

# **OBSERVATIONS ON FLORAL BIOLOGY OF CASHEW IN SRI LANKA**

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Enormous variation in the performance of individual trees are noticed due to the influence of several factors, one of which is inherent character of the floral parts. Previous work in Tanganyika (Bigger 1960) has provided information on the composition and number of inflorescences produced by trees and work in India (Rao and Hassan 1957) was concerned with floral structure and behaviour, pollination and fruit setting. Investigation on floral biology in Sri Lanka has yielded the following.

Season of flowering—mid October to February.

Flowering in a tree is completed in 32-38 days

Flowering habit—Starting from east lower part and directing upwards in a clockwise direction.

Cashew tree is polygamous, monoecious with staminate (=96%) and hermaphrodite flowers (=4-6%) appearing on the same panicle. There are 3 distinct phases in the panicle opening. 1. Male phase ( $1\frac{1}{2}$ -2wks) 2. Mixed phase (2-2 $\frac{1}{2}$  wks) 3. Second male phase (1-1 $\frac{1}{2}$ wk).

Staminate flowers were found to open very early morning and continued till about 4 pm. The perfect flowers opened mostly between 8 am - 12 noon with a peak of anthesis at 9 - 9.30 am. Nearly 80% of the flowers were cross pollinated. The fruit set/short under natural conditions is about 5-10% of the total number of the perfect flowers produced.

#### References:

1. Bigger, M 1960. *Selenothrips rubrocinctus* Giard and the floral biology of cashew in Tanganyika. E. Afri. Agric. 35. 229-234
2. Rao V. N. M. and Hassan M. V 1957. Preliminary studies on the floral biology of cashew. Indian J. Agric. Sci. 27. 277-288