Acknowledgements

I express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr. K. R. Vijayakumar, Director, Rubber Training Centre, Rubber Board for initiating me to the field of growth studies. It all goes back to 1989 when he suggested me to take up the studies on growth of *Hevea* trees. With grateful remembrance, I thank him for believing in my ability and for providing me able guidance and constant encouragement for completing this thesis.

I am indebted to Dr. N. M. Mathew, the Director of Research, Rubber Research Institute of India for his keen interest and encouragement to this study and for providing all the facilities for completing this work.

I am extremely thankful to Dr. Mark Kimberley, Biometrician at the New Zealand Forest Research Institute, Rotorua for his help and guidance in weather and growth modelling and for the help in analysis of data in SAS.

My colleagues Dr. V. C. Mercykutty, Dr. L. Sankariammal, Dr. Vinoth Thomas, Dr. T. Meenakumari and Dr. T. Gireesh in the Division of Botany and Dr. D. V. K. Nageswara Rao in the in the Division of Agronomy/Soils deserve special thanks for their encouragement.

My deepest gratitude and affection goes to my wife Savithra, for her constant encouragement and support in one way or the other. My children Ms. Asha, C. S., Deepa, C. S. and Manjunath, C. S. deserve special appreciation for tolerating my absence from house for long hours in spite of the requirement of my presence for their studies.

Last but not the least, I owe my gratitude to my teachers: Prof. K. S. Jagadishchandra, Dr. R. Ramalingam and Dr. K. Suryanarayana at the University of Mysore, whose blessings have brought me to this stage.

Place: Kottayam
Date: 14 March 2007

TR Chandrasekhar