

Book description

Tea (*Camellia sinensis* (L.) O. Kuntze) belongs to the genus *Camellia*. The genus has over 200 species many of which interbreed relatively freely resulting in many natural hybrids. Species introgression into the cultivated germplasm of tea from related *Camellia* species has therefore been postulated and it is thought that archetypal tea varieties do not exist. Tea cultivars are routinely characterized and classified on the basis of their morphophysiological traits, cytology, leaf biochemical traits and molecular tools. Leaf biochemicals and molecular tools have provided proof of a possible monophyletic origin of all *Camellia* species. Though the tea plant is the only commercially viable species, the potential for economic use of other species as a beverage is, however, real, and several including *C. taliensis*, *C. grandibractiata*, *C. kwangsiensis*, *C. gymnogyna*, *C. crassicolumna*, *C. tachangensis*, *C. ptilophylla* and *C. irrawadiensis* are already used in parts of Asia.