

Repeats Of Unusual Size in Plant Mitochondrial Genomes: Identification, Incidence and Evolution

Emily L. Wynn¹ and Alan C. Christensen²

School of Biological Sciences

University of Nebraska

Lincoln, Nebraska 68588-0666, USA

¹ ORCID 0000-0001-6902-9301

² ORCID 0000-0002-1125-3172

1 **Running title: Repeats in plant mitochondria**

2

3 **Key words: Plant mitochondrial genomes, Repeated sequence, Genome**

4 **rearrangement, Organelle genome evolution**

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Author for Correspondence: Alan C. Christensen, School of Biological Sciences,
University of Nebraska – Lincoln, Lincoln, NE, USA, 68588-0666, Phone 402-472-
0681, FAX 402-472-8722, email achristensen2@unl.edu

1 **Abstract**

2 Plant mitochondrial genomes have excessive size relative to coding capacity, a low
3 mutation rate in genes and a high rearrangement rate. They also have non-tandem
4 repeats in two size groups: a few large repeats which cause isomerization of the
5 genome by recombination, and numerous repeats longer than 50bp, often found in
6 exactly two copies per genome. It appears that repeats in the size range from several
7 hundred to a few thousand base pair are underrepresented. The repeats are not
8 well-conserved between species, and are infrequently annotated in mitochondrial
9 sequence assemblies. Because they are much larger than expected by chance we call
10 them Repeats Of Unusual Size (ROUS). The repeats consist of two functional classes,
11 those that are involved in genome isomerization through frequent crossing over,
12 and those for which crossovers are rare unless there are mutations in DNA repair
13 genes, or the rate of double-strand breakage is increased. We systematically
14 described and compared these repeats, which are important clues to mechanisms of
15 DNA maintenance in mitochondria. We developed a tool to find non-tandem repeats
16 and analyzed the complete mitochondrial sequences from 135 plant species. We
17 observed an interesting difference between taxa: the repeats are larger and more
18 frequent in the vascular plants. Analysis of closely related species also shows that
19 plant mitochondrial genomes evolve in dramatic bursts of breakage and rejoining,
20 complete with DNA sequence gain and loss, and the repeats are included in these
21 events. We suggest an adaptive explanation for the existence of the repeats and their
22 evolution.

1 **Introduction**

2 It has long been known that plant mitochondrial genomes are much larger than
3 those of animals (Ward, B. L. *et al.* 1981) and include significant amounts of non-
4 coding DNA (Schuster, W. and A. Brennicke 1994). These genomes also often have
5 repeats of several kb, leading to multiple isomeric forms of the genome (Folkerts, O.
6 and M. R. Hanson 1989; Klein, M. *et al.* 1994; Palmer, J. D. and L. A. Herbon 1988;
7 Palmer, J. D. and C. R. Shields 1984; Siculella, L. *et al.* 2001; Sloan, D. B. *et al.* 2010;
8 Stern, D. B. and J. D. Palmer 1986). Plant mitochondrial genomes have very low
9 mutation rates, but paradoxically have such high rearrangement rates that there is
10 virtually no conservation of synteny (Drouin, G. *et al.* 2008; Palmer, J. D. and L. A.
11 Herbon 1988; Richardson, A. O. *et al.* 2013; Wolfe, K. *et al.* 1987).

12

13 In addition to the large, frequently recombining repeats, there are often other
14 repeated sequences in the size range of 1kb and lower (Arrieta-Montiel, M. P. *et al.*
15 2009; Forner, J. *et al.* 2005). Ectopic recombination between these homeologous
16 repeats has been shown to increase when double-strand breakage is increased, or in
17 plants mutant for DNA maintenance genes (Abdelnoor, R. V. *et al.* 2003; Shedge, V. *et*
18 *al.* 2007; Wallet, C. *et al.* 2015). Understanding the repeats is critical to fully
19 understanding the mechanisms of DNA maintenance and evolution in plant
20 mitochondria, yet they have never been systematically identified and analyzed. In
21 addition to being infrequently and inconsistently annotated and described in
22 mitochondrial genome sequences, repeats are often described as long, short and
23 intermediate-length (Arrieta-Montiel, M. P. *et al.* 2009; Davila, J. I. *et al.* 2011; Miller-

1 Messmer, M. *et al.* 2012). The repeats are sometimes thought to be distributed into
2 two size classes (one of up to several hundred bp and another of several kb), but
3 this is derived from early studies of Arabidopsis and a few other species in which
4 repeats were described and annotated.

5

6 The most likely hypothesis that explains the peculiar characteristics of plant
7 mitochondrial genomes is that double-strand break repair (DSBR) is abundantly
8 used in plant mitochondria, perhaps to the exclusion of nucleotide excision and
9 mismatch repair pathways (Christensen, A. C. 2014; Christensen, A. C. 2018).

10 Double-strand break repair is very accurate when the repair is template-based,
11 accounting for the low mutation rate in genes, but the nonhomologous end-joining
12 or break-induced-replication pathways can account for the creation of repeats and
13 chimeric genes, expansions, and loss of synteny through rearrangements.

14

15 The lack of a coherent nomenclature and the inconsistent reporting and annotation
16 of repeated sequences leads to a number of questions. What is the best way to
17 discover and characterize them? Is the size distribution really bimodal in
18 angiosperms? Are there repeats in the mitochondria of other groups of green
19 plants? How do they differ between groups? And can they be followed through
20 evolutionary lineages like genes? Are the repeats themselves somehow adaptive, or
21 are they a side-effect of DSBR that is neutral or nearly neutral? The availability in
22 recent years of complete mitochondrial genome sequences across a wide variety of
23 taxa of green plants allows us to begin addressing these questions. We describe a

1 computational strategy for finding non-tandem repeats within genomes. Using this
2 tool we describe the phylogenetic distribution of repeats in both size classes,
3 examine their evolution in a family of closely related angiosperms, and propose an
4 hypothesis for the evolutionary significance of the repeats and the DSBR processes
5 that produce them.

6

7 **Materials and Methods**

8 **Sequence data and manipulation**

9 DNA sequences were downloaded as FASTA format files from GenBank
10 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/genbank/>). BLAST searches (Altschul, S. F. *et al.*
11 1990) were done using version 2.7.1 on a Linux-based machine. In addition to the
12 sequences shown in Table 1, mitochondrial genomes from several Brassica species
13 were used to compare close relatives. These sequences are as follows: *Brassica*
14 *carinata*; JF920287, *Brassica rapa*; JF920285, *Brassica oleracea fujiiwase*; AP012988,
15 *Brassica napus polima*; FR715249, *Brassica juncea*; JF920288. Alignments were done
16 using the clustalW implementation in the VectorNTI 11.5 software package
17 (ThermoFisher).

18

19 **Repeat Analysis**

20 Custom Python scripts are in Supplementary Materials. The script ROUSFinder.py
21 (Supplemental File S1) uses blastn to perform a pairwise ungapped comparison of a
22 sequence with itself, both strands separately, using a word size of 50, E value of
23 10,000, reward for a match +1, penalty for a mismatch -9, percent identity cutoff

1 99%. The script then concatenates the two output files and the full length identity is
2 deleted. Alignments are then sorted and compared to identify and remove duplicate
3 repeats, and an output file of the repeats in fasta format is created. This output file is
4 then used as a query with the genome as subject to locate every copy of that repeat,
5 create a table, and a table of binned sizes. The output can also be formatted for
6 GenBank annotation. MultipleRepeats.py (Supplemental File S2) automates running
7 ROUSFinder.py on every sequence within a directory.

8

9 **Data Availability**

10 The authors state that all data necessary for confirming the conclusions presented
11 in this article are represented fully within the article, including python scripts in
12 Supplemental Material and accession numbers of DNA sequences shown in Table 1.
13 Supplemental Material available at FigShare.

14

15 **Results**

16 **Repeats in plant mitochondrial genomes**

17 The existence of large non-tandem repeats in plant mitochondrial genomes is well
18 known by now, but they have not been systematically identified and analyzed. Prior
19 studies used variations of BLAST (Altschul, S. F. *et al.* 1990) to find repeats
20 (Alverson, A. J. *et al.* 2011a; Alverson, A. J. *et al.* 2010; Alverson, A. J. *et al.* 2011b; Liu,
21 Y. *et al.* 2014) or REPuter (Hecht, J. *et al.* 2011; Kurtz, S. and C. Schleiermacher
22 1999). Other available software packages specifically identify tandem repeats, or
23 repeats matching known repetitive sequences. Due to the ready availability of

1 BLAST and the flexibility of its use, and because most prior work used it, we wrote
2 and used a Python script called ROUSFinder.py that uses BLAST to identify non-
3 tandem repeats within mitochondrial genomes. The parameters for identification of
4 a sequence repeat were relatively stringent and included a blastn word size of 50, a
5 percent identify cutoff of 99% and match/mismatch scores of +1/-9. Any choice of
6 parameters will necessarily identify some false positives and false negatives. These
7 parameters were chosen in order to find duplicate copies of sequence that were
8 either recently created or recently corrected by gene conversion. A duplication
9 longer than 100 bases that has several mismatches in the center of the repeat unit
10 will be identified as two different repeats in this way. However, the mismatches in
11 the center are indicative of either two independent events producing the two parts
12 of the repeat, or mutation and drift that have escaped gene conversion. Because we
13 are concerned with the recombination behavior of the repeats we therefore choose
14 to call these two different repeats. To analyze and identify repeats in a single
15 sequence for further study or annotation would require additional manual curation
16 of the output.

17 The species we used represent a significant subset of the complete mitochondrial
18 genome sequences from green plants in GenBank and are shown in Table 1.
19 Sequences available on GenBank are not a random sample across taxa (food crops
20 are very over-represented, for example), so to reduce sampling bias somewhat we
21 used only one species per genus. Incomplete sequences or sequences with gaps are
22 not handled well by BLAST without further curation, so these were not used. Species
23 with multiple distinct chromosomes were also not used because of the additional

1 layer of complexity from inter- and intra-chromosomal repeats. The full output is in
2 Supplemental Table S1. The repeats seen in plant mitochondrial genomes are much
3 larger than those found in random sequence (data not shown), suggesting that they
4 arise from specific biological processes and are not stochastic. For this reason we
5 call them “Repeats Of Unusual Size” or ROUS (Christensen, A. C. 2018).

6

7 BLAST is an excellent tool for identification of repeated sequences. Our script
8 automates the task of identifying repeats in both direct and inverted orientations,
9 removes the full-length match, and provides the output in a convenient format that
10 can be used for annotation or in spreadsheets for further analysis.

11

12 **Phylogenetic clustering**

13 The distribution of repeat sizes forms distinct clusters between the phylogenetic
14 groups (see Figure 1). Because there are different numbers of species in each group,
15 and some species have an order of magnitude more total repeats than others, we
16 represent the data as the fraction of species within that group that have at least one
17 repeat within a given size range. The complete output is in Supplemental Table S1.

18 There are several complete mitochondrial genomes from chlorophytes and
19 bryophytes to compare to angiosperms. Within the chlorophytes, repeats of greater
20 than 200bp are rare. The exceptions are the prasinophytes (discussed below) and a
21 few interesting cases. *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii* has a 532 bp inverted repeat at
22 the termini of its linear chromosome. *Dunaliella salina*, *Kirchneriella aperta* and
23 *Polytoma uvella* have novel structures at a small number of loci that consist of

1 overlapping and nested repeats and palindromes (Smith, D. R. *et al.* 2010). The
2 function of these structures is unknown, but they are unusual and not common in
3 the chlorophytes. The prasinophyte group resembles the rest of the chlorophytes in
4 having no ROUS greater than 200bp but many of them include two copies of a single
5 large repeat between 9.5 and 14.4 kb. This is similar to many chloroplast genomes
6 and it is possible that this structure is involved in replication (Bendich, A. J. 2004).
7 The bryophytes generally resemble the chlorophytes; there are no ROUS greater
8 than 200bp.

9

10 In contrast to the chlorophytes and bryophytes, the Marchantiophyta (liverworts)
11 and Anthocerotophyta (hornworts) have ROUS greater than 200bp in size, but none
12 bigger than 867bp. Few taxa within the liverworts and hornworts have been
13 sequenced, so this group is underrepresented, but the members available to date are
14 consistent. The other lineages of streptophytic green algae (referred to as
15 charophytes in GenBank) resemble the chlorophytes albeit with a slightly higher
16 upper limit. In this group the largest repeat is found in *Chlorokybus atmophyticus*
17 and is 291bp.

18

19 The ferns and lycophytes are strikingly different from the previous groups.
20 Unfortunately the number of species sequenced is low. They have large numbers of
21 repeats and the repeat sizes range well above 200bp, up to 10 kb. Some members of
22 these groups, such as *Huperzia*, are similar to the bryophytes, but others are large
23 and have significant repeat content (Guo, W. *et al.* 2017). These groups are also very

1 underrepresented among available mitochondrial sequences (in part due to the
2 complexity caused by the repetitive nature of the genomes (Grewe, F. *et al.* 2009)),
3 but the patterns are noticeably different from the nonvascular plants described
4 above.

5
6 The angiosperms are represented very well in the sequence databases. Only one
7 member of this group does not have any ROUS above 200bp (*Medicago truncatula*).
8 A small number of angiosperms, scattered among plant families, lack repeats larger
9 than 1 kbp, and approximately half include repeats larger than 9 kbp. *Silene conica*, a
10 species with multiple large chromosomes not included in our dataset has a nearly
11 75kb sequence found in both chromosomes 11 and 12 (Sloan, D. B. *et al.* 2012).
12 Gymnosperms are also underrepresented, but appear to be similar to the other
13 vascular plants. Interestingly, the gymnosperms *Ginkgo biloba* and *Welwitschia*
14 *mirabilis* resemble angiosperms, while *Cycas taitungensis* is more similar to ferns.
15 The *C. taitungensis* mitochondrion has numerous ROUS, including many that are
16 tandemly repeated. Five percent of this genome consists of the mobile Bpu element,
17 a remarkable level of repetitiveness (Chaw, S. M. *et al.* 2008).

18
19 It is only in the vascular plants that the number and size of repeated sequences in
20 mitochondrial genomes has been expanded. The vascular plants generally only have
21 genomes a few times larger than the bryophytes, liverworts and hornworts, but the
22 repeats are expanded well beyond proportionality to size. In addition, random
23 sequences of comparable length do not have any repeats of the sizes discussed here

1 (data not shown). Some taxa, such as the Geraniaceae, *Plantago*, and *Silene* include
2 species with significantly expanded genomes (Park, S. *et al.* 2015; Parkinson, C. L. *et*
3 *al.* 2005; Sloan, D. B. *et al.* 2012). These species are outliers in the magnitude of the
4 genome sizes and number of repeats, but the underlying processes are likely to be
5 the same. The overall picture is that there was a significant change in mitochondrial
6 DNA maintenance mechanisms roughly coincident with the origin of the vascular
7 plants.

8

9 **Repeat sizes and frequency in angiosperms.**

10 Large repeats of several kilobases have been identified in several species and shown
11 to be recombinationally active, isomerizing angiosperm mitochondrial genomes
12 (Folkerts, O. and M. R. Hanson 1989; Klein, M. *et al.* 1994; Palmer, J. D. and L. A.
13 Herbon 1988; Palmer, J. D. and C. R. Shields 1984; Siculella, L. *et al.* 2001; Sloan, D. B.
14 2013; Stern, D. B. and J. D. Palmer 1986). A few species have been reported to lack
15 such structures (Palmer, J. D. 1988). The first comprehensive catalog of repeated
16 sequences shorter than 1000 base pairs was done in *Arabidopsis thaliana*, and they
17 were shown to be recombinationally active in some mutant backgrounds, but not
18 generally in wild type (Arrieta-Montiel, M. P. *et al.* 2009; Davila, J. I. *et al.* 2011;
19 Miller-Messmer, M. *et al.* 2012; Shedge, V. *et al.* 2007). Is the spectrum of repeat
20 sizes in *Arabidopsis*, and its bimodality, typical for angiosperms? Figure 2 illustrates
21 the presence of repeats in the size range of 50bp to over 10,000 bp in 58
22 angiosperms. The overall pattern is that there is a multimodal distribution of sizes
23 that is often bimodal. Gaps in the distribution are indicated in yellow in Figure 2,

1 however, the size cutoffs of the gap are somewhat variable. Most species have a
2 paucity of repeats between 600 and 10,000bp. Twelve of the 58 species have no
3 repeats larger than 600bp, leaving open the question of if they isomerize through
4 recombination or not. All of the other species have a large repeat of somewhere
5 between 800bp and 65kbp. The total length of repeats in a species does not
6 correlate with genome size (linear regression $r^2 = 0.08$, data not shown), additional
7 evidence that these are not produced by stochastic processes, and suggesting that
8 they occur and change faster than speciation does.

9

10 **Alignment of repeats within the Brassicales**

11 Understanding the evolution of the repeated sequences requires analysis of
12 homologous repeats in related species. Of the species with sequenced mitochondrial
13 genomes, the Brassicales order of plants has a number of such species. Within the
14 *Brassica* genus there are three diploid species: *Brassica rapa*, *Brassica nigra* and
15 *Brassica oleracea*, and three allotetraploid species (Cheng, F. *et al.* 2017). The diploid
16 nuclear genomes are called the A, B and C genomes, respectively. Based on both
17 nuclear and mitochondrial sequences it appears that *Brassica carinata* has the *B.*
18 *nigra* and *B. oleracea* nuclear genomes (BBCC) and the *B. nigra* mitochondrial
19 genome, while *Brassica juncea* has the *B. nigra* and *B. rapa* nuclear genomes (BBCC)
20 and the *B. rapa* mitochondrial genome. *Brassica napus* is of two subspecies, *polima*
21 and *napus*. Both have the *B. oleracea* and *B. rapa* nuclear genomes (AACC), but *B.*
22 *napus polima* appears to have the *B. rapa* mitochondrial genome and *B. napus napus*
23 has the *B. oleracea* mitochondrial genome (Chang, S. *et al.* 2011; Franzke, A. *et al.*

1 2011; Grewe, F. *et al.* 2014). Thus it appears that the hybridization event between *B.*
2 *oleracea* and *B. rapa* occurred at least twice, with each species being the maternal
3 parent. In the analysis below we use the *B. napus polima* mitochondrial genome. We
4 compared these Brassica species to *Raphanus sativus* and *Sinapis arvensis*. These
5 species are the closest relatives of the Brassicas with complete mitochondrial
6 genome sequences (Grewe, F. *et al.* 2014). Several of these species were mapped
7 prior to genomic sequencing, and repeated sequences and isomerization of the
8 genomes was observed (Palmer, J. D. 1988; Palmer, J. D. and L. A. Herbon 1986).

9
10 All eight of these species include one pair of long repeats, ranging in length from 1.9
11 to 9.7kb. However, these species fall into two groups. Each group has a large repeat
12 that is found as a single copy in the other group. The *B. nigra* group consists of *R.*
13 *sativus*, *S. arvensis*, *B. nigra* and *B. carinata*; the *B. rapa* group consists of *B. rapa*, *B.*
14 *oleracea*, *B. napus* and *B. juncea*. A tree showing the relationships of these species,
15 but without measures of distance, is shown in Figure 3. Part A shows the long repeat
16 and neighboring sequences from the *B. nigra* group and the homologous single-copy
17 sequences from the *B. rapa* group. Part B compares the long repeat from the *B. rapa*
18 group to the unique homologous region from the *B. nigra* group.

19
20 The number of changes in coding DNA between plant species is generally low,
21 making mutation rate estimates difficult, and these low rates may also be affected by
22 sequencing errors (Sloan, D. B. *et al.* 2018). Grewe *et al.* examined the synonymous
23 substitution rates in genes of Brassicales mitochondrial genomes (Grewe, F. *et al.*

1 2014) and found them to be very low, consistent with most land plants. However,
2 the presence of repeats allows mutations in non-coding DNA to be examined
3 qualitatively. The long repeats of *R. sativus*, *S. arvensis*, *B. nigra* and *B. carinata* differ
4 by large block substitutions and insertion/deletions (alignments are shown in
5 Supplemental Figure S1). Where two copies are present in a species there are very
6 few difference between copies, and they are generally near the boundaries of the
7 repeats. Although significant differences can arise during speciation events, both
8 copies of a repeat within a species remain identical. This supports the hypothesis
9 that copies of repeated DNA are maintained as identical sequence by frequent
10 recombination and gene conversion.

11

12 The long repeat of *B. nigra* and *B. carinata* underwent massive change in the lineage
13 leading to the other four Brassica species. The first 1.6kb and the last 1.7kb of the
14 repeat of *B. nigra* are conserved in the *B. rapa* group, and the *ccmB* gene still flanks
15 the repeat on one side. However, the last 1.7kb are inverted and separated from the
16 first 1.6kb by 3.3kb of a sequence of unknown origin. An additional difference is
17 seen in *B. oleracea* wherein *rps7* now flanks the repeat rather than *ccmB*. Other
18 major changes appear to have occurred in the time since *B. nigra* diverged from the
19 ancestor of *B. oleracea* and *B. rapa*; a comparison of the complete mitochondrial
20 genomes of *B. rapa* and *B. nigra* reveal at least 13 segments of DNA that have been
21 rearranged. No major rearrangements have occurred between *B. nigra* and *B.*
22 *carinata*, nor between *B. rapa*, *B. juncea* and *B. napus polima*. *B. oleracea* differs from
23 *B. rapa* by approximately six rearrangement events.

1

2 At the same time that the *B. nigra* long repeat was being dramatically altered in the
3 lineage leading to *B. rapa* and *B. oleracea*, a new long repeat appeared, which
4 includes the coding sequence of the *cox2* gene. This new long repeat is maintained
5 throughout this group of four species, and the flanking genes are also conserved
6 (alignments are shown in Supplemental Figure S2). The *cox2* gene is single copy in
7 *R. sativus*, *S. arvensis*, *B. nigra* and *B. carinata*, and is in a nearly syntenic
8 arrangement with neighboring genes.

9

10 **Discussion**

11 The availability of complete mitochondrial genome sequences from many taxa of
12 green plant allows us to compare the repeat structures across taxa. Although Large
13 Repeats and ROUS have been known for some time, their functions (if any) and
14 evolution are largely mysterious. It has been suggested that their existence and
15 maintenance are outgrowths of double-strand break repair events such as
16 nonhomologous end-joining (NHEJ), break-induced replication (BIR) and gene
17 conversion (Christensen, A. C. 2018). We describe here a Python script that uses
18 BLAST (Altschul, S. F. *et al.* 1990) to find non-tandem repeats within genomes, and
19 use it to analyze plant mitochondrial DNA. Comparison of repeats between closely
20 related species showed that repeat differences between species were largely due to
21 rearrangements and block substitutions or insertions, which could be due to NHEJ
22 and BIR, while the two copies of the repeat were identical within a species,
23 suggesting continuing repair by gene conversion or homologous recombination.

1

2 The phylogenetic distribution of complex repeated structures in mitochondria
3 appear to be common to the vascular plants and significantly different from the
4 more primitive non-vascular taxa. This suggests that the common ancestor of
5 lycophytes, ferns and seed plants adopted a new mechanism or strategy of
6 mitochondrial genome replication and repair that led to a proliferation of repeats
7 and increases in size. Complete sequences of more species, particularly in the
8 lycophytes and ferns, is necessary to add clarity but the ancestor of vascular plants
9 evidently made a transition to increased use of double-strand break repair in their
10 mitochondria, leading to the genomic gymnastics seen today in plants.

11

12 The analysis of repeats in the *Brassica* species suggests that mitochondrial genomes
13 can remain relatively static for long periods of time, but can also diverge very
14 rapidly resembling punctuated equilibrium (Gould, S. J. and N. Eldredge 1977) that
15 includes major rearrangements, sequence loss, and gain of sequences of unknown
16 origin. The mechanisms and frequency are unknown, but it suggests that a lineage
17 can experience a burst of genome recombination, breakage and rejoining,
18 dramatically rearranging and altering the mitochondrial genome, as if it had been
19 shattered and rebuilt. These events occur on a time scale that is faster than that of
20 speciation, leading to the high levels of divergence, and a lack of strong correlations
21 with the phylogeny.

22

1 Qualitative differences have been described between the repeats shorter and longer
2 than about 1kb (Arrieta-Montiel, M. P. *et al.* 2009; Klein, M. *et al.* 1994; Mower, J. P.
3 *et al.* 2012). The clustering within phylogenetic groups (Figure 2) and the trend
4 towards bimodality (Figure 3) suggest differences between the large repeats and
5 the smaller ones. We suggest that the term “large repeats” be reserved for those
6 ROUS that are involved in genome isomerization. A working definition could be
7 those ROUS larger than 1000bp, but functional analysis may reveal different size
8 cutoffs in different species. Functional analysis can be done by analyzing clones big
9 enough to include the repeats (Klein, M. *et al.* 1994), by long read sequencing
10 (Shearman, J. R. *et al.* 2016) or Southern blotting. Functional analysis of the large
11 repeats is an important step in understanding genome structure and evolution (Guo,
12 W. *et al.* 2016; Guo, W. *et al.* 2017; Sloan, D. B. 2013) and may reveal different size
13 cutoffs between species, which would reveal important differences in the replication
14 and repair machinery and dynamics.

15

16 We doubt that there is an adaptive advantage to large size and abundant
17 rearrangements in the genomes of plant mitochondria. We suggest that these are
18 merely correlated traits accompanying the adaptive advantage of a greatly
19 increased reliance on double-strand break repair. DNA repair is critically important
20 because damage is more likely in mitochondria than the nucleus due to the changes
21 in pH and redox potential, and the presence of reactive oxygen species. The strategy
22 followed by animals is to minimize mutational targets by reducing genome size
23 (Lynch, M. *et al.* 2006; Smith, D. R. 2016). However, with multiple copies of

1 mitochondrial DNA in each cell, an alternative trajectory is to increase the use of
2 template DNA in repair. The template-based accuracy of double-strand break repair
3 is accompanied by the creation of chimeras, rearrangements and duplications when
4 templates are not identical or cannot be found by the repair enzymes. Dramatic
5 expansions, rearrangements and losses, accompanied by low substitution rates in
6 genes is characteristic of flowering plant mitochondria. Selection on gene function
7 maintains the genes, while the expansions and rearrangements must be nearly
8 neutral. Once mitochondria evolved very efficient double-strand break repair, and a
9 mechanism for inducing double-strand breaks at the sites of many types of damage,
10 more primitive mechanisms, such as nucleotide excision repair can and have been
11 lost (Gualberto, J. M. *et al.* 2014; Gualberto, J. M. and K. J. Newton 2017) without
12 obvious evolutionary cost.

13

14 The adaptive value of increased and efficient double-strand break repair is probably
15 to avoid mutations in the essential genes of mitochondria, and is possible because of
16 the abundance of double-stranded template molecules in each cell. However this
17 mechanism of repair has an additional correlated trait. There are bacterial species,
18 such as *Deinococcus radiodurans*, that excel at double-strand break repair and can
19 rebuild even significantly fragmented genomes (Krisiko, A. and M. Radman 2013).
20 This species is notoriously resistant to ionizing radiation, but the adaptive value of
21 the trait is thought to be desiccation resistance, because dehydration also produces
22 double-strand breaks (Mattimore, V. and J. R. Battista 1996). Radiation resistant
23 bacteria in unrelated phylogenetic groups show more genome rearrangements and

1 loss of synteny than their radiation sensitive relatives (Repar, J. *et al.* 2017),
2 suggesting that abundant double-strand break repair is the cause of both the
3 resistance to significant double-strand breakage and the loss of synteny. An
4 interesting possibility is that very efficient double-strand break repair in plant
5 mitochondria also confers desiccation resistance as a correlated trait. Because
6 mitochondria are metabolically active immediately upon imbibition of seeds, DNA
7 damage must be repaired very efficiently and rapidly (Paszkiwicz, G. *et al.* 2017).
8 Efficient repair of desiccation-mediated damage in all cellular compartments is a
9 prerequisite to being able to produce seeds or spores for reproduction. It is possible
10 that the DNA repair strategy of plant mitochondria was one of several factors
11 (including desiccation resistance of the nuclear and plastid genomes, presumably by
12 distinct mechanisms) that are beneficial to vascular plants. The evidence of the
13 repeats suggests that the transition to double-strand break repair in mitochondria
14 occurred at approximately the same time as the transition to vascularity in plants,
15 and it may have been one of several traits that enabled their success. In addition,
16 once the life cycles of land plants included periods of desiccation in spores and
17 seeds, double-strand breakage would have increased, accompanied by increases in
18 rearrangements, expansions, and chimeras. The mechanisms of double-strand break
19 repair continue to be important for understanding the evolution of plant
20 mitochondrial genomes.

21

22 **Acknowledgements**

1 We are grateful to Jeff Mower and Brandi Sigmon for many helpful comments on the
2 manuscript, and Alex Kozik (UC Davis) for beta testing. ACC is grateful to Meric
3 Lieberman and Isabelle Henry (U.C. Davis) for introducing him to Python scripting.
4 ELW thanks Maya Khasin for support and encouragement. This work was supported
5 in part by a grant from the National Science Foundation (MCB-1413152).

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1 **Supplemental Materials**

2 Supplemental File S1. Python script ROUSFinder.py

3 Supplemental File S2. Python script MultipleRepeats.py

4 Supplemental Table S1. Repeat sizes of all species used in this study. Bins include
5 repeats larger than the size in the header, up to the next bin size.

6 Supplemental Figure S1. Alignment of the long repeats from *Raphanus sativus*,
7 *Sinapis arvensis*, *Brassica nigra* and *Brassica carinata* with the homologous
8 sequences from *Brassica rapa*, *Brassica juncea*, *Brassica napus polima* and *Brassica*
9 *oleracea*. Part a is interleaved, and part b is in sequential fasta format.

10 Supplemental Figure S2. Alignment of the long repeats from *Brassica rapa*, *Brassica*
11 *juncea*, *Brassica napus polima* and *Brassica oleracea*, with the homologous sequences
12 from *Raphanus sativus*, *Sinapis arvensis*, *Brassica nigra* and *Brassica carinata*. Part a
13 is interleaved, and part b is in sequential fasta format.

14

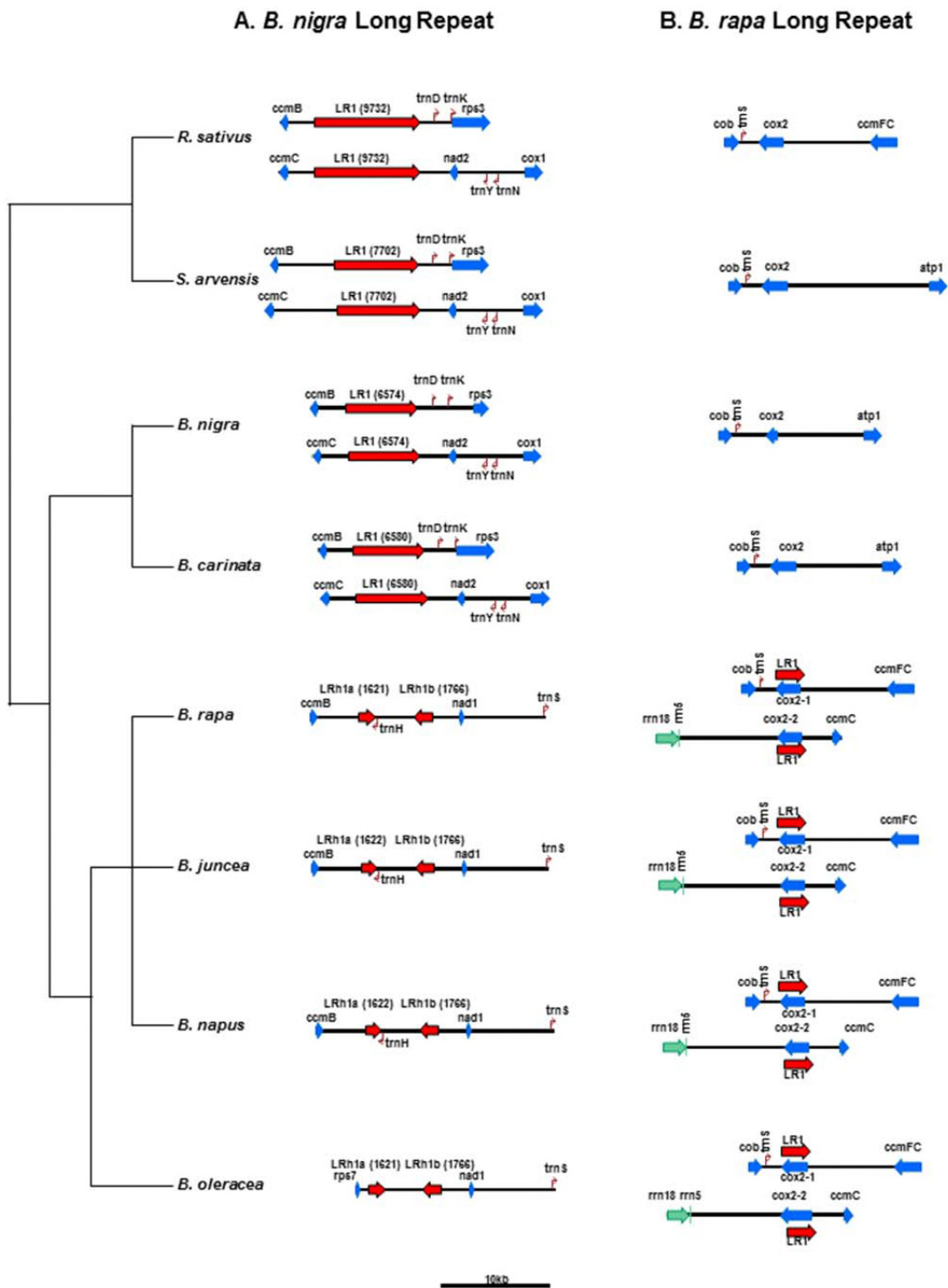
1 Figure 1. Size distributions of repeats in groups of species. The number of species
 2 represented in each group is shown. Headings indicate the bins of repeat sizes and
 3 the numbers indicate the fraction of species in that group that have at least one
 4 repeat of that size. Heat map color coding is blue for the highest value and yellow for
 5 zero.

6

	#sp	50-199	200-499	500-999	1000-2499	2500-4999	5000-7499	7500-9999	≥ 10000
Chlorophyta	26	0.88	0.19	0.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Prasinophytes	8	0.63	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.25
Anthocerotophyta	2	1.00	0.50	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Marchantiophyta	4	1.00	1.00	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Bryophytes	23	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Charophyta	8	0.88	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Fern	2	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00
Lycophyte	2	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.50	0.00
Gymnosperm	3	1.00	1.00	0.33	0.67	0.33	0.33	0.00	0.00
Angiosperm	58	1.00	0.97	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.36	0.26	0.41

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8

1 Figure 3. Long repeats in the Brassicales. A phylogenetic tree is shown at left,
2 derived from Grewe *et al* (Grewe, F. *et al.* 2014). In part A are the regions
3 surrounding the long repeat in *R. sativus*, *S. arvensis*, *B. nigra* and *B. carinata*. The
4 homologous sequence from *B. rapa*, *B. napus*, *B. juncea* and *B. oleracea* is also shown.
5 Part A shows the regions surrounding the long repeat in *B. rapa*, *B. napus*, *B. juncea*
6 and *B. oleracea*, and the homologous region in the prior four species. Branch lengths
7 in the tree are not to scale. The sequences are depicted at the scale shown in the
8 figure.
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1 Table 1. List of species and mitochondrial DNA accession numbers

Genus species	Group	Subgroup	Accession Number
<i>Auxenochlorella protothecoides</i>	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	KC843974.1
<i>Botryococcus braunii</i>	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	LT545992.1
<i>Bracteacoccus aerius</i>	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	KJ806265.1
<i>Chlamydomonas eustigma</i>	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	BEGY01000520.1
<i>Chlamydomonas reinhardtii</i>	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	EU306617.1
<i>Chlorella</i> sp. ArM0029B	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	KF554428.1
<i>Dunaliella salina</i> strain GN	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	KX641169.1
<i>Eudorina</i> sp.	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	KY442294.1
<i>Gloeotilopsis planctonica</i>	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	KX306823.1
<i>Gloeotilopsis sarcinoidea</i>	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	KX306822.1
<i>Hariotina</i> sp. MMOGRB0030F	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	KU145405.1
<i>Kirchneriella aperta</i>	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	NC_024759.1
<i>Lobosphaera incisa</i>	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	KP902678.1
<i>Microspora stagnorum</i>	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	KF060942.1
<i>Mychonastes homosphaera</i>	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	NC_024760.1
<i>Neochloris aquatica</i>	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	NC_024761.1
<i>Oltmannsiellopsis viridis</i>	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	DQ365900.1
<i>Ostreococcus tauri</i>	Chlorophytes	Prasinophytes	CR954200.2
<i>Ourococcus multispurus</i>	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	NC_024762.1
<i>Polytoma uvella</i>	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	NC_026572.1
<i>Prototheca wickerhamii</i>	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	U02970.1
<i>Pseudendoclonium akinetum</i>	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	AY359242.1
<i>Tetrademus obliquus</i>	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	CM007918.1
<i>Trebouxiophyceae</i> sp. MX-AZ01	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	JX315601.1
<i>Ulva flexuosa</i>	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	KX455878.1
<i>Ulva linza</i>	Chlorophytes	Chlorophyta	NC_029701.1
<i>Nephroselmis olivacea</i>	Chlorophytes	Nephroselmidophyceae	AF110138.1
<i>Bathycoccus prasinus</i>	Chlorophytes	Prasinophytes	NC_023273.1
<i>Cymbomonas tetramitiiformis</i>	Chlorophytes	Prasinophytes	KX013548.1
<i>Micromonas</i> sp. RCC299	Chlorophytes	Prasinophytes	FJ859351.1
<i>Monomastix</i> sp. OKE-1	Chlorophytes	Prasinophytes	KF060939.1
<i>Prasinoderma coloniale</i>	Chlorophytes	Prasinophytes	KF387569.1
<i>Pyrenococcus provasolii</i>	Chlorophytes	Prasinophytes	GQ497137.1
<i>Pyramimonas parkeae</i>	Chlorophytes	Prasinophytes	KX013547.1
<i>Megaceros aenigmaticus</i>	Anthocerotophyta	Anthocerotophyta	EU660574.1
<i>Phaeoceros laevis</i>	Anthocerotophyta	Anthocerotophyta	GQ376531.1
<i>Aneura pinguis</i>	Marchantiophyta	Marchantiophyta	KP728938.1
<i>Marchantia polymorpha</i>	Marchantiophyta	Marchantiophyta	NC_001660.1
<i>Pleurozia purpurea</i>	Marchantiophyta	Marchantiophyta	NC_013444.1
<i>Treubia lacunosa</i>	Marchantiophyta	Marchantiophyta	JF973315.1
<i>Anomodon attenuatus</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	JX402749.1
<i>Atrichum angustatum</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KC784956.1
<i>Bartramia pomiformis</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KC784955.1
<i>Brachythecium rivulare</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KR732319.1
<i>Bucklandiella orthotrichacea</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KP742835.1
<i>Buxbaumia aphylla</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KC784954.1
<i>Climacium americanum</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KC784950.1
<i>Codriophorus aciculare</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KP453983.1
<i>Funaria hygrometrica</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KC784959.1
<i>Hypnum imponens</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KC784951.1
<i>Nyholmiella gymnostoma</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KX578030.1
<i>Orthotrichum callistomum</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KX578029.1
<i>Oxystegus tenuirostris</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KT326816.1
<i>Physcomitrella patens</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	NC_007945.1
<i>Ptychomnion cygnisetum</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KC784949.1
<i>Sanionia uncinata</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KP984757.1

<i>Sphagnum palustre</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KC784957.1
<i>Stoneobryum bunyaense</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KX578031.1
<i>Syntrichia filaris</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KP984758.1
<i>Tetraphis pellucida</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KC784953.1
<i>Tetraplodon fuegianus</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KT373818.1
<i>Ulota phyllantha</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KX578033.1
<i>Zygodon viridissimus</i>	Bryophytes	Bryophytes	KX711975.1
<i>Chaetosphaeridium globosum</i>	Streptophyta	Charophyta	AF494279.1
<i>Chara vulgaris</i>	Streptophyta	Charophyta	AY267353.1
<i>Chlorokybus atmophyticus</i>	Streptophyta	Charophyta	NC_009630.1
<i>Closterium baillyanum</i>	Streptophyta	Charophyta	NC_022860.1
<i>Entransia fimbriata</i>	Streptophyta	Charophyta	KF060941.1
<i>Klebsormidium flaccidum</i>	Streptophyta	Charophyta	KP165386.1
<i>Nitella hyalina</i>	Streptophyta	Charophyta	JF810595.1
<i>Roya obtusa</i>	Streptophyta	Charophyta	KF060943.1
<i>Ophioglossum californicum</i>	Tracheophyta	Fern	NC_030900.1
<i>Psilotum nudum</i>	Tracheophyta	Fern	NC_030952.1
<i>Huperzia squarrosa</i>	Tracheophyta	Lycophyte	NC_017755.1
<i>Selaginella moellendorffii</i>	Tracheophyta	Lycophyte	GL377739.1
<i>Ginkgo biloba</i>	Tracheophyta	Gymnosperm	KM672373.1
<i>Welwitschia mirabilis</i>	Tracheophyta	Gymnosperm	NC_029130.1
<i>Cycas taitugensis</i>	Tracheophyta	Gymnosperm	AP009381.1
<i>Aegilops speltoides</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	AP013107.1
<i>Ajuga reptans</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KF709392.1
<i>Allium cepa</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KU318712.1
<i>Arabidopsis thaliana</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	BK010421
<i>Batis maritima</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KJ820684.1
<i>Beta vulgaris</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	BA000024.1
<i>Betula pendula</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	LT855379.1
<i>Boea hygrometrica</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	JN107812.1
<i>Brassica nigra</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KP030753.1
<i>Butomus umbellatus</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KC208619.1
<i>Cannabis sativa</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KU310670.1
<i>Capsicum annuum</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KJ865410.1
<i>Carica papaya</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	EU431224.1
<i>Castilleja paramensis</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KT959112.1
<i>Citrullus lanatus</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	GQ856147.1
<i>Cocos nucifera</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KX028885.1
<i>Corchorus capsularis</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KT894204.1
<i>Daucus carota subsp. sativus</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	JQ248574.1
<i>Diplostegium hartwegii</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KX063855.1
<i>Eruca vesicaria</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KF442616.1
<i>Geranium maderense</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	NC_027000.1
<i>Glycine max</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	JX463295.1
<i>Gossypium hirsutum</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	NC_027406.1
<i>Helianthus annuus</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	CM007908.1
<i>Heuchera parviflora</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KR559021.1
<i>Hibiscus cannabinus</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	MF163174.1
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	AP017300.1
<i>Hyoscyamus niger</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KM207685.1
<i>Ipomoea nil</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	AP017303.1
<i>Lagerstroemia indica</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KX641464.1
<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	NC_021152.1
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	JX999996.1
<i>Lotus japonicus</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	JN872551.2
<i>Medicago truncatula</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KT971339.1
<i>Milletia pinnata</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	JN872550.1
<i>Mimulus guttatus</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	JN098455.1
<i>Nicotiana tabacum</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	BA000042.1

<i>Oryza sativa Indica</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	NC_007886.1
<i>Phoenix dactylifera</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	JN375330.1
<i>Populus tremula</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KT337313.1
<i>Raphanus sativus</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	NC_018551.1
<i>Rhazya stricta</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KJ485850.1
<i>Ricinus communis</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	HQ874649.1
<i>Salix suchowensis</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KU056812.1
<i>Salvia miltiorrhiza</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KF177345.1
<i>Schrenkiella parvula</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KT988071.2
<i>Silene latifolia</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	HM562727.1
<i>Sinapis arvensis</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KM851044.1
<i>Sorghum bicolor</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	DQ984518.1
<i>Spinacia oleracea</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KY768855.1
<i>Tripsacum dactyloides</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	NC_008362.1
<i>Triticum aestivum</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	AP008982.1
<i>Vicia faba</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KC189947.1
<i>Vigna angularis</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	AP012599.1
<i>Viscum album</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	NC_029039.1
<i>Vitis vinifera complete</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	FM179380.1
<i>Zea mays strain NB</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	AY506529.1
<i>Ziziphus jujuba</i>	Tracheophyta	Angiosperm	KU187967.1

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