Pseudomonas coronafaciens sp. nov., a new phytopathogenic species diverse from Pseudomonas syringae

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Abstract

We propose Pseudomonas coronafaciens sp. nov. as a new species in genus Pseudomonas, which is diverse from P. syringae. We also classified strains from onions which are responsible for yellow bud (YB) disease as P. coronafaciens. Sequencing of 16S rRNA gene and multi-locus sequence analysis (MLSA) of housekeeping genes (gyrB, rpoD, gltA and gap1 genes) for the P. syringae pv. coronafaciens strains along with other strains of P. syringae pathovars resulted in a distinct cluster separate from other P. syringae pathovars. Based on DNA-DNA relatedness, pathotype strain of P. syringae pv. coronafaciens (CFBP 2216PT) exhibited ≤35.5% similarity with the pathotype strains of P. syringae pv. syringae (CFBP 1392PT, 4702T) but exhibited ≥90.6% with the YB strains (YB 12–1, YB 12–4, YB 09–1). Also, the YB strains (YB 12–1, YB 12–4, YB 09–1) were able to infect only onion but not oat, rye and Italian ryegrass (common hosts for P. syringae pv. coronafaciens). Contrastingly, P. syringae pv. coronafaciens strains (NCPPB 600PT, ATCC 19608, Pcf 83–300) produced typical halo blight symptoms on oat, rye and Italian ryegrass but did not produce any symptoms on onion. These results provide evidence that P. syringae pv. coronafaciens should be elevated to a species level and the new YB strains may potentially be a novel pathovar of hereto proposed P. coronafaciens species.

Introduction

The taxonomy of Pseudomonas syringae sensu lato and its pathovars has evolved and been a matter of debate for last 34 years [1]. In the 8th edition of Bergey’s Manual of Determinative Bacteriology, P. syringae was widely accepted as a species and was comprised of fluorescent phytopathogenic Pseudomonas nomenspecies [2,3]. Furthermore, a revised taxonomic classification placing 41 nomenspecies of P. syringae as pathovars, was proposed in the 16th edition of Bergey’s Manual of Systematic Bacteriology [4]. This proposal was supported by the International Society for Plant Pathology, subcommittee on taxonomy of plant pathogenic bacteria [5]. The descriptions of most P. syringae pathovars were based on limited cross-pathogenicity...
Competing interests: The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

tests on different hosts. As a result, overlap in host-range among different \textit{P. syringae} pathovars often occur. Moreover, routine biochemical tests do not differentiate many of the \textit{P. syringae} pathovars creating problems in correct identification of pathogens [6,7]. Gardan \textit{et al.} (1999) [8] identified nine ‘genomospecies’ of the \textit{P. syringae} complex in a comprehensive DNA-DNA re-association study. Among different genomospecies, genomospecies 4 (also called phy-pathovars creating problems in correct identification of pathogens [6,7]. Gardan often occur. Moreover, routine biochemical tests do not differentiate many of the

Materials and methods

\textbf{Bacterial strains used in this study}

Bacterial strains used in this study included \textit{P. syringae} \textit{pv. coronafaciens} NCPPB 600\textsuperscript{PT}, CFBP 2216 \textsuperscript{PT} (pathotype strain) and ATCC 19608, \textit{P. syringae} \textit{pv. syringae} NCPPB 281 \textsuperscript{PT}, CFBP 4702 \textsuperscript{PT} (pathotype strain) and NCPPB 1770, and \textit{P. syringae} \textit{pv. aptata} NCPPB 3539, \textit{P. coronafaciens} \textit{pv. garcea} NCPPB 588 \textsuperscript{PT} (pathotype strain), \textit{P. coronafaciens} \textit{pv. oryzae} NCPPB 3683 \textsuperscript{PT} (pathotype strain), \textit{P. coronafaciens} \textit{pv. porri} NCPPB 3364 \textsuperscript{PT} (pathotype strain), \textit{P. coronafaciens} \textit{pv. striafaciens} NCPPB 1898 \textsuperscript{PT} (pathotype strain), \textit{P. cannabina} NCPPB 1437, and \textit{P. savastanoi} NCPPB 639 \textsuperscript{PT} (pathotype strain). The strains were recovered following instructions given by the NCPPB and ATCC culture collections. Other bacterial strains used in this study are listed in Table 1. The YB strains from onion which are responsible for yellow bud (YB) disease [10] and concluded that they may potentially be a novel pathovar of hereto proposed \textit{P. coronafaciens} species.

\textbf{Phylogenetic analysis based on 16S rRNA, \textit{gap}1, \textit{gyr}B, \textit{glt}A and \textit{rpo}D gene sequences}

Total microbial genomic DNA from bacterial strains was extracted using an UltraClean Microbial DNA Kit (MO BIO, Carlsbad, CA) according to the manufacturer’s instructions.
Two microliters of bacterial DNA (1 ng/μL) were amplified in 25 μL of a PCR master mix using the 16S rRNA primer pair (fD1 AGAGTTTGATCCTGGCTCAG and rD1 AAGGAGGTGATCCAGCC) as described by Weisburg et al. (1991) [11]. For sequencing, the PCR amplicon from these bacterial strains were purified using an affinity column (Wizard PCR Preps DNA Purification System, Promega) and sequenced (Eurofins Genomics, Huntsville, AL, USA). ClustalW [12] was used for sequence alignment and overhangs were trimmed. PAUP*4.0b.10 [13] was used for phylogenetic analyses. Phylogenetic trees were created using parsimony analysis. Bootstrap analysis (10,000 replications) was performed for the parsimony tree using step-wise addition with the tree-bisection reconnection (TBR) branch-swapping option. As an outgroup, P. putida was included in the analysis.

### Table 1. List of bacterial strains used in this study.

| Species ID          | Strain          | Host   | Strain source          |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------|------------------------|
| Pseudomonas cannabina | NCPPB 600<sup>PT</sup> = CFBP 2216<sup>PT</sup> | Oat    | GenBank                |
| P. syringae pv. coronafaciens | ATCC 19608 | Oat    | ATCC<sup>b</sup>, U.S.A. |
|                      | Pcf 93–2        | Oat    | CPES<sup>d</sup>, UGA  |
|                      | Pcf 83–300      | Rye    | CPES, UGA              |
|                      | YB 12–1         | Onion  | CPES, UGA              |
|                      | YB 09–1         | Onion  | CPES, UGA              |
|                      | YB 12–4         | Onion  | CPES, UGA              |
|                      | YB 12–5         | Onion  | CPES, UGA              |
| P. syringae pv. garceae | NCPPB 588<sup>PT</sup> | Coffee | NCPPB, UK              |
| P. syringae pv. oryzae | NCPPB 3683<sup>PT</sup> | Rice   | NCPPB, UK              |
| P. syringae pv. porri | NCPPB 3364<sup>PT</sup> | Leak   | NCPPB, UK              |
| P. syringae pv. striafaciens | NCPPB 1898<sup>PT</sup> | Oat    | NCPPB, UK              |
| P. putida            | ATCC 12633      | -      | GenBank                |
| P. savastanoi       | NCPPB 639<sup>T</sup> | Olive  | GenBank                |
| P. syringae pv. aptata | NCPPB 3539  | Sugarbeet | NCPPB, UK             |
| P. syringae pv. glycinea | Psg 86–3      | Soybean | CPES, UGA              |
| P. syringae pv. lachrymans | Ps 83–1     | Cucumber | CPES, UGA              |
| P. syringae pv. morsprunorum | Psm 83–4    | Peach  | CPES, UGA              |
| P. syringae pv. phaseolicola | Pph 83–2   | Kudzu  | CPES, UGA              |
| P. syringae pv. syringae | NCPPB 281<sup>PT</sup> = CFBP 4702<sup>PT</sup> | Lilac  | NCPPB, UK; CFBP, France |
|                      | NCPPB 1770      | Bean   | NCPPB, UK              |
|                      | CFBP 1392       | Lilac  | CFBP, France           |
|                      | Psa 87–300      | Bean   | CPES, UGA              |
|                      | Psa 88–306      | Bean   | CPES, UGA              |
| P. syringae pv. tomato | Pst 84–17     | Tomato | CPES, UGA              |
|                      | Pst 89–21       | Tomato | CPES, UGA              |
| P. viridiflava       | CFBP 2107<sup>T</sup> = ATCC 13223<sup>T</sup> | Bean   | GenBank                |

<sup>PT</sup>Pathotype strain.

<sup>a</sup>NCPPB = National Culture Collection for Plant Pathogenic Bacteria, Sandhutton, York, UK.

<sup>b</sup>CFBP = Collection Francaise de Bacteries Associees aux Plantes, Beaucouze Cedex, France.

<sup>c</sup>ATTC = American Type Culture Collection, Manassas, VA, USA.

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https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0208271.t001
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Purified DNA from four YB strains (12–1, 09–1, 12–4, 12–5) along with pathotype strains of *P. syringae* pv. *syringae*, *P. syringae* pv. *coronafaciens*, *P. syringae* pv. *garceae*, *P. syringae* pv. *oryzae*, *P. syringae* pv. *striafaciens*, and *P. syringae* pv. *porri* (NCPPB 3539) were extracted using an UltraClean Microbial DNA Kit (MO BIO, Carlsbad, CA) according to the manufacturer’s instructions. DNA extraction from additional *P. syringae* pathovars (*P. syringae* pv. *tomato*, *P. syringae* pv. *maculicola*, *P. syringae* pv. *lachrymans*, *P. syringae* pv. *glycinea*, *P. syringae* pv. *morsprunorum*, and *P. syringae* pv. *phaseolicola*) strains was also conducted. Four housekeeping genes (*gap1*, *gltA*, *gyrB*, and *rpoD*) were amplified for each bacterial strain stated above with primers described by Hwang et al. (2005) [14] and PCR products were sequenced as described by Yan et al. (2008) [15]. Sequence analysis and tree construction were performed on concatenated sequences as described above.

**PCR assay for the detection of plasmid pCOR1 and coronafactate ligase gene**

The detection of pCOR1 plasmid in YB strains were conducted as per the conventional PCR protocol described by Takahashi et al. (1996) [16] using primer pairs P1 (5’-GGGCTTGCGAGAGATGTCAATGGA-3’) and P2 (5’-TTCTGGAAGCTATGGCCACTTG-3’). Four YB strains (12–1, 09–1, 12–4, 12–5) along with a pathotype strain (NCPPB 600PT) and a strain (ATCC 19608) of *P. coronafaciens*, a pathotype strain (NCPPB 281PT) and a strain (NCPPB 1770) of *P. syringae* pv. *syringae* and one strain each of *P. syringae* pv. *phaseolicola*, *P. syringae* pv. *glycinea*, *P. syringae* pv. *lachrymans*, *P. syringae* pv. *maculicola*, *P. syringae* pv. *tomato*, *P. syringae* pv. *syringae*, and *P. syringae* pv. *aptata* were used in this assay. The gene, coronafactate ligase encodes the coupling of coronafacic acid and coronamic acid in a coronatine (phytoxin) biosynthetic pathway [1]. For coronafactate ligase PCR, microbial DNA were amplified using a primer pair, CFL F 5’-GGCGCTCCCTCGCACTT-3′ and CFL R 5’-GGTATTGGCGGGGGTGC-3′ following conditions described by Bereswill et al. (1991) [17]. The PCR detection assay for the *cfl* gene was conducted with the strains described above.

**The gene, hrpZ based PCR assay**

The *hrpZ* based PCR assays with group I-IV specific primers were conducted for the YB strains (12–1, 09–1, 12–4, 12–5) as described previously by Inoue and Takikawa (2006) [18]. Known strains of *P. syringae* pv. *phaseolicola*, *P. syringae* pv. *lachrymans*, *P. syringae* pv. *tomato*, *P. syringae* pv. *syringae*, and *P. syringae* pv. *coronafaciens* (NCPPB 600PT and ATCC 19608) were used as positive controls for *hrpZ* group Ia, Ib, II, III, and IV-based PCR assays, respectively.

**PCR assay for the detection of effector genes (avrPto, avrD1, avrAE1, hopA1, hopB1, hopC1, hopD1, hopF2, hopG1, hrpK1, hopAF1, and hopAN1)**

The presence of 12 effector genes (*avrPto*, *avrD1*, *avrAE1*, *hopA1*, *hopB1*, *hopC1*, *hopD1*, *hopF2*, *hopG1*, *hrpK1*, *hopAF1*, and *hopAN1*) were assayed by PCR amplification using specific primers under conditions described by Ferrante and Scortichini [19]. Two YB strains (12–1, 09–1 and 12–4) and the strains of *P. syringae* pv. *syringae* (NCPPB 281PT and NCPPB 1770) and *P. syringae* pv. *coronafaciens* (NCPPB 600PT and ATCC 19608) were used.

**DNA-DNA hybridization and determination of DNA G+C content**

High-quality DNA for DNA–DNA hybridization was prepared by the method of Wilson (1987), with minor modifications [20,21]. DNA–DNA hybridization was performed using the microplate method with some modifications [20, 21]. The hybridization temperature was 45±1°C. The strains were labeled with 4-methylumbelliferyl-beta-D-galactoside and the fluorescence intensity was
measured. Reciprocal reactions were performed for select hybridization pairs and variation within the limits of this method [22]. The DNA G+C contents for the pathotype strain of *P. syringae pv. coronafaciens* (NCPPB 600 PT) and an onion strain (YB 12–1) was measured by HPLC [23,24].

**Phenotypic characteristics**

Physiological and biochemical tests were performed on the pathotype strain of *P. syringae pv. coronafaciens* strains (NCPPB 600PT) along with onion strains (12–1, 09–1, 12–4, 12–5), rye strain (*P. syringae pv. coronafaciens* 83–300), and oat strain (*P. syringae pv. coronafaciens* 93–2). Results were compared with *P. syringae pv. syringae* strains (NCPPB 1770, *P. syringae pv. syringae* 87–300, *P. syringae pv. syringae* 88–306). The phenotypic characteristics of additional *P. syringae* pathovar strains (*P. syringae pv. aptata, P. syringae pv. glycinea, P. syringae pv. lachrymans, P. syringae pv. maculicola, P. syringae pv. morsprunorum, P. syringae pv. phaseolicola*, and *P. syringae pv. tomato*) were adopted from the literature [25] for comparison. BIOLOG GN2 plates were used to test substrate utilization patterns for the strains characterized. Additional tests included utilization of trigonelline, mannitol, erythritol, sorbitol, inositol, D-tartarate, L-lactate, ability to reduce nitrate to nitrite, ability to form pits on crystal violet pectate (pectinolytic) and carboxymethy cellulose media (cellulolytic), ability to hydrolyze starch, esculin and gelatin, indole reaction, LOPAT test (levan production, oxidase activity, pectinolytic (potato rot) activity, arginine dihydrolase, tobacco hypersensitivity), fluorescence on King’s B medium (KMB) and ice-nucleation activity tests [25].

**Fatty acid analysis**

The whole-cell fatty acid methyl ester (FAME) composition was determined for the type strain of *P. coronafaciens* (NCPPB 600 PT) and an onion strain (YB 12–1). Strains were cultured on tryptic soy broth agar for 24 h at 28˚C, and whole-cell fatty acids were saponified, methylated, and extracted as described previously by Miller and Berger (1985) [26]. FAME analysis was conducted using the Microbial Identification System, Sherlock version 3.10 (MIDI).

**Pathogenicity test**

Three YB strains (12–1, 09–1, 12–4) and *P. syringae pv. coronafaciens* (NCPPB 600 PT, ATCC 19608, Pc83–300), *P. syringae pv. porri* (NCPPB 3364 PT) and *P. syringae pv. syringae* (NCPPB 281 PT, Pss 87–300) were grown overnight at 28˚C in nutrient broth on a rotary shaker (Innova; New Brunswick Scientific Co., Edison, NJ) at 150 rpm. After overnight incubation, bacterial cultures were centrifuged at 5,000 × g (Allegra 25R, Beckman Coulter, Fullerton, CA) for 3 min and the supernatant was decanted leaving a pellet of bacterial cells. The pellet was resuspended in 0.1 M PBS and the concentration of each bacterial strain was adjusted using a spectrophotometer (Spectronic 20, Bausch and Lomb, Rochester, NY) to an optical density of 0.3 at 600 nm (≈1 × 10⁸ CFU/ml). Seedlings of rye (cv. Wren Abruzzi), oat (cv. Gerard 229), Italian ryegrass (cv. Attain) and onion seedlings (cv. Century) were planted in 10 cm × 8 cm (diameter × height) pots (Hummert International, Earth City, MO) in a commercial potting mix (Sunshine LP5 Plug Mix; Sun Gro Horticulture Industries, Bellevue, WA) in the greenhouse and maintained at 22–24˚C and 70–75% RH with a 12L:12D photoperiod. Three weeks-old seedlings (*n* = 10/strain/experiment) of each host type were inoculated using a hypodermic syringe and needle to inject a 1.0 ml suspension containing 1 × 10⁸ CFU/ml of each bacterial strain in the leaf. Seedlings inoculated with PBS served as a negative control. Inoculated seedlings were evaluated for development of symptoms up to 15 days post inoculation (DPI).
Results

Phylogenetic analysis based on 16S rRNA, gap1, gyrB, gltA and rpoD gene sequences

Based on 16S rRNA gene sequences, strains of \textit{P. syringae pv. coronafaciens} [NCPPB 600* \textsuperscript{PT}, ATCC 19608, 93–2, 83–300] and YB from onion (09–1, 12–1, 12–4, and 12–5), and the pathotype strains of \textit{P. syringae pv. porri} (NCPPB 3364* \textsuperscript{PT}), \textit{P. syringae pv. oryzae} (NCPPB 3683* \textsuperscript{PT}), and \textit{P. syringae pv. garceae} (NCPPB 588* \textsuperscript{PT}) formed a clade that was distinct from other \textit{P. syringae} pathovars (Fig 1).

Sequences of the four housekeeping gene loci \textit{gltA}, \textit{gap1}, \textit{gyrB}, and \textit{rpoD} \cite{15} were concatenated for the strains described above (Fig 2). The four YB strains (12–1, 09–1, 12–4, 12–5) along with the pathotype strain of \textit{P. syringae pv. coronafaciens} (NCPPB 600* \textsuperscript{PT}) and a

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Fig 1. Maximum parsimony tree based on nucleotide sequences of the 16S rRNA gene of \textit{Pseudomonas} species and pathovars obtained from heuristic parsimony search and bootstrap analysis. Bootstrap values are shown at the nodes based on 10,000 replications. Gaps were treated as missing data. The 16S rRNA gene sequence of \textit{Pseudomonas putida} obtained from NCBI database was treated as an outgroup. Bar, 0.001 substitutions per nucleotide position. The accession numbers are listed adjacent to the respective bacterial strain. The “*” in the figure represents a pathotype strain.

https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0208271.g001
strain (ATCC 19608) formed a distinct clade. This clade also contained the pathotype strains of \( \text{P. syringae} \) pv. porri (NCPPB 3364 \text{PT}), \( \text{P. syringae} \) pv. oryzae (NCPPB 3683 \text{PT}), \( \text{P. syringae} \) pv. striafaciens (NCPPB 1898 \text{PT}) and \( \text{P. syringae} \) pv. garcea (NCPPB 588 \text{PT}) separate from other \( \text{P. syringae} \) pathovars (Fig 2). These results suggest that strains from \( \text{P. syringae} \) pv. coronafaciens clade are closely related and different from other \( \text{P. syringae} \) pathovars.

**PCR assay for the detection of plasmid pCOR1 and coronafactate ligase (cfl) gene**

As expected, PCR amplification of both pathotype (NCPPB 600 \text{PT}) and a strain of \( \text{P. syringae} \) pv. coronafaciens (ATCC 19608) with pCOR1-specific primers resulted in a 600 base pair (bp) amplicon (Table 2). One hundred percent of the YB strains (12–1, 09–1, 12–4, 12–5) also produced an amplicon of same size indicating a presence of indigenous plasmid (pCOR1) which is responsible for biosynthesis of coronatine toxin. None of the bacterial strains of \( \text{P. syringae} \) pathovars including strains of \( \text{P. syringae} \) pv. syringae (NCPPB 281 \text{PT}) and \( \text{P. syringae} \) pv. aptata (NCPPB 3539 \text{PT}) were amplified by the pCOR1-based PCR assay (Table 2). These results also suggest that the YB strains are closely related to \( \text{P. syringae} \) pv. coronafaciens and both are different from other \( \text{P. syringae} \) pathovars.
Table 2. Polymerase chain reaction screening of bacterial strains using of plasmid (pCOR1) - and coronafacate ligase (cfl) gene-specific primers.

| Species or pathovars of Pseudomonas | Strain        | pCOR1 | cfl |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-------|-----|
| P. syringae pv. phaseolicola       | 83–2          | -     | -   |
| P. syringae pv. glycinea           | 86–3          | -     | +   |
| P. syringae pv. lachrymans         | 83–1          | -     | -   |
| P. syringae pv. maculicola         | 02–1          | -     | +   |
| P. syringae pv. tomato             | 84–17, 89–21  | -     | +   |
| P. syringae pv. syringae           | NCPPB 1770    | -     | -   |
|                                    | NCPPB 281 PT  | -     | -   |
| P. syringae pv. aptata             | NCPPB 3539    | -     | -   |
| P. coronafaciens                   | ATCC 19608,   | +     | +   |
|                                    | NCPPB 600 PT  |       |     |
|                                    | YB 12–1, YB 09–1, YB12–4, YB 12–5 |       |     |

*a*Negative detection by polymerase chain reaction.

*b*Positive detection by polymerase chain reaction.

PTPathotype strain.

https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0208271.t002

maculicola, and P. syringae pv. tomato with an expected amplicon size of 600 bp (Table 2). This gene was not detected from other P. syringae pathovars (P. syringae pv. phaseolicola, P. syringae pv. lachrymans, P. syringae pv. syringae, and P. syringae pv. aptata) tested (Table 2).

The gene, hrpZ based PCR assay

Only YB strains (12–1, 09–1, 12–4, 12–5) and P. syringae pv. coronafaciens strains (NCPPB 600 PT and ATCC 19608) were amplified with hrpZ group IV based PCR primers and produced an amplicon of 780 bp (Table 3). In contrast, amplicons were not produced by any of the P. syringae pv. coronafaciens strains, including the YB strains with hrpZ group Ia-III-based

Table 3. Polymerase chain reaction screening of bacterial strains using hrpZ Group I-IV specific primers.

| Species or pathovars of Pseudomonas | Strain        | HrpZ groups |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
|                                    |               | hrpZ G-IA   | hrpZ G-IB | hrpZ G-II | hrpZ G-III | hrpZ G- IV |
| P. syringae pv. phaseolicola       | 83–2          | +           | -         | -         | -         | -         |
| P. syringae pv. glycinea           | 86–3          | +           | -         | -         | -         | -         |
| P. syringae pv. lachrymans         | 83–1          | -           | +         | -         | -         | -         |
| P. syringae pv. maculicola         | 02–1          | -           | -         | +         | -         | -         |
| P. syringae pv. tomato             | 84–17, 89–21  | -           | -         | +         | -         | -         |
| P. syringae pv. syringae           | NCPPB 1770    | -           | -         | -         | +         | -         |
|                                    | NCPPB 281 PT  | -           | -         | -         | -         | -         |
| P. syringae pv. aptata             | NCPPB 3539    | -           | -         | -         | +         | -         |
| P. coronafaciens                   | ATCC 19608    | -           | -         | -         | -         | +         |
|                                    | NCPPB 600 PT  | -           | -         | -         | -         | +         |
|                                    | YB 12–1, YB 09–1, YB12–4, YB 12–5 | -     | -         | -         | -         | +         |

*a*Negative detection by polymerase chain reaction.

*b*Positive detection by polymerase chain reaction.

PTPathotype strain.

https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0208271.t003
PCR assays. *P. syringae* pv. *phaseolicola*, *P. syringae* pv. *lachrymans*, *P. syringae* pv. *tomento* and *P. syringae* pv. *syringae*, were only amplified by PCR assays with *hrpZ* group Ia (880 bp), Ib (850 bp), II (1000 bp), and III (750 bp) primers, respectively (Table 3). These results indicate that the YB strains belong to *hrpZ* group IV have a close relationship with *P. syringae* pv. *coronafaciens* strains. These results also indicate that *P. syringae* pv. *coronafaciens* strains group differently from *P. syringae* pathovars.

**PCR assay for the detection of effector genes (avrPto, avrD1, avrAE1, hopA1, hopB1, hopC1, hopD1, hopF2, hopG1, hrpK1, hopAF1, and hopAN1)**

Both YB and *P. syringae* pv. *coronafaciens* strains were positive by PCR assay for *avrPto*, *avrD1*, *avrAE1*, *hopA1*, *hopB1*, *hopD1*, and *hopAF1* genes. These bacterial strains were negative for *hopC1*, *hopF2*, *hopG1*, *hrpK1*, and *hopAN1* genes (Table 4). *P. syringae* pv. *syringae* was also positive for the effector genes (*avrPto*, *avrD1*, *avrAE1*, *hopC1*, and *hopAN1*) whereas it was negative for *hopA1*, *hopB1*, *hopD1*, *hopF2*, *hopG1*, *hrpK1*, and *hopAF1* genes (Table 4).

**DNA-DNA hybridization and determination of DNA G+C content**

Three representative YB strains (09–1, 12–1 and 12–4) exhibited high levels of DNA–DNA relatedness to each other (≥94.9%) (Table 5). In contrast, DNA-DNA relatedness of the three YB strains with a pathotype strain of *P. syringae* pv. *syringae* (CFBP 4702PT = NCPPB 281PT) displayed ≤40.8% similarity (Table 5). Additionally, the type strain of *P. syringae* pv. *coronafaciens* (CFBP 2216PT = NCPPB 600PT) exhibited 34.2% similarity with the type strain of *P. syringae* pv. *syringae* (CFBP 4702PT = NCPPB 281PT). Furthermore, DNA-DNA relatedness of a representative strain of YB (12–1) when compared with the pathotype strains of *P. syringae* pv. *coronafaciens* (CFBP 2216PT) and *P. syringae* pv. *syringae* (4702), exhibited 90.6% and 36.2% similarity, respectively (Table 5). The DNA G+C% for NCPPB 600PT and YB 12–1 was 58.2 and 57.8 mol%, respectively.

**Table 4. List of effector proteins and avirulence genes screened by polymerase chain reaction for the bacterial strains of *Pseudomonas coronafaciens* and *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *syringae*.**

| Bacterial Strains | *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *coronafaciens* | *P. syringae* pv. *syringae* |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| **Effector Genes** |                                       |                               |
| avrPto            | +                                      | +                             |
| avrD1             | +                                      | +                             |
| avrAE1            | +                                      | +                             |
| hopA1             | +                                      | -                             |
| hopB1             | +                                      | -                             |
| hopC1             | -                                      | +                             |
| hopD1             | +                                      | -                             |
| hopF2             | -                                      | -                             |
| hopG1             | -                                      | -                             |
| hrpK1             | -                                      | -                             |
| hopAF1            | +                                      | -                             |
| hopAN1            | -                                      | +                             |

*P. syringae* pv. *coronafaciens* Strains: YB 12–1, YB 09–1, YB 12–4, ATCC 19608 and NCPPB 600PT; *P. syringae* pv. *syringae* NCPPB 281PT.

1Positive detection by polymerase chain reaction.

2Negative detection by polymerase chain reaction.

PTPathotype strain.

https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0208271.t004
Phenotypic characteristics

The most useful phenotypic characteristics for the differentiation of the *P. syringae pv. coronafaciens* strains from *P. syringae* pathovars are listed in Table 6. Trigonelline is a key substrate that differentiates *P. syringae pv. coronafaciens* from *P. syringae* pathovars with the latter being able to utilize the substrate.

Fatty acid analysis

The fatty acid profile of the *P. syringae pv. coronafaciens* (pathotype strain: NCPPB 600\(^{PT}\)) was similar to that of onion strain (YB 12–1). The most abundant fatty acids identified were C\(_{16:0}\), C\(_{16:1}\) \(\Delta7c\) and/or C\(_{16:1}\) \(\Delta6c\) (summed feature 3) and C\(_{18:1}\) \(\Delta7c\) and/or C\(_{18:1}\) \(\Delta7c\) (summed feature 8).

Pathogenicity test

Seedlings (of tested hosts) inoculated with PBS did not produce symptoms at 15 DPI. One hundred percent of the seedlings of oat, rye and Italian ryegrass produced halo blight symptoms when inoculated with the strains of *P. syringae pv. coronafaciens* (NCPPB 600\(^{PT}\), ATCC 19608, Pcf 83–300) (Table 7). However, symptoms were not produced when strains of *P. syringae pv. porri* (NCPPB 3364\(^{PT}\)) strain did not produce any symptoms on the seedlings of oat, rye and Italian ryegrass. *P. syringae pv. syringae* strains (NCPPB 281\(^{PT}\), Pss 87–300) did not produce symptoms on any of the inoculated plants (Table 7). Subsequent bacterial isolation and re-identification for all bacterial strain-plant species inoculation combination reconfirmed the association of symptoms with typical bacterial strain inoculated.

Discussion

The taxonomy of *Pseudomonas syringae* and its pathovars has changed and been a matter of confusion for three decades [1]. Among the identified nine ‘genomospecies’ of the *P. syringae*

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**Table 5. DNA relatedness among Pseudomonas coronafaciens and *P. syringae* pv. *syringae***

| Source of unlabeled DNA | Source of \(^{3}H\)-labeled DNA |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Taxon                   | Strain             | CFBP 2216 | YB 12–4 | YB 09–1 | YB 12–1 | CFBP 1392 | CFBP 4702 |
| *P. syringae pv. coronafaciens* | CFBP 2216 \(^{PT}\) = NCPPB 600\(^{PT}\) | 100\(^{b}\) | * | * | 90.6 | 35.5 | 34.2 |
| *                        | YB 12–4            | *         | *        | *      | *       | *        | *        |
| *                        | YB 09–1            | 99.3      | 100      | 94.9   | *       | 40.8     |          |
| *                        | YB 12–1            | 90.6      | 100      | 100    | 100     | 37.8     |          |
| *P. syringae pv. *syringae* | CFBP 1392          | *         | *        | *      | 34.8    | 100      | 100      |
| *                        | CFBP 4702\(^{PT}\) = NCPPB 281\(^{PT}\) | *         | *        | *      | 36.2    | *        | 100      |

\(^{a}\)Strain designations are according to CFBP = Collection Francaise de Bacteries Associees aux Plantes, Beaucouze Cedex, France and NCPPB = National Culture Collection for Plant Pathogenic Bacteria, Sandhutton, York, UK

\(^{b}\)The values in the table represent DNA relatedness, expressed as percentage relative re-association of the particular combination of DNA isolated from different strains.

\(^{c}\)Represent strains not compared.

\(^{PT}\)Pathotype strain.

https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0208271.t005

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**Pseudomonas coronafaciens** sp. nov., a new phytobacterial species diverse from *Pseudomonas syringae*
complex, genomospecies 4 comprised of pathovars [pv. *coronafaciens*, pv. *atropurpurea*, pv. *striafaciens*, pv. *oryzae*, and pv. *zizaniae*, pv. *garcea*, pv. *porri* that infect small grains, grasses, leek, onion and coffee] [6,8]. An attempt was made by Schaad and Cunfer (1979) [9] to differentiate *P. syringae* pv. *coronafaciens*, *P. syringae* pv. *zea*, *P. syringae* pv. *atropurpurea* and *P. syringae* pv. *striafaciens*; however, the authors found these bacterial species/pathovars to be synonymous. The authors couldn’t differentiate these strains based on physiological, immunological, substrate utilization and host-range tests. Apart from these two studies, detailed investigation is lacking on characterization of *P. syringae* pv. *coronafaciens* and *P. syringae* pv. *syringae*.

Despite being in genomospecies 4, “*Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *coronafaciens*” was not included in the Approved List of Bacterial Names and hence is not recognized as a valid species name [27]. Polyphasic approach of taxonomic classification was not adopted when species designations were made. The current study adopted a polyphasic approach to re-characterize *P. syringae* pv. *coronafaciens* strains (hosts: oat, rye and onion; and also a pathotype strain) and observed them to be distinct from the pathotype strains of *P. syringae* and *P. syringae* pathovars. Hence, it is recommended to elevate *P. syringae* pv. *coronafaciens* to a species level as *P. coronafaciens*. Furthermore, polyphasic approach was also used to identify an unknown bacterial pathogen that was responsible for a new disease in onion (yellow bud), to a species (*P. coronafaciens*).

### Table 6. Phenotypic characteristics that distinguish *P. coronafaciens* from *P. syringae* and *P. syringae* pathovars.

Data for reference taxa for column 3–7 were taken from Schaad et al. (2001).

| Characteristic          | 1a          | 2b          | 3c          | 4d          | 5e          | 6f          | 7g          | 8h          | 9i          |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Mannitol                | -*          | +           | +           | +           | +           | +           | +           | -           | +           |
| Erythritol              | +           | +           | -           | +           | -           | +D          | -           | +           | -           |
| Sorbitol                | +           | -           | +           | +           | +           | -           | +           | +           | +           |
| Inositol                | +           | +           | +           | +           | +           | -           | +           | +           | +           |
| Trigonelline            | -           | +           | +           | +           | +           | +           | +           | +           | +           |
| Gelatin Hydrolysis      | +           | +           | -           | +           | +           | +           | +           | +           | +           |
| Indole Reaction         | -           | +D          | +D          | +D          | ND          | -           | -           | -           | -           |
| Nitrate Reduction       | -           | -           | +           | -           | -           | -           | -           | -           | +           |
| Esculin Hydrolysis      | +           | +           | -           | +D          | +           | +D          | -           | +           | +           |
| L-Lactate               | -           | +           | -           | -           | -           | -           | +D          | +           | +           |
| D-Tartrate              | -           | +           | -           | -           | -           | -           | +D          | +           | +           |
| Pectinolysis            | -           | -           | -           | +           | ND          | -           | -           | -           | -           |
| Fluorescence            | V           | +           | +           | +           | +           | +           | +           | +           | +           |
| Ice-Nucleation          | +           | +           | +D          | +           | +           | -           | +D          | +           | +           |

*a*Pseudomonas coronafaciens* (ATCC 19608, NCPPB 600 PT, YB 12–1, YB 09–1, YB 12–4 and YB 12–5).

b*P. syringae* pv. *aptata* (NCPPB 3539 and 13–4).

*P. syringae* pv. *glycinea* (Psg 86–3).

*P. syringae* pv. *lachrymans* (Psl 83–1).

*P. syringae* pv. *maculicola* (Pma 02–1).

*P. syringae* pv. *morsprunorum* (Psm 83–4).

*P. syringae* pv. *phaseolicola* (Pph 83–2).

*P. syringae* pv. *syringae* (NCPPB 281 PT, 87–300, 88–306).

*P. syringae* pv. *tomato* (84–17, 89–21).

A adopted from Schaad et al. (2001); + = 80% or more positive; +D = 80% or more delayed positive; V = 21–79% positive; — = 80% or more negative; ND = Not determined.

Determined on King’s Medium B.

PTPathotype strain.

https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0208271.1006
Phylogenetic analysis based on 16S rRNA sequences indicate that strains of *P. syringae* pv. *coronafaciens* [NCPPB 600<sup>PT</sup>, ATCC 19608, 93–2, 83–300] and YB from onion (09–1, 12–1, 12–4, and 12–5), and the pathotype strains of *P. syringae* pv. *porri* (NCPPB 3364<sup>PT</sup>), *P. syringae* pv. *oryzae* (NCPPB 3683<sup>PT</sup>), and *P. syringae* pv. *garcea* (NCPPB 588<sup>PT</sup>) formed a clade that was distinct from other *P. syringae* pathovars. Sequencing and concatenation of four housekeeping gene loci gltA, gap1, gyrB, and rpoD resulted in a distinct clade that comprised of four YB strains (12–1, 09–1, 12–4, 12–5) and *P. syringae* pv. *coronafaciens* strains [NCPPB 600<sup>PT</sup>, ATCC 19608, 93–2, 83–300]. The pathotype strains of *P. syringae* pv. *porri* (NCPPB 3364<sup>PT</sup>), *P. syringae* pv. *oryzae* (NCPPB 3683<sup>PT</sup>), *P. syringae* pv. *striafaciens* (NCPPB 1898<sup>PT</sup>) and *P. syringae* pv. *porri* strains from the *P. syringae* pathovars were also grouped in this clade, and were separated from other *P. syringae* pathovars. These results suggest that strains from *P. syringae* pv. *coronafaciens* clade are closely related and are different from other *P. syringae* pathovars. Similar observations were made by Gomila et al. (2017) [28] where the authors compared whole genomes and pan-genomes of 139 *Pseudomonas* pathovars. They observed that *P. syringae* pv. *coronafaciens* along with *P. syringae* pv. *garcea*, *P. syringae* pv. *oryzae*, *P. syringae* pv. *striafaciens*, and *P. syringae* pv. *porri* formed a distinct cluster different from other *P. syringae* pathovars [28]. Rombouts et al., (2015) [29] also demonstrated separate grouping of *P. syringae* pv. *garcea*, *P. syringae* pv. *oryzae*, *P. syringae* pv. *striafaciens*, and *P. syringae* pv. *porri* strains from the *P. syringae* pathovars using rpoD based sequencing and DNA fingerprinting by BOX-PCR. Although in above studies MLSA or 16S rRNA sequencing were not used but the conclusions derived from these independent studies were similar. Plasmids not only govern bacterial host range, and microbial evolution but in some cases can be utilized in bacterial taxonomy. The knowledge of plasmid profile (quantity and type) may help in understanding bacterial phylogeny and taxonomy. However, sole or heavy reliance of plasmid diversity in bacterial taxonomy can be misleading as it can be easily transferred or lost [30]. Nevertheless, plasmid pCOR1 is common among the coronatine (a chlorosis producing phytotoxin) producing *Pseudomonas* sp. including *P. syringae* pv.
coronafaciens and P. syringae pathovars (pvs. atropurpurea, maculicola, glycinea and morsprunorum) [16]. Further characterization of P. syringae pv. coronafaciens strains using pCOR1-based PCR assay resulted in a positive amplification from the YB strains along with pathotype strain of P. syringae pv. coronafaciens (NCPPB 600PT). However, P. syringae pathovars used in this study were not amplified indicating close relationship of the YB strains to P. syringae pv. coronafaciens. Based on hrpZ group specific PCR assay, it was observed that the YB strains along with P. syringae pv. coronafaciens strains belonged to group IV, which is distinct from P. syringae and P. syringae pathovars. These results indicate that the YB strains have a close relationship with the pathotype strain of P. syringae pv. coronafaciens (NCPPB 600) and also they are different from P. syringae pathovars. However, we acknowledge that PCR based assays reported above reflect mere presence/absence of gene or genes but they do not truly reflect their functionality.

Profile of effector genes (type) tend to be similar to some extent in closely related phytopathogenic bacterial species. The YB and P. syringae pv. coronafaciens strains possessed similar effector genes; avrPto, avrD1, avrAE1, hopA1, hopB1, hopD1, and hopAF1 genes. In contrast, P. syringae pv. syringae possessed effector genes (avrPto, avrD1, avrAE1, hopC1, and hopAN1) whereas it lacked genes; hopA1, hopB1, hopD1, hopF2, hopG1, hopK1, and hopAF1. These results suggest that the YB strains were similar to P. syringae pv. coronafaciens with respect to the presence of effector genes. Despite differences in effector profile between P. syringae pv. coronafaciens and P. syringae pv. syringae, we acknowledge that such differences may not truly reflect species level distinction. Further detailed investigation on determining effector profiles of multiple P. syringae pv. coronafaciens and P. syringae pv. syringae may throw some light on this perspective.

DNA-DNA hybridization values have been widely used by bacterial taxonomist for determining bacterial species especially in Pseudomonas [31]. In this study, DNA-DNA relatedness of YB strains when compared with the pathotype strains of P. syringae pv. coronafaciens (CFBP 2216PT = NCPPB 600PT) exhibited ≥90.6% similarity. These results indicate that the YB and P. syringae pv. coronafaciens strains meet the criteria established for a bacterial species. Furthermore, DNA-DNA relatedness of a YB strain (12–1) and a pathotype strain of P. syringae pv. coronafaciens (CFBP 2216PT = NCPPB 600PT) when compared with a pathotype strain of P. syringae pv. syringae (CFBP 4702PT = NCPPB 281PT), similarity index of 36.2% and 34.2%, respectively were observed. These observations suggest that the YB and P. syringae pv. coronafaciens strains do not belong to the species P. syringae. Gardan et al. (1999) [8] also made similar observations where ≤45% DNA-DNA relatedness was observed when P. syringae CFBP 1392PT was compared with P. syringae pv. porti, P. syringae pv. garcea, P. syringae pv. striafaciens, P. syringae pv. coronafaciens, P. syringae pv. atropurpurea, P. syringae pv. oryzae, and P. syringae pv. zizaniae.

DNA-DNA relatedness is a good indicator of species delineation and in some cases is better than 16S rRNA and MLSA. Moreover, DNA-DNA relatedness has been demonstrated to carry similar weight as that of whole genome sequencing [22]. Goris et al. (2007) [22] examined the quantitative relationship between DNA-DNA relatedness values and genome sequence-derived parameters, such as the average nucleotide identity (ANI) of common genes and the percentage of conserved DNA. The authors observed a close relationship between DNA-DNA relatedness values and ANI and the percentage of conserved DNA for each pair of strains. The authors recommended that cut-off point of 70% DNA-DNA relatedness values for species delineation more likely corresponds to 95% ANI and 69% conserved DNA. It would be interesting to evaluate relationships among the pathotype strains in genomospecies 1 including P. syringae pv. syringae and pathotype strains of genomospecies 4 including P. syringae pv. coronafaciens strains using genome sequence-derived parameter like ANI of common genes.
Future studies should include comparative genomics of pathotype strains of genomospecies 1 and 4.

Pathovar is a bacterial classification that plant pathologist and applied plant microbiologists often use to differentiate bacterial strains based on their ability to cause infection on different plant host/hosts [5,19]. In this study, host range for the YB strains was determined on common hosts known for \( P. syringae \) pv. \( coronafaciens \) (oat, rye and Italian ryegrass) and also on an isolated host ‘onion’. As expected \( P. coronafaciens \) strains (NCPPB 600\(^{PT}\), ATCC 19608, Pcf 83–300) produced typical halo blight symptoms on oat, rye and Italian ryegrass but did not produce any symptoms on onion. Contrastingly, the YB strains (12–1, 09–1, 12–4) and a pathotype strain of \( P. syringae \) pv. \( porri \) (NCPPB 3364\(^{PT}\)) produced symptoms on onion but did not produce symptoms on any of the other tested hosts (oat, rye, Italian ryegrass). However, symptoms produced by YB strains were different (intense chlorosis in emerging leaves and severe blight in the older leaves) than those produced by \( P. syringae \) pv. \( porri \) (NCPPB 3364\(^{PT}\)) (water-soaked necrotic lesions on younger leaves). These observations suggest that the YB strains, although belong to \( P. syringae \) pv. \( coronafaciens \) (identified in this study), did not share the common host range (oat, rye, Italian ryegrass). Also, these results indicate that the YB strains can potentially be a novel pathovar of \( P. syringae \) pv. \( coronafaciens \) infecting onion. This is the first report that any \( P. syringae \) pv. \( coronafaciens \) infecting a member of Alliacea family (onion).

The “\( P. syringae \) pv. \( coronafaciens \)” strains belong to genomospecies 4 according to Garden et al. [8]. The species “\( P. syringae \) pv. \( coronafaciens \)” has been proposed by Schaad and Cunfer (1979) [9] based on phenotypic characteristics. Recently, whole genome and pan-genome comparison of 139 \( Pseudomonas \) pathovars revealed that \( P. syringae \) pv. \( coronafaciens \) belonged to a distinct cluster different from other \( P. syringae \) pathovars and hence the authors proposed to revive “\( P. syringae \) pv. \( coronafaciens \)” as a nomenclature species [28]. However, the study by Gomila et al. (2017) [28] lacked relevant information on phenotypic and genotypic characterization of \( P. syringae \) pv. \( coronafaciens \) strains that we provide in the current study and thereby proposing to designate and revive \( P. coronafaciens \) as a separate species.

In conclusion, the genotypic and phenotypic data presented in this study demonstrate that the \( P. syringae \) pv. \( coronafaciens \) strains along with the YB strains from onion belong to a separate species from \( P. syringae \). We therefore propose to elevate \( P. syringae \) pv. \( coronafaciens \) to a species level as \( P. coronafaciens \) sp. nov., nom. rev.

**Description of Pseudomonas coronafaciens sp. nov., (co.ro.na.fa’ci.ens. L. corona crown; L. facio to make; M.L. part. adj. coronafaciens halo-producing)**

Bacterial cells are gram-negative, short rods, non-capsulated, motile and non-spore-forming. Colonies are cream-colored, smooth, round and convex with entire margins on nutrient agar supplemented with 0.5% yeast extract. Growth occurs at 24–30°C, but not at 4 or 40°C. The bacterium is strictly aerobic and negative for indole activity. It produces levan, is negative for oxidase, does not cause a rot in potato, negative for arginine dihydrolase, but produces a hypersensitive reaction in tobacco (LOPAT reaction: +−−+). The bacterium is ice-nucleation positive and is variable for the production of a water-soluble, fluorescent pigment when grown on KMB. \( P. coronafaciens \) sp. nov., nom. rev. can hydrolyze aesculin and gelatin and utilize the following substrates at 24°C: tween 40, tween 80, L-arabinose, D-arabitol, I-erythritol, D-fructose, D-galactose, \( \alpha \)-D-glucose, sucrose, methyl pyruvate, mono-methyl succinate, acetic acid, cis-aconitic acid, formic acid, D-galactonic acid lactone, D-galacturonic acid, D-gluconic acid, D-glucosaminic acid, D-gluconic acid, \( \alpha \)-keto-glutaric acid, malonic acid, propionic acid,
quinic acid, D-saccharic acid, succinic acid, succinamic acid, glucuronamide, D-alanine, L-allyl-glycine, L-asparagine, L-aspartic acid, L-Glutamic acid, glycyl-L-glutamic acid, L-proline, L-serine, L-threonine, γ-amino butyric acid, inosine, uridine, thymidine, glycerol, and D, L-α-glycerol phosphate. The bacterium cannot utilize trigonelline, L-lactate, and D-tartarate.

The type strain of *P. coronafaciens* sp. nov. is NCPPB 600\(^T\) = CFPB 2216\(^T\) = LMG 5060\(^T\) = ICMP 3316\(^T\). The most abundant fatty acids are C\(_{16:0}\), C\(_{16:1}\)ω7c and/or C\(_{16:1}\)ω6c (summed feature 3) and C\(_{18:1}\)ω7c and/or C\(_{18:1}\)ω7c (summed feature 8). The DNA G+C% for *P. coronafaciens* type strain (NCPPB 600\(^T\)) and onion strain (YB 12–1) were 58.2 and 57.8 mol%, respectively. The NCBI accession number for the type strain is 16S rRNA gene is HM032070.

**Acknowledgments**

We thank Mr. Jonathon Van Keith Searcy, Mr. Kyle Parris and Ms. Erin Holliman for their technical assistance. This work was supported in part by the Vidalia Onion Committee. The funders had no role in study design, data collection and analysis, decision to publish, or preparation of the manuscript. The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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