

STUDIES ON WINTERING AND FLOWERING PATTERN OF DIFFERENT *HEVEA* CLONES IN COASTAL KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT

The wintering and flowering patterns of *Hevea* clones in coastal Karnataka, one of the major non-traditional areas growing rubber, were studied. Forty clones were studied for wintering and twenty-three clones for flowering. The study was carried out at weekly intervals during the wintering and flowering seasons of 1998-99, 1999-2000 and 2000-01. In general, wintering pattern of the clones was not uniform over seasons. While three distinct clusters were obtained for 1998-99 and 2000-01 seasons, four clusters were obtained for 1999-2000. However, certain clones exhibited uniformity of wintering pattern in all the seasons. Further, results indicated that some of the clones were more influenced by the environment than others for wintering pattern. Individual clusters had close relatives grouped together irrespective of seasons, thus, indicating the genetic control on wintering behaviour. The observations on flowering indicated that commencement of flowering depends on wintering pattern. Wide variations were observed for the male to female flower ratios, pollen stainability and also initial fruit set. Owing to the adverse influence of environment, natural fruit recovery was seldom achieved. The results generated can be used for characterisation of clones and also to select them for appropriate breeding programmes apart from designing suitable breeding orchards.

INTRODUCTION

The para rubber, *Hevea brasiliensis* is a deciduous tree that displays annual leaf shedding called 'wintering'. Wintering is reported to occur from December to February in South India. Wintering may either be complete or partial depending upon the clone, age of the plants, seasonal factors, location, etc. (George *et al.*, 1967 and Priyadarshan *et al.*, 2001). Refoliation and flowering follow wintering. Flowering is dependent on wintering, clone and agroclimatic conditions (Meenattoor *et al.*, 1989). The clonal specificity on wintering pattern and flowering behaviour in the traditional rubber growing areas (George *et al.*, 1967 and Soman *et al.*, 1995) and the non-traditional regions like Tripura has been well established (Meenattoor *et al.*, 1989; Vinod *et al.*, 1996; Sowmyalatha *et al.*, 1996). Though rubber cultivation has been in existence in the non-traditional region of coastal Karnataka for the last four decades, little information is available on the wintering and flowering characteristics of *Hevea* tree in this region. The present study was aimed at assessing the performance of different clones for wintering pattern and flowering behaviour in Coastal Karnataka.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

WINTERING

Forty clones planted under different clone

evaluation trials at HBSS, Nettana (75°32' E; 12°43' N; 110 MSL) constituted the material for the study (Table 1). Twenty trees per clone were selected and observed individually for the entire leaf fall period at weekly intervals from December to February and their wintering pattern scored using the visual score scale (Vinod *et al.*, 1996). Observations were initiated in 1998-99 season and concluded during 2000-2001. In general, the entire leaf shedding process extended for ten effective weeks every season. The average score for the ten weeks was computed for the clones individually for three seasons. Analysis of variance was performed using the average data. The average data was also used to compute the proximity values between the clones using the formula.

$$d_{ii'} = \sum (X_{ij} - X_{i'j})^2$$

where, $d_{ii'}$ is the distance between the clones i and i' ($i = 1$ to m) and x_i and $x_{i'}$ are the values of clones i and i' for the corresponding week, j ($j = 1$ to n). The proximity matrix was used to cluster the clones using Sneath and Skals's (1973) unweighted pair group method using arithmetic averages (UPGMA). Clusters were arrived at empirically by fixing the cut off distance at 30 units and the grouping was done individually for the seasons.

FLOWERING

Since good flowering was not observed in

all the forty clones selected for wintering studies, the study was limited to twenty three clones from among them which showed good flowering (Table 1). The study was conducted at weekly intervals during the flowering seasons of 1999 to 2001. Five trees per clone were subjected to the studies. For the sex ratio and fruit set studies, two branches per tree were selected and the count was made on five panicles randomly on each branch. Pollen stainability was assessed by counting stained pollen, using squash preparations of another lobes made with 1 per cent acetocarmine.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

WINTERING

The combined analysis of variance (Table 2) showed significant variation in the pattern of wintering contributed by the clones, weeks, seasons and also the interactions among the three

factors. This indicated that the wintering pattern of clones in this region is at random and is highly influenced by the environment, other than the genetic factors.

The average weekly data were used to group the clones based on their wintering pattern individually for all the three seasons. The clusters constructed using UPGMA exhibited different grouping of clones in all the three seasons. While three clusters were distinct during 1998-99 & 2000-01, four clusters emerged during 1999-2000.

The cluster characteristics for the component clones of the individual seasons are given in Tables 3, 4 and 5. The classification was based on the commencement of wintering (early, normal and late), progress of wintering over weeks (slow and fast) and the nature of wintering (complete, partial or intermediate). The early

Table 1. Details of the clones used in the study

Clone	Parentage	Country of origin	Clone	Parentage	Country of origin
RRII 105*	Tjir 1 x G11	India	PB 252*	PB 86 x PB 32	Malaysia
RRII 118*	Tjir 1 x PR 107	India	PB 311*	RRIM 600 x PB 235	Malaysia
HP 185	Tjir 1 x Mil 3/2	India	PB 86*	Primary clone	Malaysia
HP 187	Tjir 1 x Mil 3/2	India	PB 28/83	Primary clone	Malaysia
HP 204	Tjir 1 x Mil 3/2	India	GL 1*	Primary clone	Malaysia
HP 223	Tjir 1 x Hil 28	India	Ch 26*	Primary clone	Malaysia
RRII 203*	Mil 3/2 x Hil 28	India	PR 255*	Tjir 1 x PR 107	Indonesia
HP 372	Mil 3/2 x Hil 28	India	PR 261*	Tjir 1 x PR 107	Indonesia
RRII 300*	PB 86 x Mil 3/2	India	Tjir 1	Primary clone	Indonesia
RRII 308	G11 x PB Mil 6/50	India	GT 1*	Primary clone	Indonesia
AVT 73*	Primary clone	India	RRIC 36	PB 86 x PR 107	Sri Lanka
RRIM 600*	Tjir 1 x PB 86	Malaysia	RRIC 45*	RRIC 8 x Tjir 1	Sri Lanka
PB 5/51*	PB 56 x PB 24	Malaysia	Hil 28	Primary clone	Sri Lanka
PB 213*	PB 56 x PB 86	Malaysia	Mil 3/2	Primary clone	Sri Lanka
PB 215*	NK	Malaysia	KRS 128	RRIM 501 x PB 5/63	Thailand
PB 217*	PB 5/51 x PB 6/9	Malaysia	KRS 163	PB 5/63 x RRIM 501	Thailand
PB 235*	PB 5/51 x PB 5/78	Malaysia	KRS 25	Primary clone	Thailand
PB 242	PB 5/51 x PB 32/36	Malaysia	SCATC 88/13	RRIM 600 x Pil B 84	China
PB 255	PB 5/51 x PB 32/36	Malaysia	Haiken 1*	Primary clone	China
PB 260*	PB 5/51 x PB 49	Malaysia	IAN 45/873*	PB 86 x F 1717	Brazil

* clones selected for flowering and fruit set study

wintering clones started to show yellowing of leaves as early as December I week and late wintering clones as late as I week of January. The clones which wintered between December II to IV week were classified as normal. The clones that showed steady progress of wintering were described as slow and those which showed leaf shedding at a very faster rate within a short gap of 1-2 weeks were described as fast wintering clones. Those clones, which shed leaves completely before reflushing are described as complete wintering clones and those which did not shed leaves completely, are described to be partial wintering clones.

The tables reveal a wide variation for the cluster characteristics over seasons. During 1998-99 season, cluster I comprised of the majority of clones under study which started to shed leaves earlier and slowly progressed over weeks to show

complete wintering. Prominent among the clones were RRII 105, PB 242, PB 252, Ch 26, PR 261, Haiken 1, PR 255 and KRS 128, which were found to be in the cluster I for subsequent seasons also. The cluster III comprised of RRII 203 and KRS 25 alongwith other clones which were also found to occupy the III cluster in the subsequent seasons. These clones were found to winter normal and exhibited a steady progress and were partial in nature. The clone PB 217, which was in the III cluster during 1998-99 and 2000-01 seasons, however, was found in a separate group during 1999-2000 season owing to its late wintering nature. Rest of the clusters were intermediate to these and the constituent clones shifted their positions between clusters I and III besides II in all the seasons. This clearly indicated that some clones were more influenced by the environment in the wintering behaviour than others.

Table 2. Combined analysis of variance for the wintering pattern of forty clones for three seasons

Source	Degrees of freedom	Mean squares	Variance ratio
Clone	39	22998.63	300.22*
Week	9	284733.56	16106.06*
Season	2	5585.34	1421.77*
Clone x Week	351	11720.31	17.00*
Clone x Season	78	8296.27	54.75*
Week x Season	18	10990.11	310.84*
Clone x Week x Season	702	7109.67	5.16*
Error	22,781	44647.05	

* significant at 5% level

Table 3. Cluster characteristics for wintering pattern of forty clones in 1998-99 season

Cluster	No. of clones	Clones	Wintering nature
I	29	RRII 105, HP 185, HP 187, Hp 204 HP 223, HP 372, AVT 73, RRIM 600, PB 5/51, PB 213, PB 215, PB 242, PB 255, PB 260, PB 252, PB 86, PB 28/83, G11, Ch 26, PR 255, PR 261, GT 1, RRIC 36, Hil 28, Mil 3/2, KRS 128, KRS 163, SCATC 88/13, Haiken 1	Early, slow, complete
II	2	Tjir 1, IAN 45/873	Early, fast, complete
III	9	RRII 118, RRII 300, RRIC 45, RRII 203, PB 235, PB 311, KRS 25, PB 217, RRII 308	Normal, slow, partial

Evaluation of *Hevea* clones in Coastal Karnataka

Table 4. Cluster characteristics for wintering pattern of forty clones in 1999-2000 season

Cluster	No. of clones	Clones	Wintering nature
I	28	RRII 105, RRII 118, HP 187, HP 223, HP 372, RRII 300, AVT 73, RRIM 600, PB 5/51, PB 215, PB 235, PB 242, PB 255, PB 260, PB 252, PB 86, G1 1, Ch 26, PR 261, RRIC 36, Hil 28, KRS 128, KRS 163, SCATC 88/13, Haiken 1, PR 255, Tjir 1, IAN 45/873	Early, slow, complete
II	4	RRIC 45, GT 1, PB 213, PB 28/83	Normal, slow, complete
III	7	RRII 203, PB 311, Mil 3/2, HP 204, KRS 25, RRII 308, HP 185	Normal, slow, partial
IV	1	PB 217	Late, fast, partial

Table 5. Cluster characteristics for wintering pattern of forty clones in 2000-2001 season

Cluster	No. of clones	Clones	Wintering nature
I	10	RRII 105, PB 242, PB 252, Ch 26, PR 261, Haiken 1, PR 255, Tjir 1, IAN 45/873, KRS 128	Early, slow, complete
II	24	HP 185, HP 187, HP 204, HP 223, HP 372, RRII 300, RRII 308, AVT 73, RRIM 600, PB 5/51, PB 213, PB 215, PB 235, PB 255, PB 260, PB 311, PB 86, PB 28/83, G1 1, GT 1, RRIC 36, Hil 28, KRS 163, SCATC 88/13	Normal, slow, complete
III	6	RRIC 45, RRII 118, Mil 3/2, PB 217, RRII 203, KRS 25	Normal, slow, partial

On a closer examination of the individual clusters, it was observed that in quite a number of cases close relatives were grouped together irrespective of the seasons. RRIM 600 and RRIC 36 derived from PB 86 share same cluster in all the seasons. HP 223 and HP 372 with Hil 28, PB 255 and PB 260 with PB 5/51 and SCATC 88/13 with RRIM 600 showed similar associations. However, there are few more cases showing similar grouping but not in all seasons, the details of which are presented in table 6. Also, it is very pertinent to note that the number of relatives grouped apart in different clusters is relatively small in the all three seasons. This strongly suggests the genetic influence on the wintering pattern of genotypes, part from the environmental modification as described by Vinod *et. al.*, (1996).

FLOWERING

In general, during all the seasons under study good flowering was not observed in any of the clones. Flowering was concentrated on the exposed areas and on the upper canopies of the trees.

The time of commencement of flowering for individual clones over seasons are presented in Table 7. It has been observed that RRII 105, IAN 45/873 and PB 311 were the early flowering clones irrespective of the seasons. RRII 105 and IAN 45/873 were early wintering clones and PB 311 started to winter normally. However, unlike the other two, in PB 311 panicles emerged alongwith new flushes. Similarly, the clones GT 1, PB 235 and PB 260 were late to commence flowering irrespective of the

seasons. The rest of the clones exhibited variations, which are intermediate in nature. The peak flowering period for all the clones in this region was February to middle of March. However, most of the clones continued to flower during April and May. Remarkably, the cessation of flowering occurred by April in clones like RR11 105, RR11 600, PB 311, PR 255, PR 261 and Haiken 1.

Other attributes related to floral biology of the clones are furnished in Table 8. The study revealed highly significant variation among clones for the traits. The male/female flower ratio was wide in PB 311 (32.70 : 1) followed by PB 235 (21.50 : 1). It was much narrower in IAN 45/873 (6.87 : 1) and PR 261 (7.95 : 1). Marked protandry was observed in all the clones studied. The anthesis of

Table 6. Grouping of relatives under individual clusters for three seasons

Cluster	Parents	Seasons		
		1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001
RR11 105	♀ Tjir 1	-	+	+
	♂ G1 1	+	+	-
RR11 118	♀ Tjir 1	-	+	-
HP 185	♂ Mil 3/2	+	+	-
HP 187	♀ Tjir 1	-	+	-
	♂ Mil 3/2	+	-	-
HP 204	♂ Mil 3/2	+	+	-
HP 223	♀ Tjir 1	-	+	-
	♂ Hil 28	+	+	+
RR11 203	♀ Mil 3/2	-	+	+
HP 372	♀ Mil 3/2	+	-	-
	♂ Hil 28	+	+	+
RR11 300	♀ PB 86	-	+	+
RR11 308	♀ G1 1	-	-	+
RR11 600	♀ Tjir 1	-	+	-
	♂ PB 86	+	+	+
PB 213	♂ PB 86	-	+	+
PB 235	♀ PB 5/51	-	+	+
PB 242	♀ PB 5/51	+	+	-
PB 255	♀ PB 5/51	+	+	+
PB 260	♀ PB 5/51	+	+	+
PB 252	♀ PB 86	+	+	-
PB 311	♀ RR11 600	-	-	+
	♂ PB 235	+	-	+
PB 255	♀ Tjir 1	-	+	+
PR 261	♀ Tjir 1	-	+	+
RR11 36	♀ PB 86	+	+	+
SCATC 88/13	♀ RR11 600	+	+	+
IAN 45/473	♀ PB 86	-	+	-

+ Grouped - Not grouped

Evaluation of *Hevea* clones in Coastal Karnataka

staminate flowers occurred between 11.00 A.M. to 12 noon during the first fortnight of March in all the clones. The pistillate flowers opened 10-15 days after the anthesis of male flowers. The data on pollen stainability showed higher percentage of stained pollens in RRIM 600 followed by PB 260, Ch 26 and PB 2335. However, it was much lower in Haiken 1, PB 252, PB 86 and PB 213. The clone GT1 was male sterile as there were no mature anthers realised in the male buds. Saraswathyamma *et. al.* (1986) have earlier reported the male sterile nature of GT 1. In spite of having good flowering in some of the clones under study, expected natural fruit set could not be realised in any of these clones. Generally, poor initial fruit set was observed in clones, with no fruit set in few clones during all the three seasons. This was primarily due to the desiccation of the female flowers even before the anthesis of male flowers. However, relatively better initial fruit set was seen

in clones like PR 261 (16.67%), PB 217 (16.44%) and Ch 26 (15.93%). It was poor in PB 213, Haiken 1 and PBB 311. However, due to severe incidence of diseases like *Corynespora* leaf fall, followed by fruit rot caused by *Phytophthora* none of the fruits survived to maturity under natural conditions. However, possibility of salvaging fruits by suitable control measures is being explored.

CONCLUSION

In general, refoliation commenced before or at the completion of wintering process in majority of the clones. However, it was observed that the clones which shed leaves late reflushed late. Normally, the fast wintering clones escape from the incidence of leaf diseases, while the slow wintering clones have young leaves for a longer period enough for exposure to pathogens, rendering them vulnerable to various leaf diseases

Table 7. Time of commencement of flowering in twenty three clones for three seasons

Clones	1999	2000	2001
PB 311	Jan IV week	Jan III week	Jan IV week
IAN 45/873	Jan IV week	Jan II week	Jan IV week
RRII 105	Feb I week	Jan III week	Jan IV week
PR 261	Feb I week	Jan IV week	Feb I week
PR 255	Feb I week	Jan IV week	Feb II week
PB 5/51	Feb II week	Jan IV week	Feb I week
RRIM 600	Feb II week	Jan IV week	Feb II week
RRII 203	Feb II week	Jan IV week	Feb I week
RRII 118	Feb II week	Jan IV week	Feb I week
RRIC45	Feb II week	Jan IV week	Feb I week
PB 86	Feb II week	Jan IV week	Feb I week
PB 252	Feb II week	Jan IV week	Feb I week
PB 217	Feb II week	Jan IV week	Feb I week
PB 215	Feb II week	Jan IV week	Feb I week
PB 213	Feb II week	Feb I week	Feb I week
Haiken 1	Feb II week	Jan II week	Jan III week
G1 1	Feb II week	Jan IV week	Feb I week
Ch 26	Feb II week	Jan IV week	Feb I week
AVT 73	Feb II week	Jan IV week	Feb I week
RRII 300	Feb III week	Jan IV week	Feb I week
GT 1	Feb III week	Feb I week	Feb II week
PB 235	Feb IV week	Jan IV week	Feb I week
PB 260	Feb IV week	Feb I week	Feb II week

Table 8. Average male : female flower ratio, pollen stainability and initial fruit set in twentythree clones over three seasons.

Clones	1999	2000	2001
PB 311	32.70 g	68.60 de	8.68
IAN 45/873	6.87 a	69.39 de	10.37
RRII 105	10.05 a-c	84.91 i	13.75
PR 261	7.95 ab	71.28 ef	16.67
PR 255	11.27 a-d	66.77 d	14.24
PB 5/51	8.34 ab	76.51 g	12.77
RRIM 600	12.73 b-d	95.02 k	15.27
RRII 203	9.25 ab	72.10 f	9.49
RRII 118	11.67 a-d	75.98 g	-
RRIC 45	11.05 a-d	78.72 gh	-
PB 86	14.35 c-e	62.44 c	-
PB 252	11.80 b-d	61.51 c	-
PB 217	9.30 ab	80.93 hi	16.44
PB 215	9.65 a-c	89.58 j	15.49
PB 213	10.25 a-c	62.52 c	7.70
Haiken 1	10.00 a-c	53.79 b	7.95
GI 1	11.77 b-d	67.06 de	11.87
Ch 26	17.43 ef	91.69 jk	15.93
AVT 73	17.90 ef	80.85 hi	12.59
RRII 300	15.33 de	80.99 hi	9.49
GT 1	11.97 b-d	0.00 a	-
PB 235	21.50 f	90.65 j	12.09
PB 260	11.83 b-d	92.71 jk	14.51

Clone averages followed by same letters are not significantly different at 5% level based on Tukey's B test.

(Peries, 1979; Webster and Paardekooper, 1989). Slow wintering nature of clones like RRII 105, PR 255 and PR 261 could be one of the reasons for high incidence of *Corynespora* leaf fall in these clones. Grouping of the clones can be used as a tool for appropriately selecting them for different breeding programmes as flowering invariably follows wintering. Moreover, based on the wintering behaviour of the clones appropriate disease control measures can be adopted. The information can also be useful for characterisation of the clones in the region.

The results on the observed flowering attributes reveal greater degree of clonal specificity for the characters. However, the greater influence

of the seasons particularly the climatic changes and disease outbreaks, often mask the true genetic expression for these traits. But the results can still be used to identify the synchrony in flowering between different clones, which in turn can be utilized to chalk out hybridisation programmes and also design appropriate multi clone breeding orchards. However, further insight into these attributes is required to fix the casual factors for the apparent variability.

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