

A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON TWO FLORAL VARIANTS IN THE 1981 WILD *HEVEA* GERMPLASM COLLECTION

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Flora-morphological studies on the 1981 IRRDB wild *Hevea* germplasm collection maintained at the Rubber Research Institute of India have revealed two genotypes which are different from the rest. These variants differ in the pattern of growth, colour of the flower, presence of a disk at the base of the staminal column in the male flower and morphology of the fruit. The possibility of these being intraspecific variants or interspecific hybrids is discussed.

Key words : Floral morphology, Fruit morphology, *Hevea* species, Taxonomy, Wild germplasm.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1981, the IRRDB member institutes and the EMBRAPA of Brazil made a joint expedition in the Amazon forests to collect wild *Hevea* (mainly *H. brasiliensis*) germplasm. The large number of genotypes collected by the team was distributed among the member countries. The share of the wild germplasm received in India is being maintained in conservation nurseries at the Central Experiment Station of the Rubber Research Institute of India in Kerala. During the studies on floral morphology, as part of the characterization programme of these wild genotypes, two floral variants with a distinct colouration were detected. The morphology of these variants, which are Rondonian accessions is detailed and their possible origin discussed.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Inflorescences and fruits of the two variants, RO 373 and RO 394, were examined, with particular reference to

taxonomical traits. The flowers and fruits of a few wild germplasm accessions as well as those of a few Wickham clones were observed for comparison. The flowers and fruits of the species *H. spruceana* and *H. benthamiana* were also examined for similarities and differences. For the rest of the species, the descriptions given in the literature (Schultes, 1970; Wycheley, 1992) have been consulted for comparison.

RESULTS

The two wild accessions were found to differ from typical *H. brasiliensis* in the pattern of growth, colour of the flower, presence of a basal disk in the male flower and in the shape of the fruit and seed. The pattern of growth exhibited by these accessions is the 'short shoot' type, which is typical of most species of the genus, but not of *H. brasiliensis*. In the flowering branch of RO 373, long panicles were produced in the axils of the scale leaves in a highly compressed whorl, just above the old shoot