

Development and characterization of EST-SSR markers for *Carex angustisquama* **(Cyperaceae), an extremophyte in solfatara fields**

Koki Nagasawa^{1[,](http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9966-9967)7} U , Hiroaki Setoguchi², Masayuki Maki³, Hayato Goto⁴, Keitaro Fukushima^{[5](http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5968-5938)} U , Yuji Isagi⁶, and Shota Sakaguchi^{[2](http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6180-1747)}

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¹ Faculty of Integrated Human Studies, Kyoto University, Yoshida-nihonmatsu-cho, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto 606-8501, Japan

2 Graduate School of Human and Environmental Studies, Kyoto University, Yoshida-nihonmatsu-cho, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto 606-8501, Japan

3 Botanical Gardens, Tohoku University, Kawauchi, Sendai 980-0862, Japan

4 Graduate School of Life Sciences, Tohoku University, Kawauchi, Sendai 980-0862, Japan

⁵ The Center for Ecological Research, Kyoto University, Otsu, Shiga 520-2113, Japan

6 Graduate School of Agriculture, Kyoto University, Kyoto 6068502, Japan

7 Author for correspondence: dracaenacinnabari846@gmail.com

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PREMISE OF THE STUDY: Expressed sequence tag–simple sequence repeat (EST-SSR) markers were developed for *Carex angustisquama* (Cyperaceae) to investigate the evolutionary history of this plant that is endemic to solfatara fields in northern Japan.

METHODS AND RESULTS: Using RNA-Seq data generated by the Illumina HiSeq 2000, 20 EST-SSR markers were developed. Polymorphisms were assessed in *C. angustisquama* and the closely related species *C. doenitzii* and *C. podogyna*. In *C. angustisquama*, many loci were monomorphic within populations; the average number of alleles ranged from one to five, and levels of expected heterozygosity ranged from 0.000 to 0.580, while all markers were polymorphic in a population of *C. doenitzii*. This indicates that low genetic polymorphism of *C. angustisquama* is likely due to the species' population dynamics, rather than to null alleles at the developed markers.

CONCLUSIONS: These markers will be used to assess genetic diversity and structure and to investigate evolutionary history in future studies of *C. angustisquama* and related species.

 KEY WORDS *Carex angustisquama*; *Carex doenitzii*; Cyperaceae; expressed sequence tag– simple sequence repeat (EST-SSR) markers; solfatara.

Carex L. is one of the largest and most widespread genera of the flowering plants, with approximately 2000 species (Reznicek, 1990). Most of its species are distributed in the Northern Hemisphere, especially in northern temperate and arctic regions. In addition to its global distribution, it is noteworthy that the species in the genus occur in various habitats ranging from rainforests and dry grassland to wet meadows, temperate forests, and alpine zones (Starr et al., 1999), which makes them useful models to study plant adaptation to the environment.

Carex angustisquama Franch. (Cyperaceae) is a perennial sedge that is endemic to solfatara fields in the Tohoku region of northern Japan. Solfatara fields are areas around fumaroles emitting sulfide gases containing H_2S and SO_2 even after eruption (Tsujimura, 1979; Yamamoto et al., 2018). Acidified by sulfide gases from fumaroles, the soil in solfatara fields has low pH values of 2–3 and high concentrations of sulfur and aluminum, making a harsh environment for plants to survive. *Carex angustisquama* grows close to fumaroles

where no other vascular plants are able to survive (Tsujimura, 1982). Because no other closely related species in *Carex* sect. *Podogynae* Holm grow in a similar habitat, *C. angustisquama* is assumed to have adapted to solfatara fields in the process of speciation. *Carex angustisquama* also represents a disjunct geographic distribution in six main volcanic areas in the Tohoku region, which are isolated by unsuitable forested vegetation. This pattern of distribution provides an ideal model to reconstruct the historical biogeography of *C. angustisquama*.

To investigate the genetic structure and evolutionary history of *C. angustisquama*, genetic markers are needed, but there are no available markers that can be applied to this species. Expressed sequence tag–simple sequence repeat (EST-SSR) markers are widely distributed both in transcribed and nontranscribed regions (Morgante et al., 2002). EST-SSR markers are regarded as easier and less expensive markers to develop and reported to be more transferable among closely related species (Bouck and Vision, 2007). Moreover,

they are shown to be more reliable because they have lower frequencies of null alleles than anonymous genomic SSR markers (Ellis and Burke, 2007). Therefore, we developed EST-SSR markers and examined their polymorphisms and transferability to closely related taxa.

METHODS AND RESULTS

Total RNA was extracted from *C. angustisquama* (population CA18, Appendix 1) using the Agilent Plant RNA Isolation Mini Kit (Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, California, USA). A nonnormalized cDNA library was constructed and sequenced using the Illumina HiSeq 2000 system (Illumina, San Diego, California, USA). De novo assembly of 83,484,902 cleaned 100-bp reads (DNA Data Bank of Japan [DDBJ], Bioproject PRJDB6849) using CLC Genomic Workbench version 10.1.1 software (CLC bio, Aarhus, Denmark) produced 53,628 contigs (N50: 1321 bp).

Microsatellite regions (≥8 dinucleotide repeats, ≥8 trinucleotide repeats) were searched using MSATCOMMANDER (Faircloth, 2008). We obtained 937 markers, of which 63 pairs were selected based on repeat number. For all loci, the forward primer was synthesized with one of four different M13 sequences (5′-CACGACGTTGTAAAACGAC-3′, 5′-TGTGGAAT-TGTGAGCGG-3′, 5′-CTATAGGGCACGCGTGGT-3′, or 5′-CGGA-GAGCCGAGAGGTG-3′) and the reverse primer was tagged with a PIG-tail (5′-GTTTCTT-3′). PCR reactions were performed using a QIAGEN Multiplex PCR Kit (QIAGEN, Hilden, Germany) in a 10 μL volume containing 20–30 ng of DNA, 5 μL of 2× Multiplex PCR Master Mix, 0.01 μM of forward primer, 0.2 μM of reverse primer, and 0.1 μM of fluorescently labeled M13 primer. The PCR protocol was as follows: 95°C for 30 min; followed by 35 cycles of 94°C for 30 s, 60°C for 3 min, 72°C for 1 min; and a final extension at 68°C for 30 min. Amplified products were loaded onto an ABI 3130 autosequencer (Applied Biosystems, Foster City, California, USA) using the GeneScan 600 LIZ Size Standard (Applied Biosystems), POP7 polymer (Applied Biosystems), and 36-cm capillary array. Fragment size was determined using GeneMapper (Applied Biosystems).

For the initial PCR amplification trial, we used two individuals from population CA09 (Appendix 1). For the 32 primer pairs that showed clear peaks, two individuals from each population (CA09, CA13, CA14, and CA15; Appendix 1) were then used to check polymorphisms among populations. Using 20 primers that were polymorphic over the eight samples (details for 12 monomorphic markers are provided in Appendix 2), 24 individuals from each population (CA09, CA14, and CA15) were evaluated for withinpopulation polymorphisms. However, because few polymorphisms were detected within each population, we examined the transferability and evaluated polymorphisms in two closely related species (*C. doenitzii* Boeckeler and *C. podogyna* Franch. & Sav.; Appendix 1) to test whether low genetic variation of *C. angustisquama* was the result of null alleles at the markers or of the species' genetic nature. GenAlEx 6.5 software (Peakall and Smouse, 2012) was used to calculate genetic diversity indices (number of alleles [*A*], observed heterozygosity [H_o], and expected heterozygosity [H_e]). FSTAT 2.9.3 software (Goudet, 1995) was used to test significance of Hardy–Weinberg equilibrium (HWE) by 1000 randomizations; the significance of the associated *P* values was adjusted by applying sequential Bonferroni correction. The test for the presence of null alleles was performed using MICRO-CHECKER version 2.2.3 (van Oosterhout et al., 2004).

For *C. angustisquama*, all primer pairs (Table 1) were polymorphic when all populations were combined; *A* ranged from two to seven, and levels of $H_{\textrm{\tiny e}}$ and $H_{\textrm{\tiny o}}$ ranged from 0.100 to 0.703 and 0.000 to 0.286, respectively (Table 2). For each population, *A* ranged from one to five, and levels of $H_{\textrm{\tiny e}}$ and $H_{\textrm{\tiny o}}$ ranged from 0.000 to 0.580 and

 $\mathsf{Note:}$ A = number of alleles per locus; H_{e} = expected heterozygosity; H_{o} = observed heterozygosity; \mathcal{N} = number of individuals genotyped.

a Voucher and locality information are provided in Appendix 1.

† Significant possibility of presence of null alleles (99% confidence level) detected by MICRO-CHECKER (van Oosterhout et al., 2004).

TABLE 3. Cross-amplification and genetic diversity statistics of the EST-SSR markers developed for *Carex angustisquama* in two related species.^a

Note: $A =$ number of alleles per locus; $H_e =$ expected heterozygosity; $H_o =$ observed heterozygosity; $N =$ number of individuals genotyped.

a Voucher and locality information are provided in Appendix 1.

† Significant possibility of presence of null alleles (99% confidence level) detected by MICRO-CHECKER (van Oosterhout et al., 2004).

*Significant departures (*P* < 0.01) from Hardy–Weinberg equilibrium after Bonferroni correction.

0.000 to 0.524, respectively (Table 2). For cross-species amplification, 20 and nine primer pairs were polymorphic in *C. doenitzii* and *C. podogyna*, respectively (Table 3). Significant departures (*P* < 0.01) from HWE were detected in three loci (Cang4398, Cang7240, and Cang48335) in *C. doenitzii*, although no significant departures were detected for any of the populations or loci in both *C. angustisquama* and *C. podogyna*. Analysis with MICRO-CHECKER (at the 99% confidence level) highlighted the existence of null alleles at some loci in *C. angustisquama* and *C. doenitzii* (Tables 2, 3).

EST-SSR markers were shown to have a disadvantage of less polymorphism than genomic SSR markers (Bouck and Vision, 2007; Ellis and Burke, 2007), and we found low genetic variation in all populations of *C. angustisquama*. This may be caused by presence of null alleles. However, substantial polymorphisms were detected in *C. doenitzii*, which is the most closely related species to *C. angustisquama* (K. Nagasawa, H. Setoguchi, M. Maki, H. Goto, K. Fukushima, Y. Isagi, S. Sakaguchi, Y. Suyama, and Y. Tsunamoto, unpublished data). Moreover, in *C. angustisquama*, although most loci were homozygous within populations, these loci were fixed with different alleles for each population, which likely reflects evolutionary history rather than null alleles. Thus, we conclude that low genetic variation of *C. angustisquama* is probably caused by the species' demographic history.

CONCLUSIONS

The 20 EST-SSR markers developed for *C. angustisquama* are less polymorphic within populations. However, in intraspecific and cross-species amplification, substantial polymorphisms were detected, indicating that low genetic variation in *C. angustisquama* results from the species' demographic history, and not from the markers' characteristics. Thus these markers will be useful for investigating intraspecific relationships among *C. angustisquama* populations occurring in disjunct solfatara fields. These markers are also useful in other *Carex* species, providing novel population genetic tools in this speciose genus.

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DATA ACCESSIBILITY

Cleaned reads from the cDNA library have been deposited to the DNA Data Bank of Japan (DDBJ; Bioproject PRJDB6849). Sequence information for the developed primers has been deposited to the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI); GenBank accession numbers are provided in Table 1.

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APPENDIX 1. Sample information for *Carex* species used in this study.

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Note: N = number of individuals; NA = voucher unavailable

a Vouchers are deposited at Kyoto University (KYO), Kyoto, Japan.

b Sample used for cDNA library construction.

c Sample used for initial PCR amplification trials.

d Samples used to check polymorphisms among populations.

e Samples used for detailed evaluation for polymorphisms within populations.

f Samples used for transferability test.

APPENDIX 2. Twelve monomorphic EST-SSR markers developed for *Carex angustisquama.*

