Polymorphic microsatellite loci for Virola sebifera (Myristicaceae) derived from shotgun 454 pyrosequencing

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• Premise of the study: Polymorphic microsatellite loci were characterized in the dioecious neotropical rainforest tree Virola sebifera. The markers will be used to study ecological and genetic impacts of hunting and landscape change in this vertebrate-dispersed, insect-pollinated tree species.

• Methods and Results: Simple sequence repeat (SSR) markers were screened from genomic libraries of South American V. sebifera obtained by shotgun 454 pyrosequencing. Primer pairs were tested on Panamanian samples (N = 42). Approximately 52% of the 61 tested SSR markers amplified, and 16% were polymorphic. Ten selected polymorphic SSR loci contained seven to 15 alleles per locus, and polymorphic information content averaged 0.694. Observed heterozygosity ranged from 0.465 to 0.905, and expected heterozygosity was between 0.477 and 0.876.

• Conclusions: The 10 polymorphic loci will be useful in studying gene flow and genetic structure at local and regional spatial scales in V. sebifera.

Key words: microsatellite loci; Myristicaceae; shotgun 454 pyrosequencing; Virola sebifera.

Neotropical nutmeg (Virola sebifera Aubl.; Myristicaceae) is a wide-ranging canopy tree found in mature tropical forests from Central America to the Amazon Basin and Guiana Shield. Like other species in its genus, V. sebifera is dioecious, pollinated by small insects, and dispersed by vertebrates (primarily large birds) that consume the nutrient-rich red aril covering its seeds (Howe, 1981). Given the high mobility and considerable seed loads of large avian dispersers, seed-mediated gene flow in V. sebifera may play an important role in maintaining genetic variation within and among populations. However, as increasing anthropogenic activities (e.g., hunting and landscape change) adversely impact the abundance and/or habitat of frugivores (Wright, 2003; Vetter et al., 2011), it is important to investigate how changing vertebrate densities may impact gene flow and population structure in V. sebifera and other tropical forest tree species.

To address these and other questions, we developed a set of polymorphic microsatellite DNA markers for V. sebifera, based on genomic DNA libraries obtained from French Guiana samples by shotgun 454 pyrosequencing (Gardner et al., 2011a, b).

METHODS AND RESULTS

Previously developed genomic libraries of V. sebifera (Gardner et al., 2011a, b) were obtained using the combined genomic DNA of six French Guiana individuals, sampled from tagged trees in trails or permanent forest inventory plots in three localities: Sentier la Miranda (4°51’N, 52°20’W; tag no. S35, S31), Sentier Rorota (4°52’N, 52°15’W; S104, S110), and Iracoubo (5°25’N, 53°5’W; S230, S235). Genomic DNA was isolated from each individual using Nucleospin Plant II (Macherey-Nagel, Düren, Germany), then pooled with equal concentrations (~0.8 µg/individual) for subsequent 454 pyrosequencing. Standard GS-FLX Titanium library preparation was adopted. After DNA nebulization, small fragments of length <350 bp were removed. Fragmented DNA was then ligated with MID-tagged (MIDS, ACGAGTAGACT) adapters. This barcoded V. sebifera DNA library was multiplexed with seven other species in a single run of GS-FLX Titanium, which rendered V. sebifera 12.5% of the picotiter plate.

We used the program QDD version 2 (Meglécz et al., 2010), set at default parameters, to search for simple sequence repeat (SSR) loci with ≥5 uninterrupted motif repeats from 90,164 read sequences (mean read length = 367 bp) (Gardner et al., 2011a, b). The SSR marker output was further restricted to A and B primer designs in QDD version 2, so as to exclude loci with complex flanking regions (i.e., containing repeat units). We obtained a total of 526 SSR loci, of which 315 contained dinucleotide motifs, followed by 182 tri-, 21 tetra-, six penta-, and two hexanucleotide motifs. Following the suggestions of Gardner et al. (2011a), we first focused on loci containing at least 10 pure repeat units of di-, tetra-, and pentanucleotide SSR motifs, which were expected to be more polymorphic than other motifs. However, because of an unexpected low rate of amplification success and polymorphism, we also included compound...
motifs, and tri- and hexanucleotide microsatellite loci of 29 repeats. The final testing array contained 61 candidate SSR markers (57% in di-, 36% in tri-, 3% in tetra-, 2% in penta-, and 2% in hexanucleotide motifs).

We checked the amplification rate and polymorphism of the 61 SSR primer pairs in 42 *Viola sebifera* adult trees (diameter at breast height [dbh] > 20 cm; voucher no. Pérez 1806 and Pérez 1930, STRI herbarium, Panama), which were randomly collected from the 50-ha Forest Dynamics Plot in the plateau of Barro Colorado Island (9°10′N, 79°51′W), Panama. Genomic DNA was isolated from silica-dried leaves using the DNeasy Plant Mini Kit (Qiagen, Valencia, California, USA), quantified using NanoDrop 2000 (Thermo Scientific, Wilmington, Delaware, USA), and diluted to 1.5 ng μL for subsequent PCR. The 6-μL PCR cocktail contained 1.5 ng of DNA template, 0.05 μM each dNTP, and 1 U Taq polymerase. PCRs were carried out in a Mastercycler ep thermocycler (Eppendorf, Hamburg, Germany) following an initial denaturation at 94 °C for 4 min; 28 cycles of 94 °C for 30 s, 52 °C for 60 s; and a final extension at 72 °C for 10 min. PCR product of 1.5 μL was added to 12 μL Hi-Di formamide (Applied Biosystems, Carlsbad, California, USA) and 0.05 μL GeneScan 500 Rox Standard (Applied Biosystems) for subsequent fragment sizing in an ABI 3730 DNA Analyzer (Applied Biosystems) by the DNA Sequencing Core Laboratory at the University of Michigan. Alleles were visualized and scored using GeneScan 500 Rox Software (Applied Biosystems) version 3.7 (SoftGenetics, State College, Pennsylvania, USA).

CONCLUSIONS

We found that trinucleotide SSR loci exhibited better marker properties, such as higher probability of polymorphism and less stuttering, than the other motifs, particularly dinucleotide SSRs. Although the 454 genomic libraries were obtained from French Guiana samples, the markers were developed for Panamanian individuals, despite the probable high levels of genomic divergence between populations located east and west of the Andean cordilleras. Genomic divergence may partly explain the unexpected low rate of amplification (52%) and polymorphism from Hardy–Weinberg proportions after sequential Bonferroni correction (P < 0.006). The overall exclusion probability with one parent known was 0.992.

| Locus | Primer sequences (5′–3″) | Repeat motif | Size range (bp) | T_a (°C) | GenBank accession no. |
|-------|-------------------------|--------------|----------------|---------|----------------------|
| VSE02 | F: CGCTGATCGTGGACACCA | (AG)_2 | 266–296 | 55 | JX415276 |
|       | R: GCTGGTCTGATGGTCTCTCTCTCT | | | | |
| VSE11 | F: TTATGACGCTTCGCAATGGA | (AG)_10 | 237–267 | 55 | JX415277 |
|       | R: TCGTGGAAGATCTGCTTCTCTCTCT | | | | |
| VSE30 | F: CAGTGGATCAGATGTCATA | (AGT)_10 | 159–186 | 55 | JX415278 |
|       | R: TTCCAGCATATCCATGTGTCTCACA | | | | |
| VSE41 | F: AACCTAGGGCTCCGCGAGGT | (AAAT)_12 | 183–210 | 55 | JX415279 |
|       | R: CCAAGAACAGCTGCTTCAAGC | | | | |
| VSE42 | F: CGAGGAATTGAGGAGAAGCC | (ACT)_14 | 214–253 | 55 | JX415282 |
|       | R: TCACATCGGAAATGTTCAACAC | | | | |
| VSE45 | F: TTGAAATTTGGCTTTTTCTGGGAGG | (TGAG)_12 | 283–306 | 55 | JX415283 |
|       | R: TGATCCATTATATCGAGAGG | | | | |
| VSE55 | F: GTCGTAGTTCTGTGGTGTTGGT | (ACT)_14 | 132–163 | 55 | JX415284 |
|       | R: TGCTTTACGGAGATGTTAAGGG | | | | |

Note: T_a = annealing temperature.

*Significant deviation from Hardy–Weinberg expectations after sequential Bonferroni correction (P < 0.006).

Table 2. Summary statistics of SSR marker polymorphism screened in 42 *Viola sebifera* individuals located in the 50-ha Forest Dynamics Plot on Barro Colorado Island, Panama.

| Locus | A | H_s | H_e | PE | PIC |
|-------|---|-----|-----|----|-----|
| VSE02 | 15 | 0.487 | 0.876* | 0.604 | 0.864 |
| VSE11 | 12 | 0.810 | 0.834 | 0.511 | 0.816 |
| VSE30 | 9 | 0.767 | 0.695 | 0.306 | 0.666 |
| VSE31 | 10 | 0.762 | 0.764 | 0.384 | 0.734 |
| VSE32 | 8 | 0.756 | 0.732 | 0.347 | 0.703 |
| VSE36 | 7 | 0.465 | 0.477* | 0.129 | 0.456 |
| VSE38 | 12 | 0.905 | 0.827 | 0.491 | 0.806 |
| VSE42 | 11 | 0.571 | 0.566 | 0.197 | 0.549 |
| VSE45 | 10 | 0.561 | 0.544 | 0.178 | 0.524 |
| VSE55 | 9 | 0.854 | 0.844 | 0.519 | 0.825 |
| Mean | 10.3 | 0.694 | 0.716 | 0.992* | 0.694 |

Note: A = number of alleles per locus; H_s = observed heterozygosity; H_e = expected heterozygosity; PE = probability of exclusion with one parent known; PIC = polymorphism information content.

*Significant deviation from Hardy–Weinberg expectations after sequential Bonferroni correction (P < 0.006).

© Probability of exclusion over all loci.
of the markers. Although one marker (VSE02) showed evidence of null alleles, and one other marker showed deviation from HWE, these markers may perform well in the South American populations. The 10 polymorphic loci characterized here will be useful for studies of gene flow and population structure in this widespread, vertebrate-dispersed, dioecious tree species.

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