ANALYSES OF GENETIC DIVERSITY AND DRUPE SIZE QTLS IN 
PHYLLANTHUS EMBLICA L. USING DNA MARKERS

S.M.U.P. Mawalagedera1, P. Janaththani1, S.W.M.B. Dunuwille1, G.A.D. Perera2, C.K. Weebadde3 and S.D.S.S. Sooriyapathirana1*

1Department of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, Faculty of Science, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
2Department of Botany, Faculty of Science, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
3Departments of Plant, Soil and Microbial Sciences and Horticulture, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, USA

*sunethss09@gmail.com

Phyllanthus emblica L. (V. Nelli) is a medicinally and commercially important fresh fruit species. Yet it remains as an underutilized fruit crop to date. There is a significant diversity in this germplasm in relation to drupe traits which can be exploited to breed superior cultivars. However, the genomic diversity of P. emblica germplasm in Sri Lanka has not been studied in detail. Therefore, the present study was conducted to molecularly characterize the P. emblica germplasm in Sri Lanka.

Young tender leaves were collected from 66 trees of P. emblica from various parts of Kandy, Kurunegala and Anuradhapura districts of Sri Lanka. Genomic DNA was extracted using QiaGen DNeasy Plant mini kit. Six microsatellite markers and one SCAR marker developed for P. emblica were used for PCR amplification of the sampled P. emblica germplasm. The PCR products of the DNA samples of 66 P. emblica trees were then size separated by using 6% denaturing polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis. Different alleles for each marker were visually identified in base pairs and a binary scoring matrix was built for all the markers. For each allele, allele frequency, heterozygosity and polymorphic information content were calculated. Cluster analysis was conducted based on marker data and association analysis was done to detect putative QTLs associated with drupe traits.

The dendrogram based on seven DNA marker alleles, showed three major clusters at 46.39% genetic similarity coefficient without showing any biasness based on sampling location. A total of 51 alleles were detected for the sampled P. emblica germplasm for the six microsatellite markers and SCAR marker tested. Out of the six microsatellite markers, four were polymorphic and one was monomorphic. Heterozygosity of the tested markers ranged from 0.89 to 0.44. Out of those markers highest significant association (P < 0.001 and P < 0.0001) with commercially important traits drupe height, width, weight and mesocarp thickness was shown by the marker Phyll 112, alleles 175 bp, 176 bp and 178 bp. The P. emblica germplasm has a higher variation in Sri Lanka and this diversity can be used to develop genetically superior varieties in the future. The putative QTLs can be used for marker assisted selection in breeding and for molecular screening of seedlings for drupe traits of commercial importance.

Financial assistance given by the University of Peradeniya (RG/2013/15/S) and Michigan State University Research Grant is acknowledged.