

**LENTICEL DEVELOPMENT AND DISCOLOURATION IN THE  
FRUIT OF SOME MANGO (*Mangifera indica* L.) CULTIVARS**

**by**

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## CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>UITTREKSEL</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	
<b>1.1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.2 ORIGIN, FORMATION AND STRUCTURE OF LENTICELS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.2.1 Lenticels on stems</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.2.2 Lenticels on roots</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.2.3 Lenticels on fruit</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.3 DISORDERS</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1.4 PHYSIOLOGY</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1.4.1 Entrance of water</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1.4.2 Gas exchange</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>1.4.3 Lenticellular transpiration</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>1.5 SUMMARY</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>REFERENCE LIST</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: FLOWER DEVELOPMENT WITH REFERENCE TO INFLORESCENCE DEVELOPMENT</b>	
<b>2.1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>2.2 MATERIALS AND METHODS</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>2.3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>2.4.1 Stomatal development</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>REFERENCE LIST</b>	<b>31</b>

<b>CHAPTER 3: LENTICEL ONTOGENY OF ‘TOMMY ATKINS’, ‘KEITT’ AND ‘KENT’ FRUIT</b>	
<b>3.1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>3.2 MATERIALS AND METHODS</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>3.3 RESULTS</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>3.3.1 Fruit development from anthesis to 3 mm             in length</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>3.3.2 ‘TA’, ‘Keitt’ and ‘Kent’ Fruit, 4 - 20 mm</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>3.3.3 Fruit length up to 50 mm</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>3.3.4 Fruit length up to 100 mm</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>3.3.5 Lenticels on mature fruit</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>3.3.6 Second type of lenticels on ‘Kent’ fruit</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>3.3.7 Lenticels of different plant species</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>3.4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>REFERENCE LIST</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4: DISCOLOURATION OF MANGO LENTICELS</b>	
<b>4.1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>4.2 MATERIALS AND METHODS</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>4.3 RESULTS</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>4.3.1 Effect of resin on immature fruit</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>4.3.2 Lenticel discolouration</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>4.3.3 Effect of resin on mature fruit</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>4.3.4 Possible role of resin ducts</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>4.4 DISCUSSION</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>4.3.5 Scenario 1</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>4.3.6 Scenario 2</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>4.5 CONCLUSION</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>REFERENCE LIST</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>GENERAL DISCUSSION</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>REFERENCE LIST</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>80</b>

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**LIST OF FIGURES**

- Figure 2.1 (A) Oblique view of a hermaphrodite 'Kent' flower bud primordium. Sepal (se), stamen (st), carpel (c), petal (p) and staminoid primordia are visible. (B) Polar view of a more advanced stage of (A). b – bud scale. 24
- Figure 2.2 Flower buds with petals and sepals removed. (A) Differentiating carpel (c) with indentation of locule. Enlarging petal (p) and staminode primordia (si) visible. (B) Showing folded carpel. Further developed staminodes (si) with filament and first indications of nectar gland primordia (ng) are visible. d – indentation, b – bud scale. 26
- Figure 2.3 Flower buds with petals and sepals removed. (A) Style starts to elongate from ovary (o). Filament (f) of fertile stamen (anther removed) and nectar glands (ng) are visible. (B) More advanced stage of (A), showing fertile anther (fa) and elongated style (st). d – indentation. 27
- Figure 2.4 (A) Excised pistil prior to anthesis. (B) Showing a flower during anthesis. Staminodes (si) and nectar glands (ng) are visible. 29
- Figure 2.5 Paradermal sections of mango ovary surfaces of different ages. (A) Meristemoid (a) and early development of guard cells (b). (B) Nucleoli visible in cells just after division. (C) Later stage of development of guard cells. (D) Functional stoma shortly after anthesis. (E) Same stage as C, stomatal opening still covered with cutin, therefore not functional yet. Scale = 10µm. 30

- Figure 3.1 Sections of: (A) 1 mm 'TA' ovary, showing differentiating stomatal guard cells (sgc) and resin ducts (rd) already formed (at anthesis); (B) 2 mm 'Kent' fruitlet with differentiated guard cells; (C) 3 mm 'TA' fruitlet showing differentiated guard cells and substomatal cavity. Active cell divisions of epidermis cells are clearly visible in (A, B and C). (D) SEM micrograph of a 1 mm 'TA' ovary showing differentiated stomata. Schizogenic opening between the guard cells is just starting to form underneath the wax/cuticle layer. e - epidermis. 37
- Figure 3.2 (A) 13 mm 'TA' fruit showing undulating epidermis; (B and C) Stomatal guard cells being forced upward. (D) 12 mm 'Kent' fruit with smooth surface. (E) Stomatal guard cells of a 14 mm 'Kent' fruit seem to be still functional. Note the abundance of resin ducts in (A, B and D). c – cuticle. 38
- Figure 3.3 (A) Epidermis of 20 mm 'TA' fruit lost its undulating appearance. Resin ducts close to the fruit surface are also visible in this figure. (B) Stomatal guard cells (sgc) elevated above the now smooth epidermis. 40
- Figure 3.4 35 mm 'TA' fruit with stomatal guard cells still raised above epidermis (A) and 40 mm 'Kent' fruit (B). Enlarging lenticel cavity only protected by a thin cuticle. 41
- Figure 3.5 Lenticels of (A) 90 'TA' and (B) 70 mm 'Keitt' fruit. Lenticel cavity contains dead, loose cells and it is clear that a periderm is absent. 44
- Figure 3.6 Section of a 100 mm 'TA' fruit. Lenticel cavity is only partially covered with cutin (staining black with Sudan Black B), making it more susceptible for penetration of foreign objects. 45

- Figure 3.7 (A) 100 mm 'TA' lenticel with pigments in vacuoles in sublenticular cells. (B) 100 mm 'Kent' fruit. Continuous cuticle, stained black with Sudan Black B are not interrupted at the lenticel. Scale - 0.02 mm. 46
- Figure 3.8 Lenticels of mature (A) 'TA' and (B) 'Kent' fruit. Note the abundance of pigments around 'TA' lenticel in contrast to the absence thereof in 'Kent'. It is also marked how closely situated resin ducts are to the lenticel. 48
- Figure 3.9 (A) Part of mature fruit skin of 'TA' showing a resin duct (rd) subtended with epithelial cells (ec) and bordering vascular bundle (vb), always associated with a resin duct. (B – F) Sequential sections of a 6 mm 'Kent' epidermis showing a resin duct breaking through the epidermis. 49
- Figure 3.10 Sections of A) 30 mm 'Kent' fruit showing rays (r) of cells where a phelloderm (pd) are starting to develop; (B) 40 mm fruit lenticel showing a well-developed phelloderm around the lenticel cavity as well as a cuticle present in the lenticel cavity, continuous with the epidermis. 51
- Figure 3.11 (A and B) Lenticels originated from resin ducts of mature 'Kent' fruit. In both lenticels phelloderm (pd) were clearly visible, filling the lenticel cavity with living cells. Lenticel cavities were also covered with the characteristic thick cuticle, extending into intercellular spaces. pg -phellogen 52
- Figure 3.12 (A) Lenticel of mature Marula fruit. Radial cells of phelloderm (pd) are neatly arranged to the outside. The lenticel cavity is covered by a phellem (cork cells). (B) Petiole lenticel of *Phytolacca dioica* with a very active phellogen. cc - complementary cells, pg – phellogen. 54

- Figure 4.1 (A) An immature 'Keitt' fruit showing the damage caused after resin application from another 'Keitt' fruit. (B) An immature 'Kent' fruit also treated with 'Keitt' resin showing more severe damage. (C) A immature 'Keitt' fruit showing retarded growth on the side where 'Keitt' resin was applied. (D) 'Kent' fruit treated 'Kent' resin showing no damage. 62
- Figure 4.2 (A) Transverse sections of exocarp of mature 'TA' fruit showing lenticels subtended by cells containing pigments that stained red with Safranin A. (B) Staining of cuticle using Sudan Black and natural colour of pigments in vacuoles. 63
- Figure 4.3 Transverse section of lenticel showing natural pigmentation in a discoloured lenticel's cell walls in the absence of chemical staining. The cuticle stained black with Sudan Black B. 64
- Figure 4.4 Collected resin from: 1 – 'TA', 2 – 'Keitt' and 3 – 'Kent'. The symbol { shows the oil fraction of the resin on top of the PPS fraction. 64
- Figure 4.5 (A) 'Keitt' fruit showing the effect of the oil fraction (1) and the PPS fraction (2) of 'TA' resin. (B) 'Keitt' fruit showing the effect of the oil fraction (1) and PPS fraction (2) of 'Keitt' resin. 'TA' fruit treated with the oil fraction (C) and PPS fraction (D) of 'Kent' resin. 66
- Figure 4.6 (A) Resin marks of the oil fraction of all three cultivars 'TA' (1), 'Keitt' (2) and Kent' (3) on a 'Keitt' fruit. (B) Close up a replication. 67
- Figure. 4.7 Distinct damage on the surface of a 'Kent' fruit after the application of 'TA' resin. 68



- Figure 4.8 Transverse section through a resin duct (rd) in the wall of a mature 'TA' fruit. Resin duct lined epithelial cells (ec). Resin ducts are always associated with adjacent vascular bundles (vb). 68
- Figure 4.9 Resin squirting from the pedicel directly after removal of the inflorescence axis, indicating the pressure within the resin ducts. 70
- Figure 4.10 (A) 'Keitt' fruit where latex droplets had formed on the fruit surface prior to picking. (B) Collapsed resin duct (crd) adjacent to a discoloured lenticel. Surrounding cell walls were visibly discoloured (ec = epithelial cell; rd = resin duct). 70

## APPENDIX

- Figure 1 Light micrograph of (A) a "resting bud". No meristematic activity in preformed leaf primordia axils (stage1). (B) an activated bud showing elongation of main axis (primary inflorescence axis) (late stage 1). (C) Scanning electron micrograph of apical buds with leaf (bract) primordia removed; same stage as A, showing resting bud with quiescent apical meristem (a), youngest leaf primordia (p) scars of outer bud scales (o) and inner bract scars (b). (Courtesy Robbertse, *et al.*, 2001) 80
- Figure 2 (A and B) Light micrograph of differentiating apical buds (stages 2 and 3) showing elongating primary inflorescence axis (m) and appearance of first lateral bud meristem (s) that will become secondary inflorescence axes apical meristems (s) producing new leaf (bract) primordia (p). (C) Scanning electron

- micrograph of activated bud induced to produce lateral inflorescence axis meristems (s) in the axils of the bracts (b). (Courtesy Robbertse, *et al.*, 2001) 81
- Figure 3 Scanning electron micrograph of stage 3 buds with preformed bracts removed to show secondary inflorescence axis buds (f). Note that the apical meristem (a) is producing new bract primordia (p) and secondary axis primordia (s). (Courtesy Robbertse, *et al.*, 2001) 82
- Figure 4 (A and B) Scanning electron micrographs of two stages of secondary axis differentiation. Note the apical meristem (l) producing opposite, decussate bracts (p-p4) each subtending a bud primordium (B) which are meristems producing tertiary inflorescence axis. (Courtesy Robbertse, *et al.*, 2001) 82
- Figure 5 (A and B) Sections of two stages of lateral inflorescence axis differentiation; each forming a number of tertiary axes with terminal flower bud primordia (f). (Courtesy Robbertse, *et al.*, 2001) 83
- Figure 6 (A) Diagram of mango inflorescence. (B) shows one sympodial tertiary inflorescence branch. Numbers indicate the sequence of branching, ending in first, second third and fourth order branches. - Monopodial primary inflorescence axis (pi), secondary inflorescence axes (si), bract axil (b) and tertiary inflorescence axes (ti). (Courtesy Robbertse, *et al.*, 2001) 83

## ABSTRACT

Lenticels are macroscopic openings occurring on the surface of roots, shoots and some fruits like apples, pears, avocados and mangos and are responsible for gaseous exchange and transpiration. The discolouration of the lenticels of some mango cultivars is a serious problem, affecting the economic value of the fruit, especially in 'TA' and 'Keitt' while problems with lenticel discolouration are seldom found in 'Kent'. Mango fruit lenticels develop from ruptured stomata on fruit from about 20 mm in 'TA' and 'Keitt' and 30 to 40 mm in 'Kent'. Lenticels enlarge as the fruit grows due to stretching of the fruit surface, reaching their maximum size on adult fruit. Fully developed lenticels of 'TA' and 'Keitt' are larger in size than those of 'Kent'. 'Kent' lenticels are also better insulated than 'TA' and 'Keitt', having a thick cuticle in the lenticel cavity and in some instances a phellogen is also present, while both of above mentioned characteristics are absent in 'TA' and 'Keitt'. Resin present in the skin of the fruit plays an important role in the discolouration of 'TA' and 'Keitt' lenticels. The resin of both 'TA' and 'Keitt' fruit contain a considerable amount of an aggressive compound termed terpenes. These terpenes are volatile and are able to move out of the resin ducts via the sublenticellular cells to the outside of the fruit through the lenticels. The integrity of tonoplasts of the sublenticellular cells are lost due to the action of the terpenes, causing vacuolar bound phenols to come into contact with polyphenol oxidase present in the cell walls. The product of the resultant reaction is a quinone accumulating as a brownish deposit in the cell walls, visible from the outside as black markings around the lenticels. Lenticel discolouration may, however also occur due to maltreatment or rough handling of fruit, high temperatures in the warm water bath, extended brushing on packline or breaking of the cold chain and spilling of resin onto the surface of the fruit.

## UITTREKSEL

Lentiselle is makroskopiese opening op die oppervlak van wortels, stingels en sommige vrugte soos appels, pere, avokado's en mango's en is verantwoordelik vir gaswisseling en transpirasie van die plant. Lentiselverkleuring by sommige mango kultivars is 'n ernstige probleem wat die ekonomiese waarde van die vrug beïnvloed, veral by 'TA' and 'Keitt' terwyl lentiselverkleuring selde by 'Kent' voorkom. Lentiselle ontwikkel vanuit beskadigde stomas op vruggies van ongeveer 20 mm by 'TA' en 'Keitt' en 30 tot 40 mm by 'Kent'. Lentiselle vergroot namate die vrug groei en die oppervlakkige selle onder spanning verkeer. Maksimum grootte word bereik wanneer die vrug volwassenheid bereik. Volwasse lentiselle van 'TA' en 'Keitt' vrugte is groter as dié van 'Kent'. 'Kent' lentiselle is ook beter geïsoleer as 'TA' en 'Keitt' lentiselle. 'n Dik kutikula is teenwoordig in die lentiselholte en soms is daar ook 'n fellogeen (kurk kambium) in 'Kent' lentiselle gevind, terwyl beide afwesig was in 'TA' en 'Keitt' lentiselle. Hars wat in die skil van die vrug voorkom speel 'n belangrike rol by lentisel verkleuring in 'TA' en 'Keitt'. Die hars van beide 'TA' en 'Keitt' vrugte bevat 'n aansienlike hoeveelheid aggresiewe verbindings wat terpene genoem word. Dié terpene is vlugtig wat dit moontlik maak om vanuit die harskanale, deur sublentisellêre selle via die lentisel na buite te beweeg. Die integriteit van die tonoplasts van die vakuole in sublentisellêre selle word versteur as gevolg van die teenwoordigheid van die terpene. Dit veroorsaak dat vakuoolgebonde fenole met die ensiem polifenooloksidase in die selmembraan in aanraking kom. Die produk van die reaksie is 'n bruinerige quinon wat in die selwande akkumuleer en die swart kleur aan die verkleurde lentiselle gee. Lentisel verkleuring kan ook veroorsaak word deur swak hantering van die vrugte soos byvoorbeeld: rowwe hantering, te hoë temperature in die warm water bad, verlengde periodes op die borsels in die paklyn, breek van die koue ketting en die mors van hars op die oppervlak van die skil van die vrug.

## INTRODUCTION

In the 2001/02 season, the South African mango industry produced a total of 88 000 tons of fruit of which 16 851 tons were exported to foreign countries. An amount of about 5.25 million cartons were exported at an FOB price of R18.52 per carton, adding up to a total of R97.19 million worth of mangos, making up a substantial percentage of the income for a large number of mango farmers (Elphick, 2002).

Produce from and supply of a top quality product is therefore essential to ensure prime prices on the export market. To comply with this requirement, a series of rather strict criteria such as ripeness, taste, size, general appearance, minimum chemical residues present and a certain threshold of pest and disease incidence are needed to comply with. The outer appearance of the fruit plays in most instances a major roll in determining its economic value and therefore is an aesthetic attractive fruit of great importance.

In most mango producing countries around the world, producers have problems with the discolouration of lenticels on the fruit surface, especially after harvest and packaging (Tamjinda *et al.*, 1992). It is a serious problem because the dark coloured spots gives an undesirable impression and, secondly, it is incorrectly associated with pathogenic infections, consequently depreciating its economic value (O'Hare and Prasad, 1992).

Lenticels in general are macroscopic openings occurring on stems, old roots where the periderm (cork) has formed and on several fruit types (Dietz *et al.*, 1988). Lenticels are essential to the plant, since they control gaseous exchange for photosynthesis, respiration and transpiration in the absence of stomata (Mauseth, 1988).

On fruit like apples, pears and cherries, stretching and rupturing of the stomata due to fruit growth and enlargement can mostly be the beginning of lenticel

development, though, the lenticels can not always be regarded as “true” lenticels. This is due to the absence of a distinct phellogen below the lenticels (Clements, 1935 and Wilson, 1972).

Much research on different causal aspects on mango fruit discolouration has already been undertaken. Post-harvest treatments previously shown to increase lenticel discolouration include dipping fruit in hot water (45°C) for 30 min (Jacobi *et al.*, 2001); a combination of hot water and hot air (Jacobi *et al.*, 1996); washing fruit in one of several disinfectants or soaps including Agral<sup>®</sup>, Cold Power<sup>®</sup> or Mango Wash<sup>®</sup> (Bally *et al.*, 1997); or washing fruit in ambient water (O’Hare *et al.*, 1999).

In order to understand the structure, function and discolouration of mango lenticels better, it is essential to know their origin and development. Dietz *et al.* (1988) maintained that lenticels may originate in one of two ways viz. from a preformed stoma, or from shearing of the fruit epidermis as a result of rapid fruit growth. Tamjinda *et al.* (1992) found that cells directly below the lenticel are smaller than surrounding cells and have larger intercellular spaces conforming to the situation in stomata.

The limited and insufficient literature on the formation, development and detailed anatomy of mango lenticels (Tamjinda *et al.*, 1992) emphasized the need for a more detailed study on the ontogeny and structure of mango lenticels that could form a base for interpreting lenticel discolouration.

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