

## Washingtonia from Kolkata to Punjab: With their 'palms', brothers trio strike green gold

Courtesy: Anju Agnihotri Chhaba



In an era where traditional farming often feels like a struggle for survival, three brothers from Tibbi Kalan in Ferozepur district of Punjab are defying the odds. Cousins Jaswinder Singh (34), Varinder Singh (36), and Gurjant Singh (35) have turned their land into a thriving business, earning a staggering Rs 1.5 crore from just one acre in four years (Rs 37.5 lakh per year per acre). Their secret? Palm tree farming — a practice virtually unheard of in the state. The trio, who owns around 8 acres of farmland each, used to grow wheat and paddy until 2017 when an out of the box idea transformed their lives. “We’ve always been experimenting with new farming techniques. From flowers to mushrooms, we tried various options before settling on palm trees and naming the initiative ‘The Palm garden Store’ of Tibbi Kalan,” says Jaswinder Singh, a graduate. Initially, they procured palm saplings from [Kolkata](#) at Rs 37 per plant, including transportation costs. They started with two acres, where they planted 10,000 saplings of different varieties. They experimented with six to seven varieties, each on small sections to test which one suited the local soil and climate. They eventually found the perfect match — Washingtonian Palm trees. In 2019, they dedicated two acres to Washingtonia palms, which turned out to be a huge success. These palms, which grow up to 10 feet in height (including the leaves) in just 3.5 to 4 years, now fetch Rs 2,500 to Rs 2,800 per plant.

After five years, the price increases to Rs 4,500 to Rs 5,500 per plant. Till date, they have sold 25,000 plants ranging from 3.5 to 5 years. By 2020, they expanded their operation, adding two more acres. With an ever-growing demand for palm trees, the farm now spans 9 acres, and two more acres are expected to be added before August. The brothers plant around 5,000 palm trees per acre and have ensured a steady cycle of harvesting and selling every six months. “We are aiming to sell around 20,000 to 25,000 plants every six months by maintaining a proper rotation,” says Gurjant Singh, a postgraduate, adding that there is significant demand for this ornamental plant as greenery is now a prerequisite for every new locality. “Initially, we were selling our plants to traders across Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and other parts of North India. But now, we’ve shifted to direct selling, which has been more profitable as it eliminates the middleman. We’ve received an order of one lakh palm trees from Dubai,” says Jaswinder, adding that with its ability to be uprooted and replanted easily, palm trees are in high demand for landscaping in new localities in India as well. Additionally, compared to date palms, which take 10-12 years to mature, palm trees can grow to an impressive height in just 4-5 years, making them a popular choice for quick greenery. This can be grown entire year except two extreme cold and hot months each in Punjab. “Despite the challenges and the mistakes we have made, it has been a learning experience. We learnt that plants in one field must be cleared before replanting, as planting new trees where large plants already exist can hinder the growth of the new ones. Palm farming requires minimal input costs, with each acre’s expenditure hovering around Rs 3.50 lakh but the returns are huge. The costs include plant purchase, transplantation, pruning, weed clearing, and irrigation. While palm trees require 20 irrigations a year, much of this is provided by rainwater during the monsoon, making the overall water consumption relatively low,” Varinder says. Jaswinder adds that they use very little fertilizer — just cow dung manure in the beginning. “Once you plant the trees, you need to wait 3-4 years for them to gain height. Tall trees have a huge demand and excellent price, so they’re definitely worth the wait,” he adds. The brothers have also started diversifying by introducing Bismarckia palms, which are in high demand for their silver-toned leaves and can be sold at Rs 10,000-15,000 per plant in the wholesale market, depending on size and age.

\*\*\*\*\*