

SOME STUDIES ON MUCUNA SPECIES OF SRI LANKA

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The genus *Mucuna* is cultivated in Sri Lanka for the following purposes: (1) cover crop (2) fodder (3) Ayurvedic drugs (4) green manure. This genus is also a well-known source of 1-DOPA. There appears to be at least five morphologically distinct types in Sri Lanka.

The classification and identification was attempted. The main difference of the types lay in pod character. Differences were also observed in the inflorescence and the seed. The species commonly used in Ayurvedic drugs and fodder were identified as *Mucuna cinera* and *Mucuna utilis* respectively, while a species containing high 1-DOPA content was identified as *Mucuna atterrima*.

Some parameters indicative of nutritive value were studied at various stages of pod development. The dry weight of the fresh pod increased rapidly during its first three weeks of growth with a slight increase in next two weeks. Maximum protein content (15.5%) was observed after 4 weeks of growth. The non-hydrolysable (1M HCl) matter (including fibre) was found to be high (24%) at this stage. Results indicate that the best age for utilization of the pods as fodder is 4 to 5 weeks.

Although rapid loss of viability of seeds has been claimed by cultivators these studies showed that provided the seeds are well dried (9% moisture) and stored (air tight) that there is virtually no loss of viability after 5 months storage at room temperature.