

## The Cashew: An Indian Scenario

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CASHEW (*Anacardium occidentale* L.) is a precious gift of nature to mankind, which is grown mainly for its delicious kernel. The English name 'Cashew' is derived from the Portuguese word 'Caju'. It is known by different names in different countries such as Acajaiba (Brazil), Acajou (France), Acote maranon (Guatemala), Gajus (Malaya Peninsula), Kasoy (Philippines), Pajuil (Porto-Rico), Mananon (Spain), Acajua (Tupi), Merey (Venezuela). The other vernacular Indian names are *Kashuvandi* or *Parangi andi* (Malayalam), *Gerubeeja* or *Godambi* (Kannada), *Jeedi Pappu* (Telugu), *Mundhiri Paruppu* (Tamil), *Caju badam* (Assamese), *Hilji badam* (Bengali), *Lenka beeja* (Odiya) etc. Cashew belongs to the family Anacardiaceae, the genus *Anacardium* and species *occidentale*. About 21 species of *Anacardium* are reported to exist, viz., *Anacardium amilcarianum*, *A. brasiliense*, *A. ciratellaefolium*, *A. corymosum*, *A. encardium*, *A. excelsum*, *A. gigantum*, *A. humile*, *A. kuhlanannianum*, *A. mediterraneum*, *A. microcarpum*, *A. microsepalum*, *A. nanum*, *A. negrense*, *A. orthonianum*, *A. parvifolium*, *A. pumilum*, *A. rhinocarpus*, *A. rondonianum*, *A. spruceanum* and *A. tenuifolium*. However, only 4 species available in India i.e. *Anacardium occidentale*, *A. pumilum*, *A. orthonianum*, *A. microcarpum*, besides *Semecarpus prainii* a related wild species of cashew with small fruit size has been collected recently from Andaman. The chromosome number of *Anacardium occidentale* is reported to be  $2n=42$  (Darlington and Janaki Ammal, 1945). Cashew is a medium size woody perennial, primarily cross-pollinated and andromonoecious tree with staminate and hermaphrodite flowers appearing on the same panicle (Rao and Hassan, 1957; Damodaran *et al.*, 1965). Flowering lasts for 2 to 3 months. It takes 50 to 70 days from pollination to maturity of the fruit. The cashew fruit has two distinct parts, viz. the swollen and pear shaped peduncle (cashew apple) and a kidney-shaped nut attached to the lower end of the apple. The nut contains the outer hard shell and the inside seed; the seed is consisting of the outer testa and the edible kernel.

Cashew is a tropical plant and grown in wide range of soils including loamy red and lateritic soils, mixed red and black soils, coastal and deltaic alluvium derived soils etc., but it prefers well drained brown forest soils, red sandy loam and light coastal soil with medium acidic to near neutral pH (6.3 to 7.5) and rich in organic matter. It can be cultivated up to 1,000 m above mean sea level (MSL). The mean annual rainfall distribution in cashew growing areas ranges from low rainfall (300-600 mm in Gujarat) to high rainfall (2,700 to 3,000 mm in West coast, and NEH region) and the mean annual temperature ranges from 20.0 to even more than 27.5°C. The productivity is highest in regions with a mean annual