

CASHEWNUT

(*Anacardium occidentale* L.)

Cashew nut is one of the important tropical dollar earning plantation crops, which is mainly grown in Garo Hills of Meghalaya. The nuts are found to contain 20 % protein, 45 % fat and 26 % carbohydrates. The swollen peduncle and disk known as cashew apple is used for production of wine called Kaju Fenny.



Cultivars

Since cashew is highly cross-pollinated crop, planting of seedlings raised through seed is not recommended. The improved cultivars are Vengurla-1, Vengurla-4, Anakkayam-1 and Priyanka (Hybrid).

Soil and Climate

Cashew is mainly a crop of tropics and cannot tolerate frost or extreme cold. It thrives best in hot and humid climate and can be grown up to 700 msl. It requires a bright weather and does not tolerate excessive shade. It comes up well even on waste land of low fertility. Red sandy loam or deep loam soils are good for more production and profitable yield.

Propagation

Seed propagation: Seed propagation is seldom practiced now except to raise the rootstock materials. Seed should be collected during May-June for raising nursery.

Vegetative propagation: Cashew can be vegetatively propagated by grafting. One year old shoots as well as current season shoots (3-5 months old) are used for grafting.

Epicotyl grafting and soft wood grafting have been recommended for commercial scale adoption. In case of epicotyl grafting, tender seedlings of 10-15 days old with a height of 10-15 cm, having 3-4 coppery colour leaves are selected as rootstock and 'V' shaped cut is made after beheading it at a height of 6-8 cm from the collar region. For scion, no flowered lateral shoots of current season growth about 3-5 months old with pointed, dormant apical buds should be selected for grafting. The grafted plants should be kept under shade for 8-10 days and afterwards may be shifted to open place.

For raising planting materials through soft wood grafting, local cashew seeds sown in nursery. Soft wood grafting is done when the seedlings are 1-3 months old by using 3-4 months old scion stick of desired variety.

Planting

Pits of 75 x 75 x 75 cm are dug at a distance of 7 x 7 metre during rainy season.

Manure and Fertilizer

Annual application of farmyard manure and fertilizer is necessary to get higher production

Training and pruning

All the side shoots must be removed up to a height of at least one metre from the ground. Water sprouts arising below the graft union should be removed periodically. Periodical pruning of dead wood and criss cross branches during the month of July is recommended to minimize the losses through diseases such as dieback and increase the yield.

Insect/Pests

Root and stem borer: The grubs feed on bark of stem and root tissues. Cleaning of hole with iron wire and insert a cotton swab soaked in Petrol/Kerosene or inject 5 ml of Monocrotophos (1.5 ml/ litre) or Dichlorvos (2.5 ml/ litre) and plug with mud. Drench the soil around the base of the tree with Monocrotophos.

Tree mosquito bug: Spray Endosulfan 0.05 % thrice, first at the time of emergence of new flushes, the second at floral formation and third at fruit set.

Disease

Die back or pink disease: The affected shoots starts dying from top to downwards. Prune the affected branches and apply Bordeaux paste on cut surface. Spray 1 % Bordeaux mixture 3 times in May, June and October.

Harvesting and Processing

Cashew nuts are harvested during February-May. Only fully mature nuts should be harvested. Usually, the nuts are picked after they fall off from the trees. Best quality nuts are obtained where freshly fallen fruits are collected. The apples are removed and the nuts are sun-dried for 2-3 days to reduce moisture from 25 % to below 9 %. With proper drying, the kernels retained their quality, particularly the flavors. However, if cashew apples are used for processing, it is better to harvest from the trees without damaging the apples. The mature nuts sink in water while the immature/unfilled ones float. This test could be used to find out whether the nuts are mature or not.