixture of biosolids, lime and flyash as a soil ameliorant) has been to convert a waste disposal problem into a potential solution, enabling such people to produce vegetables and flowers for sale in the informal sector.

This pilot trial, conducted using simple raised beds, constructed with discarded tyres, compared the production of spinach (a popular vegetable amongst these communities), and asters (a potential crop for street vendors), using a range of SLASH treatments. A mixture of 4.55% SLASH and 95.4% soil (in this case a sandy, acidic and infertile soil was used), gave the best results with spinach. The treatment with 9.68% SLASH gave similar results, while the treatment receiving 30.00% of SLASH - although yielding more than the untreated soil - exhibited some toxicity/deficiency symptoms. In the case of asters SLASH treatments, although all exhibiting improved vigour over the control, all exhibited scorch on the leaves. This scorch was most severe and unsightly on the 30% SLASH treatment. Control plants were smaller, flowered earlier and senesced sooner. The potential is there. Refinement of the technology is required.