Effects of Cytokinin and Auxin on Plant Development and Vascular Tissues in *Lens culinaris*

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Keywords: Tissue culture, Benzylaminopurine (BAP), Naphthaleneacetic acid (NAA), phloem, xylem.

Abstract: Cytokinins and auxins were studied in *Lens culinaris* before; however, there was lack of information about their effects on vascular tissues and their relation with plant development. In this study, intact lentil seedlings were treated with different doses of BAP (1 mg/L) and NAA (0.3, 0.6, 0.9, 1.2 mg/L) with periodic intervals of 7, 14, 21, 28, and 35 days under in vitro conditions. The behaviors of plant height, number of shoots per plant, and rooting were investigated to find if their regeneration behavior is related with the developmental behavior of phloem and xylem thickness and stem radius. In most instances, seven-day culture conditions in all plant growth regulators (PGRs) doses demonstrated the best results. BAP and NAA treatments with high doses on prolonged days of culture caused unhealthy growing on plant development and vascular tissues. While phloem region thickness was the highest in control group, xylem region was found to have the highest thickness in 1 mg/L BAP treatment used singly. Moreover, high doses of BAP and NAA caused deformity and shrinking in phloem and xylem regions that also lead to shrinking in stem radius. These results reveal negative effects of BAP and NAA treatments on prolonged days of culture and conclude that the time period of treatment must be optimized precisely to avoid damages to vascular and other tissues and promote desirable growth and development of tissues.

Keywords: Tissue culture, Benzylaminopurine (BAP), Naphthaleneacetic acid (NAA), phloem, xylem.

1. Introduction

The lentil (*Lens culinaris* Medik. subsp. *culinaris*) is widely used in human nutrition due to its protein-rich seeds (Bhatt, 1988). It is suspected that several factors are responsible for reduced yields, including vulnerability to pests and diseases, massive drop in flowers, and post-harvest losses (Solh, 1984). In order to increase the lentil production and the yield per unit area, it is necessary to develop and spread new varieties. There is substantial potential of lentil under such circumstances to accept biotechnological methods for improving lentils such as tissue culture. Nevertheless, the lentil improvement by biotechnology approaches has appeared to be limited and difficult to regenerate due to its recalcitrant disposition (Khanam, Sarker, Hogue, & Haque, 1995; Polanco & Ruiz, 1997; Khawar & Ozcan 2002; Sarker et al., 2003; Khawar, Sancak, Uranbey, & Ozcan, 2004; Sevimay, Khawar, & Yuzbasioğlu, 2005).

A number of previous studies have been carried out to establish effective in vitro tissue culture regeneration systems and to work out the possibility of adapting biotechnology to programs for lentil development. Treatments of cytokinins have an important role largely on inducing shoot regeneration while auxins mainly have an effect upon rooting induction (Saxena & King 1987; Polanco, Pelaez, & Ruiz, 1988; Sarker et al., 2003; Khawar, Sancak, Uranbey, & Ozcan, 2004; Chhabra, Chaudhary, Varma, Saiinger, & Jaiwal, 2008; Ozdemir, Turker, & Khawar, 2015). Cytokinins, auxins, and cytokinin-auxin correlations are generally regarded as the most essential factor to control growth and initiate regeneration in plant tissue and organ cultures (Evans, Sharp, & Flick, 1981). Among the plant development and growth, cytokinin and auxin perform quite vital roles such as regulating several...
developmental processes as well as the formation and maintenance of meristems; thus, the correlation between cytokinin and auxin is critical for forming the entire plant body (Su, Liu, & Zhang, 2011). During those processes, xylem and phloem are the vascular tissues that connect the entire plant body; while phloem transfers and distributes photoassimilates synthesized in the shoot, xylem carries minerals and water from the roots and provides the plant with its structure and girth (Milhinhos & Miguel, 2013).

The comparative quantities of phloem and xylem are regulated and formed by auxin concentrations. While xylem differentiation occurs at high auxin concentrations, phloem differentiation occurs at low auxin concentrations. Also, cytokinins induce early phases of vascular differentiation in the presence of auxins; otherwise, cytokinins enhance tissue sensitivity to auxin stimulation (Aloni, 1995). Largely, effects of plant growth regulators (PGRs) on vascular tissues have been investigated in trees and rose and make a relatively new research interest in other plants (Little & Pharis, 1995; Eriksson, Israelsson, Olsson, & Moritz, 2000; Björklund, Anti, Uddestrand, Moritz, & Sundberg, 2007; Guo et al., 2015; Johnsson et al., 2018; Monder, Kozakiewicz, & Jankowski, 2019). Previous studies have revealed that indole-3-acetic acid (IAA), as an auxin, has a significant role in cambial activity and wood formation of woody plants (Little & Pharis, 1995; Savidge, 1996). A related research was established by Yuan et al. (2019) in *Populus simonii* × *P. nigra*. The auxin treated seedlings increased xylem-to-phloem ratios in comparison. Also, xylem thickness was found at the highest after auxin treatments and there was no significant difference in phloem thickness between the auxin concentrations compared to controls (Yuan et al., 2019). There is no research upon cytokinin and auxin effects on the plant development and vascular tissues under both in vitro tissue culture conditions and anatomical studies in legumes. This study aimed to investigate the effects of various concentrations of cytokinin-auxin on anatomical features of *L. culinaris* tissue development treated for different periods in days under in vitro conditions to determine whether the time period of treatment affected rooting behavior of the treated shoots.

2. Material and Methods

2.1. Plant material and surface sterilization

Seeds of lentil cultivar Çifçi were provided from the General Directorate of Agricultural Research at Yenimahalle Ankara, Turkey. Undamaged healthy seeds were preferred and picked manually prior to surface sterilization. The lentil seeds were sterilized for 15 minutes in 100% commercial bleach including 5% NaOCl and then rinsed 3 times with sterile distilled water for 3 minutes.

2.2. Medium, culture conditions, and plant explant

In tissue media; MS medium (Murashige & Skoog, 1962) supplemented with 30 g/L sucrose and 6.2 g/L agar. BAP (1 mg/L) and NAA (0.3, 0.6, 0.9, 1.2 mg/L) doses were added to the tissue media before autoclaving. IBA stock solution was sterilized with a millipore filter 0.45 μm pore size. The pH of the culture medium was adjusted to 5.8 before adding agar and autoclave sterilization at 121°C for 20 minutes. All cultures were incubated at 24°C, 16 hours light and 8 hours dark conditions. The seeds were placed horizontally at semi-submerged position in each culture treatment to achieve maximum germination rate.

The plants that germinated to a 2-3 cm length were cut off closer to cotyledon nodes and were transferred to the tissue medium including abovementioned plant growth regulator concentrations. The shoots were cultured periodically for different day (7, 14, 21, 28, 35 days) intervals with aforementioned BAP and NAA concentrations. After those treatments, the explants were cultured in rooting medium with 0.5 mg/L IBA hormone for 30 days.

2.3. Paraffin wax method

Aforementioned BAP and NAA exposed lentil stems (0.5 cm length) were used for anatomical studies. The material was fixed in 70% ethyl alcohol for 7 days. Then, stem samples were placed in glass vials and dehydrated through alcohol series (50, 70, 85, and 100%) and alcohol/xylene series (2:1, 1:1, 1:2) for 30 minutes in each. Afterwards, they were rinsed in 100% xylene for 15 minutes each and glass vials were filled with 15 ml of 100% xylene followed by adding 1 metal teaspoon of paraffin. Thereafter, the vials were gradually transferred to oven at 60°C. This was supposed to evaporate the xylene and promote the full wax infiltration of the tissues. After a period of 24 h with constant addition of wax, the tissues were embedded in paraffin wax when the vials were in the oven at 60°C.

After 7 days, the stems were placed in moulds and filled with molten paraffin cooled in refrigerator at -20°C. The moulds were later removed and the “wax-cubed” containing the tissues were trimmed with bistoury and sectioned using a Leica RM2125RTS rotary microtome at 10 to 15 μm thickness. The wax ribbon section was collected on already egg-albumen-smeared slides. The slides were placed on waterbath at 50°C for 3 minutes. The sections were de-waxed in pure xylene and rehydrated in alcohol series in the order of 100, 85, 70, and 50% for 5 minutes each. All sections were stained with Safranin and Fast Green and mounted with Entellan (Johansen, 1940). Photomicrographs were taken using a Leica DM500 light microscope.

2.4. Measurements

Plant height was measured with a digital caliper. Phloem and xylem thickness, stem radius were measured using Leica application suite version 3.4.0 in all three replications. Although stem diameter was relatively preferred, we were required to measure stem diameter both vertical and horizontal in order to minimize measuring faults stemming from deformity in stem shape. Then average of four measurements were accepted as the stem radius in all replications.

2.5. Statistical Analysis

The experiment was established in completely randomized factorial experiment design in 3 replications with 5 explants in each treatment. Significance was determined by analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the differences between the means were compared by Tukey’s multiple comparisons post hoc test using the JMP data analysis tool.
3. Results

Plant height, number of shoots per plant, xylem and phloem region's thickness, xylem region/phloem region ratio, and stem radius were analyzed. There was no statistical significance among replications and also the explants responded homogeneously within and among replications. According to the analysis of variance results: significant differences ($p < 0.01$) were noted among plant growth regulator treatments and day treatment intervals and a significant interaction ($p < 0.01$) was noted among plant growth regulator doses × day treatment intervals (except for xylem/phloem regions percentage in plant growth regulator × day treatments).

3.1. Plant Height

Plant height was recorded and observed on all culture media with 100% viability and during the experiment no contamination was observed. Determination of the optimal culture media is a major concern in vitro plant regeneration and development. The maximum plant height was observed on 1 mg/L BAP + 0.6 mg/L NAA treatment with 7 days of culture. This trend was followed by treatment of 1 mg/L BAP + 0.3 mg/L NAA with 7 days of culture. It was obvious that the average maximum plant height was obtained after 7 days of culture (Table 1). High doses of BAP and NAA treatments and prolonged day treatments influenced plant height negatively producing shorter plantlets (Fig. 1c).

Figure 1. (a) 7 days culture, (b) 21 days of culture, (c) 35 days of culture (1) Control (absence of BAP and NAA), (2) 1 mg/L BAP + 0.3 mg/L NAA (3) 1 mg/L BAP + 0.6 mg/L NAA

It was significant to note that plant height showed a declined growth after 21 days of culture using all plant growth regulator doses when average values were taken into consideration (Table 1). High doses of BAP and NAA caused unhealthy plant growth after 21 days of culture.

3.2. Number of shoots per explant

It is clear that BAP, as a cytokinin, activated shoot production by inducing new germinating buds. Average value was the highest on 1 mg/L BAP treatment singly when compared to other treatments all together (Table 2). 21 days of BAP treatment achieved the highest rate of shoot regeneration. It was noted that different periods of culture in days had statistically similar effects on number of shoots regenerated per explant. NAA inhibited shoot regeneration. All groups that were treated with NAA showed low rate of shoot regeneration per explant. Our findings are in agreement with Müller and Leysers (2011).

3.3. Width of phloem region of the stem

Width of phloem region of the stem was the highest in control group by average value. The differences between the control group and other applications were statistically significant. It was noted that the differences between periods in day applications were also statistically significant on width of phloem region of the stem. The highest phloem thickness obtained from 7 and 14 days of culture applications respectively (Table 3). Prolonged days of culture with plant growth regulator treatments caused degeneration of cells and shrinking in phloem region. In addition, treatment periods for 35 days lead to degeneration and narrowing in phloem tissues as well (Fig. 2e). This consequently affected plant growth and could be a reason for poor plant growth and development in prolonged days treatments especially using high doses of BAP and NAA (Fig. 1c). Moreover, BAP and NAA treatment did not affect width of pith and existence of fascicular and interfascicular cambium (Fig. 2).

The results of this study are not in agreement with Yuan et al. (2019). They depicted that there were no notable differences between the IAA treatment and control treatment in phloem thickness in Populus simonii × P. nigra. These differences in results may have occurred due to different plant species used in these two studies. The results of this study are in agreement with Monder, Kozakiewicz and Jankowska (2019) in terms of phloem region width. They found that measurement of phloem width was higher in control treatment compared to their width in NAA-treated plantlets.

Figure 2. Cytokinin and auxin treated phloem and xylem tissues; (a) 7 days culture, (b) 14 days of culture, (c) 21 days of culture, (d) 28 days of culture, (e) 35 days culture, (1) Control (absence of BAP and NAA), (2) 1 mg/L BAP, (3) 1 mg/L BAP + 0.3 mg/L NAA, (4) 1 mg/L BAP + 0.6 mg/L NAA, (5) 1 mg/L BAP + 0.9 mg/L NAA, (6) 1 mg/L BAP + 1.2 mg/L NAA
The results of this study showed that 1 mg/L BAP treatment induced the highest xylem region width on the stem and the same region width on control group plantlets was the lowest. A period of 7 days of culture treatments induced the highest xylem region thickness compared to any periodic day intervals by average value that showed a gradual reduction in xylem region with each increase period of treatment and dose dependent manner. A period of 35 days culture of 1mg/L BAP + 1.2 mg/L NAA showed the least xylem region width. This result is not supported by Matsumo et al. (2014) in which the researchers showed that IAA treatments induced the highest xylem region width. This study showed that NAA treatments caused the lowest xylem region width. There are relatively few studies on the effects of cytokinin-auxin on vascular tissues. Moreover, these findings on xylem region width showed similarity with a study carried out by Monder, Kozakiewicz and Jankowskab (2019). The researchers found that the control group treatments lead to higher increase in xylem region of rambler roses stem sample compared to the stem samples taken from NAA-treated group.

3.5. Stem radius

Stem radius measurement results showed parallel behavior in line with phloem and xylem regions width when culture periods’ treatments in days are considered (Tables 3, 4, 6). 7 days of culture treatment period induced the largest stem radius. The stem radius showed decline with each increase in period in days from 14, 21, 28, and 35 days of culture. Extended days of culture treatments had negative effects on horizontal expansion of stems and induced shrinking on stem (Table 6; Fig. 2e). The largest average stem radius was observed on 1 mg/L BAP treatment, 1 mg/L BAP + 0.3 mg/L NAA and 1 mg/L BAP + 0.6 mg/L NAA treatment. Control group and 1 mg/L BAP + 0.9 mg/L NAA treatments induced the shortest average stem radius. 35 days culture of 1mg/L BAP + 1.2 mg/L NAA showed the least stem radius (Table 6). Xylem thickness measurements and stem radius interestingly had a parallel behavior (Tables 4, 6). The result also showed positive increase in length of stems after BAP treatments. The result is not supported by Matsumo-Kitano et al. (2008) in which the researchers found that cytokinins decreased stem diameter in Arabidopsis thaliana.

3.6. Rooting

Plant growth regulator treatment periods had a clear influence on rooting with 0.5 mg/L IBA. Only control group shoots that were precultured for 21, 28, and 35 days rooted. No rooting was noted on shoots precultured for 7 days.

Table 1. Effects of different cytokinin and auxin concentrations and day interval treatments on plant height (cm) of L. culinaris

| Days | Control (No treatment) | 1 mg/L BAP | 1 mg/L BAP 0.3 mg/L NAA | Treatments | 1 mg/L BAP 0.6 mg/L NAA | 1 mg/L BAP 0.9 mg/L NAA | 1 mg/L BAP 1.2 mg/L NAA | Average |
|------|-----------------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| 7    | 4.80 ad              | 5.04 ad    | 6.8 ab                  | 7.78 a     | 5.74 ac                 | 3.45 bd                 | 5.46 ac                 | 5.46 ac  |
| 14   | 5.56 ad              | 4.92 ad    | 4.50 ad                 | 4.04 bd    | 3.47 bd                 | 2.69 bd                 | 4.19 b                  |
| 21   | 5.93 ab              | 5.17 ad    | 4.10 bd                 | 2.94 bd    | 2.01 d                  | 2.34 bd                 | 3.74 b                  |
| 28   | 5.20 ad              | 5.38 ad    | 3.78 bd                 | 2.84 bd    | 3.26 bd                 | 2.52 bd                 | 3.83 b                  |
| 35   | 5.16 ad              | 5.21 ad    | 2.66 bd                 | 2.24 cd    | 2.38 bd                 | 2.33 bd                 | 3.33 b                  |
|      | Average value        | 5.33 a     | 5.14 ab                 | 4.2 ac     | 3.96 bc                 | 3.37 cd                 | 2.66 d                  |

Table 2. Effects of different cytokinin and auxin concentrations and day interval treatments on number of shoots per plant in L. culinaris

| Days | Control (No treatment) | 1 mg/L BAP | 1 mg/L BAP 0.3 mg/L NAA | Treatments | 1 mg/L BAP 0.6 mg/L NAA | 1 mg/L BAP 0.9 mg/L NAA | 1 mg/L BAP 1.2 mg/L NAA | Average |
|------|-----------------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| 7    | 0.86 ad               | 0.86 ad    | 0.93 ad                 | 1.06 ad    | 1.06 ad                 | 0.80 ad                 | 0.92 c                  |
| 14   | 0.66 bd               | 1.46 ac    | 1.13 ad                 | 0.40 bd    | 0.40 bd                 | 0.33 bd                 | 0.73                   |
| 21   | 0.60 bd               | 2.06 a     | 1 ad                    | 0.46 bd    | 0.06 d                  | 0.20 cd                 | 0.73                   |
| 28   | 1.13 ad               | 1 ad       | 1.06 ad                 | 0.20 cd    | 0.60 bd                 | 0.40 bd                 | 0.73                   |
| 35   | 0.66 bd               | 1.53 ab    | 0.53 bd                 | 0.20 cd    | 0.33 bd                 | 0.20 cd                 | 0.57                   |
|      | Average value         | 0.78 bc    | 1.38 a                  | 0.53 b     | 0.46 c                  | 0.49 c                  | 0.38 c                  |

Table 3. Phloem thickness measurements of L. culinaris (µm) treated with different concentrations of cytokinin and auxin in variable day intervals

| Days | Control (No treatment) | 1 mg/L BAP | 1 mg/L BAP 0.3 mg/L NAA | Treatments | 1 mg/L BAP 0.6 mg/L NAA | 1 mg/L BAP 0.9 mg/L NAA | 1 mg/L BAP 1.2 mg/L NAA | Average |
|------|-----------------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| 7    | 100.67 ab            | 69.88 aj   | 94.82 ac                | 84.91 af   | 88.48 ae                | 104 a                   | 90.46 ac               |
| 14   | 106.03 a             | 91.04 ad   | 69.97 aj                | 63.64 bj   | 73.89 ai                | 85.76 ae                | 81.72 a                |
| 21   | 102.17 ab            | 55.30 dj   | 67.41 aj                | 57.98 cj   | 46.36 fj                | 56.18 cj                | 64.23 b                |
| 28   | 61.60 cj             | 57.61 ci   | 50.82 eq                | 54.79 dj   | 79.95 ag                | 57.65 cj                | 60.40 b                |
| 35   | 75.18 ah             | 42.55 gj   | 35.66 ij                | 46.79 fj   | 38.52 bj                | 33.44 j                 | 45.35 c                |
|      | Average value        | 89.13 a    | 63.27 b                 | 63.73 b    | 61.62 b                 | 65.44 b                 | 67.41 b                |
and 14 days on MS medium. Any, BAP or BAP + NAA pretreatment inhibited root induction. It was noted that BAP and NAA treated shoots inhibited rooting primarily due to the deformation of vascular bundles in the root zone. It is well known that the adventitious roots are induced from pericycle cells very close to vascular tissues cells with stimulation to divide after treatment with auxin under tissue culture conditions. Division which then go on to produce lateral root meristems (Grant & Fuller, 1970; Scott & Norris, 1970). A disturbance in vascular tissue formation affects the connection of pericycles to the vascular tissue and rooting (Esau, 1977). The results of this study are in agreement and confirmation to these studies and suggest careful optimization in plant growth regulator treatments to avoid difficulty in rooting of tissue cultured plants.

Table 4: Xylem thickness measurements of *L. culinaris* (µm) that treated with different concentrations of cytokinin and auxin in variable day intervals

| Days | Control (No treatment) | 1 mg/L BAP | 1 mg/L BAP 0.3 mg/L NAA | Treatments | 1 mg/L BAP | 1 mg/L BAP 0.6 mg/L NAA | 1 mg/L BAP 1 mg/L BAP 0.9 mg/L NAA | 1 mg/L BAP 1 mg/L BAP 1.2 mg/L NAA | Average value |
|------|------------------------|------------|--------------------------|------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|
| 7    | 70.74 ± 0.36          | 60.36 ± 0.41| 65.84 ± 0.43             | 63.28 ± 0.29| 63.28 ± 0.29          | 58.32 ± 0.34                  | 58.32 ± 0.34                  | 53.85 ± 0.31                  | 53.85 ± 0.31  |
| 14   | 70.74 ± 0.36          | 60.36 ± 0.41| 65.84 ± 0.43             | 63.28 ± 0.29| 63.28 ± 0.29          | 58.32 ± 0.34                  | 58.32 ± 0.34                  | 53.85 ± 0.31                  | 53.85 ± 0.31  |
| 21   | 70.74 ± 0.36          | 60.36 ± 0.41| 65.84 ± 0.43             | 63.28 ± 0.29| 63.28 ± 0.29          | 58.32 ± 0.34                  | 58.32 ± 0.34                  | 53.85 ± 0.31                  | 53.85 ± 0.31  |
| 28   | 70.74 ± 0.36          | 60.36 ± 0.41| 65.84 ± 0.43             | 63.28 ± 0.29| 63.28 ± 0.29          | 58.32 ± 0.34                  | 58.32 ± 0.34                  | 53.85 ± 0.31                  | 53.85 ± 0.31  |

4. Conclusion

In line with the findings, it was clearly determined that when the BAP and NAA application period was extended, it had a negative effect on rooting due to the deformation of vascular bundles in the *L. culinaris* tissues. The development of negative effects of BAP and NAA on the vascular tissues in turn had a negative effect on pericycle cells and rooting of the plant. It is the first study to determine the effects of auxin and cytokinin on vascular tissues and development of lentil plants. It is believed that this study will shed a strong light on the tissue culture and rooting studies to be conducted in future.

Acknowledgements: This study was derived from a M.Sc. thesis of the first author at Department of Agricultural Sciences at Institute of Natural and Applied Sciences, Usak University, Usak, Turkey. The authors would like to express their gratitude to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ahmet Kahraman from Department of Biology, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Plant Systematics and Phylogenetics Laboratory (PSPL), Usak University for his constructive comments on the manuscript and excellent technical assistance on anatomical study.

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