



NOTES FROM THE UNAFAS CVP TREE NURSERY HOW TO GERMINATE AND NURSE USEFUL TREE SPECIES

Cashew

Scientific Name – *Anacardium occidentale*. Noix d’cajou, pomme d’cajou,

[Link to photo 1](#)
[Link to photo 2](#)

Cashew is native to South America, now widespread, including in Nigeria & East Africa with many commercial and home uses. An attractive medium sized tree, spreading, evergreen, much branched, 12-15m tall, the same family as mango, it has the shape of a small mango tree, though this varies with conditions. Mature trees have a prominent tap root and well developed, extensive network of lateral and sinker roots.

Biophysical limits – Altitude, 0-1000 m. Mean annual temperature, 17-38°C. Mean annual rainfall, 500-3500 mm. Soil type, prefers deep, fertile, sandy soils, but will grow well on most soil except pure clay, or soils that are impermeable, poorly drained or suffer flooding. Prefers open, sunny sites.

Young trees must be weeded, and mulched in the dry season. After the tree starts bearing if there is means apply manure or fertiliser and spray against pests. It flowers in 3-5 years, with many male, and also hermaphrodite flowers. The nut has toxic oil in the shell. Inside the shell is the edible, nutritious seed 2.5 cm long. The fruit is edible, juicy, slightly bitter and contains much more vitamin C than citrus fruits.

The oil in the shell is toxic, it burns skin. It makes the skin peel, and then causes open wounds. When handling seeds plastic gloves should be worn or coconut or red oil put on the skin as a protection. Wash wounds with cold water. Do not apply creams or lotions.

Shell oil is used to make hydraulic fluid, paint & varnish. Roasted seeds sell profitably.

Nursery technique

Cashew seeds and seedlings need care and attention to grow successfully. It is common to lose 20-40% of seedlings to damp rot : remove and destroy these, persisting with the rest.

- Seeds supplied dry need to be soaked in water for three days. It is essential that the water is changed early morning, mid day and evening, every day.
- Seeds can be sown in situ (where you want them to grow), 5-8 cm deep, in planting holes 30 cm wide. Apply manure if available.
- Alternatively, nurse seeds on a seed bed with loose soil at least 40 cm deep. Place the seeds, evenly, all over the surface and cover with a thin layer of soil. As soon as they start to germinate place in individual containers or bags.
- Remove and burn the shells as soon as they are loose of the seed – they decay and attract insects and damp rot that can destroy seedlings.
- It is important to water and weed regularly, and to prevent water logging.



- The roots are delicate and easily damaged, by excess water, or physical disturbance. Such damage often kills the plant. Cashew seedlings also damage easily when transporting and transplanting.
- Fence against browsing animals-goats, cows and sheep find and like eating the leaves.