

## Botany, Taxonomy and Genetic Resources

Cashew (*Anacardium occidentale* L.) is an important export oriented crop of tropical region and belongs to the family Anacardiaceae under the order Sapinales. This family comprises 60 to 74 genera and 400 to 600 species (Barros, 1991). However, Susan (2009) reported approximately 800 species in 82 genera. Members of this family are cultivated throughout the world for their edible fruits, seeds, medicinal compounds, valuable timber, and landscape appeal (Ohler, 1979). Other important species of Anacardiaceae include mango (*Mangifera indica*), pistachio (*Pistacia vera*) and pink peppercorn (*Schinus terebinthifolia*) and products of these species are consumed worldwide. Other distinguished species such as the pantropical *Spondias* fruits, the marula of Africa (*Sclerocarya birrea*), and the neotropical fruits of the genus *Antrocaryon* are considered to be localized cultivation and consumption and are not generally transported to distant markets.

According to Baily (1949), the genus *Anacardium* contains eight tropical American species. Parente (1972) names 10 species but Peixoto (1960) names 20 different species several of which had edible peduncles such as *A. nanum*, St. Halaire, a very early bearing small shrub, *A. subterraneanum* Liais, a small shrub with its trunk almost completely underground containing water reserves; *A. microcarpum* Ducke, a small tree from sandy savannas, *A. spruceanum* Benth. a large tree and the largest species of the genus *A. giganteum* Hanca which grows

Table 3.1. Species of *Anacardium* described by classic systematic botany (Johnson, 1973)

Species	Country of origin
<i>Anacardium amilcarianum</i> Machado	Brazil
<i>A. brasiliense</i> Barb.Rodr.	Brazil
<i>A. corymbosum</i> Barb.Rodr.	Brazil
<i>A. curatellaefolium</i> St.Hil	Brazil
<i>A. encardium</i> Noronha	Malaysia
<i>A. excelsum</i> Skeels	Brazil
<i>A. giganteum</i> Hancock ex.Engl.	Brazil
<i>A. humile</i> St.Hil	Brazil
<i>A. kuhlmannianum</i> Machado	Brazil
<i>A. mediterraneanum</i> Vell.Fl.Flum	Brazil
<i>A. microcarpum</i> Ducke.	Amazon region
<i>A. microsepalum</i> Loesn	Amazon region
<i>A. nanum</i> St.Hil	Brazil
<i>A. negrense</i> Pires & Fro'es	Brazil
<i>A. occidentale</i> Linn.	Brazil
<i>A. othonianum</i> Rizz.	Brazil
<i>A. parvifolium</i> Ducke	Amazon region
<i>A. rhinonocarpus</i> D.C.Prod.	Brazil
<i>A. rondonianum</i> Machado	Brazil
<i>A. spruceanum</i> Benth Ex.Engl.	Brazil
<i>A. tenuifolium</i> Ducke	Amazon region