Research Paper

**PgLOX6 encoding a lipoxygenase contributes to jasmonic acid biosynthesis and ginsenoside production in Panax ginseng**

Shadi Rahimi1,2, Yu-Jin Kim3,4,*, Johan Sukweenadhi1,2, Dabing Zhang4,5 and Deok-Chun Yang1,3,*

1 Graduate School of Biotechnology and Ginseng Bank, College of Life Sciences, Kyung Hee University, Yongin, 446–701, Republic of Korea
2 Department of Crop Science, Chungbuk National University, Cheongju 361–763, Korea
3 Department of Oriental Medicinal Biotechnology, College of Life Sciences, Kyung Hee University, Yongin, 446–701, Republic of Korea
4 State Key Laboratory of Hybrid Rice, Shanghai Jiao Tong University–University of Adelaide Joint Centre for Agriculture and Health, School of Life Sciences and Biotechnology, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai 200240, China
5 School of Agriculture, Food and Wine, University of Adelaide, Waite Campus, Urrbrae, South Australia 5064, Australia

* Correspondence: yujinkim@khu.ac.kr; dcyang@khu.ac.kr

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Abstract

Ginsenosides, the valuable pharmaceutical compounds in *Panax ginseng*, are triterpene saponins that occur mainly in ginseng plants. It was shown that *in vitro* treatment with the phytohormone jasmonic acid (JA) is able to increase ginsenoside production in ginseng plants. To understand the molecular link between JA biosynthesis and ginsenoside biosynthesis, we identified a JA biosynthetic 13-lipoxygenase gene (*PgLOX6*) in *P. ginseng* that promotes ginsenoside production. The expression of *PgLOX6* was high in vascular bundles, which corresponds with expression of ginsenoside biosynthetic genes. Consistent with the role of *PgLOX6* in synthesizing JA and promoting ginsenoside synthesis, transgenic plants overexpressing *PgLOX6* in Arabidopsis had increased amounts of JA and methyl jasmonate (MJ), increased expression of triterpene biosynthetic genes such as *squalene synthase* (*AtSS1*) and *squalene epoxidase* (*AtSE1*), and increased squalene content. Moreover, transgenic ginseng roots overexpressing *PgLOX6* had around 1.4-fold increased ginsenoside content and upregulation of ginsenoside biosynthesis-related genes including *PgSS1*, *PgSE1*, and *dammarenediol synthase* (*PgDDS*), which is similar to that of treatment with MJ. However, MJ treatment of transgenic ginseng significantly enhanced JA and MJ, associated with a 2.8-fold increase of ginsenoside content compared with the non-treated, non-transgenic control plant, which was 1.4 times higher than the MJ treatment effect on non-transgenic plants. These results demonstrate that *PgLOX6* is responsible for the biosynthesis of JA and promotion of the production of triterpenoid saponin through up-regulating the expression of ginsenoside biosynthetic genes. This work provides insight into the role of JA in biosynthesizing secondary metabolites and provides a molecular tool for increasing ginsenoside production.

**Key words:** Ginsenoside, jasmonic acid, lipoxygenase, *Panax ginseng*, squalene, secondary metabolite, triterpene, vascular bundles.

Introduction

*Panax* belongs to the family Araliaceae and contains at least 17 species (*Kim et al.*, 2015). Since ancient time, *Panax ginseng* (known as Korean or Asian ginseng) has been considered as a healing drug and health tonic in China, Japan, and other Asian countries (*Radad et al.*, 2006). The pharmacological effects of ginseng are correlated with ginsenosides, bioactive...