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**How the Pigment Stripes Form in Snapdragon
(*Antirrhinum majus*) Flowers: a study of the molecular
mechanism of venation pigmentation patterning in flowers**

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Abstract

Floral stripes are a common pigmentation pattern in plants. Defining the molecular mechanisms of the striped pattern formation will aid understanding of how a gene can be differentially regulated across a population of similar cells. In the venation phenotype of *Antirrhinum majus*, the anthocyanin pigment is typically confined to the adaxial epidermal cells overlaying the petal veins.

To explore how this pattern forms this study focused on the expression and regulation of *Venosa*, a *Myb* regulator of anthocyanin biosynthesis. Pigment complementation experiments demonstrated that the lack of a MYB factor caused the lack of pigment in the cells outside the venation pigmentation domain. An allele of *Venosa* was isolated and identified. It was a mutant version of functional *Venosa* due to the central part being replaced by a transposon. Phenotype / genotype analysis indicated that the venation pigmentation patterning was due to the functional *Venosa*. *In situ* mRNA hybridisation showed that *Venosa* was expressed from the xylem to the adaxial epidermis, and was controlled spatially and quantitatively by a signal associated with the petal veins. *Venosa* expression provided the longitudinal axis for venation pigmentation stripes, and determined the location and intensity of the pigmented cells. Because another factor required for pigmentation, a bHLH factor, is specifically expressed in epidermal cells and it provides the transverse axis. The pigmented stripes are the cross expression domain of these two kinds of factors.

The transcriptional controlling property of a 2.4 kb (relative to the ATG) promoter region of the *Venosa* gene was analysed. The -900 bp fragment was characterised in detail using 5'-end deletion mutagenesis. A heterologous host, tobacco, was used for analysis in stable transgenics. The homologous host, *Antirrhinum*, was used for transient assays. The efficacy and efficiency of different reporter genes (intron-containing GUS, GFP, *Venosa* cDNA and genomic *Venosa*) and enhancement systems (transcriptional enhancer, translational enhancer, inhibitor of post transcriptional gene silencing and a two-step signaling amplification system) for the detection of low-level reporter gene expression were also tested. The strength of expression correlated to the length of the promoter fragment, and expression was detected using deletions down to

-500 bp, although only weak expression was found. This expression was flower specific but not vein related in both plant hosts. No expression was detected in petals of either host with fragments shorter than -500 bp. The results suggest that the fragment from -380 bp to -900 bp positively affected *Venosa* expression at the transcriptional level, but might not be sufficient to define venation. A possibility is that the venation controlling property is negatively controlled at the epigenetic level, such as DNA methylation status and / or chromatin structure.

The role of gibberellin and sugar in the pigment and venation patterning formation of *Antirrhinum* was studied. The results suggest that gibberellin is not required for pigmentation or venation patterning. Convincing evidence on the role of sugar signaling could not be obtained from the experiments, due to the difficulty in separating the impact on pigmentation from other functions of sugars in petal development.

In addition, the *in situ* analysis detected the expression of a gene probably related to aurone biosynthesis that may be a regulatory gene of this biosynthetic pathway.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	vi
List of Figures	xiii
List of Tables	xvi
List of Abbreviations	xvii
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Overview	1
1.2 Anthocyanin pigments in plants	5
1.2.1 Anthocyanins as plant pigments and their biological functions in flowers	5
1.2.2 Anthocyanin biosynthesis	6
1.3 Gene regulation of anthocyanin biosynthesis in model plant species	8
1.3.1 Regulation of anthocyanin biosynthesis in maize	8
1.3.2 Regulation of anthocyanin biosynthesis in petunia and <i>Arabidopsis</i>	10
1.3.3 Regulation of anthocyanin biosynthesis in antirrhinum	11
1.3.3.1 Spatial and temporal control of anthocyanin production in antirrhinum	11
1.3.3.2 Transcription factors controlling anthocyanin biosynthesis in antirrhinum flowers	13
1.4 Signals that might regulate anthocyanin biosynthesis in flowers	15
1.4.1 Action of gibberellins during petal development	15
1.4.2 The role of sugar signalling in flower pigmentation	16
1.4.3 The role of light controlling anthocyanin biosynthesis	17
1.4.4 Other factors affecting anthocyanin biosynthesis	18
1.5 Pigmentation patterns in flowers	19
1.5.1 Unstable and stable patterns in flowers	19
1.5.2 Pigmentation patterning during petal development	20
1.5.3 Striped pigmentation patterning in flowers	21
1.6 <i>Antirrhinum majus</i> as a model species for the study of	

	pigmentation patterning	22
1.7	The aims & objectives of the project	24
Chapter 2	Methods and Materials	25
2.1	Plant material	25
2.2	General bacterial growth and plasmid purification methods	27
	2.2.1 Growth of bacterial cultures	27
	2.2.2 Plasmid DNA preparation	27
	2.2.3 Transformation of <i>E. coli</i> by heat shock	28
	2.2.4 Transformation of <i>A. tumefaciens</i> by electroporation	29
	2.2.5 Storage of bacteria	29
2.3	General DNA methods	29
	2.3.1 Quantification of DNA	29
	2.3.2 Electrophoresis of DNA	30
	2.3.3 Amplification of DNA by PCR	30
	2.3.4 DNA purification, digestion and ligation	31
	2.3.5 Sequencing	31
2.4	Plant RNA and DNA extraction protocol	31
2.5	Construct generation	33
	2.5.1 Construct generation for genetic complementation	33
	2.5.2 Preparation of <i>Venosa</i> promoter 5' deletion constructs	34
	2.5.3 Arabidopsis ubiquitin promoter transcriptional enhancer and Omega translational enhancer constructs	38
	2.5.4 Gal4 two-step transcriptional amplification system constructs	38
	2.5.5 Construction of constructs to use PTGS inhibitor p19 in transient assay	39
	2.5.6 Construction of binary vectors	43
2.6	Particle bombardment for transient gene expression	45
	2.6.1 Preparation of gold particles	45
	2.6.2 Precipitation of DNA onto gold particles	46
	2.6.3 Particle bombardment	46
	2.6.4 Plant material	47
2.7	Stable tobacco transgenics	48
	2.7.1 Preparation of <i>A. tumefaciens</i> culture	48

2.7.2	Transformation	48
2.8	Reporter gene assays	51
2.9	Agro-infiltration	52
2.10	<i>In situ</i> hybridisation of <i>Venosa</i> mRNA	53
2.10.1	Plant material	53
2.10.2	Precautions to avoid RNase contamination	53
2.10.3	Sectioning	54
2.10.4	Probe synthesis	54
2.10.5	Pretreatments	57
2.10.6	<i>in situ</i> hybridisation and immunological detection	58
2.11	Isolation and identification of a mutant <i>Venosa</i> allele	59
2.11.1	Isolation and characterisation of two <i>Venosa</i> genomic clones	59
2.11.2	Comparison of the promoter structure of two <i>Venosa</i> genomic clones	60
2.11.3	Genotype determination for different phenotypes using PCR	60
2.12	Inhibition of <i>Venosa</i> expression using RNAi	60
2.12.1	<i>Venosa</i> RNAi construct	60
2.12.2	Plant material	61
2.13	Investigation of the role of gibberellin and sugar signaling in controlling venation pigmentation patterning	61
2.13.1	Emasculation experiments	61
2.13.2	Experiments testing detached petal response to GA ₃ supplementation <i>In vitro</i>	62
2.13.3	Experiments testing detached petal response to different sugar supplements <i>in vitro</i>	63
2.13.4	Girdling experiments	65
Chapter 3 <i>Venosa</i> controls the venation pigmentation patterning in the petals of antirrhinum		66
3.1	Introduction	66
3.2	Results	68
3.3.1	Floral development and pigmentation	68
3.3.2	Non-pigmented cells in the petal epidermis can be pigmented by <i>Venosa</i> expression	68
3.3.3	<i>Venosa</i> expression detected by <i>in situ</i> hybridisation	

	is in a vein-specific manner	69
	3.2.4 <i>Venosa</i> RNAi	70
3.3	Discussion	79
	3.3.1 Cells lacking anthocyanin pigment in the non-pigment domain is due to lack of MYB protein, suggesting that the venation pigmentation patterning is due to the localised expression controlled by a <i>myb</i> gene promoter	79
	3.3.2 Venation pigmentation patterning was due to <i>Venosa</i>	79
	3.3.3 The performance of the controls in the <i>in situ</i> mRNA experiments	81
	3.3.4 A possible link with a regulator of aurone biosynthesis	82
	3.3.5 Particle bombardment was not effective for <i>Venosa</i> RNAi	83
3.4	Conclusion	83
Chapter 4	Isolation and identification of a mutant <i>Venosa</i> allele	85
4.1	Introduction	85
4.2	Results	85
	4.2.1 Isolation and characterisation of two different <i>Venosa</i> genomic clones	85
	4.2.2 Structural similarity between GBV promoter and GSV promoter	87
	4.2.3 Genotypes of the tested lines	88
4.3	Discussion	89
	4.3.1 GSV and GBV are alleles	89
	4.3.2 GSV represents a functional <i>Venosa</i> allele and GBV a non-functional allele	90
	4.3.3 <i>Venosa</i> / <i>venosa</i> genotypes were consistent with venal / non-venal phenotype	90
4.4	Conclusion	91
Chapter 5	Transient assay of <i>Venosa</i> promoter 5' deletion constructs	92
5.1	Introduction	92
5.2	Results	95
	5.2.1 <i>-700 VEN:GFP</i> and <i>-700 VEN:IGUS</i> constructs fail to give foci in transient assays with particle bombardment	95
	5.2.2 Efficacy of <i>Venosa</i> as reporter gene in particle bombardment	97

5.2.3	Efficacy of the arabidopsis ubiquitin transcriptional enhancer and omega translational enhancer	97
5.2.4	Particle bombardment assays using the Gal4 enhancement system	97
5.2.5	p19 as suppressor of gene silencing	100
5.2.6	Agro-Infiltration assay	101
5.3	Discussion	101
5.3.1	The expression of <i>Venosa</i> promoter deletions was too weak to be detected using IGUS or GFP as reporters for transient assays	101
5.3.2	Arabidopsis ubiquitin promoter transcriptional enhancer and Omega translational enhancer were not effective for <i>Venosa</i> promoter analysis	106
5.3.3	The Gal4 system was not effective for <i>Venosa</i> promoter analysis	107
5.3.4	p19 is not appropriate for the transient assay of <i>Venosa</i> promoter activity	107
5.3.5	The efficacy and efficiency of Agro-infiltration as a method for promoter analysis	111
5.4	Conclusion	111
Chapter6	<i>Venosa</i> promoter analysis in stable transgenics of tobacco	113
6.1	Introduction	113
6.2	Results	115
6.2.1	Transgenic lines harboring <i>Rosea</i> cDNA or GFP constructs	115
6.2.2	Transgenic lines harboring IGUS constructs	116
6.3	Discussion	120
6.3.1	Transgenic tobacco plants harboring <i>VEN:Rosea</i> or <i>VEN:GFP</i> deletion constructs	120
6.3.2	Transgenic lines harboring <i>VEN:IGUS</i> constructs	120
6.3.3	Detection efficiency of GFP and GUS as reporters in stable transgenics	122
6.4	Conclusion	123
Chapter 7	Investigation of the role of gibberellin and sugar signaling in controlling venation pigmentation patterning	124
7.1	Introduction	124

7.2	Results	125
7.2.1	Emasculation experiments	125
7.2.2	Spontaneously arising variant flowers	126
7.2.3	Response of detached petals to gibberellin supplementation <i>in vitro</i>	126
7.2.4	Response of detached petals to different sugar supplements <i>in vitro</i>	128
7.2.5	Girdling experiments	128
7.3	Discussion	132
7.3.1	Emasculation experiments and naturally mutated individual flowers	132
7.3.2	Response of detached petals to gibberellin supplementation <i>in vitro</i>	133
7.3.3	Response of detached petals to different sugar supplements <i>in vitro</i>	134
7.3.4	Girdling experiments	135
7.4	Conclusion	136
Chapter 8 General discussion		137
8.1	Summary of the aims and results of the study	137
8.1.1	Pigmentation patterning is due to <i>Venosa</i> gene activity	137
8.1.2	Analysis of the <i>Venosa</i> promoter transcriptional activity	140
8.1.3	The possible role of GA ₃ and sugar in the formation of the venation pigmentation patterning of antirrhinum flowers	141
8.2	A hypothesis for the control of <i>Venosa</i> gene expression and venation patterning	142
8.3	Limitations of the study and future experimental directions	145
References		147
Appendices		175
Appendix I	List of primers used	175
Appendix II	The sequence of genomic <i>Venosa</i> allele 1 (GSV)	181
Appendix III	The sequence of genomic <i>venosa</i> allele 2 (GBV)	184
Appendix IV	The sequence of the transposon allocating in the central part of <i>venosa</i> allele 2 (GBV)	188
Appendix V	The sequence of 2.4 kb promoter of <i>Venosa</i>	191
Appendix VI	Identification of potential <i>cis</i>-elements in <i>Venosa</i>	

	promoter using the Web Signal Scan Program	193
Appendix VII	GUS staining results for the stable tobacco transgenics	198

List of Figures

- Figure 1.1** Photographs illustrating complexity of floral pigmentation patterning in orchid.
- Figure 1.2** Floral venation pigmentation patterning is common in nature.
- Figure 1.3** Three selected phenotypes of *A. majus*.
- Figure 1.4** Anthocyanin biosynthesis pathway in *Antirrhinum*.
- Figure 1.5** The current model of gene regulation of anthocyanin biosynthesis.
- Figure 1.6** Tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*) flower consists of two distinct regions, the tube and limb, and its pigmentation patterning is related to the petal structure, in which pigmentation only occurs in the limb.
-
- Figure 2.1** Flower developmental stages of *A. majus* venation phenotype.
- Figure 2.2** The map of the vector used for promoter deletion constructs, pART7.
- Figure 2.3** Schematic representation of the structure of deletion constructs.
- Figure 2.4** The main 5' end *Venosa* promoter deletions.
- Figure 2.5** The constructs developed for strategies to enhance the expression of weak promoter deletions.
- Figure 2.6** The strategy for making binary constructs for stable tobacco transgenics.
- Figure 2.7** Helium particle inflow gun used in the biolistic bombardments in this study.
- Figure 2.8** The probe for *Venosa* mRNA *in situ* hybridisation.
- Figure 2.9** Schematic representation of the structure of p*Venosa*-RNAi construct.
- Figure 2.10** Protocol to test the response of detached petals to gibberellin and sugar *in vitro*.
-
- Figure 3.1** Anthocyanin pigment patterning in venation phenotype.
- Figure 3.2** Pigmentation complementation.
- Figure 3.3** CHS *in situ* mRNA expression pattern in sections of flowers of *A. majus*.

- Figure 3.4 *Venosa in situ* mRNA expression pattern in the petal of *A. majus*.
- Figure 3.5 Variation in the expression pattern of *Venosa* in the tube region of *A. majus*.
- Figure 3.6 *Venosa in situ* mRNA expression pattern in the petal tubes of four *Antirrhinum* species.
- Figure 3.7 *Venosa in situ* mRNA expression pattern in the petal tubes of two *Antirrhinum* samples which lack venation pigmentation.
- Figure 3.8 Probing of the aurone pattern in the lobe area of *Antirrhinum* flowers.
- Figure 3.9 *Venosa* antisense probe signal matches with the two pigmentation patterns, the anthocyanin venation pattern and the aurone patch pattern in *A. molle* (AA128).
- Figure 4.1 Two specific DNA fragments were amplified using venation phenotype genomic DNA as template in gradient PCR.
- Figure 4.2 Structural comparison of two *Venosa* alleles.
- Figure 4.3 Functional analysis of two *Venosa* alleles.
- Figure 4.4 GBV and GSV possibly share same or similar promoter region.
- Figure 4.5 Using *Venosa* specific primers in PCR to determine the *Venosa* genotypes in different phenotype lines.
- Figure 5.1 Transient assay using particle bombardment transformation of antirrhinum petals of the *rosea*^{*dorsea*} line. The strategy for making the *Venosa* promoter deletion constructs.
- Figure 5.2 *Venosa* promoter transient assay using particle bombardment with genomic *Venosa*.
- Figure 5.3 Transient assay with particle bombardment using Gal4 two-step transcriptional amplification system.
- Figure 5.4 Transient expression using p19 as inhibitor of PTGS.
- Figure 5.5 Transient assay using 35S:p19 construct.
- Figure 5.6 -900VEN:p19 can enhance VEN:IGUS activity, resulting in low number of GUS-staining foci when co-introduced into the epidermal cells of venation phenotype petals with particle bombardment.

- Figure 5.7** A transient expression system for flowers using Agro-infiltration and *35S:IGUS*.
- Figure 5.8** A transient expression system for flowers using Agro-infiltration and *35S:GFP*.
- Figure 5.9** Structure of Gal4 two-step transcriptional amplification system.
- Figure 6.1** Weak venation pigmentation patterning is visible in the limb of *Nicotiana tabacum* flowers.
- Figure 6.2** Transgenic plants containing *Venosa* promoter deletion constructs.
- Figure 6.3** The GUS staining pattern of *VEN:IGUS* deletion constructs in transgenic tobacco flowers.
- Figure 7.1** Development of emasculated flowers and mutant flowers.
- Figure 7.2** GA₃ supplementation of detached petals *in vitro*.
- Figure 7.3** Sugar supplementation of detached petals *in vitro*.
- Figure 7.4** Pigmentation and abnormal patterning could be induced by culturing the petal in MS media + sucrose when it was at a very early stage (<5mm in bud length).
- Figure 7.5** Response of flower buds to girdling of the inflorescence stem.
- Figure 8.1** The mechanism of venation pigmentation patterning formation in antirrhinum is schematically shown in cross section.

List of Tables

Table 2.1	List of <i>Venosa</i> promoter deletion constructs
Table 2.2	The constructs used for enhancement of the expression of <i>Venosa</i> promoter deletions in particle bombardment
Table 2.3	Binary constructs
Table 2.4	The number of independent tobacco transgenic lines produced for each construct
Table 2.5	Species and phenotype of plant material used for <i>in situ</i> mRNA hybridisation of <i>Venosa</i>
Table 3.1	Plant material and result of <i>in situ</i> mRNA of <i>Venosa</i>
Table 6.1	Fluorescence microscopy observation of stable tobacco transgenic plants harboring <i>35S:GFP</i>

Abbreviations

A ₂₆₀	absorbance at 260 nm
A ₆₀₀	absorbance at 600 nm
A	adenine
ANS	anthocyanidin synthase
AS	acetosyringone
ATP	adenosine triphosphate
6-BAP	6-benzylamino purine
bp	base-pairs
°C	degrees Celsius
C	cytosine
CaMV 35S	cauliflower mosaic virus 35S promoter
cDNA	complementary DNA
CHS	chalcone synthase
cm	centimetre
cv	cultivar
ATP	2'-deoxyadenosine 5'-triphosphate
dCTP	2'-deoxycytidine 5'-triphosphate
DFR	dihydroflavonol 4-reductase
dGTP	2'-deoxyguanosine 5'-triphosphate
DMSO	dimethyl sulphoxide
DNA	deoxyribonucleic acid
dNTP	deoxynucleotide triphosphate
dTTP	2'-deoxythymidine 5'-triphosphate
EDTA	ethylenediaminetetracetic acid
EtBr	ethidium bromide
F3H	flavanone 3-hydroxylase
g	gram
G	guanine
GA	gibberellin
GA ₃	gibberellic acid
GBV	genomic big venosa

GFP	green fluorescent protein
GMO	genetically modified organism
GSV	genomic small venosa
GUS	β -glucuronidase
gVenosa	genomic <i>Venosa</i>
h	hour
IGUS	intron GUS
IPTG	isopropyl- β -D-thiogalactoside
Kan	kanamycin
kb	kilo base-pairs
KV	kilo volts
L	litre
LB	Luria-Bertani (media or broth)
M	molar, moles per litre
min	minute
μ g	micro gram
mg	milligram
mL	millilitre
μ M	micro molar, micro moles per litre
MOPS	3-[<i>N</i> -morpholino] propanesulphonic acid
mRNA	messenger ribonucleic acid
MS	Murashige and Skoog Basal Medium
NaHAc	sodium acetate
ng	nanogram
NOS	nopaline synthase
<i>nptII</i>	neomycin phosphotransferase gene
OCS	octopine synthase
PCR	polymerase chain reaction
pmol	pico-molar, pico moles per litre
rATP	riboxyadenosine triphosphate
rCTP	riboxycytidine triphosphate
rGTP	riboxyguanosine triphosphate
RNA	ribonucleic acid
RNase	ribonuclease

rpm	revolutions per minute
rUTP	riboxyuradine triphosphate
SDS	sodium dodecyl sulphate
SSC	saline sodium citrate buffer
T	thymine
TBE	tris borate EDTA buffer
TBS	tris-buffered saline solution
TE	tris-EDTA buffer
TFs	transcription factors
Tris	tris(hydroxymethyl)aminomethane
Tween20	polyoxyethylenesorbitan monolaurate
U	uracil
V	volts
VEN	<i>Venosa</i> promoter deletions
<i>V_v</i>	<i>Venosa</i> / <i>venosa</i> heterozygous
<i>vv</i>	<i>venosa</i> / <i>venosa</i> homozygous
v/v	volume per volume
w/v	weight per volume
X-Gluc	5'-bromo-4-chloro-3-indoyl- β -D-glucuronide