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Diversity for growth habit in the natural population of walnut (*Juglans regia* L.) in the Kashmir valley

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ABSTRACT : The present investigation entitled diversity for growth habit in the natural population of walnut (*Juglans regia* L.) in the Kashmir valley was carried out in order to document the available genetic variability in walnut germplasm and to select elite walnut genotypes possessing superior attributes and quality traits. During the survey, data was recorded on one hundred fifty two (152) walnut trees growing in different areas of Kashmir valley. Remarkable variability was observed in seedling walnut trees for different morphological, nut and kernel characters. Similarly, variations were also reported for other characters viz., tree vigour, growth habit, branching habit, leaflet shape, shoot colour, nut shape, shell texture, shell colour, shell seal, shell strength, shell integrity, kernel shrivel and kernel colour. Studies on growth habit revealed substantial variability among the seedling raised walnuts genotypes in Kashmir valley fifty four genotypes (35.52%) had erect growth habit and another 54 genotypes (35.52%) had semi-erect growth habit, while remaining 44 genotypes (28.96%) had spreading growth habit.

KEY WORDS : Walnut, Diversity, Tree vigour

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The persian walnut (*Juglans regia* L.), known as the English walnut, belongs to the family Juglandaceae. English walnut has its origin in the eastern Europe, Asia minor and points eastward to Himalayan mountains. The native habitat of walnut extends from the Carpathian mountains to Europe across Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, South Russia and further eastward into the foot hills of the Himalayas. In India walnuts are usually grown in the mid hill areas of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and upper hills of Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh. The soil most suitable for its cultivation should be well-drained and deep silt loamy containing organic matter in abundance. It should not have a fluctuating water level, hard pan and/or sandy sub-soil with alkaline reaction. A soil 2.5 to 3.0 m deep gives best results because the roots can penetrate

deep and utilize residual soil moisture during dry spell and also make available sufficient nutrients. Furthermore, availability of sufficient moisture in the leaves can reduce the damage due to sun burning of leaves, shoots and young fruits. Walnut is grown commercially in about 48 countries with an area of 66, 58, 966 hectares. The world walnut production is about 16, 70, 109 MT. The chief walnut producing countries are China (22%), USA (20%), Iran (12%) and Turkey (10%) (Anonymous, 2007). India accounts for about 2.0 per cent of the world production. In India, Jammu and Kashmir is leading both in area as well as in production with an area of 82.04 thousand ha and production of 146.78 thousand tonnes. However, the productivity level of 1.79 t ha⁻¹ is far below than other countries. Himachal Pradesh has an area of 6.54 thousand ha with a production of 1.24 thousand tonnes

and productivity level of 0.19 t ha⁻¹, while Uttarakhand has an area of 19.26 thousand ha with a production of 8.73 thousand tonnes and productivity level of 0.45 t/ha and Arunachal Pradesh has an area of 2285 ha with a production of about 51 tonnes and productivity level of 0.022 t/ha. In the state of Jammu and Kashmir, Anantnag is the leading district both in area as well as production corresponding to an area of 13647 ha and production of 41180 tonnes with a productivity level of 3.01 t ha⁻¹, followed by the Kupwara district that covers an area of 8175 ha with 22103 tonnes production and a productivity level of a 2.70 t ha⁻¹. Kulgam ranks 6th in area and 3rd in production in the J&K state and has the highest productivity of 3.52 t ha⁻¹, which is even higher than that of USA. This indicates that the state has the right type of agro-climatic conditions and vast potential to produce export quality walnut and kernels. The variations are dependent on different environmental conditions to which the plants are subjected before and after propagation (Ibrahim *et al.*, 1978; Awasthi *et al.*, 1982 and Qureshi and Dalal 1985). Micro propagation studies in walnut are not so well established nor is any full proof protocol yet developed for efficient and faster multiplication of superior plants. The presence of phenolic compounds and entophytic bacteria are still the main limiting factors for establishing plant micro propagation in walnuts. The use of young vegetal material is the usual technique for *in vitro* set up of walnut (Driver and Kuniyuki, 1984 and Jay-Allemand *et al.*, 1993). Quality in regeneration of *in vitro* plant material is correlated with maintenance of mother plants in the controlled environments, with regular hormone application and proper choice of physiological stage for collecting materials. The correct temperature in growth chambers is essential for a proper regeneration as well for subsequent multiplication (Dolcet-Sanjuan *et al.*, 1993). The addition of PVP to the culture medium as well as the substitution of agar by gelrite are the main factors reported for the control of phenolic compounds.

The current methodology of woody crop rooting by a biotapic process is well documented in walnut (Driver *et al.*, 1984) with the use of IBA. Walnut is hard to propagate through micro propagation. Various attempts have been made using different types of explants, media, culture condition and rooting techniques (Driver and Kuniyuki, 1984). Poor proliferation and rooting rate is one of the main obstacles that limit the micro propagation efficiency in walnut. Intensive and well planned research

is needed to develop a perfect protocol for micro propagation for this crop. Genotype plays a major role in vegetative propagation, in particular for micro propagation.

In many cases the propagation ratio can be improved by using a stronger cytokinin or increasing its concentration. However, this can sometimes have detrimental effects in the later stages of micro propagation. Micro propagation studies have also been carried out in some other species of nuts and similar trees like hazelnut (Radojevic *et al.*, 1975; Mele and Messeguer, 1983; Perez *et al.*, 1983); chestnut (Vieter and Vieter, 1980) and almond (Mehra and Mehra, 1974). But reports on *in vitro* walnut culture are scarce.

RESEARCH METHODS

The present investigation entitled diversity for growth habit in the natural population of walnut (*Juglans regia* L.) was carried out during the crop seasons of 2013 and 2014. The studies comprised two clusters of germplasm extending over the main geographical distribution of cultivation in the Jammu and Kashmir state. Genetic variability studies and diversity were estimated in the natural walnut population of Kashmir valley forming two cluster populations. Two standard check cultivars (Sulaiman and Hamdaan) were used for comparison (IPGR).

Cluster-I :

Plant materials in this cluster comprised 75 *in situ* earmarked seedling raised plants that were identified after detailed survey of the areas having large concentration of the crop in the districts of Kupwara and Baramulla.

Cluster-II :

In this cluster plant materials also comprised 75 *in situ* earmarked seedling raised plants that were identified after extensive survey of promising materials in the Pulwama and Shopian districts of South Kashmir and Budgam district of central Kashmir. The data of both the clusters (over 2 years) was pooled together for statistical analyses.

Morphological characters were recorded as per the standard descriptor of walnut recommended by IBPGR.

Growth habit

Uprightness of vigorous current season shoots was

taken for this trait.

Erect	-	1
Semi erect	-	2
Spreading	-	3

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The present investigation comprised one hundred fifty (150) seedling genotypes found growing in various regions of Kashmir valley together with two standard checks (Sulaiman and Hamdan). Most of the seedling trees were indigenous of Kashmir valley. Tremendous variation in configuration of land surface, vegetation aspect, meteorology and soil type was encountered during the study. The geographical variation has resulted in sizeable genetic diversity in walnuts. The seedlings identified and catalogued in this study represent a cross section of walnut germplasm available in Kashmir. An attempt has been made to evaluate this germplasm in respect of various descriptive and Perusal of the Table 1 revealed that fifty four genotypes (35.52%) had erect growth habit and another 54 genotypes (35.52%) had semi-erect growth habit, while remaining 44 genotypes (28.96%) had spreading growth habit. The genotypes

WS-11, WS-12, WS-23, WS-24, WS-25, WS-25, WS-27, WS-29, WS-32, WS-33, WS-35, WS-38, WS-40, WS-43, WS-44, WS-45, WS-46, WS-52, WS-53, WS-54, WS-,62 WS-67, WS-69, WS-72, WS-76, WS-89, WS-90, WS-91, WS-93, WS-94, WS-97, WS-101, WS-104, WS-107, WS-111, WS-115, WS-122, WS-124, WS-127, WS-129, WS-130, WS-131, WS-132, WS-134, WS-135, WS-137, WS-140, WS-142, WS-143, WS-145, WS-146, WS-148, WS-149 and WS-150 had erect growth habit, genotypes WS-01, WS-02, WS-03, WS-06, WS-07, WS-08, WS-09, WS-10, WS-16, WS-17, WS-21, WS-28, WS-31, WS-36, WS-42, WS-49, WS-50, WS-55, WS-57, WS-59, WS-60, WS-64, WS-68, WS-71, WS-73, WS-75, WS-77, WS-78, WS-81, WS-83, WS-84, WS-85, WS-86, WS-88, WS-89, WS-92, WS-95, WS-96, WS-98, WS-99, WS-100, WS-102, WS-103, WS-106, WS-114, WS-120, WS-121, WS-123, WS-125, WS-126, WS-133, WS-147 and Sulaiman had semi-erect growth habit; while WS-04, WS-05, WS-13, WS-14, WS-15, WS-18, WS-19, WS-20, WS-22, WS-30, WS-34, WS-37, WS-39, WS-41, WS-47, WS-48, WS-51, WS-56, WS-58, WS-61, WS-63, WS-,65 WS-66, WS-70, WS-74, WS-80, WS-82, WS-87, WS-105, WS-108, WS-109, WS-110, WS-112, WS-113, WS-116, WS-117, WS-118, WS-120, WS-136, WS-138, WS-139, WS-141, WS-144 and Hamdan had spreading growth habit. Since no training or pruning had ever been practiced in this natural population, therefore, we can safely consider

Table 1: Diversity for growth habit in the natural population of walnut (*Juglans regia* L.) in the Kashmir valley

Descriptor*	Score*	Accession number	Total	Per cent of the population
Erect	1	WS-11, WS-12, WS-23, WS-24, WS-25, WS-25, WS-27, WS-29, WS-32, WS-33, WS-35, WS-38, WS-40, WS-43, WS-44, WS-45, WS-46, WS-52, WS-53, WS-54, WS-,62 WS-67, WS-69, WS-72, WS-76, WS-89, WS-90, WS-91, WS-93, WS-94, WS-97, WS-101, WS-104, WS-107, WS-111, WS-115, WS-122, WS-124, WS-127, WS-129, WS-130, WS-131, WS-132, WS-134, WS-135, WS-137, WS-140, WS-142, WS-143, WS-145, WS-146, WS-148, WS-149 and WS-150	54	35.52
Semi-erect	2	WS-01, WS-02, WS-03, WS-06, WS-07, WS-08, WS-09, WS-10, WS-16, WS-17, WS-21, WS-28, WS-31, WS-36, WS-42, WS-49, WS-50, WS-55, WS-57, WS-59, WS-60, WS-64, WS-68, WS-71, WS-73, WS-75, WS-77, WS-78, WS-81, WS-83, WS-84, WS-85, WS-86, WS-88, WS-89, WS-92, WS-95, WS-96, WS-98, WS-99, WS-100, WS-102, WS-103, WS-106, WS-114, WS-120, WS-121, WS-123, WS-125, WS-126, WS-133, WS-147 and Sulaiman	54	35.52
Spreading	3	WS-04, WS-05, WS-13, WS-14, WS-15, WS-18, WS-19, WS-20, WS-22, WS-30, WS-34, WS-37, WS-39, WS-41, WS-47, WS-48, WS-51, WS-56, WS-58, WS-61, WS-63, WS-,65 WS-66, WS-70, WS-74, WS-80, WS-82, WS-87, WS-105, WS-108, WS-109, WS-110, WS-112, WS-113, WS-116, WS-117, WS-118, WS-120, WS-136, WS-138, WS-139, WS-141, WS-144 and Hamdan.	44	28.96

*As per the IBPGR Descriptor for walnut

it as their natural habit.

Solar and Stampar (2006) studied 275 seedling trees from different populations of domestic walnuts. Growth habit parameters were recorded over three years. Majority of genotypes exhibited semi-erect to semi-spreading growth habit with the exceptions like 'Z-62' (with markedly erect habit) and 'C-6/7' (with spreading branches). 'Remsau' had most vigorous growth with dense and branching canopy.

Ferhatoglu (1989) observed great genetic diversity in walnut populations of Turkey. Of these some trees were upright, spreading and vigorous. Others were upright spreading with normal branches and some had upright spreading trees with dense branching and moderate vigour. Lal *et al.* (1993) studied tree vigour attributes of walnut cultivars *viz.*, 'Tutle-31', 'Blacumore', 'Fraquentta', 'Hartley', 'Xenia', 'Tutle-16', 'Payne', 'Waterloo' and 'K x Giant' and observed that the cultivars, 'Tutle-16 and 'Blacumore' possessed maximum tree vigour.

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