

Miscellany

Seedling variants in allspice (*Pimenta dioica* (L.) Merr.)

Allspice (*Pimenta dioica* (L.) Merr.), also known as Jamaican pepper, is indigenous to West Indies. The mature but unripe berries are dried and used as a spice. Allspice was introduced into India by the British during the 18th century. In India, it is mainly cultivated in few estates of Ashambo hills (Kanyakumari District, Tamil Nadu), and also in a few gardens in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Allspice is commonly propagated through seeds. A distinctly variant type of seedling was identified in a seedling population maintained in the nursery at the Experiment Farm of Indian Institute of Spices Research at Peruvannamuzhi (Kerala) during 1996 and is reported here.

Two seedlings, with clear morphological variations in height, shape of canopy, branching habit and leaf size were observed in a population of 20,000 seedlings. Observations on various morphological characters of these two seedlings (2 year old) were compared with those of normal seedlings of same age (Table 1).

The variant types had a dwarf/semi-dwarf habit with short internodes and bushy nature possessing a large number of branches. The leaves were smaller (about 1/3 the size) when compared to that of normal leaves (Fig. 1). The variants were multiplied clonally through grafting and all the clones exhibited the parental character. This dwarf/semi dwarf plant type in allspice with large number of branches offers

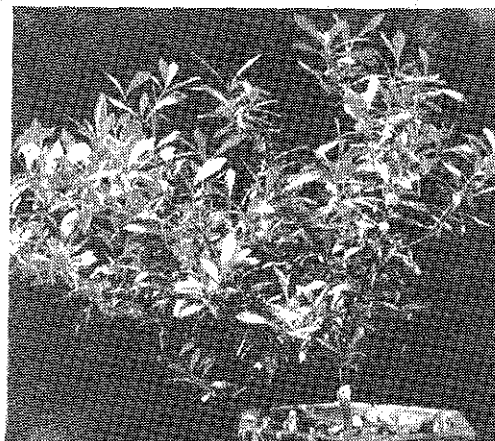


Fig.1. Seedling variant in allspice

Table 1. Morphological characters of variants and normal seedlings of allspice

Type of seedling ¹	Plant height (cm)	No. of primary branches	Canopy width (cm)	No. of leaves ²	Leaf length (cm)	Leaf breadth (cm)
Variant 1	68	21	54	13	5.2	1.3
Variant 2	72	17	40	18	7.5	2.0
Normal	100	1	24	7	14.0	5.3

¹2 year old seedlings

² in the top 15 cm length of stem

great potential in utilizing them in crop improvement programmes. The variant is being conserved in the field germplasm repository of Indian Institute of Spices

Research at Peruvannamuzhi.

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