

# Developmental and phenotypic plasticity of *Arabidopsis thaliana* accessions across an ambient temperature range

Running title: *Arabidopsis* thermomorphogenesis

Carla Ibañez<sup>1,2†</sup>, Yvonne Poeschl<sup>3,4†</sup>, Tom Peterson<sup>2</sup>, Julia Bellstädt<sup>1,2</sup>, Kathrin Denk<sup>1,2</sup>,  
Andreas Gogol-Döring<sup>3,4,5</sup>, Marcel Quint<sup>1,2</sup> and Carolin Delker<sup>1,2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Institute of Agricultural and Nutritional Sciences, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Betty-Heimann-Str. 5, 06120 Halle (Saale), Germany

<sup>2</sup>Department of Molecular Signal Processing, Leibniz Institute of Plant Biochemistry, Weinberg 3, 06120 Halle (Saale), Germany

<sup>3</sup>Institute of Computer Science, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Von-Seckendorff-Platz 1, 06099 Halle (Saale), Germany

<sup>4</sup>German Centre for Integrative Biodiversity Research (iDiv) Halle-Jena-Leipzig, Deutscher Platz 5e, 04103 Leipzig, Germany

<sup>5</sup>Technische Hochschule Mittelhessen, Wiesenstr. 14, 35390 Gießen, Germany

cibanez@ipb-halle.de

yvonne.poeschl@informatik.uni-halle.de

peterson.tom@gmx.de

julia.bellstaedt@ipb-halle.de

kathrin.denk@landw.uni-halle.de

gogol-doering@idiv.de

marcel.quint@landw.uni-halle.de

<sup>†</sup> Co-first authors

\* Author for correspondence:

carolin.delker@landw.uni-halle.de

Tel.: +49 345 5522 629

date of submission: June 13<sup>th</sup> 2016

# of figures: 5, all color

word count: 5170

Supplementary data: 3 Tables, 15 Figures

## Highlight

Comprehensive profiling of temperature responses in *Arabidopsis* reveals differential genotype and temperature effects on morphometric phenotypes and on vegetative and reproductive development.

## Abstract

Global increase in ambient temperatures constitute a significant challenge to wild and cultivated plant species. Forward genetic analyses of isolated model temperature traits have resulted in the identification of several signaling and response components. However, a comprehensive knowledge about temperature sensitivity of different developmental stages and the contribution of natural variation therein is still scarce and fragmented at best. Here, we systematically analyze thermomorphogenesis throughout a complete life cycle in ten natural *Arabidopsis thaliana* accessions grown in four different temperatures ranging from 16 to 28 °C. We used Q<sub>10</sub>, GxE, phenotypic divergence and correlation analyses to assess temperature sensitivity and genotype effects of more than 30 morphometric and developmental traits representing five phenotype classes. We found that developmental timing throughout the vegetative phase was primarily sensitive to temperature with only limited genotype effects indicating primarily thermodynamic effects and/or conserved regulation. Phenotypes associated with reproduction and various quantitative growth traits, however, were often sensitive to both genotype and temperature effects. Genotype-specific temperature responses may be attractive targets for future forward genetic approaches and accession-specific thermomorphogenesis maps may aid the assessment of functional relevance of known and novel regulatory components.

## Introduction

Recurrent changes in ambient temperature provide plants with essential information about time of day and seasons. Yet, even small changes in mean ambient temperatures can profoundly affect plant growth and development which collectively can be summarized as thermomorphogenesis (Quint et al., 2016). In crops like rice, a season-specific increase in the mean minimum temperature of 1 °C results in a

~10 % reduction in grain yield (Peng et al., 2004) Likewise, up to 10 % of the yield  
 66 stagnation of wheat and barley in Europe over the past two decades can be  
 attributed to climate change (Moore and Lobell, 2015). Current projections indicate  
 68 that mean global air temperatures will increase up to 4.8 °C by the end of the century  
 (IPCC; Lobell and Gourdji, 2012). Global climate change will thus have significant  
 70 implications on biodiversity and future food security.

Naturally, elevated ambient temperatures also affect wild species in their natural  
 72 habitats. Long-term phenology studies of diverse plant populations have revealed an  
 advance in first and peak flowering and alterations in the total length of flowering  
 74 times (Fitter and Fitter, 2002; CaraDonna et al., 2014). Furthermore, estimates  
 project that temperature effects alone will account for the extinction of up to one-third  
 76 of all European plant species (Thuiller et al., 2005). As the impact of changes in  
 ambient temperature on crop plants and natural habitats emerge, a comprehensive  
 78 understanding of thermomorphogenesis throughout development becomes  
 paramount.

Our present knowledge on molecular responses to ambient temperature signaling  
 80 has significantly progressed by studies in *Arabidopsis thaliana*. Model  
 thermomorphogenesis phenotypes such as hypocotyl elongation (Gray et al., 1998),  
 hyponastic leaf movement (Zanten et al., 2009), and alterations in flowering time  
 82 have served in various genetic approaches to identify relevant molecular components  
 (reviewed in Quint et al., 2016). Extensive natural variation in these model traits has  
 84 served as a valuable tool in the identification of regulatory components  
 (Balasubramanian et al., 2006; Box et al., 2015; Raschke et al., 2015; Zhu et al.,  
 86 2015; Sanchez-Bermejo et al., 2015; Lutz et al., 2015; Sanchez-Bermejo and  
 Balasubramanian, 2016). So far, the main molecular players identified seem to  
 90 function in response to both temperature and light stimuli and form a highly  
 interconnected network of signaling elements. Prominent members of this network  
 92 are photoreceptors such as CRYPTOCHROME 1 (CRY1, (Ma et al., 2016),  
 PHYTOCHROME INTERACTING FACTOR 4 (PIF4, (Koini et al., 2009; Franklin et  
 94 al., 2011; Proveniers and van Zanten, 2013), the DE-ETIOLATED 1 -  
 CONSTITUTIVELY PHOTOMORPHOGENIC 1 – ELONGATED-HYPOCOTYL 5  
 96 (DET1-COP1-HY5) cascade (Toledo-Ortiz et al., 2014; Delker et al., 2014) and

EARLY FLOWERING 3 (ELF3) as a component of the circadian clock (Box et al.,  
98 2015; Raschke et al., 2015).

The investigation of signaling pathways that translate temperature stimuli into  
100 qualitative and quantitative developmental responses has so far largely been limited  
to either seedling development or flowering time. However, it seems likely that  
102 temperature responses in different phases of development require variations of a  
canonical signaling pathway. To enable the dissection of thermomorphogenic  
104 signaling at different developmental stages, it is vital to gather a comprehensive  
understanding of the diversity of temperature reactions throughout plant  
106 development.

According to basic principles of thermodynamics, temperature-induced changes in  
108 free energy will affect the rates of biochemical reactions. As these effects should  
occur generally, albeit to different extents, non-selective phenotypic responses can  
110 be expected to occur robustly and rather independently of genetic variation. Such  
traits may therefore be indicative of passive, thermodynamic effects on a multitude of  
112 processes. Alternatively, robust temperature responses may be due to  
thermodynamic effects on highly conserved signaling elements. These may be  
114 attractive targets for classic mutagenesis screens to identify the relevant regulatory  
components. In contrast, natural variation in thermomorphogenesis traits is likely the  
116 consequence of variability in one or several specific signaling or response  
components. It may be addressed by quantitative genetic approaches to identify  
118 regulators that contribute to variable temperature responses. Such genes would  
represent attractive candidates for targeted breeding approaches.

In this study we aim to (i) provide a map of developmental phenotypes that are  
120 sensitive to ambient temperature effects throughout a life cycle in the model  
organism *A. thaliana*, (ii) identify traits that are robustly affected by temperature with  
122 little variation among different accessions, and ask (iii) which traits are affected  
differentially by different genotypes and thus show natural variation in temperature  
124 responses.

To realize this, we performed a profiling of numerous developmental and  
126 morphological traits which can be sorted into five main categories: juvenile vegetative  
stage, adult vegetative stage, reproductive stage, morphometric parameters and  
128

yield-associated traits. Phenotypes were analyzed in a subset of ten *A. thaliana* accessions which were grown at 16, 20, 24, and 28 °C in climate-controlled environments. Knowing that even a small randomly selected set of *A. thaliana* accessions covers a wide spectrum of genetic diversity (McKhann et al., 2004), we chose to analyze commonly used lab accessions such as Col-0, Ler-1 and Ws-2, accessions known to react hypersensitively to elevated temperature (e.g., Rrs-7, Delker et al., 2010, 2014), and parental lines of available mapping populations such as Bay-0, Sha, and Cvi-0.

In addition to a meta-analysis of the phenotypic data, we provide accession-specific developmental reference maps of temperature responses that can serve as resources for future experimental approaches in the analysis of ambient temperature responses in *A. thaliana*.

## Materials and methods

### *Plant material and growth conditions*

Phenotypic parameters (Fig. 1, Supplementary Table S1) were assessed in *A. thaliana* accessions that were obtained from the Nottingham Arabidopsis Stock Centre (Scholl et al., 2000). Detailed information on stock numbers and geographic origin are listed in Supplementary Table S2. For seedling stage analyses, surface-sterilized seeds were stratified for 3 days in deionized water at 4 °C and subsequently placed on *A. thaliana* solution (ATS) nutrient medium (Lincoln et al., 1990). Seeds were germinated and cultivated in climate-controlled growth cabinets (Percival, AR66-L2) at constant temperatures of 16, 20, 24 or 28 °C under long day photoperiods (16h light/8h dark) and a fluence rate of 90  $\mu\text{mol}\cdot\text{m}^{-2}\cdot\text{sec}^{-1}$ . We refrained from including a vernalization step because the primary focus of this study was to record morphology and development in response to different constant ambient temperature conditions.

Germination rates were assessed daily and hypocotyl, root length, and petiole angles were measured in 7 days old seedlings with ImageJ (<http://imagej.nih.gov/ij/>) and Root Detection (<http://www.labutils.de/rd.html>).

All other analyses were performed on soil-grown plants cultivated in growth cabinets (Percival) at a fluence rate of 140  $\mu\text{mol}\cdot\text{m}^{-2}\cdot\text{sec}^{-1}$  and long day photoperiods (16h

light/8h dark). After imbibition for 3 days at 4 °C, seeds were grown in individual 5 x 5 cm pots, which were randomized twice a week to minimize position effects. Relative humidity of growth cabinets was maintained at 70 % and plants were watered by subirrigation. Plants were photographed daily for subsequent determination of phenotypic parameters using Image J (<http://imagej.nih.gov/ij/>). Determination of developmental progression largely followed the stages defined in Boyes et al. (2001). The vegetative growth period was divided in a juvenile phase (germination to initiation of the fifth rosette leave) and an adult vegetative stage (initiation of the sixth rosette leave to floral transition). At transition to the reproductive growth phase, the number of leaves was determined by manual counting in addition to recording the number of days after germination.

Spectrophotometric determination of chlorophyll content was performed as described in (Porra et al., 1989). Rates of germination and seedling establishment were determined from 100 individual seeds. Two different seed pools were generated by proportional merging of four different seed batches from individuals from one accession (1:1:1:1). Both sample pools were used in the actual experiments. Sterilized and stratified seeds were germinated on ATS medium without sucrose. Germination was determined in the first three days and seedling establishment data was recorded at day six. Morphological markers and time points of analysis are described in Supplementary Table S1. Data were recorded from three independent germination experiments of which one representative set is shown.

### *Data analysis*

Data visualization and statistical analyses of the data were performed using the software R (Team R Core, 2012). For visualization of the data set, box plots were generated using the *boxplot* function contained in the graphics package. For visualization of the statistical measures, heat maps were generated using the *heatmap.2* function contained in the gplots package, which is available on <http://cran.r-project.org>.

# *ANOVA for single factors*

ANOVAs for a single factor (either accession or temperature) were performed using the *anova* function contained in the R stats package. In case of temperature, the factor had four levels. In case of accession, the factor had ten levels. Tukey's 'Honest Significant Difference' test was used as post hoc test using the function *TukeyHSD* contained in the stats package.

## *GxE interaction*

Variation in phenotype expression was analyzed by 2-way ANOVA according to Nicotra et al. (2010) and Whitman and Agrawal (2009) to test each phenotype for a significant effect of genotype (*G*, accession) or environment (*E*, temperature), and a significant genotype by environment interaction (*GxE*). Reaction norms for each analysis are shown in Supplemental Fig. S12.

## *Q<sub>10</sub> temperature coefficient*

The *Q<sub>10</sub>* temperature coefficient was calculated according to Loveys et al. (2003) as

$$Q_{10} = \left( \frac{P_w}{P_c} \right)^{\frac{10}{T_w - T_c}}$$

where *P<sub>w</sub>* and *P<sub>c</sub>* are the trait values at the warmer and colder temperatures, respectively. *T<sub>w</sub>* and *T<sub>c</sub>* represent the corresponding temperatures in °C.

## *Index of phenotypic divergence (P<sub>st</sub>)*

Calculation of the index of phenotypic divergence (*P<sub>st</sub>*, Storz, 2002; Leinonen et al., 2006) as a measure to quantify variation in each phenotypic trait was calculated as previously described by Storz (2002) as

$$P_{st} = \frac{\sigma_b^2}{\sigma_b^2 + 2\sigma_w^2}$$

where  $\sigma_b^2$  is the variance between populations, and  $\sigma_w^2$  is the variance within populations. The ANOVA framework was used to partition the variances to get unbiased estimates for  $\sigma_b^2$  and  $\sigma_w^2$ .

Using the two factorial design, two types of indices of phenotypic variation of a trait/phenotype were considered separately. The index of phenotypic divergence for



genotypes (  $P_{st}^{gen}$  ) at a defined temperature level can be computed to measure the effect/impact of the genotype on the variation whereas the index of phenotypic divergence for temperatures (  $P_{st}^{temp}$  ) provides a measure for the effect of temperature on the observed variation for individual genotypes.

## Results

To assess phenotypic plasticity in a range of ambient temperatures, *A. thaliana* plants were cultivated in parallel throughout an entire life cycle at four different temperatures (16, 20, 24 and 28 °C) under otherwise similar growth conditions (see Materials and methods for further details). More than 30 morphological and developmental traits were recorded representing the following five phenotype classes: juvenile vegetative, adult vegetative, and reproductive stages as well as morphometric and yield-associated phenotypes (Fig. 1 and Supplementary Table S1).

### *Temperature responses in the A. thaliana reference accession Col-0*

In Col-0, almost all phenotypes analyzed in this study were affected by the cultivation in different ambient temperatures. Only seed weight and maximum height remained constant regardless of the growth temperature (Fig. 2A, Supplementary Fig. S1). Among the temperature-sensitive traits were several growth-associated phenotypes in the juvenile vegetative stage. Primary root length, hypocotyl and petiole elongation all increased with elevated temperatures which concurs with previously published data (Gray et al., 1998; Zanten et al., 2009). As another example, yield-related traits, such as the number of siliques per plant and the number of seeds per silique decreased with an increase in ambient temperature (Fig. 2A).

As reported previously, Col-0 plants showed a decrease in developmental time until flowering with increasing ambient temperatures (Balasubramanian et al., 2006). The transition from the vegetative to the reproductive phase at 28 °C occurred about 25 days earlier than at 16 °C (Fig. 2A). Similarly, the number of rosette leaves developed at time of bolting differed by 26 leaves between 28 °C and 16 °C (Fig. 2A).

The fact that only a very limited number of phenotypes was insensitive to cultivation in different temperatures clearly illustrates the fundamental impact of ambient temperature on plant growth and development.



### *Natural variation of temperature responses*

To assess whether the observed temperature responses in Col-0 are robust among *A. thaliana* accessions or which of the responses may be affected by natural variation, phenotypic profiling was performed in nine additional *A. thaliana* accessions parallel to the analysis in Col-0 (Supplementary Table S2, Supplementary Fig. S1-S10). Naturally, a panel of ten accessions does not comprehensively represent the world-wide gene pool of *A. thaliana*. However, it can be expected that even 10 randomly chosen natural accessions represent ~70 % of the allelic diversity in the *A. thaliana* gene pool (McKhann et al., 2004). Hence, the general assessment of thermo-responsive development in *A. thaliana* as well as the identification and discrimination between traits that generally seem to exhibit natural variation and those that may be genetically fixed within the gene pool is a realistic aim even with a set of 10 accessions.

To approximate and to compare temperature sensitivity of traits among different accessions, we calculated  $Q_{10}$  values for each individual trait and phenotype class for each analyzed genotype (Loveys et al., 2003). The  $Q_{10}$  quotient represents the factor by which a trait value changes if the ambient temperature increases by 10 °C. We calculated geometric means of all possible pairwise combinations of temperatures to minimize effects potentially caused by different response curves and used the  $\log_2 Q_{10}$  for visualization as to retain high resolution in the presentation of the data.

Similarly to the response observed in Col-0 (Fig. 2), all analyzed genotypes showed a temperature-induced acceleration of vegetative development as indicated by negative  $\log_2 Q_{10}$  values with low variability among accessions (Fig 3A + B, Supplementary Fig. S1-S10). Considerably higher variation was observed in  $\log_2 Q_{10}$  values of traits related to reproductive stages. As all accessions investigated were principally able to flower despite the lack of an extended cold period, none of them strictly required a vernalization treatment to transition to the reproductive phase. In contrast to the other accessions, Got-7 and Rrs-7, however, showed a significant delay in flowering time with increasing temperature (Fig. 3B). Got-7, for example, did not flower within the first 90 days of cultivation when grown in 24 or 28 °C. Thus, initiated leaf senescence at bolting stage prevented accurate determination of leaf number at the onset of flowering.

A direct comparison of leaf number and time of development further corroborates a sudden increase in variation at the transition to flowering (Supplementary Fig. S11). However, at 16 °C and 20 °C several accessions contribute to the overall variability in the graph, whereas at 24 °C and 28 °C, C24 and Rrs-7 are the main determinants of variation due to their massive number of leaves corresponding to an extension of the vegetative growth phase (Supplementary Fig. S11). Got-7 likely would increase this variation at 24 and 28 °C, but is missing in these plots due to the lack of flowering transition within 90 days. Here, the lack of vernalization may at least partially be a significant factor. However, since all accessions were able to flower at temperatures of 16 and 20 °C an essential requirement for vernalization can be excluded.

Taken together, juvenile and adult vegetative development remained highly conserved, whereas the reproductive stage and yield-associated traits showed higher between-accessions and within-accession variability, as indicated by the ranges/dimensions of the box plots in Fig. 3A. Here, high variation within a phenotype class indicates that temperature effects on individual traits within that class are highly variable. The strongest within-accession variation was observed for morphometric phenotypes such as hypocotyl and petiole elongation. In contrast, a high between-accessions variability is indicative for differential responses of different genotypes which was most prominent in reproductive stage traits.

The differential variances of  $\log_2 Q_{10}$  values among the two vegetative and the other phenotype classes indicated that genotype and environment effects may contribute differentially to phenotypic plasticity of different traits. We therefore next quantified the contribution of genotype and the contribution of temperature effects on the phenotypic plasticity. We first used a 2-factorial ANOVA to assess which phenotypes show significant changes that can be attributed to genotype (G, accession), environment (E, temperature), and/or GxE interaction. Subsequently, we used the variance partitioning approach (Storz, 2002; Leinonen et al., 2006; Gay et al., 2008; Whitlock, 2008) to dissect and quantify the extent of the individual genotype and temperature effects on the phenotypic variation in more detail.

### *Genotype, Environment, and GxE interaction analysis*

Each phenotypic trait was subjected to a 2-factorial ANOVA to address which of the analyzed factors (G, E, GxE) had significant effects on the phenotype. Reaction norm plots for each phenotype are shown in Supplementary Fig. S12. Each of the analyzed traits showed significant effects of genotype, environment (temperature) and GxE interaction (Supplementary Table S3). Surprisingly, this included all juvenile and adult vegetative stages despite their seemingly uniform impression of temperature responses given by the  $Q_{10}$  values (Fig. 3A + B).

Therefore, we made use of a previously described variance partitioning approach (Storz, 2002; Leinonen et al., 2006; Gay et al., 2008; Whitlock, 2008) to further dissect the individual extent of temperature and genotype effects on the observed variation. Specifically, we calculated the index of phenotypic divergence ( $P_{st}$ , Storz, 2002) at each analyzed temperature as a measure of genotype effects  $P_{st}^{gen}$  on the trait of interest. To complement this analysis, we also estimated the variation occurring across temperatures for each of the analyzed accessions  $P_{st}^{temp}$  (Supplemental Fig. S13), which enabled us to assess the temperature effect for the trait of interest for specific genotypes.

### *Genotype effects*

The 2-factorial ANOVA design of the GxE interaction analysis has shown that the genotype significantly affects the variation of the phenotypic traits. The variance partitioning index for genotype effects ( $P_{st}^{gen}$ ) provides a quantitative assessment of the extent of genotype contribution to variation at individual temperatures.

$P_{st}^{gen}$  values showed highly variable patterns among the different traits and phenotype classes. Regardless of the individual temperature, genotype effects on developmental timing throughout the vegetative phase was generally very low (Fig. 4A). This finding corroborates the impression gained from the analysis of  $Q_{10}$  values (Fig. 3). However, genotype effects on later stages of adult vegetative development seem to increase with higher temperatures which may be the significant effect observed in the ANOVA-based GxE interaction assessment.

Similarly, increasing genotype effects at higher temperatures were also observed for

reproductive traits. For those traits,  $P_{st}^{gen}$  values at 16°C were already considerably stronger than for vegetative growth stages and increased further with elevated temperatures. A contrasting pattern of decreasing genotype effects with an increase in temperatures was observed for total plant height indicating that here, natural variation in growth is higher at lower temperatures (Fig. 4A). Yield-associated phenotypes in general showed only low genotype effects on variation, indicating that under our experimental conditions variation in trait expression in this category is primarily affected by temperature.

Other phenotypes display rather differential or less gradual genotype effects among different temperatures. For example, the genotype impact on variation in hypocotyl and petiole length sharply increases from 24 to 28°C, indicating a certain buffering capacity or a threshold for natural variation (Fig. 4A).

In some cases, such as flowering time, a strong genotype effect seems to correlate also with a strong general temperature sensitivity as indicated by the high between-accessions variability in  $Q_{10}$  values (Fig. 4A and Fig. 3B). However, this does not seem to be a general principle. In case of root length, for example, low genotype effects were observed (Fig. 4C), even though the phenotype was highly sensitive to a change in ambient temperature (Fig. 3B).

### *Temperature effects*

We also used the variance partitioning approach to analyze the extent of the significant impact of temperature on phenotypic variation that was detected in the GxE interaction analysis (Supplementary Table S3). Therefore, we calculated the index for temperature effects ( $P_{st}^{temp}$ ) on the variation of phenotypic plasticity across all four temperatures within each of the ten accessions (Fig. 4B). While the  $P_{st}^{gen}$  provided information on the genotype effect and thus, the overall natural variation of trait expression at different temperatures, the  $P_{st}^{temp}$  provides information primarily on the temperature-induced variability for each accession individually.

The heatmap representation of temperature effects (Fig. 4B) partially complements the genotype effect results. For example, variation in vegetative development showed

strong temperature effects (high  $P_{st}^{temp}$ ), whereas  $P_{st}^{gen}$  values were generally low (Fig. 4B). Interestingly, temperature effects in juvenile vegetative stages seemed to be lower (for seedling establishment and 2 rosette leave stage) than in later vegetative stages with the exception of germination which showed strong temperature effects in most accessions.

Many traits exhibit highly differential temperature effects among accessions in the sense of one accession demonstrating a particularly strong temperature effect on a specific trait, while another accession may show low to no temperature effects (e.g. chlorophyll content in Ler-1 vs. Bay-0). This is particularly obvious for yield-related traits such as total number of seeds per plant and silique as well as silique length. Here, temperature effects on phenotype variation were low for Col-0, C24 and Bay-0, whereas considerably higher  $P_{st}^{temp}$  values were determined for the other accessions. Accessions which exhibit strong temperature effects on phenotypic variation may be interesting candidates for forward genetic approaches to identify the contributing molecular regulatory components.

### *Comparison of temperature and genotype effects*

As each phenotypic trait has been assigned a value for genotype and temperature effects, they can now be compared directly to assess which of the two has a stronger influence on the phenotypic plasticity. To allow a direct comparison of effects, we first computed mean values for  $P_{st}^{gen}$  across all temperatures and  $P_{st}^{temp}$  across all accessions.

A scatterplot of mean  $P_{st}^{gen}$  and  $P_{st}^{temp}$  values for each trait clearly visualizes the predominant temperature effect on changes in the timing of vegetative growth stages (Fig. 4C, Supplementary Fig. S13). In contrast, morphometric phenotypes displayed considerably higher degrees of genotype effects with similarly high temperature effects. This combination of factorial effects is most prominent for phenotypes associated with the transition to reproductive development. Phenotypes associated with late developmental stages were generally less affected by both factors with a general tendency of slightly higher genotype than temperature effects (Fig. 4C, Supplementary Fig. S13).

### *Temperature effects on yield and propagation*

Several yield-associated phenotypes such as total number of seeds, seed size and seed weight showed varying degrees of temperature sensitivity, likely caused by the partially distinct temperature effects on individual accessions (Fig.2B, Fig. 4B). A comparison of total seed numbers harvested from plants grown at 28 °C or 16 °C clearly illustrates that for most accessions higher temperatures cause a strong decrease in total yield (Fig. 5A, Supplementary Fig. S14). However, Got-7 showed an opposite trend even though the overall yield was severely reduced at both temperatures (Supplemental Fig. S14). This illustrates that the extension of the vegetative growth phase positively affects yield (it has to be noted that in the case of Got-7 this observation might be affected by the lack of vernalization). This is in line with common logic as a longer vegetative phase means also more biomass and assimilates that can be translocated into the seeds.

The observed differences in yield and some of the seed size parameters prompted us to inspect potential trans-generational effects of ambient growth temperatures on the following generation. We therefore tested the rates of seedling establishment of seeds collected from plants grown at 16 °C and 28 °C when cultivated again at the same or the respective other temperature. Seedling establishment (= fully opened cotyledons) after 6 days showed reproducible differences among the different samples. Seeds collected from plants grown at 16 °C showed almost no differences in seedling establishment when germinated at 16 or 28 °C (Fig. 5B). In both cases, seedling establishment rates were above 97 %. However, seeds collected from plants grown at 28 °C seem to show higher seedling establishment rates when grown under the same temperature (28 °C) compared to seeds germinated at 16 °C (Fig. 5B). This selective response may indicate trans-generational priming of seeds for development at higher temperatures, putatively involving epigenetic processes. While these effects were repeatedly observed for individual seed pools, extensive analysis of seeds collected from independently cultivated parental lines need to be analyzed to substantiate these observations.

### *Correlation of phenotypic temperature responses*

Finally, we analyzed putative correlations in temperature responses (28 vs. 16 °C) among different phenotypes to assess potential links among traits and evaluate whether individual phenotype responses are indicative of temperature responses in general. We used Pearson correlation coefficients for pairwise comparisons of trait ratios (28 vs. 16 °C) among all accessions. As to be expected from the varying degrees of genotype and temperature effects on different traits, correlations among phenotypes covered a wide range (Supplementary Fig. S15). Particularly high correlation values were observed among flowering time, hypocotyl length and seed production (Fig. 5C), indicating that traits with strong adaptive potential seem to be affected similarly. Moreover, these data reveal that model phenotypes that have been successfully used in classic forward genetic approaches (such as hypocotyl elongation) are also at least partially indicative for plant temperature responses in later stages of development.

### **Discussion**

Increased ambient temperatures have been shown to affect thermomorphogenesis for selected phenotypes. A systematic assessment of developmental and phenotypic plasticity across a complete life cycle has, to the best of our knowledge, been lacking so far. This study aims to provide such a solid base of temperature effects on plants by consecutive profiling of plant growth and development throughout a life cycle of *A. thaliana* grown in four different ambient temperatures. Furthermore, including several distinct *A. thaliana* accessions reduced potential genotype-specific biases in the data and allowed the analysis of temperature and genotype effects on the variation observed in different phenotypic traits.

All of the 34 analyzed phenotypes were significantly affected by different growth temperatures, natural variation, and GxE interactions illustrating the fundamental impact of ambient temperature on plant development (Supplementary Table 3, Supplementary Fig. S1-S10). The analysis of phenotypic divergence allowed the further dissection of phenotypes based on the extent of temperature and genotype effects. First, we identified phenotypes that were primarily affected by temperature and showed small genotype-induced variation. Second, we identified phenotypes that



additionally or even predominantly showed genotype effects on the observed phenotypic variation.

Developmental timing of juvenile and adult vegetative growth was significantly affected by genotype and temperature (Supplementary Table S3). Yet, temperature was the dominant factor in the observed variation (Fig. 4). Genotype effects, albeit significant, were limited and mostly showed similar accelerations by increasing temperatures in all analyzed genotypes. This observation may be indicative for extensive thermodynamic effects on (conserved) regulatory mechanisms involved in this process. Indeed, thermomorphogenic responses are often speculated to be primarily caused by broad or general effects of free energy changes on biochemical reactions (e.g. enzyme activities). The validity of the early proposed temperature coefficient ( $Q_{10}$ ) for plant development was demonstrated for germination rates and plant respiration (Hegarty, 1973; Atkin and Tjoelker, 2003). The strong temperature effect on the acceleration of developmental timing throughout the vegetative phase, which was only weakly affected by genotypes supports this theory (Fig. 4B). When adopting the terms of “passive” and “active” temperature effects as proposed by (Penfield and MacGregor, 2014), timing of vegetative development would represent a passive temperature response that might be caused by thermodynamic effects on metabolic rates and enzyme activities or on highly conserved signaling/response components.

On the other hand, phenotypes that show a high degree of genotype and temperature effects might rather be influenced by one or more specific genes that contribute to trait expression in a quantitative manner. As such, these phenotypes would represent “active” temperature effects (Penfield and MacGregor, 2014). Natural variation in thermomorphogenic responses could be caused by different polymorphisms of signaling or response genes ranging from alteration in gene sequence to expression level polymorphism (Delker and Quint, 2011). As they provide keys to altered temperature responses that could be utilized in specific breeding approaches, these genes would thus be of high interest.

Several phenotypes analyzed here have the potential to contribute to adaptation to environmental conditions. Particularly hypocotyl and petiole elongation as well as hyponastic leaf movement (increased petiole angles) have previously been shown to

improve leaf cooling by increased transpiration rates (Crawford et al., 2012; Bridge et al., 2013). As such, variation in any of these traits could significantly impact on photosynthesis rates and affect further growth and development. In fact, the ratio of hypocotyl elongation showed a high correlation with the ratio of flowering induction and yield (28 vs. 16 °C, Fig. 5C). This could indicate that early seedling development significantly affects the timing of further development. Alternatively, these processes might involve similar signaling elements. In fact, PIF4 and ELF3 are central regulators integrating multiple environmental stimuli and have been shown to be involved in both, temperature-induced hypocotyl elongation and the induction of flowering (Koini et al., 2009; Kumar et al., 2012; Box et al., 2015; Raschke et al., 2015).

In addition, natural allelic variation in the circadian clock components *ELF3* and in the regulation of *GIGANTEA* have recently been shown to directly affect PIF4-mediated hypocotyl elongation in response to elevated temperatures (de Montaigu et al., 2015; Box et al., 2015; Raschke et al., 2015). Therefore, PIF4 and PIF4-regulating components could be important targets of adaptation to growth in higher ambient temperatures.

The increasing number of identified genes and allelic variations that contribute to specific phenotypic changes in response to elevated ambient temperatures argue against a general explanation of morphological and developmental changes due to passive thermodynamic effects.

Exploiting natural genetic variation to identify genes that are involved in the regulation of temperature effects on specific traits can provide new leads for plant breeding. The work presented here may inspire new approaches for temperature research in non-reference accessions as some temperature responses were much more pronounced in accessions other than Col-0 (Fig. 3 + 4). Specific approaches will depend on the focus on either yield- or biomass-associated traits. In addition, initial evidence for trans-generational effects require further analysis to account for potential epigenetic transduction of temperature cues on growth and development.

In conclusion, our work provides a map that allows the dissection of thermomorphogenesis in phenotypic traits that are either robustly affected by temperature or traits that are differentially affected by temperature among different

accessions. While robust temperature-sensitive phenotypes might indeed be caused  
by thermodynamic acceleration of metabolism, natural genetic variation of  
temperature responses implicate the relevance of specific regulatory cascades that  
can be instrumental to future breeding approaches.

## Supplementary data

Table S1: List of recorded phenotypes and association to phenotype classes

Table S2: Identity and geographic origin of analyzed *A. thaliana* accessions

Table S3: GxE interaction

Fig. S1: Summary of Col-0 thermomorphogenesis

Fig. S2: Summary of Bay-0 thermomorphogenesis

Fig. S3: Summary of C24 thermomorphogenesis

Fig. S4: Summary of Cvi-0 thermomorphogenesis

Fig. S5: Summary of Got-7 thermomorphogenesis

Fig. S6: Summary of Ler-1 thermomorphogenesis

Fig. S7: Summary of No-0 thermomorphogenesis

Fig. S8: Summary of Rrs-7 thermomorphogenesis

Fig. S9: Summary of Sha thermomorphogenesis

Fig. S10: Summary of Ws-2 thermomorphogenesis

Fig. S11: Natural variation in developmental timing (leaves vs. days)

Fig. S12: Reaction norm plots of each phenotype for each of the analyzed genotypes

Fig. S13: Mean and standard deviation of  $P_{st}$  values.

Fig. S14: Temperature effect on yield (absolute values)

Fig. S15: Correlations among temperature response ratios (28 vs. 16 °C)

## Acknowledgements

This study was supported by the Leibniz association and a grant from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft to M.Q. (Qu 141/3-1). The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## References

**Atkin OK, Tjoelker MG.** 2003. Thermal acclimation and the dynamic response of plant respiration to temperature. *Trends in Plant Science* **8**, 343–351.

**Balasubramanian S, Sureshkumar S, Lempe J, Weigel D.** 2006. Potent Induction of *Arabidopsis thaliana* Flowering by Elevated Growth Temperature. *PLoS Genetics* **2**, e106.

**Box MS, Huang BE, Domijan M, et al.** 2015. ELF3 Controls Thermoresponsive Growth in *Arabidopsis*. *Current biology* **25**, 194–199.

**Boyes DC, Zayed AM, Ascenzi R, McCaskill AJ, Hoffman NE, Davis KR, Görlach J.** 2001. Growth stage-based phenotypic analysis of *Arabidopsis*: a model for high throughput functional genomics in plants. *The Plant Cell* **13**, 1499–1510.

**Bridge LJ, Franklin KA, Homer ME.** 2013. Impact of plant shoot architecture on leaf cooling: a coupled heat and mass transfer model. *Journal of The Royal Society Interface* **10**, 20130326.

**CaraDonna PJ, Iler AM, Inouye DW.** 2014. Shifts in flowering phenology reshape a subalpine plant community. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* **111**, 4916–4921.

**Crawford AJ, McLachlan DH, Hetherington AM, Franklin KA.** 2012. High temperature exposure increases plant cooling capacity. *Current Biology* **22**, R396–R397.

**de Montaigu A, Giakountis A, Rubin M, Tóth R, Cremer F, Sokolova V, Porri A, Reymond M, Weinig C, Coupland G.** 2015. Natural diversity in daily rhythms of gene expression contributes to phenotypic variation. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* **112**, 905–910.

**Delker C, Pöschl Y, Raschke A, Ullrich K, Ettingshausen S, Hauptmann V, Grosse I, Quint M.** 2010. Natural Variation of Transcriptional Auxin Response Networks in *Arabidopsis thaliana*. *The Plant Cell* **22**, 2184–2200.

**Delker C, Quint M.** 2011. Expression level polymorphisms: heritable traits shaping natural variation. *Trends in Plant Science* **16**, 481–488.

**Delker C, Sonntag L, James GV, et al.** 2014. The DET1-COP1-HY5 Pathway

Constitutes a Multipurpose Signaling Module Regulating Plant Photomorphogenesis and Thermomorphogenesis. *Cell Reports* **9**, 1983–1989.

**Fitter AH, Fitter RSR.** 2002. Rapid Changes in Flowering Time in British Plants. *Science* **296**, 1689–1691.

**Franklin KA, Lee SH, Patel D, et al.** 2011. Phytochrome-interacting factor 4 (PIF4) regulates auxin biosynthesis at high temperature. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* **108**, 20231–20235.

**Gay L, Neubauer G, Zagalska-Neubauer M, Pons J-M, Bell DA, Crochet P-A.** 2008. Speciation with gene flow in the large white-headed gulls: does selection counterbalance introgression? *Heredity* **102**, 133–146.

**Gray WM, Östin A, Sandberg G, Romano CP, Estelle M.** 1998. High temperature promotes auxin-mediated hypocotyl elongation in *Arabidopsis*. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* **95**, 7197–7202.

**Hegarty TW.** 1973. Temperature Coefficient (Q<sub>10</sub>), Seed Germination and Other Biological Processes. *Nature* **243**, 305–306.

**IPCC.** Climate change 2013: The physical science basis. Fifth assessment report. <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/>.

**Koini MA, Alvey L, Allen T, Tilley CA, Harberd NP, Whitelam GC, Franklin KA.** 2009. High Temperature-Mediated Adaptations in Plant Architecture Require the bHLH Transcription Factor PIF4. *Current Biology* **19**, 408–413.

**Kumar SV, Lucyshyn D, Jaeger KE, Alós E, Alvey E, Harberd NP, Wigge PA.** 2012. Transcription factor PIF4 controls the thermosensory activation of flowering. *Nature* **484**, 242–245.

**Leinonen T, Cano JM, Mäkinen H, Merilä J.** 2006. Contrasting patterns of body shape and neutral genetic divergence in marine and lake populations of threespine sticklebacks. *Journal of Evolutionary Biology* **19**, 1803–1812.

**Lincoln C, Britton J, Estelle M.** 1990. Growth and development of the *axr1* mutants of *Arabidopsis*. *The Plant Cell* **2**, 1071–1080.

**Lobell DB, Gourdji SM.** 2012. The Influence of Climate Change on Global Crop Productivity. *Plant Physiology* **160**, 1686–1697.

**Loveys BR, Atkinson LJ, Sherlock DJ, Roberts RL, Fitter AH, Atkin OK.** 2003. Thermal acclimation of leaf and root respiration: an investigation comparing inherently fast- and slow-growing plant species. *Global Change Biology* **9**, 895–910.

**Lutz U, Posé D, Pfeifer M, Gundlach H, Hagmann J, Wang C, Weigel D, Mayer KFX, Schmid M, Schwechheimer C.** 2015. Modulation of Ambient Temperature-Dependent Flowering in *Arabidopsis thaliana* by Natural Variation of FLOWERING LOCUS M. *PLoS Genetics* **11**, e1005588.

**Ma D, Li X, Guo Y, Chu J, Fang S, Yan C, Noel JP, Liu H.** 2016. Cryptochrome 1 interacts with PIF4 to regulate high temperature-mediated hypocotyl elongation in response to blue light. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* **113**, 224–229.

**McKhann HI, Camilleri C, Berard A, Bataillon T, David JL, Reboud X, Le Corre V, Caloustian C, Gut IG, Brunel D.** 2004. Nested core collections maximizing genetic diversity in *Arabidopsis thaliana*. *The Plant Journal* **38**, 193–202.

**Moore FC, Lobell DB.** 2015. The fingerprint of climate trends on European crop yields. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* **112**, 2670 - 2675.

**Nicotra AB, Atkin OK, Bonser SP, et al.** 2010. Plant phenotypic plasticity in a changing climate. *Trends in Plant Science* **15**, 684–692.

**Penfield S, MacGregor D.** 2014. Temperature sensing in plants. In: Franklin K and Wigge P, eds. *Temperature and Plant Development*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 1–18.

**Peng S, Huang J, Sheehy JE, Laza RC, Visperas RM, Zhong X, Centeno GS, Khush GS, Cassman KG.** 2004. Rice yields decline with higher night temperature from global warming. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* **101**, 9971–9975.

**Porra RJ, Thompson WA, Kriedemann PE.** 1989. Determination of accurate extinction coefficients and simultaneous equations for assaying chlorophylls a and b extracted with four different solvents: verification of the concentration of chlorophyll standards by atomic absorption spectroscopy. *Biochimica et Biophysica Acta (BBA) - Bioenergetics* **975**, 384–394.

**Proveniers MCG, van Zanten M.** 2013. High temperature acclimation through PIF4 signaling. *Trends in Plant Science* **18**, 59–64.

**Quint M, Delker C, Franklin KA, Wigge PA, Halliday KJ, van Zanten M.** 2016. Molecular and genetic control of plant thermomorphogenesis. *Nature Plants* **2**, 15190.

**Raschke A, Ibañez C, Ullrich KK, et al.** 2015. Natural Variants of ELF3 Affect Thermomorphogenesis by Transcriptionally Modulating PIF4-Dependent Auxin Responses. *BMC Plant Biology* **15**, 197.

**Sanchez-Bermejo E, Balasubramanian S.** 2016. Natural variation involving deletion alleles of FRIGIDA modulate temperature-sensitive flowering responses in *Arabidopsis thaliana*. *Plant, Cell & Environment* **39**, 1353–1365.

**Sanchez-Bermejo E, Zhu W, Tasset C, Eimer H, Sureshkumar S, Singh R, Sundaramoorthi V, Colling L, Balasubramanian S.** 2015. Genetic Architecture of Natural Variation in Thermal Responses of *Arabidopsis*. *Plant Physiology* **169**, 647–659.



**Scholl RL, May ST, Ware DH.** 2000. Seed and Molecular Resources for Arabidopsis. *Plant Physiology* **124**, 1477–1480.

**Storz JF.** 2002. Contrasting patterns of divergence in quantitative traits and neutral DNA markers: analysis of clinal variation. *Molecular Ecology* **11**, 2537–2551.

**Team R Core.** 2012. *R: A language and environment for statistical computing*. R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria, 2012. ISBN 3-900051-07-0.

**Thuiller W, Lavorel S, Araújo MB, Sykes MT, Prentice IC.** 2005. Climate change threats to plant diversity in Europe. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* **102**, 8245–8250.

**Toledo-Ortiz G, Johansson H, Lee KP, Bou-Torrent J, Stewart K, Steel G, Rodríguez-Concepción M, Halliday KJ.** 2014. The HY5-PIF Regulatory Module Coordinates Light and Temperature Control of Photosynthetic Gene Transcription. *PLoS Genetics* **10**, e1004416.

**Whitlock MC.** 2008. Evolutionary inference from QST. *Molecular Ecology* **17**, 1885–1896.

**Whitman D, Agrawal A.** 2009. What is Phenotypic Plasticity and Why is it Important? In: Whitman D and Ananthakrishnan TN, eds. *Phenotypic Plasticity of Insects*. Science Publishers, chapter1.

**Zanten M van, Voesenek LACJ, Peeters AJM, Millenaar FF.** 2009. Hormone- and Light-Mediated Regulation of Heat-Induced Differential Petiole Growth in Arabidopsis. *Plant Physiology* **151**, 1446–1458.

**Zhu W, Ausin I, Seleznev A, et al.** 2015. Natural Variation Identifies ICARUS1, a Universal Gene Required for Cell Proliferation and Growth at High Temperatures in Arabidopsis thaliana. *PLoS Genetics* **11**, e1005085.

## Figure legends

Fig. 1: Phenotypic profiling approach

Schematic representation of the accessions, cultivation temperatures (°C) and phenotype classes used in the phenotypic profiling approach. Numbers indicate individual traits listed in Supplementary Table S1 and are color-coded according to the corresponding phenotype class. Blue squares indicate phenotypes sorted into the 'morphometric phenotypes' class. Their position is indicative for the developmental stage at time of assessment.



Fig. 2: Col-0 growth and development in response to different ambient temperatures  
(A) Quantification of phenotypic traits recorded at different growth temperatures. Box plots show median and interquartile ranges (IQR), outliers ( $> 1.5$  times IQR) are shown as circles. Units for each trait are specified in Supplementary Table S1. Different letters denote statistical differences ( $P > 0.05$ ) among samples as assessed by one-factorial ANOVA and Tukey HSD. (B) Summary of temperature effects on developmental timing. Circles denote medians, bars denote IQRs ( $n > 15$ ). Times of phenotypic assessment for selected traits in (A) are indicated by asterisks.

Fig. 3 Natural variation in temperature sensitivity of phenotypic traits ( $Q_{10}$ )  
Mean  $\log_2 Q_{10}$  values for each accession (A) summarized in box plots for each phenotype class and (B) presented as a heatmap for all individual phenotypes. (A) Box plots show median and interquartile ranges (IQR), whiskers range from min. to max. values. (B) positive (increasing) and negative (decreasing)  $\log_2 Q_{10}$  values are shown in yellow and blue, respectively with a  $\log_2 Q_{10}$  cut-off value of 2 for better resolution. Missing data are denoted in light gray.

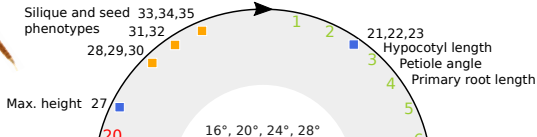
Fig. 4 Genotype and temperature effects on phenotypic variation  
Heat map representations of (A) genotype effects  $P_{st}^{gen}$  and (B) temperature effects  $P_{st}^{temp}$  on all recorded phenotypes. Missing data is shown in light gray. (C) Scatter plot of mean  $P_{st}^{gen}$  and  $P_{st}^{temp}$  values over all temperatures and accessions, respectively. Phenotypes are color-coded according to the phenotype class shown in Fig. 1 and described in Supplementary Table S1. A scatter plot including standard deviations is shown in Supplementary Fig. S13.

Fig. 5 Yield, transgenerational effects and phenotypic correlations  
(A) Comparison of yield among 28 and 16 °C. Box plots show relative seed numbers and SEM of 28 °C (vs. 16 °C mean). Values  $< 1$  indicate a reduction of seed numbers compared to the 16 °C mean. Different letters denote significant differences ( $P < 0.05$ ) as assessed by two-factorial ANOVA of absolute data shown in Supplementary Fig S14. (B) Germination rate of seeds collected from plants grown at 16 or 28 °C for an entire life cycle were analyzed for subsequent germination at 16 °C and 28 °C.

The experiment was performed three times with similar results of which one representative result is shown. (C) Scatter plot of selected phenotypes with strong temperature effects. Pearson correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) of trait values are shown in the upper right corners. See Supplementary Fig. S15 for complete set of pair-wise comparisons among traits.

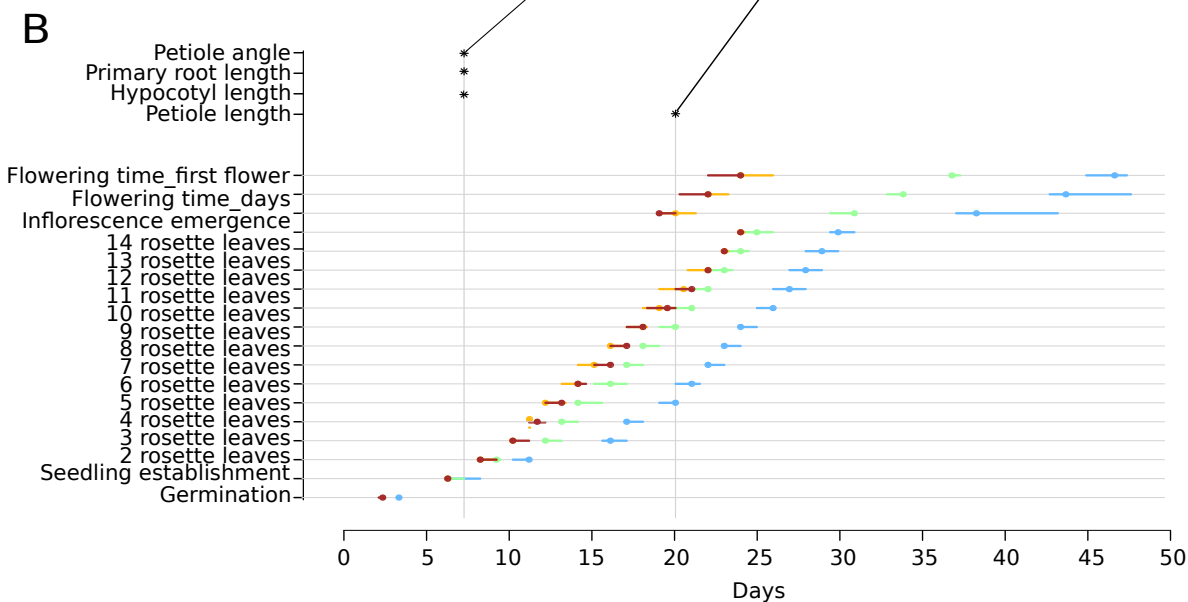
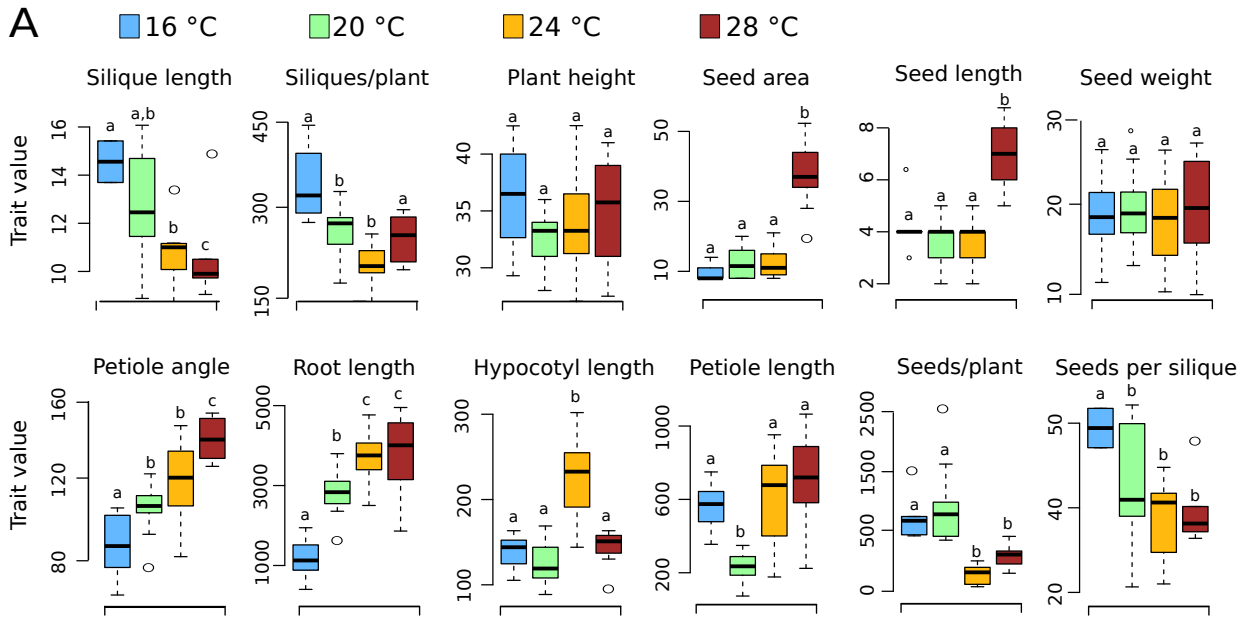
## Yield-associated phenotypes

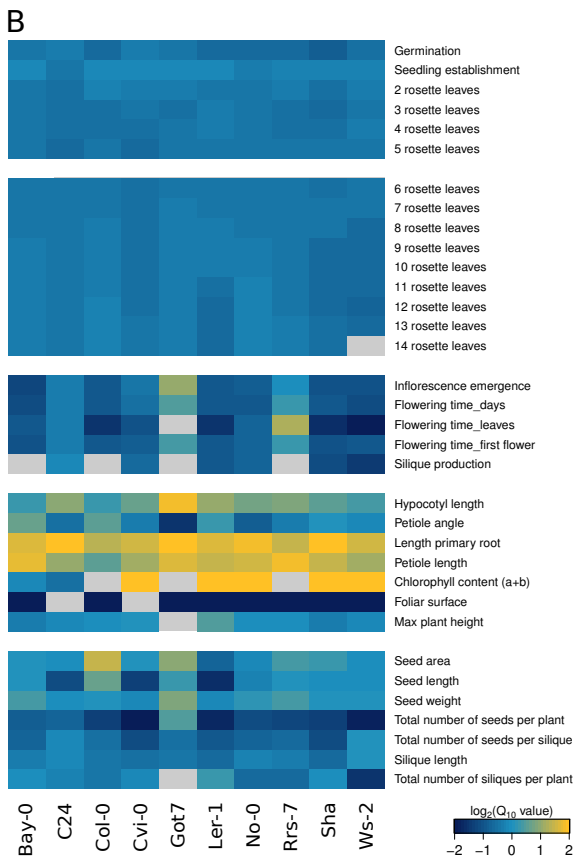
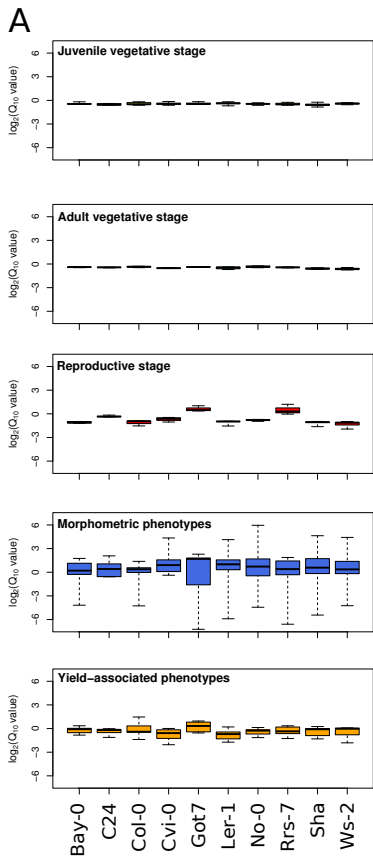
## Juvenile vegetative stage

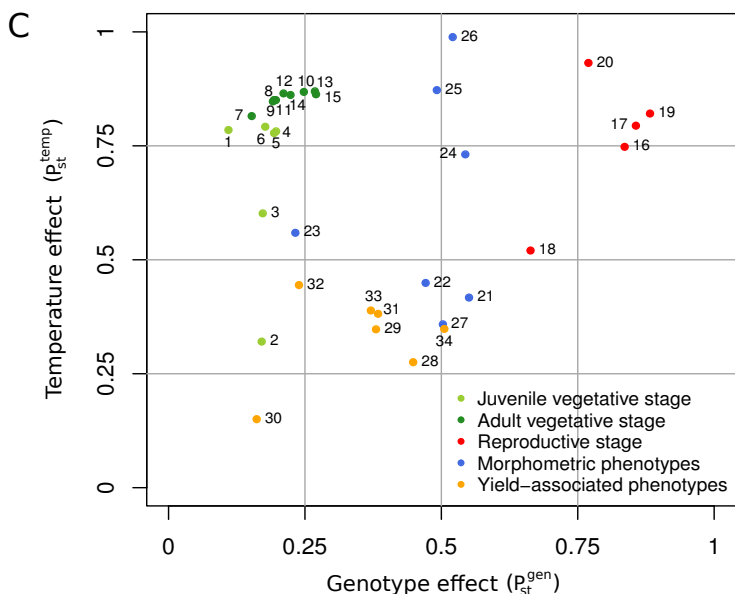
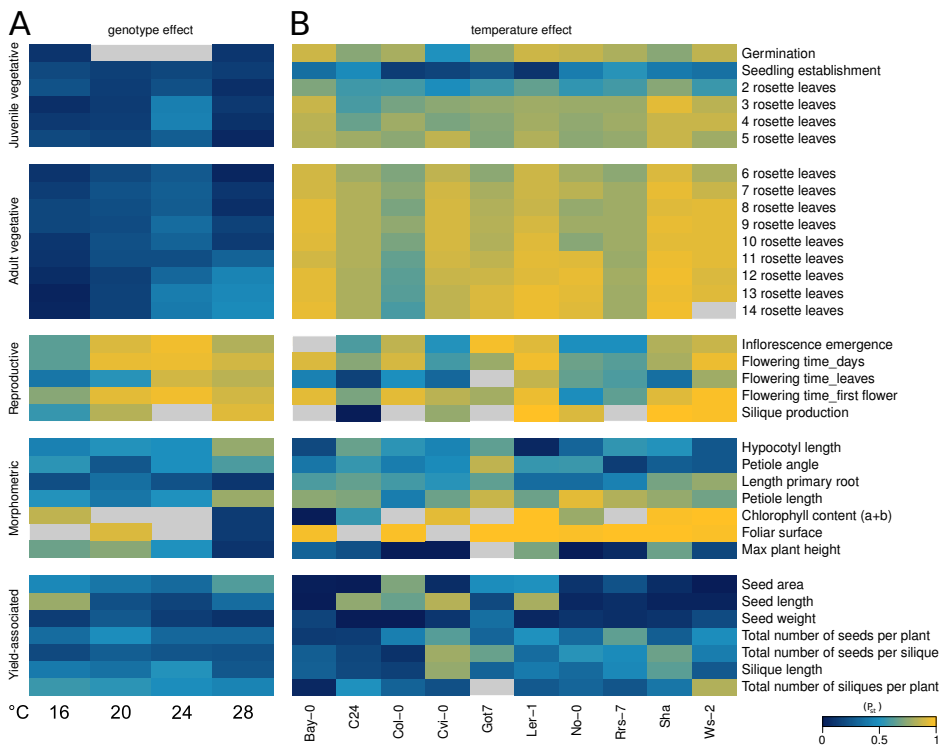


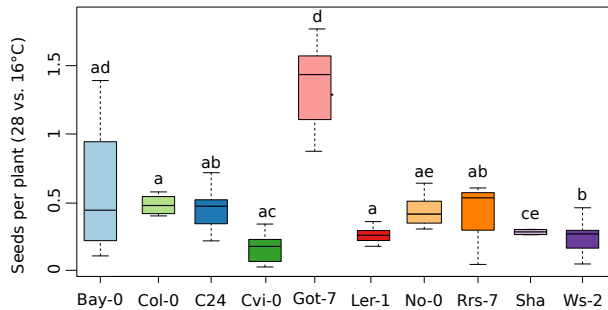
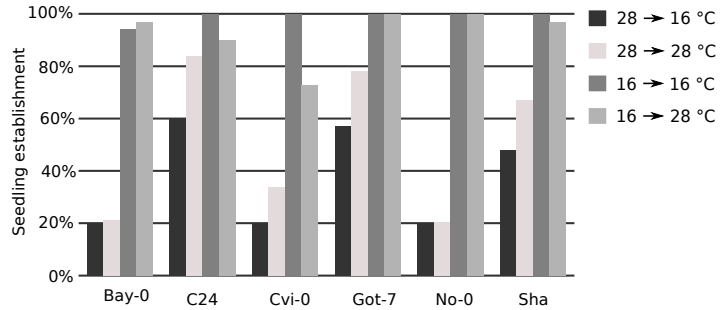
## Reproductive stage

## Adult vegetative stage







**A****B****C**