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## Asparagus somatic embryogenesis: detection of somaclonal variation using molecular and cytological analyses

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

of

#### **Doctor of Philosophy in Horticultural Biotechnology**

at

**Massey University** 

Wendy Hollingsworth

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**Dedicated to:** 

My parents - Rudolph and Shirley Hollingsworth

".....because you love me....."

In pursuit of excellence !!!!!!

#### Abstract

The embryogenic potential for six asparagus cultivars (Aspiring, Karapiro, Pacifica, Turoa, Syn4, and UC157), and the genetic stability of the somatic embryogenic system were investigated. Experiments 1 to 3 investigated the embryogenic potential of select cultivars, whereas experiments 4 to 7 analysed the genetic stability of embryogenic cells and plantlets. In experiment 8, morphological, anatomical, cytological and molecular techniques were used to characterise different types of calli identified during the study.

For all cultivars, embryogenic callus was promoted on Murashige and Skoog (MS) media containing 3% sucrose, 1% agar and one of the following plant growth regulator (PGR) concentrations: 0.3, 1, 3, and 10  $\mu$ M 2,4-D and 1.0  $\mu$ M NAA/ 0.1  $\mu$ M Kinetin. Plant genotype, PGR concentration and length of time in culture significantly influenced both the number of explants producing calli and the type of calli developing from explants.

The following sequence was found to be most effective in producing complete plantlets from embryogenic calli: callus induction (CI) on Murashige and Skoog (MS) media containing 3% sucrose, 1% agar and either of 1.0, 3.0 and 10  $\mu$ M 2,4-D, followed by transfer onto liquid embryo induction media (EI) containing MS + 6% sucrose and finally regeneration on regeneration media (Rg4) containing MS + 0.2 g/l glutamine + 3% sucrose + 1% agar. Treatment of 'Pacifica' globular embryos at -15 °C for 3 hr produced the highest percent converted plantlets (34 and 26% for 6-month-old embryogenic calli and 1 year-old embryogenic suspension cells respectively).

The number of *in vitro*-regenerated asparagus plantlets surviving acclimatisation was increased by acclimatising plantlets with minicrowns that contain 2-5 storage roots, and by removal of *in vitro*-formed cladophylls prior to acclimatisation.

Random amplified polymorphic DNA (RAPD) markers distinguished among asparagus cultivars, and revealed differences within seed-raised commercial cultivars. The RAPD

technique also detected changes in genomic DNA structure induced during culture of embryogenic cells. No change in genomic structure of plantlets regenerated from somatic embryos was detected.

Cytological analysis, using chromosome counts and DNA content analysis, were used to determine the genetic stability of embryogenic calli, suspension cells, and plantlets regenerated through somatic embryogenesis. The basic chromosome number of 20 (2n = 20) remained unchanged for all samples. The DNA content of explants and plantlets was similar, indicating that plantlets were diploid. The experiment was unable to detect somaclonal variation, revealed by altered ploidy level indicating that cytological analysis is not as sensitive as RAPD analysis for detecting somaclonal variation.

Extracellular protein profiles generated for embryogenic cells grown in suspension culture were influenced by PGR concentration and length of time in culture, and were therefore not suitable for monitoring somaclonal variation.

Overall, individual cultivars produced between 6 to 8 different calli types for all PGR treatments. Plant genotype and PGR treatment influenced the phenotype of calli developed for each cultivar. The results indicate that, for the six asparagus cultivars investigated in this study, nodular calli or nodular mucilaginous calli have more embryogenic potential than other calli types. These calli were also noted to produce embryogenic cells in suspension, and could, therefore, be used to successfully inoculate liquid cultures either for small or large-scale production of asparagus somatic embryos.

#### Keywords

Asparagus officinalis L., in vitro, plant growth regulator, somatic embryos, embryogenic calli, maturation, regeneration, plantlet acclimatisation, random amplified polymorphic DNA (RAPD), chromosome count, DNA content, extracellular protein

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### **List of Abbreviations**

μg	microgram (s)
μl	microlitre (s)
μm	micrometer (s)
μM	micromolar (s)
µmol	micromole (s)
2,4-D	2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid
2C	nuclear DNA content of unreplicated diploid chromosome
	complement
ABA	Abscisic acid
AFLP	Amplified fragment length polymorphism
ASP	Asparagus cultivar Aspiring
BA (BAP)	Benzylamino purine
CFLP	Cleavase fragment length polymorphism
Chl-	Chlorophyll deficient embryos
Chl+	Globular embryos containing chlorophyll
CI	Callus induction
CRD	Complete random design
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
EI	Embryo induction
g	grams
GA <sub>3</sub>	Gibberellic acid
hr	hour (s)
IAA	3-indole acetic acid
IEDC	Induced embryogenic determined cell
kD	kilodalton
kg	kilogram (s)
Kn	Kinetin
KP	Asparagus cultivar Karapiro
l or L	litres
LEA	Late embryogenesis protein
mg	milligram (s)
min	minute (s)
mm	millimetre (s)
MS	Murashige and Skoog
MW	molecular weight
NAA	α-Napthaleneacetic acid
°C	degrees Celsius
PC	Asparagus cultivar Pacifica
PCR	Polymerase chain reaction
PEDCs	Pre-embryogenic determined cell
PEG	Polyethylene glycol
PEMs	Proembryogenic masses
PGR	Plant growth regulator (s)
PI	Propidium iodide
Pur	Globular embryos with purple pigment
RAPD	Random amplified polymorphic DNA
	remean ampirios porjinorphilo Drart

RFLP	Restriction fragment length polymorphism
Rg	Regeneration
SEM	Standard error of mean
SN	Asparagus cultivar Syn4
SSCP	Single stranded conformation polymorphism
TU	Asparagus cultivar Turoa
UC	Asparagus cultivar UC157

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# **SECTION 1**

## ASPARAGUS PRODUCTION