



First Report of Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus (TSWV) Infection on *Agapanthus praecox* in China

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Received Date: May 06, 2024; **Published Date:** May 15, 2024

Abstract

Tomato spotted wilt virus (TSWV), which is a member of the Orthospovirus genus and transmitted by thrips. It has extensive host and causes significantly economic losses. In May 2023, virus-like symptoms such as ring spotted, leaf yellowing and necrosis were observed on *Agapanthus praecox* leaves in Kunming, Yunnan Province, China. Spherical viral particles with a diameter of 80-120nm were observed by TEM. The results of RT-PCR and DNA showed that the sequence of N gene for this virus shared 99.87% identity with TSWV isolate from Shandong isolate (acc. no. OQ627140.1). The obtained 777-bp consensus sequence named TSWN-N was deposited in GenBank (acc. no. OP867047.1). Phylogenetic tree analyses showed that TSWV obtained from *Agapanthus praecox* plant samples clustered together into a large clade from Guizhou. Koch's postulate and the virus was re-amplified from the inoculated plants. This is the first report of TSWV on *Agapanthus praecox* in China and provides early warning of virus disease on medicinal materia.

Keywords: Tomato Spotted Wilt Orthospovirus; *Agapanthus praecox*; Electron Microscopy; RT-PCR

Introduction

Agapanthus praecox subsp. *Praecox* Willd. is a highly valued medicinal plant of the genus *Agapanthus* established by L'Heritier in 1788 belongs to the family Amaryllidaceae and order Asparagales [1]. *Agapanthus praecox* is an evergreen species of genus *Agapanthus*, it is commonly called blue lily, agapanthus, Africa lily, or lily of the Nile [2]. It is one of the highly valued medicinal plants in South African folkloric medicine, and possesses anti-inflammatory, antioedema, antitussive, immunoregulatory, antibacterial, antifungal, and antitumor properties [3]. Diseases often occur in the planting process and cause serious economic losses. It has been reported that TSWV infecting on *Agapanthus praecox* in

Australia and Africa [4,5].

TSWV is ranked second in the global top 10 plant viruses due to its importance in scientific research and economic fields [6]. It can affecting the level of plant hormones [7], and causes abnormal leaf growth, stunting and even death, significantly affecting crop yield and quality [7]. TSWV virions are typically spheroidal virions ranging from 80 to 120 nanometers in size, producing envelope structures and continuous projection layers on their outer membranes [8].

In our study, symptomless *A. praecox* plants leaves were received from professionally cultivated fields for regular control of virus infection in May 2023. TEM and the molecular

investigations indicated that this virus was TSWV. This work was done to fulfill Koch's postulate and verify TSWV is able to infect *A. praecox* plants in fields.

Materials and Methods

Samples

Samples of *Agapanthus praecox* were collected in May 2023 in Kunming, Yunnan Province, China. The five sample leaves of *A. praecox* were collected from diseased parts of plants and stored in a refrigerator at -80°C on the same day for RT-PCR.

Transmission Electron Microscopy

Negative staining was performed for infected and healthy leaves and was observed under a transmission electron microscope with an accelerating voltage of 80kV [9].

RT-PCR

Total RNA was extracted from leaves using Trizol reagent (Nanjing, Norvezan Biotechnology) according to the manufacturer's protocol. The total RNA was reverse transcribed to the first-strand cDNA synthesis according to the HiScriptIII 1st Strand cDNA Synthesis Kit (Nanjing, Norvezan Biotechnology) and was amplified followed the primers in Table 1. PCR reaction system of 25 µL: 10×PCR reaction buffer (including Mg₂₊) 2.5 µL, dNTP Mix 2 µL, 10 µmol/L upstream and downstream primers each of 0.5 µL, rTaq DNA polymerase 0.25 µL, cDNA 1.25 µL, ddH₂O 18 µL. Amplification conditions: 94°C pre-denaturation 30s, 98°C

denaturation 10s, 58°C annealing 30s, 72°C extension for 45s, 35 cycles, 72°C further extension for 10 min.

Primers	Sequence (5'-3')
TospS-3 W	GC (a / t) GTTCCAGGGTT (a / g)
Tosp-3	AGAGCAATCGAGGCGCTA ATAA
TSWV-F	5'-ATGTCTAAGGTTAAGCTCA-3'
TSWV-R	5'-AGCAAGTTCTGCAAGTTTTG-3'

Table 1: Primers used to amplify gene sequence.

Phylogenetic Analyses

Phylogenetic analyses was conducted using MEGA version 6.0, the maximum likelihood (ML) tree was constructed with 1000 replicates as the guide value to evaluate the reliability of the resulting tree [9].

Results

TEM Detection

In May 2023, virus-like symptoms on leaves consisting of ring spotted, leaf yellowing and necrosis were observed and appeared on approximately 80% of *Agapanthus praecox* in the fields in Kunming, Yunnan (Figure 1A). The leaves of five samples with symptoms and symptomless were used for transmission electron microscopy (TEM) (America, FEITECNALG2Spirit) detection using negative staining [10]. The results showed that spherical particles of 80-120 nm in diameter, similar to *Orthotospovirus* (Figure 1B).

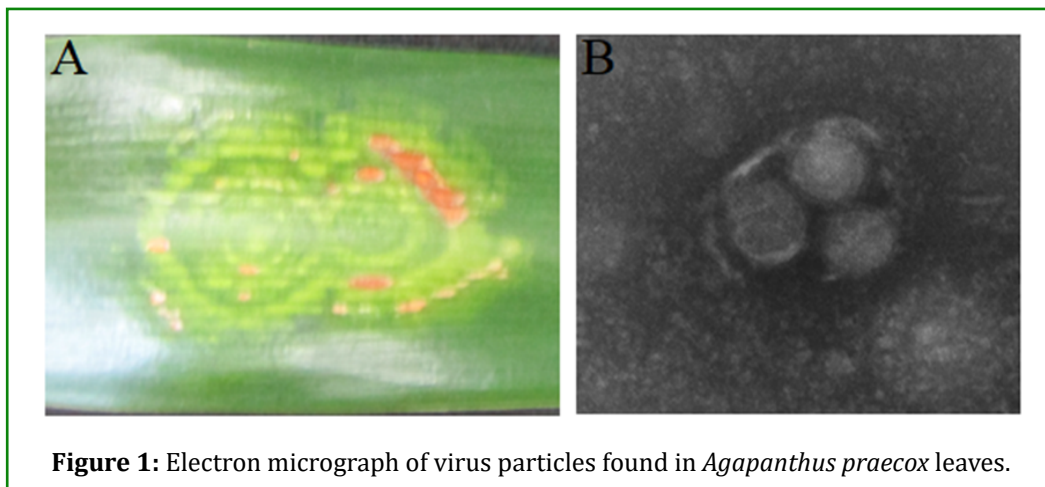


Figure 1: Electron micrograph of virus particles found in *Agapanthus praecox* leaves.

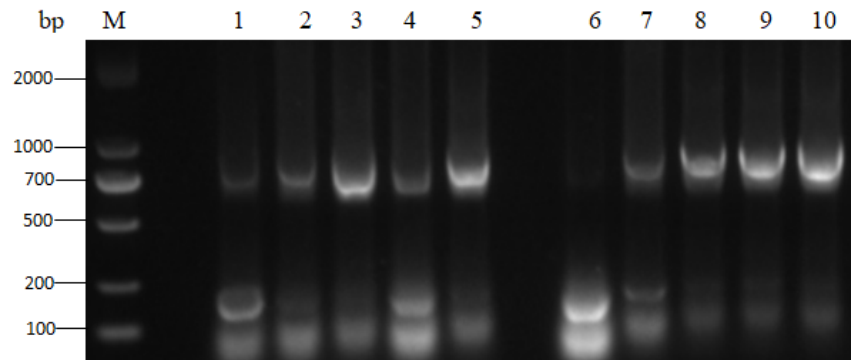
RT-PCR Detection and Sequence

In order to identify the exact virus infecting the plants, five samples of *Agapanthus praecox* with symptoms and symptomless were detected by RT-PCR (Guangdong, TCLT9620). Total RNA was extracted and reversed for RT-PCR with a pairs of universal primers for N gene of *Orthotospovirus*

viruses (Table 1). A 777-bp sequence was obtained from each sample (Figure 2) and cloned into the pMD18-T vector for Sanger sequencing. BLASTn-analysis showed that the 5 amplicons were identical and shared 99.87% nucleotide sequence identity with tomato spotted wilt orthotospovirus isolate Guizhou from tobacco (acc. no. OP867047.1). Koch's

experiments also were performed and the virus from the infected plants was successfully transmitted onto healthy *A. praecox* plants (n= 5) upon mechanical inoculation, and the

plants not only developed foliar distortion symptoms but also tested positive for TSWV by RT-PCR with the N-specific primers (Table 1).



M: DL2000 DNA Maker; 1-5: the amplified fragment of TSWV using the primer Tosp-3; 6-10: the amplified fragment of TSWV using the primer TSWV-F/TSWV-R.

Figure 2: Presence of sequence in *Agapanthus praecox* plant samples by RT-PCR amplification.

Phylogenetic Analysis

Phylogenetic tree was prepared using the available amino acid sequence of N protein of *P. multiflorum* and the N gene corresponding amino acid sequence of TSWV from

different regions. The results are showed that the isolate of *P. multiflorum* grouped with several TSWV isolates (e.g., LC505372.1, MK372883.1 and KP684518.1) from Korea and South China (Figure 3).

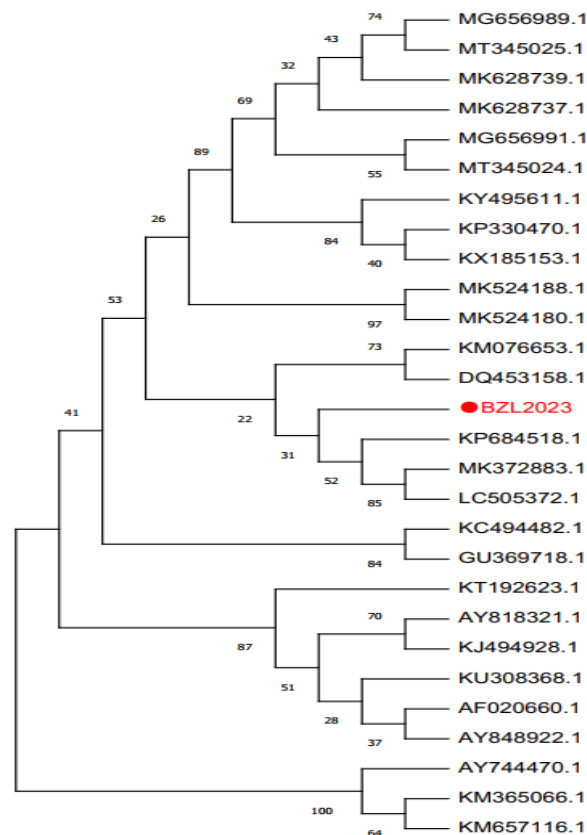


Figure 3: A phylogenetic tree constructed based on the tomato spotted wilt virus N gene sequence.

Discussion

Tomato spotted wilt orthotospovirus (TSWV), which is belonging to the genus *Orthotospovirus* of *Tospoviridae* family, and is transmitted by thrips and seed [11,12]. TSWV has widest host range, which can infect 1090 plants in 84 families [12]. It has been reported that TSWV can mainly infect vegetables: including tomato, pepper, tobacco, watermelon and lettuce [13-16]; it also infect herbage, flowers and nuts [17-19]. In this study, the results showed that *A. praecox* with symptoms of chlorosis, mottling, leaf yellowing and necrotic in Kunming was infected with tomato spotted wilt *orthotospovirus* based on the data of molecular identifications and electron microscopy. This is the first report of TSWV was detected on *A. praecox* in China.

The technology for detecting virus includes Electron microscopy (TEM), RT-PCR and ELISA. TEM is the visual way for detecting the virus. Previous studies have been reported that cucumber mosaic virus (CMV), tobacco rattle virus (TRV), ranunculus mild mosaic virus (RMMV), zucchini tigre mosaic virus (ZTMV) et al., which were observed in different host [20-22]. In this study, the virus particles were observed under TEM by negative staining for the samples, the diameter ranged from 80 to 120 nm. However, the results of TEM only identified the genus of the virus, for exact identification of the virus, RT-PCR was used for detection. Owing to the N protein is an important basis for virus classification [23]. The samples of *A. praecox* with have been infected by TSWV was tested using RT-PCR and NCBI sequence of N gene. A 777bp sequence was obtained from the sample, which nucleotide sequence homology was 99.87% with tomato spotted wilt *orthotospovirus* isolate Guizhou from tobacco. Phylogenetic tree results showed that the isolate of *P. multiflorum* grouped with several TSWV isolates (e.g., LC505372.1, MK372883.1 and KP684518.1) from Korea and South China.

This is the first report of TSWV infected *A. praecox* in China. Symptomatic phenotype-based field survey son some plantations in Yunnan Province indicated that the disease incidence ranged from 70% to 90%, resulting in significant loss of production of *A. praecox*. The result provides a new strategy for the prevention and control virus in the planting process.

Acknowledgements

This work was carried out with supporting from Yunnan Young & Elite Talents Project (YNWR-QNRC-2020 to JZ, YNWR-QNRC-2022 to LHZ), Important plan of research and development (NO. 202103AF140003), Seed industry laboratory-the project of enhancement construction in core function laboratory (NO. 202305AR340004), National Natural Science Foundation of China (No.32360639).

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