

VEGETATION ANALYSIS OF AN *ALSTONIA* COMMUNITY IN LOWER HANTANA**A. Cumaraswamy, S. M. Bandara and C. V. S. Gunatilleke***(Department of Botany, University of Peradeniya)**and***A. Greller***(Department of Biology, Queens College, Flushing, New York, USA)*

The population of *Alstonia macrophylla* (Apocynaceae) appears to be increasing in localised areas of the lower Hantana grasslands despite annual fires in this hill range. To monitor the performance of this species over a long period, basic information on density, size class distribution and other species associated with it were studied. For this purpose all trees over 25 cm gbh in 1 ha of the vegetation as well as the undergrowth were examined.

Alstonia macrophylla dominated the vegetation and was associated with 23 other tree species which included exotics and possible remnant species of the original vegetation. *Cymbopogon nardus* (Graminae), dominated the undergrowth where 18 other species were also recorded.

From the girth class histograms of *Alstonia macrophylla* and other common tree species it may be predicted that the floristic composition of the vegetation is likely to change with time in this area. *Alstonia macrophylla* appears to be an early colonizer and the existing vegetation a seral stage in a long term succession. It may be possible to exploit this successional pattern for reforestation programmes on poor soils using local species in this part of the country.