

UNUSUAL POSITION OF INFLORESCENCE IN BANANA (MUSACEAE)

V. RAMASSAMY and J. PRESENA

Department of Botany, Kanchi Mamunivar Centre for P.G. Studies, Lawspet, Pondicherry - 605 008, India.

The present report brings out an interesting type of abnormality in the morphology of inflorescence in banana. As an unusual feature the peduncle was seen projecting out of pseudo-stem at the middle level through an axially elongated fissure.

Keywords : Abnormality; Banana; Morphology of inflorescence.

Banana (fruit of wisemen) a native of India is a perennial herb perennating through rhizome. What seems to be the stem or the trunk of banana plant is in reality only a compact mass of overlapping leaf sheaths (pseudo-stem or pseudo-trunk). As the plant approaches middle age, a primordial inflorescence bud originates from the rhizome and pushes up through the centre of the pseudo-stem. The inflorescence comes out after all the leaves including the short blade have emerged. The fleshy inflorescence is a mixed spadix with unbranched peduncle, which usually continues to grow till the fruits ripen. It is bent over and droops in the cultivated varieties, but is erect in some wild ones.

Abnormalities in banana appear to be rare except the frequent occurrence of syngynia in which ovaries of adjoining fruits fuse resulting in paired fruits. Cherian Jacob¹ has recorded a few abnormalities like fasciated peduncle above the region of fruits in a variety 'kali' and development of four independent inflorescence buds from the rhizome of which one is forked into two thus resulting in five normal bunches in a single plant belonging to 'Monthan' variety.

The present report brings out yet another interesting type of abnormality in the morphology of the inflorescence axis in one plant (Poovan variety) of a grove with more than 100 plants, situated at about 20 km away



Fig. 1. Banana plant showing scape (peduncle) projecting out of the pseudo-stem.

from Pondicherry on the Pondicherry - Villupuram highways. The plant was slightly shorter. In this plant the scape (peduncle) was seen projecting out of the pseudo-stem (Fig. 1) at the middle level (three feet above the soil level) unlike normal plants bearing peduncle at the apex. It has emerged by piercing through the axially elongated fissure made in the pseudo-stem (Fig. 1). However, the inflorescence was found to possess only a few bunches of diminutive fruits compared to those of normal plants.

It has been reported earlier that sometimes the bunches partially and prematurely develop by bursting through the sides of the pseudo-stem due to severe case of bunchy-top virus infection². Interestingly, the plant reported presently appears to be free from diseases.

This abnormal phenomenon might be due to the compact arrangement of leaf sheaths which failed to develop fully further; thus not allowing the peduncle

(scape) to grow further axially. Hence, the peduncle might have been forced to project through the weak point (the longitudinal fissure) formed in the leaf sheaths. It grew vertically to some extent and then slightly bent down.

Compact arrangement of leaf sheaths and failure in allowing the scape to grow further vertically may be attributed to the lack of certain mineral elements.

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The authors dedicate this paper to the loving memory of Mr. K. Madhivanan (late), professor of Tamil.

References

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