

## Cashew Nut Cultivation Guide

**Introduction** Cashew nut (*Anacardium occidentale*) is a tropical tree crop cultivated for its nutritious nuts and by-products such as cashew apple and cashew shell oil. Cashews are a valuable export commodity and are widely used in food processing, confectionery, and oil production. Cashew trees thrive in warm climates with well-drained sandy or laterite soil and require proper care throughout their growing cycle to ensure high yields.

### Steps to Harvest/Cultivate

1. **Selection of Variety:** Choose high-yielding and disease-resistant varieties based on climate conditions. Common varieties include VRI-3, BPP-8, and Goa-1.
2. **Soil Preparation:** Cashew trees grow best in well-drained sandy loam or lateritic soil with a pH of 5.5 to 6.5. Proper land preparation, including deep plowing and organic matter incorporation, improves tree establishment.
3. **Planting:**
  - Cashew seeds or grafted seedlings should be planted at the onset of the rainy season.
  - Maintain a spacing of 7-10 meters between trees to allow for canopy development.
  - Dig pits of 60 cm x 60 cm x 60 cm and fill them with a mixture of topsoil and compost before planting.
4. **Watering:** Young plants require regular watering, especially in dry conditions. Mature cashew trees are drought-tolerant and require minimal irrigation.
5. **Fertilization:** Apply nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium fertilizers along with organic manure to enhance tree growth and nut yield. Fertilization should be done at different growth stages.
6. **Pruning and Maintenance:**
  - Prune cashew trees regularly to remove weak or diseased branches and promote airflow.
  - Mulching around the base of trees helps retain moisture and suppress weeds.
7. **Pest and Disease Control:**
  - Common pests include tea mosquito bugs, stem borers, and thrips. Use neem-based sprays or biological control methods to manage infestations.
  - Prevent fungal diseases like anthracnose by ensuring proper spacing and drainage.
8. **Weed Management:** Manual weeding or mulching helps prevent competition for nutrients and moisture.
9. **Harvesting:**
  - Cashew nuts are ready for harvest after 3-4 years of planting, usually in the dry season.
  - Nuts are collected once they fall from the tree, separated from the cashew apple, and dried before processing.

**Conclusion** Cashew cultivation is a profitable venture when managed with proper soil preparation, fertilization, pest control, and harvesting techniques. With increasing global demand, cashew farming provides excellent economic opportunities for farmers while contributing to sustainable agricultural practices.

