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1 Beech cupules share endophytic fungi with leaves and twigs

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12

13 Number of figures: 3

14

1 **Abstract**

2

3 Endophytic mycobiota on leaves, twigs and cupules of *Fagus crenata* were
4 investigated using a culture-dependent method over a growing season to test the
5 hypothesis that endophytic fungi of cupule (a woody phyllome) share some
6 components of the endophytic fungal assemblages with both leaves and twigs. A
7 total of 14 fungal taxa were isolated, and the most frequent taxon was *Phomopsis*
8 sp., followed by *Xylaria* sp., *Ascochyta fagi* and *Geniculosporium* sp. The
9 compositions of fungal assemblages of leaf laminae and petioles were generally
10 relatively dissimilar to those of current and first year twigs when compared for
11 each sampling month, and those of cupules and cupule stalks were intermediate
12 between those of leaves and twigs. Permutational multivariate analysis of
13 variance confirmed that month and organ were significant factors of the variation
14 of the composition of endophytic fungal assemblages. *Phomopsis* sp., a common
15 twig endophyte, and *A. fagi*, a common leaf endophyte, were common in cupules
16 and cupule stalks. These results suggested that the endophytic fungal
17 assemblages of cupules shared component taxa with those of both leaves and
18 twigs.

19

20 *Keyword:* Endophyte • *Fagus crenata* • Leaf • rRNA gene sequence analysis •
21 Season

22

1 **1. Introduction**

2

3 Endophytic fungi include those that can colonize internal plant tissues at some
4 time in their life without causing apparent harm to their host (Sieber 2007).
5 Beech (*Fagus* spp.) is a dominant tree of cool temperate forests and has been
6 examined for endophytic fungi, with intensive efforts devoted to Japanese beech *F.*
7 *crenata* (Sahashi et al. 1999, 2000; Kaneko and Kakishima 2001; Osono 2002;
8 Kaneko et al. 2003; Osono and Mori 2003; Kaneko and Kaneko 2004; Fukasawa et
9 al. 2009; Hashizume et al. 2010), European beech *F. sylvatica* (Sieber and
10 Hugentobler 1987; Danti et al. 2002) and American beech *F. grandifolia* (Chapela
11 1989). Most of these studies investigated endophytic fungi on leaves and twigs;
12 but there have been no published works regarding the endophytic fungi
13 associated with beech cupules. A cupule is a woody phyllome surrounding the seed
14 in a fruit; thus, a cupule shares its origin with that of leaves but is chemically
15 similar to twigs (Osono and Takeda 2001; Fukasawa et al. 2009, 2012). We
16 hypothesized that endophytic fungal assemblages of beech cupule shared
17 components of endophytic fungi with both leaf and twig within the shoot. The
18 purpose of the present study was to investigate the endophytic mycobiota on
19 leaves, twigs and cupules of *F. crenata* over a growing season to test our
20 hypothesis.

21

22 **2. Materials and methods**

23

1 *2.1. Study site and sample collection*

2

3 Samples were collected in Ashiu Experimental Forest of Kyoto University
4 (35°18'N and 135°43'E), Kyoto, Japan. Details of the study site were described in
5 Osono et al. (2011). In the study site, mass flowering of *F. crenata* and mass
6 production of cupules were observed in 2005, whereas only a few individual trees
7 flowered in 2006. We selected a mature tree (height 16 m) that flowered in 2006,
8 and shoots with flowers were harvested from the canopy at approx. 5–8 m height
9 in Jun, Aug and Oct 2006. Ten shoots carrying current-year leaves, maturing
10 cupules, a current-year twig and a one-year twig (Fig. 1) were arbitrarily selected
11 from the canopy and harvested on each sampling date. Healthy-looking shoots
12 without obvious faunal and/or microbial attacks were selected. The samples were
13 placed in paper bags and taken to the laboratory.

14 One leaf, one cupule, two current-year twigs (1 cm in length) and two
15 first-year twigs (1 cm in length) were taken from each shoot. The leaf was divided
16 into lamina and petiole, and four leaf disks were punched from the lamina with a
17 sterile cork borer (5.5 mm in diameter) from the central part of leaves, avoiding
18 the primary vein. The cupule was cut into four equivalent pieces and one stalk.
19 Thus, a total of 40 disks of leaf lamina, 10 petioles, 40 pieces of cupules, 10 cupule
20 stalks, 20 current-year twigs and 20 first-year twigs were prepared on each
21 sampling date and used for the isolation of fungi.

22

23 *2.2. Fungal isolation*

1
2 A surface sterilization method by Osono et al. (2008) was used for the isolation of
3 fungi from beech organs. Fungal isolation was carried out within 24 hours of
4 sampling. The plant organ samples were submerged in 70% ethanol (v/v) for 1 min
5 to wet the surface, then surface-disinfected for 30 s in a solution of 15% hydrogen
6 peroxide, and submerged again for 1 min in 70% ethanol. The samples were
7 rinsed with sterile distilled water, transferred to sterile filter paper in Petri dishes
8 (9 cm in diameter), and dried for 24 h to suppress vigorous bacterial growth after
9 plating (Widden and Parkinson 1973). The leaf disks or pieces from cupules and
10 twigs were placed in 9-cm Petri dishes containing malt extract agar (malt extract
11 2% w/v, agar 2%; Nacalai tesque, Kyoto, Japan), with two disks/pieces per plate.
12 Plates were incubated at 20 °C in the dark and observed at 1, 4 and 8 weeks after
13 surface sterilization. Identification was primarily based on micromorphological
14 observations, with reference to Gams (2007). Some isolates were then used for
15 molecular analysis as described below. The frequency of an individual taxon was
16 calculated as the percentage of incidences based on the number of plant organs
17 with the taxon relative to the total number of the organ, for each sampling date.
18 Taxa with low frequencies were specifically discussed only if their occurrence was
19 of special interest.

20

21 *2.3. DNA analysis*

22

23 Twenty-two isolates of *Phomopsis* sp., *Xylaria* sp. and *Geniculosporium* sp. were

1 used for DNA analysis. Thirteen isolates of *Phomopsis* sp. included seven from
2 cupules, one from cupule stalk, two from twigs and three from lamina. Seven
3 isolates of *Xylaria* sp. included four from cupules, two from cupule stalks and one
4 from leaf lamina. Two isolates of *Geniculosporium* sp. included one from cupule
5 and one from cupule stalk. Before DNA extraction, the isolates were subcultured
6 in 2% malt extract liquid medium. The DNA was extracted from small quantities
7 of mycelia using DNeasy Plant mini kit (Qiagen, Hilden, Germany) according to
8 the manufacturer's instructions. Polymerase chain reactions (PCR) were
9 performed using a Quick Taq HS DyeMix (Toyobo, Osaka, Japan). Each PCR
10 reaction contained a 50 µl mixture (21 µl distilled water, 25 µl master mix, 3 µl ca.
11 0.5 ng/µl template DNA and 0.5 µl each primer (final, 0.25 µM)). The primer pair
12 ITS1f (Gardes and Bruns 1993) / LR3 (Vilgalys and Hester 1990) was used to
13 obtain the ITS2 and the D1-D2 domain of the 28S rRNA. Each DNA fragment was
14 amplified using a PCR thermal cycler (DNA Engine, Bio-Rad Laboratories,
15 Hercules, USA) using the following thermal cycling schedule: the first cycle
16 consisted of 2 min at 94 °C, followed by 35 cycles of 30 s at 94 °C, 30 s at 50 °C for
17 annealing, 1 min at 68 °C, and a final cycle of 10 min at 68 °C. The PCR products
18 were purified using a QiAquick PCR Purification Kit (Quiagen). The purified PCR
19 products were sequenced by Macrogen Japan Corp. (Tokyo, Japan). The sequences
20 determined in this study were deposited in the DNA Data Bank of Japan (DDBJ)
21 (AB915934–AB915946, AB918138–AB918140, AB918142–AB918147). The ITS2
22 and 28S rRNA gene sequences were compared using MEGA5 (Tamura et al. 2011)
23 to determine the sequences identity. All positions containing gaps and missing

1 data eliminated from the sequences, resulting in 884, 875 and 887 bases for
2 *Phomopsis* sp., *Xylaria* sp. and *Geniculosporium* sp., respectively, for the
3 comparisons. The sequences were then compared with the GenBank database
4 using BLAST (Altschul et al. 1997).

5

6 *2.4. Statistical analysis*

7

8 We prepared a datasheet of endophytic fungal assemblages indicating the
9 frequency of 14 endophytic fungal taxa on 18 samples (six organs each for three
10 months). To compare the composition of endophytic fungal assemblages of organs
11 within the shoot, we used nonmetric multidimensional scaling (NMDS) with the
12 Bray-Curtis distance metric. The NMDS analysis was carried out with the
13 *metaNDS* function with default settings of the *vegan* package (Oksanen et al.
14 2011) in the R version 3.0.2 for Mac (<http://www.r-project.org>). We then assessed
15 the effect of month and organ on endophytic fungal assemblage, by analyzing the
16 average Bray-Curtis dissimilarity matrices in permutational multivariate
17 analysis of variance (PERMANOVA, Anderson 2001) with the *adonis* function of
18 the R *vegan* package. Effects of month and organ on the frequency of four major
19 fungal taxa (*Phomopsis* sp., *Xylaria* sp., *A. fagi* and *Geniculosporium* sp.) were
20 analyzed with generalized linear models (GLMs) with a Poisson distribution. The
21 GLMs were performed with the *glm* function and with the *glht* function of the R
22 *multcomp* package for multiple comparisons with Tukey's test.

23

1 3. Results and discussion

2

3 A total of 14 fungal taxa were isolated from organs of *F. crenata*. The most
4 frequent taxon was *Phomopsis* sp., followed by *Xylaria* sp., *A. fagi* and
5 *Geniculosporium* sp. Less frequent taxa included *Epicoccum nigrum*, *Alternaria*
6 spp., *Chaetomium* sp., *Nigrospora* sp., and six unidentified morphotaxa.
7 *Phomopsis* sp. and *A. fagi* have been encountered in several beech forests in
8 Japan as major endophytic fungi of twigs and leaves, respectively (Sahashi et al.
9 2000; Kaneko et al. 2003; Osono and Mori 2003; Hashizume et al. 2010). *Xylaria*
10 sp. and *Geniculosporium* sp. are common Xylariaceous endophytes of leaves of
11 multiple tree species in cool temperate forests (Osono et al. 2013; Ikeda et al.
12 2014) and in tropical forests (Okane et al. 2008, 2012). *Xylaria* sp. also occurs in
13 beech twigs (Fukasawa et al. 2009, 2013). Fukasawa et al. (2012) reported
14 frequent occurrence of *Xylaria* sp., *Phomopsis* sp. and *A. fagi* during the initial
15 stages of cupule decomposition on the soil. In contrast, *Dasyscyphella*
16 *longistipitata* and *X. carpophila*, which frequently produce fruiting bodies on dead
17 cupules (Hosoya et al. 2010; Fukasawa et al. 2012), were not isolated from living
18 tissues of cupules, leaves, or twigs.

19 The rRNA sequences of isolates of *Phomopsis* sp., *Xylaria* sp., and
20 *Geniculosporium* sp. from different organs showed similarities between 99.7%
21 and 100.0%, between 99.8% and 100.0% and 99.9%, respectively, indicating that
22 the respective isolates belonged to single fungal species and that these three
23 species had low organ specificity. Taxonomic assignment using BLAST searches

1 demonstrated that the base sequences of *Phomopsis* sp. had affinities to those of *P.*
2 *mali* (AB665315), *P. conorum* (DQ116553), *P. fukushii* (JQ807469) and *Diaporthe*
3 *eres* (JQ807441) with query coverages of 100% and max identities of 99% for all
4 accessions. *Xylaria* sp. and *Geniculosporium* sp. were identical to ubiquitous foliar
5 endophytes of multiple tree species in the study site (Osono et al. 2013),
6 suggesting that these species had low levels of not only organ specificity but also
7 host specificity.

8 The NMDS ordination showed differences in the endophytic fungal
9 assemblages with respect to month and organ (Fig. 2). The compositions of fungal
10 assemblages of leaves (leaf laminae and petioles) were generally dissimilar to
11 those of twigs (current and first year twigs) when compared for each sampling
12 month, and those of cupules and cupule stalks were intermediate between those of
13 leaves and twigs. Permutational multivariate analysis of variance confirmed that
14 month and organ were significant factors of variation of the composition of
15 endophytic fungal assemblages (month: d.f.=2, $F=6.04$, $P<0.001$; organ: d.f.=5,
16 $F=4.20$, $P<0.001$). These differences in endophytic fungal assemblages with
17 respect to month and organ were chiefly attributed to the variations in the
18 frequency of major endophytic fungal taxa as described below. Previous studies
19 have already documented seasonal changes in endophytic fungal assemblages in
20 tree leaves (e.g., Hata et al. 1998; Sahashi et al. 1999; Osono 2008; Osono et al.
21 2009).

22 Figure 3 shows the frequencies of four major endophytic taxa. *Phomopsis*
23 sp. was significantly more frequent in cupules, cupule stalks and current and first

1 year twigs than in leaf laminae and petioles, and more frequent in Aug than in
2 Jun or Oct. *Xylaria* sp. was more frequent in the order: cupule stalks > first year
3 twigs > cupules > current year twigs > leaf petioles > leaf laminae, and increased
4 from Jun to Aug and to Oct. *Ascochyta fagi* was significantly more frequent in leaf
5 laminae and cupules than in leaf petioles and cupule stalks and in current and
6 first year twigs, and increased from Jun to Aug and to Oct. *Geniculosporium* sp.
7 was significantly more frequent in cupule stalks and leaf petioles than in current
8 and first year twigs, and more frequent in Jun and Oct than in Aug.

9 These results supported our hypothesis and indicated that the
10 endophytic fungal assemblages of cupules shared features with those of both
11 leaves and twigs. One possible explanation is that cupules could serve as habitat
12 and food suitable for the colonization of endophytic fungi associated with both
13 leaves and twigs because cupules as woody phyllomes not only share the origin
14 with leaves but also possess chemical similarities to twigs (Osono and Takeda
15 2001; Fukasawa et al. 2009, 2012). Another possibility is that cupules are located
16 between leaves and twigs within the shoot (Fig. 1) and therefore can readily be
17 infected by endophytic fungi of these organs, leading to the intermediate
18 composition of endophytic fungal assemblages. In this respect, it is noteworthy
19 that the frequency of *A. fagi* in cupules in June appeared higher than that in the
20 other organs, including leaf laminae (Fig. 3), suggesting the advanced colonization
21 of current year shoots by this fungal species through cupules in early months of
22 the growing season. Such facilitated colonization may lead to higher incidence of
23 *A. fagi* in fruiting beech shoots than in non-fruiting ones. Further studies are

1 needed to test whether this hypothesis is applicable to other beech trees and tree
2 species.

3

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5

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12

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12

1 Figure legends

2

3 **Fig. 1** – A fruiting shoot of *Fagus crenata*.

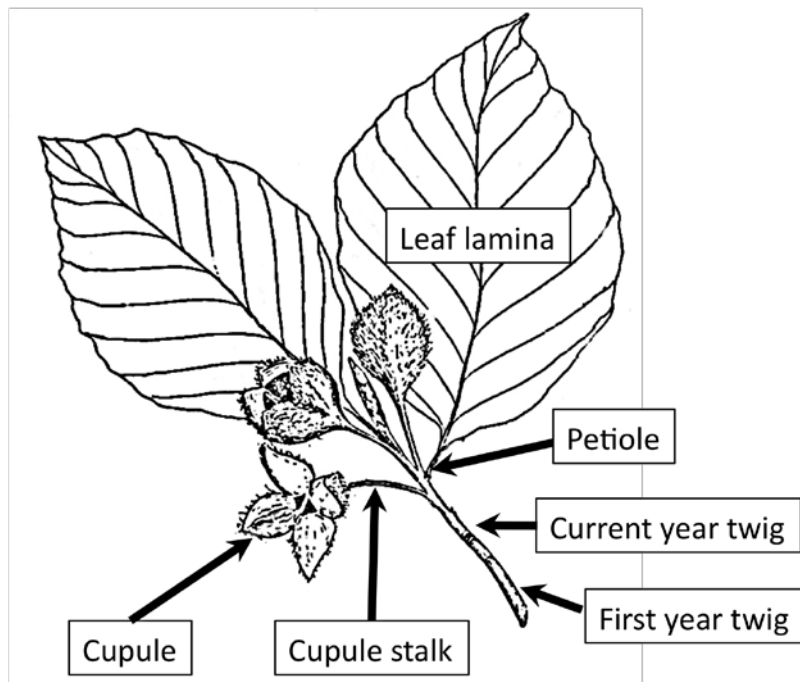
4

5 **Fig. 2** – Endophytic fungal assemblage dissimilarity among organs examined in
6 Jun (bold), Aug (italic), and Oct (gray), represented by nonmetric
7 multidimensional scaling (NMDS, stress=0.155). Ll, leaf lamina; Lp, leaf petiole;
8 Cp, cupule; Cs, cupule stalk; T0, current year twig; T1, first-year twig. The
9 compositional dissimilarity between samples was assessed with the Bray-Curtis
10 dissimilarity index.

11

12 **Fig. 3** – Frequency (%) of major fungal taxa on organs of fruiting shoots. Striped,
13 Jun; shaded, Aug; blank, Oct. Ll, leaf lamina; Lp, leaf petiole; Cp, cupule; Cs,
14 cupule stalk; T0, current year twig; T1, first-year twig. Results of generalized
15 linear models are indicated. ***, $P < 0.001$. The same letters are not significantly
16 different between organs at 5% level with Tukey's test.

1 Tateno et al. Fig. 1



1 Tateno et al. Fig.2

2

