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4           **Genome-wide identification and expression specificity**  
5           **analysis of the DNA methyltransferase gene family under**  
6                           **adversity stresses in cotton**

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26 XY drafted the manuscript.

27

## 28 **Abstract**

29 DNA methylation is an important epigenetic mode of genomic DNA modification that is an  
30 important part of maintaining epigenetic content and regulating gene expression. DNA  
31 methyltransferases (MTases) are the key enzymes in the process of DNA methylation. Thus far,  
32 there has been no systematic analysis the DNA MTases found in cotton. In this study, the whole  
33 genome of cotton C5-Mtase coding genes was identified and analyzed using a bioinformatics  
34 method based on information from the cotton genome. In this study, 51 DNA MTase genes were  
35 identified, of which 8 belonged to *G. raimondii* (group D), 9 belonged to *G. arboreum* L. (group  
36 A), 16 belonged to *G. hirsutum* L. (group AD<sub>1</sub>) and 18 belonged to *G. barbadense* L. (group  
37 AD<sub>2</sub>). Systematic evolutionary analysis divided the 51 genes into four subfamilies, including 7  
38 MET homologous proteins, 25 CMT homologous proteins, 14 DRM homologous proteins and 5  
39 DNMT2 homologous proteins. Further studies showed that the DNA MTases in cotton were more  
40 phylogenetically conserved. The comparison of their protein domains showed that the C-terminal  
41 functional domain of the 51 proteins had six conserved motifs involved in methylation  
42 modification, indicating that the protein has a basic catalytic methylation function and the  
43 difference in the N-terminal regulatory domains of the 51 proteins divided the proteins into four  
44 classes, MET, CMT, DRM and DNMT2, in which DNMT2 lacks an N-terminal regulatory  
45 domain. Gene expression in cotton is not the same under different stress treatments. Different  
46 expression patterns of DNA MTases show the functional diversity of the cotton DNA  
47 methyltransferase gene family. VIGS silenced *Gossypium hirsutum* l. in the cotton seedling of  
48 DNMT2 family gene *GhDMT6*, after stress treatment the growth condition was better than the  
49 control. The distribution of DNA MTases varies among cotton species. Different DNA MTase  
50 family members have different genetic structures, and the expression level changes with different  
51 stresses, showing tissue specificity. Under salt and drought stress, *G. hirsutum* L. TM-1 increased  
52 the number of genes more than *G. raimondii* and *G. arboreum* L. *Shixiya* 1. The resistance of  
53 *Gossypium hirsutum* L. TM-1 to cold, drought and salt stress was increased after the plants were  
54 silenced with *GhDMT6* gene.

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## 56 Introduction

57 DNA methylation is the process of transferring a methyl (-CH<sub>3</sub>) group to a specific base of a  
58 DNA molecule and is catalyzed by DNA MTases, with S-adenosine methionine (SAM) as a  
59 methyl donor [1, 2]. DNA methylation widely occurs in the epigenetics of bacteria, plants, and  
60 animals and is involved in transposons [3-6], the suppression of gene silencing, genomic  
61 imprinting [7], X chromosome inactivation [8], cell differentiation [9], and embryo development  
62 [10]. However, DNA methylation is not immutable; under conditions of stress, the plant genome  
63 can overcome the limitation of genome instability through DNA methylation by rapid  
64 modification. This induces the expression of some genes associated with stress to maintain plant  
65 growth and development and evolutionary process [11-13]. Therefore, epigenetic modification  
66 precedes genomic evolution in response to adversity, and DNA methylation is considered the  
67 molecular response mechanism of plants in the face of adverse stress [5, 6, 11].

68 DNA methylation occurs mostly in CpGs at carbon 5 in cytosine (C5). It primarily occurs in  
69 symmetric sequence CGs but also occurs in CHG and CHH (H=A, C or T) sequences [14]. There  
70 are two DNA methylation methods in plants: maintenance methylation and denovo methylation  
71 [15]. Maintenance methylation refers to the methylation of a chain of double-stranded DNA  
72 molecules through semi-reserved replication, which is passed to the offspring by the parent  
73 methylation mode of another chain without methylation. Denovo methylation is a type of DNA  
74 methylation that occurs when different DNA MTases catalyze two strands of DNA without  
75 methylation [16]. C5-Mtases in plants fall into four categories, MTase (MET), chromomethylase  
76 (CMT), domains rearranged MTase (DRM), and Dnmt2 [17, 18]. MET is mainly used in  
77 methylation of the heterochromatin region of the CG site of the symmetric sequence, which is a  
78 very important part of the methyltransferase [19]. CMT is a specific type of DNA MTases that  
79 maintains CHG and CHH site methylation and, to a certain extent plays a role in stabilizing the  
80 heterochromatin state of the genome [20]. The function of DRM is to catalyze the methylation of  
81 cytosine and to maintain the cytosine methylation of non-CpG sites under the guidance of RNA  
82 [21]. DRM is homologous to the DNMT3 of animals [22, 23]. The proteins encoded by the plant  
83 Dnmt2 family are very similar to those of mice, bacteria and yeast C5-Mtases, but their  
84 mechanism of action in the process of C5 methylation has not been clarified [18].

85 Cytosine-5 DNA MTases were discovered in 1925 by Robert D. Coghill [24]. DNA  
86 methylation catalyzed by MTases was observed in bovine thymus in 1948 by Hotchkiss [25]. In  
87 1964, Gold and Hurwitz identified the first DNA MTases in *Escherichia coli* [26]. Besto identified  
88 the first plant DNA MTases, and MET was isolated from *Arabidopsis thaliana*. Its encoded  
89 protein, AtMET1, had high homology with the methylation enzyme Dnmt1 in mice [27]. The  
90 reaction mechanism of DNA methylation was first explained in prokaryotic organisms in 1993 by  
91 Finnegan [28]. DNA MTases were identified in *Arabidopsis thaliana*, rice, maize, solanaceae,  
92 Tobacco, Legumes and other plants [22, 29-32].

## 93 Materials and methods

## 94 **Identification of cotton DNA MTases family members**

95 The cotton genome information was downloaded from CottonGen  
96 (<https://www.cottongen.org/>), and the DNA-methylase structure domain (PF00145) was  
97 downloaded from the Pfam (<http://pfam.xfam.org/>) database (IPR001525). The  
98 DNA-methylase.hmm Hidden Markov model was constructed with DNA-methylase.hmm as the  
99 reference HMMER3.0 (<http://hmmmer.org/download.html>). The cotton genome database was  
100 queried to obtain the gene location and name of candidate protein family members containing  
101 DNA-methylase structure domains in cotton and to obtain GFF (general feature format) files from  
102 genome annotation files. Then, we obtained the gene position on the chromosome and used local  
103 BLAST 2.2.31+ to obtain the CDS sequence and protein sequence of the corresponding gene and  
104 obtained the whole sequence of the gene corresponding to the genome based on its position on the  
105 chromosome. The gene protein sequence is in the Smart software. The Pfam30.0 database is  
106 analyzed to ensure that each candidate gene contains a DNA-methylase structure domain.  
107 Subcellular location prediction was performed on cello. The ProtParam was obtained by protein  
108 analysis.

## 109 **Cotton DNA MTases gene structure, and evolutionarily** 110 **conserved protein domain analysis**

111 The CDS sequence of cotton DNA MTase genes and the corresponding genome-wide  
112 sequence in GSDS2.0 (<http://gsds.cbi.pku.edu.cn/>) were used to map the gene structure. The  
113 software Smart (<http://smart.embl-heidelberg.de/>) was used to determine the protein conserved  
114 structural domains.

## 115 **Phylogenetic analysis**

116 Cotton DNA-methylase (PF00145, IPR001525) was used as the key word in Phytozome  
117 v12.1 (<https://phytozome.jgi.doe.gov/pz/portal.html>) in the database rather than the homologous  
118 sequences of other species (file 2). Clustal W software was used to analyze the amino acid  
119 sequence alignment. MEGA7.0 software was used to construct the phylogenetic tree with the  
120 neighbor-joining method. The number of bootstraps was 1000.

## 121 **Expression pattern analysis of cotton DNA MTases under** 122 **stresses**

123 The phytotron sand culture cultivation method was used for *G. raimondii* and *G. arboreum* L.  
124 *Shixiya* 1 (16h light / 8h dark, day 28°C, night 25°C). *G. hirsutum* L. TM-1 processing salt  
125 (200mM) and PEG6000 (20%) were used at the three-leaf stage at 0h, 1h, 3h, 6h, and 12h. Total  
126 RNA was extracted from root, stem, and leaf samples and reverse transcribed into cDNA. The  
127 primers for the real-time fluorogenic quantitative PCR were designed with the NCBI-line primer  
128 design tool primer-BLAST (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/tools/primer-blast/>) (file 1). The RNA

129 was reverse transcribed to cDNA samples as a template for quantitative PCR experiments using  
130 *G. raimondii*, *G. arboreum* L. *Shixiya* 1, and *G. hirsutum* L. TM-1 to determine the gene  
131 expression of DNA MTases. The reaction conditions were 94°C for 30s; 40 cycles of 94°C  
132 denaturation for 5s, 50°C annealing for 34s, extension at 72°C for 10s, and a final extension for  
133 34s at 72°C.

## 134 **PYL156:VIGS silencing and Relative expression of** 135 **GhDMT6 gene**

136 The plasmid pYL156 was digested by EcoR and Xma I, and the digested product was detected  
137 by 1.2% agarose gel. The carrier segment was recycled. In-Fusion technique was used to insert the  
138 VIGS silencing fragment into the vector pYL156, and then transferred into DH5a. The positive  
139 clones were selected. PCR detection and sample sequencing were carried out to obtain the correct  
140 monoclonal. The vector pYL156:*GhDMT6* was successfully constructed.

141 TM-1(*Gossypium hirsutum* L.) was cultured in the artificial climate chamber by sand culture  
142 method. After about 5 days of seedling emergence, the preserved *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* were  
143 resuscitated and transferred to 60 ml LB liquid medium. The cultured *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*  
144 were shaken to OD<sub>600</sub>=1.5, centrifuged for 5 minutes with 5 000 rpm of bacterial liquid, and the  
145 supernatant was discarded. Using 45ml(10mM MES+10 mMgCl<sub>2</sub>+200 AS) resuspension to culture  
146 the thallus. In order to remove a small amount of antibiotics, repeat the operation, then stewing the  
147 thallus in 25°C for 4h.

148 After mixing the suspension solution containing pYL156:*GhDMT6*, pYL156 and pYL156:C  
149 LA1 with the suspension solution containing auxiliary carrier pYL192 isopyknic, the cotton was pre-  
150 pared to be infected. A little pore was stabbed at the back of cotyledon with a sterile needle, and  
151 suspension solution injected into the cotyledon spread over the whole cotyledon. After inoculation  
152 , the cotton seedlings were put back into the artificial climate chamber for dark culture at 23°C  
153 for 24h, and then cultured at 23°C  
154 with other conditions unchanged. When the albinism symptoms of the positive control seedlings  
155 were obvious, the cotton without infection and pYL156:*GhDMT6* were treated with 200 mM NaCl  
156 1, 4°C.

## 157 **Results**

### 158 **Genome-wide identification of cotton DNA MTases family** 159 **members**

160 A total of 51 DNA MTase members were identified from the whole genome of cotton. Group  
161 A had 8 DNA MTases and group D had 9 DNA MTases, which were named *GaDMT1- GaDMT8*  
162 and *GrDMT1- GrDMT9*, respectively, according to their sequence on the chromosomes. Similarly,  
163 16 DNA MTases were identified in the AD<sub>1</sub> group, named *GhDMT1- GhDMT16*, and 18 DNA

164 MTases were identified in the AD<sub>2</sub> group, named *GbDMT1- GbDMT18*. Most of the DNA  
165 MTases in the four cotton species are located on the chromosome. There are 161-1577 different  
166 amino acids, and most contain 300-800 amino acid residues. Because of the difference in the  
167 regional gene structure of the N-terminal, *GbDMT3* was up to 1577 amino acids, whereas  
168 *GbDMT17* contains only 161 amino acids. The structure of the gene is composed of 118-402  
169 different amino acids, and the theoretical pi (PI) ranges from 4.67 to 9.24. The predicted  
170 subcellular localization shows that most DNA MTases are located in the cytoplasm, but some are  
171 located in the outer membrane. *GbDMT13* is predicted to be periplasmic (table 1).

## 172 **Multi-sequence alignment and evolutionary analysis**

173 The DNA MTases in cotton have a C-terminal MTase catalytic region structure domain and a  
174 specific N-terminal domain, which is consistent with those of Arabidopsis, rice, maize,  
175 solanaceae, Tobacco, Legumes and other crops [22, 29-32]. To evaluate the evolution of DNA  
176 MTases in A, D, AD<sub>1</sub> and AD<sub>2</sub>, multiple sequence alignment was performed and a phylogenetic  
177 tree was constructed for 51 members of the DNA MTase family (Fig. 1A). The DNA MTases in  
178 cotton are divided into four subfamilies, namely, CMT, MET, DRM, and Dnmt2 [33]. Among  
179 these 51 DNA MTases, the CMT subfamily contains 25 members, with 4, 5, 9, and 7 members in  
180 the D, A, AD<sub>1</sub>, and AD<sub>2</sub> groups, respectively. There are three different types of CMTs: CMTa has  
181 9 members, with 1, 2, 3, and 3 members in the D, A, AD<sub>1</sub>, and AD<sub>2</sub> groups, respectively; CMTb  
182 has 6 members, with 1, 1, 2, and 2 members in the D, A, AD<sub>1</sub>, and AD<sub>2</sub> groups, respectively; and  
183 CMTc has 10 members, with 2, 2, 4, and 2 members in the D, A, AD<sub>1</sub>, and AD<sub>2</sub> groups,  
184 respectively. MET has 7 members in the D, A, AD<sub>1</sub>, and AD<sub>2</sub> groups. DRM has 14 members, with  
185 2, 2, 4, and 6 members in the D, A, AD<sub>1</sub>, and AD<sub>2</sub> groups, respectively. There are 5 members in  
186 Dnmt2, with 1, 1, 1, and 2 members in the D, A, AD<sub>1</sub>, and AD<sub>2</sub> groups, respectively.

## 187 **Genetic structure and protein domains of DNA MTases in** 188 **cotton**

189 Gene structure analysis is an important method in the study of genetic evolution. The number  
190 of introns and exons in DNA MTase family members in groups D, A, AD<sub>1</sub> and AD<sub>2</sub> were  
191 analyzed, and a DNA MTase gene structure for cotton was created (Fig. 1B). The results showed  
192 that the numbers of exons in different MTase genes in cotton were very different; the *GbDMT14*  
193 gene had the fewest exons, with only 2 exons, whereas *GrDMT8*, *GhDMT9*, *GhDMT11* and  
194 *GhDMT14* had 24 exons. The Dnmt2 family contains only 10 exons, the Met family contains  
195 10-12 exons, the CMTa family contains 5-22 exons, the CMTb family contains 19-24 exons, the  
196 CMTc family contains 9-24 exons, and the DRM family contains only 2-20 exons.

197 Motif analysis of the 51 DNA MTase proteins in cotton is shown in Fig. 2 The C-terminal  
198 catalytic region has 6 highly conserved motifs: motif x and motif i for Sam-binding sites; motif iv,  
199 motif vi, motif viii, and motif ix are the c5-Mtase functional catalytic sites, of which motif iv is  
200 the active site, motif vi is the target cytosine binding site. motif viii is the DNA neutralization  
201 region, and motif ix is the target sequence location identification area, which is consistent with the  
202 related literature [22]. The MTases of cotton DNA have different motif orders. The motif order of

203 the DRM family is X, VI, VIII, IX, I, and IV, and the order for the DNMT2 family is I, x, vi, viii,  
204 iv, and ix. There are three motif orders in CMT: The first is I, iv, vi, x, viii, and ix; the second is  
205 IX, i, iv, vi, x, and viii; and the third is VI, i, iv, x, viii, and ix.

## 206 **The relationship between the cotton DNA MTase family and** 207 **DNA MTases in other crops**

208 Phylogenetic trees are used to reveal the homologous and evolutionary relationships of DNA  
209 MTase families from different species. To show the evolutionary relationship between the  
210 members of the cotton DNA MTase family and those of Arabidopsis, cocoa, Medicago, rice,  
211 Chlamydomonas reinhardtii and other crops, the amino acid sequences of DNA MTase family  
212 members in several crops were compared (table 2) to the DNA of the MET, DRM, and CMT  
213 family members. In monocotyledons, the differentiation of DNA MTases was separate from the  
214 evolution of the dicotyledons, and the Dnmt2 family did not differentiate in the monocotyledons,  
215 which showed that the Dnmt2 family was highly conserved during evolution. The DNA MTases  
216 in cotton are closer to those in cocoa in various branches, suggesting that they have similar  
217 functions. (Note: The VvDMT8, VvDMT9, ZmDMT7, and StDMT5 sequences are shorter and  
218 cannot be used in the construction of the inter-species evolutionary tree.)

## 219 **Cotton gene expression analysis of different DNA MTases** 220 **under stress**

221 To study the expression patterns of DNA MTase genes of cotton in different tissues under  
222 salt and drought stress, the *G.raimondii*, *G. arboreum* L. *Shixiya* 1, and *G. hirsutum* L. TM-1 were  
223 developed to the trefoil stage, and real-time quantitative PCR was performed. The results showed  
224 that the three cotton species had different expression patterns under different stress conditions, and  
225 *G.raimondii*, *G. arboreum* L. *Shixiya* 1, and *G. hirsutum* L. TM-1 had obvious tissue differences  
226 when treated with PEG6000 and NaCl. *G. arboreum* L. *Shixiya* 1 expressed more genes in the cut  
227 root and stem under salt and drought stress. The leaf also had more genes, and with different  
228 treatments, the gene expression was also different. *GaDMT7* and *GaDMT4* decreased in the stem  
229 under salt treatment, and drought treatment also decreased their expression. *G.raimondii* also has  
230 organizational specificity. Gene expression was decreased in the rhizome and increased in the leaf.  
231 *GrDMT5* decreases in the stem but increases in the root performance under the salt treatment,  
232 showing that the same gene is expressed differently in various tissues. *GrDMT1* is decreased in  
233 leaves under drought treatment; however, salt treatment increases its expression. For *G. hirsutum*  
234 L. TM-1 and the above two cotton varieties, the genes are mainly distributed in the root of the  
235 rhizome. Additionally, the leaf has more genes. *GhDMT9* is expressed in the root under salt  
236 treatment. In the leaf, expression first increases and then decreases.

## 237 **Functional analysis of GhDMT6 gene in cotton**

238 After 6 days of natural drought, the plant phenotypes were significantly different. The plants

239 injected with pYL156 and those of the wild type were yellow and withered, seriously dehydrated,  
240 and the plants died. The plants injected with pYL156:*GhDMT6* had no true leaf blight and water  
241 loss (Fig. 5a). The relative expression level of *GhDMT6* gene in pYL156:*GhDMT6* infected  
242 cotton seedlings was detected. The figure shows that the expression level of *GhDMT6* gene in  
243 pYL156 infected cotton seedlings did not change under different stresses. Compared with the  
244 control, the transcription level of *GhDMT6* gene in pYL156 infected cotton seedlings decreased  
245 the most in the stem, followed by the leaves, and decreased the least in the roots (Fig. 5d).

246 About 15 days after VIGS infection, the positive control plants showed obvious bleaching  
247 and other indexes were normal. Using no infection and pYL156 infection of cotton seedlings as  
248 control, the silent plants were treated with cold(4°C), drought (natural drought), salt(200 mM  
249 NaCl). After 36h of cold treatment, the phenotypic differences were obvious (Fig. 5b). The plants  
250 injected with pYL156 and wild-type true leaf wilted and curly, and the plants injected with  
251 pYL156:*GhDMT6* gene grew normally without phenotypic changes. The expression level of  
252 *GhDMT6* gene in pYL156 infected cotton did not change under different stresses, and the  
253 transcriptional level of *GhDMT6* gene in pYL156:*GhDMT6* infected cotton was significantly  
254 reduced compared with the control. Leaf blade decreased the most, followed by root, stem the  
255 least (Fig. 5e).

256 The phenotype of cotton seedlings was significantly different after 3 days, which were treated  
257 with 200mM NaCl. The seedlings of pYL156 and wild-type cotyledons were exfoliated, the leaf  
258 edges of true leaves were severely coked, and the plants with pYL156:*GhDMT6* gene were not  
259 withered and dehydrated (Fig. 5c). The results showed that the expression of *GhDMT6* gene in  
260 cotton seedlings infected with pYL156:*GhDMT6* did not change under salt stress. The  
261 transcription level of *GhDMT6* gene in cotton seedlings infected with pYL156:*GhDMT6*  
262 decreased most in stems, followed by roots, and decreased least in leaves (Fig. 5f).

## 263 Discussion

264 With the completion of the genome project of cotton [34], the identification and study of  
265 gene family classifications, evolutionary features and function prediction at the whole-genome  
266 level is a hotspot of cotton functional gene research. Cotton is one of the pioneer plants in  
267 saline-alkali lands. DNA MTases are key enzymes in DNA methylation, which is closely related  
268 to resistance to stress. Therefore, the study of genome-wide DNA MTases is of great significance  
269 to cotton breeding, the identification of functional genes and the mechanism of cotton resistance.

270 DNA methylation affects many biological processes, including disease-associated syndromes  
271 in humans [35]. Natural variations of epialleles play a role in plant evolution [36], morphological  
272 diversity in plants [37], and the selection and breeding of agronomic traits in crops [4, 38].  
273 Increasing evidence from recent studies suggests that DNA methylation plays an important role in  
274 regulating the stress response/adaptation in plants. DNA methylation may be an adaptation  
275 mechanism of plants in response to adversity. Osmotic stress causes DNA methylation in the  
276 chromatin region of tobacco (*Nicotiana L.*) and tissue culture cells [39]. Salt stress can inhibit



277 *zmPP2C* expression and induce *zmGST* expression in maize (*Zea mays*) seedlings [40]. Heavy  
278 metals, such as Cd and Pb, can increase the methylation level in the genomes of rice, wheat,  
279 rapeseed and other crops and produce toxicity [41].

280 This study, for the first time, systematically analyzed the DNA MTase gene family in the  
281 cotton genome, and 51 DNA MTases were obtained, divided into four Asian families. There are 7  
282 members of the Met family with a region rich in glutamic acid and aspartate, similar to those of  
283 *Arabidopsis thaliana*. Although the amino acid residues in this region are important for the  
284 function of DNA MTases, the specific effect has not been determined [42]. The CMT family has  
285 25 members, and the main sites are CHG sequences. They have particularly high abnormal  
286 chromatin content, possibly because CHG methylation maintains the plant genome regional  
287 chromatin state [43]. The DRM family, which has 14 members, contains a ubiquitin-related  
288 structural domain (UBA) and an interface between seat proteins, which introduces DRM to  
289 specific DNA regions to complete methylation of the region. The DNMT2 family has 5 members  
290 and is highly homologous in animals, plants, and prokaryotic organisms. This high homology may  
291 be due to the evolution of prokaryotic organisms. Its functional substrate is RNA, and the main  
292 target is tRNA<sup>Asp</sup>. DNMT2 family members can specifically methylate the tRNA<sup>Asp</sup> of the reverse  
293 codon ring 38C [44]. There were 8 members in group A, 9 in group A, 16 in the AD<sub>1</sub> group and 18  
294 in the AD<sub>2</sub> group. The results showed that there were more DNA MTase genes in the AD genome  
295 than in the A genome or D genome, but the number of genes in the AD genome was not equal to  
296 the sum of genes in genome A and genome D. The number of DNA MTases in the AD<sub>1</sub> genome is  
297 less than the sum of genomes A and D, which may be associated with genetic loss during the  
298 evolution of the twofold ancestral AD<sub>1</sub> genome. The number of DNA MTases in the AD<sub>2</sub> genome  
299 is greater than the sum of genomes A and D, which may be related to gene duplication during the  
300 evolution of the twofold ancestral AD<sub>1</sub> genome. However, the quantitative difference between the  
301 DA<sub>1</sub> genome and the DA<sub>2</sub> genome may be the difference between natural selection and artificial  
302 domestication [45].

303 Gene expression profiling is usually related to gene functional identification. For the three  
304 cotton species under salt and drought stress, DNA MTase gene expression is significantly different  
305 in different tissues. This differential gene expression may be caused by the corresponding adverse  
306 effects of the regulatory pathway. This shows that different DNA methylation enzymes have  
307 different functions and participate in many regulatory pathways and that the plant's response to  
308 adversity is the result of synergistic effects through multiple pathways and is a complex process.  
309 Drought and salt stress can cause osmotic pressure, and the change in the DNA MTase gene  
310 transcription level in cotton may be caused by the joint action of these two types of stress. This is  
311 similar to the findings for other crops. Different cotton species in the same subfamily have  
312 different patterns of expression, and DNA MTase gene may have specific functions.

313 The function of the GhDMT6 gene was verified by the VIGS silence. After silencing the  
314 cotton GhDMT6 gene, it was less sensitive to cold, salt and drought stress than the control group,  
315 which indicated that the gene had a certain significance in improving cotton resistance. In  
316 summary, the GhDMT6 gene is a gene involved in stress resistance.

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321 **Conflict of interest** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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## Figures

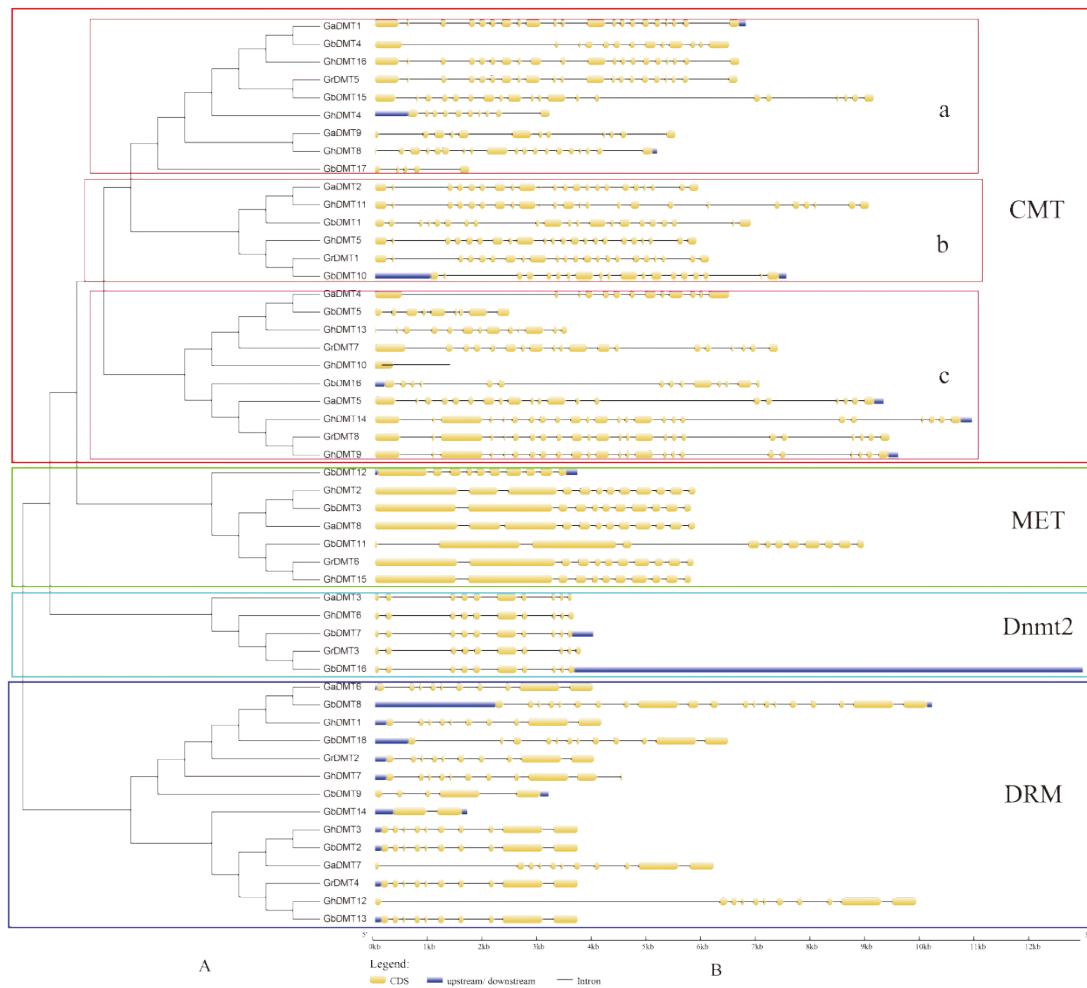


Fig. 1 Phylogenetic analysis of the DNA Mtae gene family in cotton (A) and genetic structure (B). Cotton DNA Mtae family members are divided into four subfamilies, CMT, MET, DRM, Dnmt2.



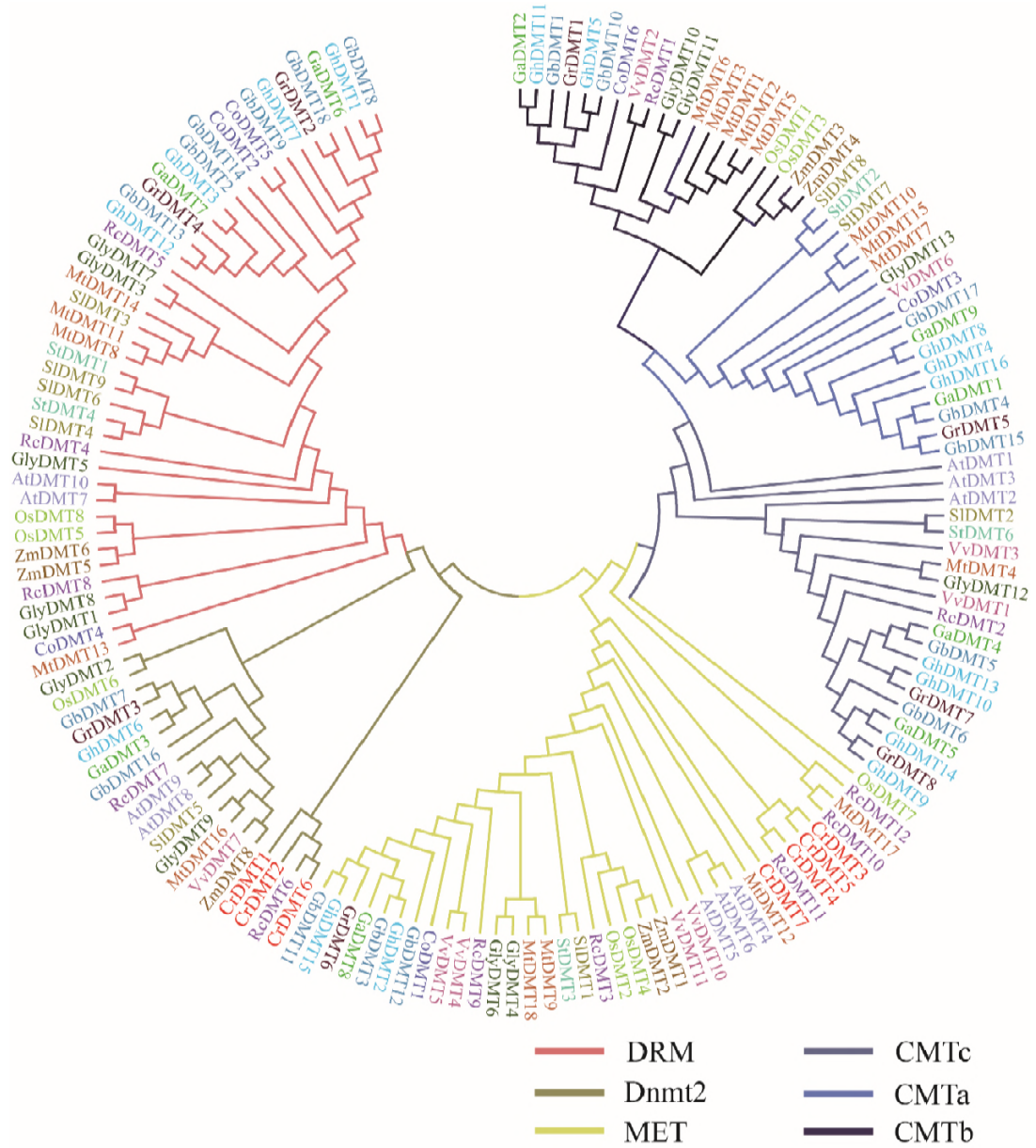


Fig. 3 DNA Methyltransferase family phylogenetic tree of cotton and other crops. The neighbor-joining method was used to construct the tree without a root system, and the value of the bootstrap was 1000.

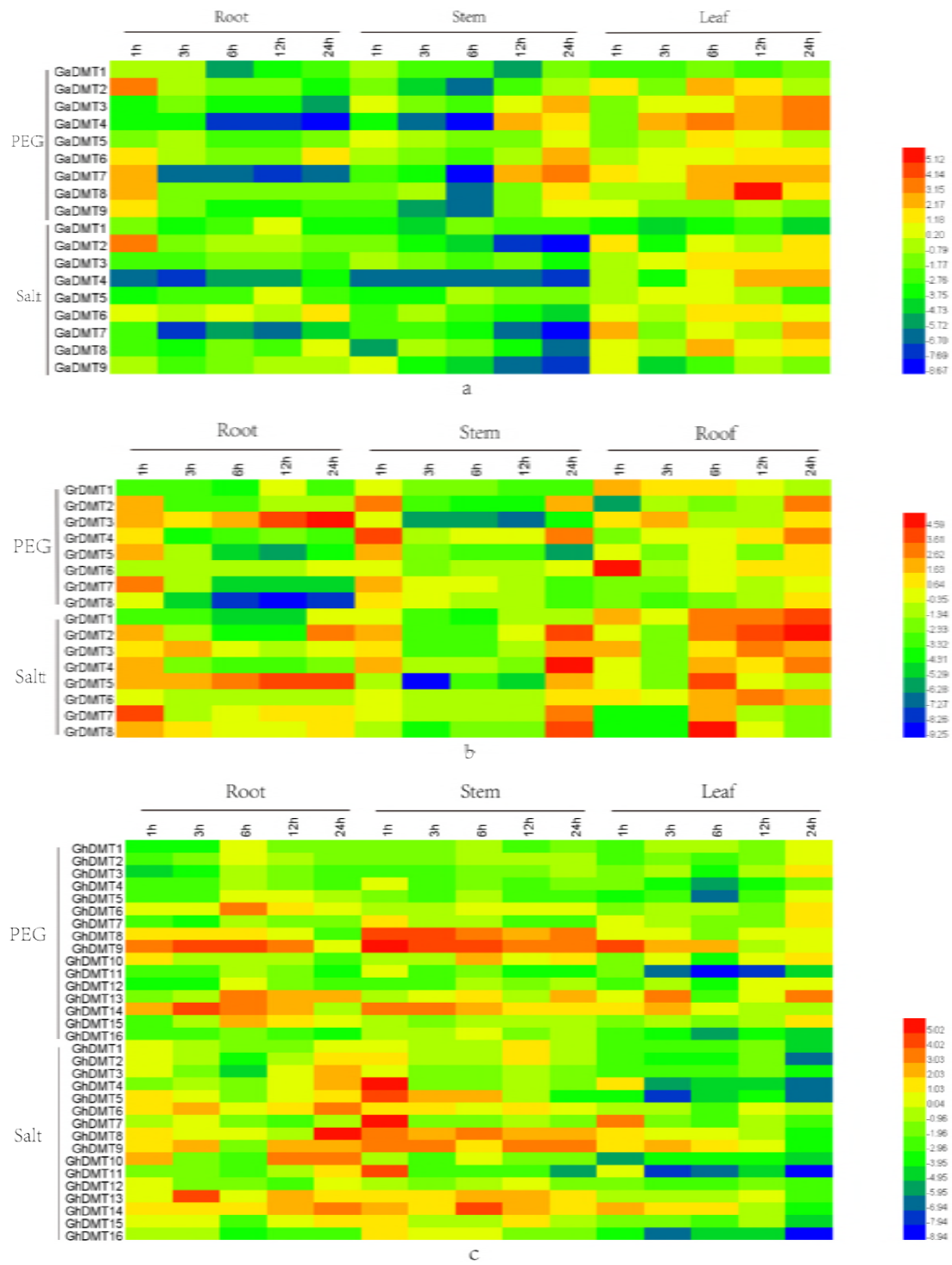


Fig. 4 The expression of DNA Mtase genes in the roots, stems and leaves of three cotton species, namely, *Shixiya 1*, *G. raimondii*, and *G. hirsutum* L. TM-1, under drought and salt treatments at different times. a *G. arboreum* L. *Shixiya 1*, b *G. raimondii*, and c *G. hirsutum* L. TM-1.



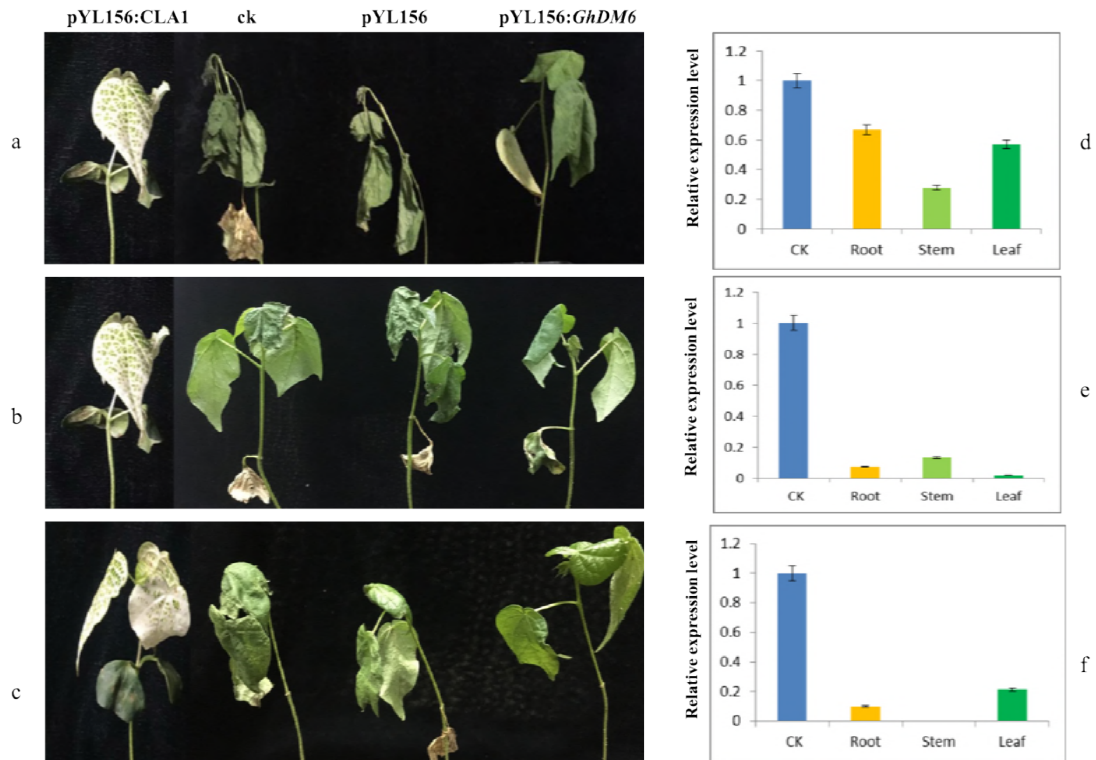


Fig. 5 Relative expression of GhDMT6 gene in different tissues of different stress in *Gossypium. hirsutum* .a.Phenotypic differences of cotton after drought stress.b.Relative expression of GhDMT6 gene after drought stress in *G. hirsutum* L. TM-1.c.Phenotypic differences of cotton after cold stress.d.Relative expression of GhDMT6 gene after cold stress in *G. hirsutum* L. TM-1.e.Phenotypic differences of cotton after salt stress.f.Relative expression of GhDMT6 gene after salt stress in *G. hirsutum* L. TM-1

## Tables

Table 1 Basic characteristics of DNA Mtase genes in the cotton genome

gene name	Accession number	Location (chromosome)	Position (domain)	CDS (bp)	AA	PI	Predicted subcellular localization
GaDMT1		CA_chr1: 66883217:66889872-	499-871	2724	907	5.09	Cytoplasmic
GaDMT2	Cotton_A_27044	CA_chr2: 55459962..55465882-	480-771	4638	1545	5.66	Cytoplasmic
GaDMT3	Cotton_A_20175	CA_chr3: 24408653..24412255+	13-389	1179	637	6.02	OuterMembrane
GaDMT4	Cotton_A_29334	CA_chr3: 96706846..96713328-	552-692	2082	693	7.44	OuterMembrane
GaDMT5	Cotton_A_29333	CA_chr3: 96716269:96725942-	475-822	2580	859	6.24	Cytoplasmic
GaDMT6	Cotton_A_36034	CA_chr10: 113686352..113690340+	513-631	1914	663	4.8	Cytoplasmic
GaDMT7	Cotton_A_08447	CA_chr12: 1201266..1207466-	534-653	1992	392	4.94	Cytoplasmic
GaDMT8	Cotton_A_27234	CA_chr12: 56291689..56297548-	1110-1539	1494	497	5.82	Cytoplasmic
GaDMT9	Cotton_A_19737	CA_chr13: 63213811..63219313+	155-372	2421	806	5.25	Cytoplasmic
GrDMT1	Cotton_D_gene_10004803	Chr2:8382256..8388371 +	494-785	2463	820	5.67	Cytoplasmic
GrDMT2	Cotton_D_gene_10010304	Chr3:6796286..6800300-	512-630	1911	636	4.8	Cytoplasmic
GrDMT3	Cotton_D_gene_10010121	Chr4:457766..461539 +	13-389	1203	400	5.55	OuterMembrane
GrDMT4	Cotton_D_gene_10027875	Chr4:20122791..20126504-	511-630	1923	640	4.9	Cytoplasmic
GrDMT5	Cotton_D_gene_10009363	scaffold141: 194013:200650-	495-869	2718	905	5.1	Cytoplasmic
GrDMT6	Cotton_D_gene_10000349	scaffold531:66538..72372 -	1128-1557	4692	1563	5.51	Cytoplasmic
GrDMT7	Cotton_D_gene_10002270	scaffold372: 306669:314046-	530-928	2892	963	7.02	OuterMembrane
GrDMT8	Cotton_D_gene_10002271	scaffold372: 317040:326457-	789-1165	3609	1202	8.44	OuterMembrane
GhDMT1	CotAD_37635	At_chr6:11311066..11315214-	512-630	1911	636	4.8	Cytoplasmic
GhDMT2	CotAD_51709	At_chr9:63179674..63185543-	1076-1505	4536	1511	6.34	Cytoplasmic
GhDMT3	CotAD_46796	At_chr9:65748738..65752451+	511-630	1923	640	4.85	Cytoplasmic
GhDMT4	CotAD_10542	Dt_chr1:40856014..40859213-	1-308	1035	344	7.76	Cytoplasmic
GhDMT5	CotAD_49037	Dt_chr2:8190450..8196335-	496-781	2451	816	5.62	Cytoplasmic
GhDMT6	CotAD_04205	Dt_chr5:13787674..13791315+	13-389	1206	401	5.82	OuterMembrane
GhDMT7	CotAD_13275	Dt_chr6:40651384..40655909-	512-611	1878	625	4.72	OuterMembrane
GhDMT8	CotAD_24264	Dt_chr7:37416068..37421133+	230-632	2007	668	4.81	Cytoplasmic
GhDMT9	CotAD_00990	Dt_chr10: 6477855..6487242+	789-1157	3585	1194	8.51	OuterMembrane
GhDMT10	CotAD_00992	Dt_chr10:6495924..6502242+	299-680	2094	697	6.75	Cytoplasmic
GhDMT11	CotAD_14980	scaffold39.1:602870..611908+	667-846	2646	881	6.94	OuterMembrane
GhDMT12	CotAD_18652	scaffold71.1:1581335..1591239-	547-666	2031	676	4.91	Cytoplasmic
GhDMT13	CotAD_41398	scaffold294.1:1053646..1057162-	319-500	1533	510	5.45	Cytoplasmic
GhDMT14	CotAD_41399	scaffold294.1:1063401:1074111-	780-1161	3597	1198	8.71	OuterMembrane
GhDMT15	CotAD_46012	scaffold1041.1:189137..194922+	1112-1541	4644	1547	5.57	Cytoplasmic
GhDMT16	CotAD_40093	scaffold2005.1:29096..35764+	453-828	2595	864	5.02	Cytoplasmic
GbDMT1	Gbscaffold4563.2.0	At01: 75311449..75320269	441-816	2556	851	5.66	Cytoplasmic
GbDMT2	Gbscaffold7611.1.0	At05:80836461..80840887+	564-683	2082	693	5.03	Cytoplasmic
GbDMT3	Gbscaffold10176.3.0	At05:85393045..85400787+	1142-1571	4734	1577	5.49	Cytoplasmic
GbDMT4	Gbscaffold23728.21.0	At07: 5162033..5169156	503-875	2739	912	4.98	Cytoplasmic
GbDMT5	Gbscaffold11439.6.0	At08:92243382..92245846-	278-428	1431	476	5.77	Cytoplasmic

GbDMT6	Gbscaffold11439.5.0	At08: 92252927..92259967	131-508	1641	546	8.13	Cytoplasmic
GbDMT7	Gbscaffold10104.36.0	At08:106991133..106995128+	13-389	1179	392	5.4	OuterMembrane
GbDMT8	Gbscaffold155.2.0	At09:9281821..9292014+	1068-1186	3579	1192	4.78	Cytoplasmic
GbDMT9	Gbscaffold155.3.0	At09:9298124..9301305+	374-492	1497	498	5.56	Cytoplasmic
GbDMT10	Gbscaffold10257.5.0	Dt01: 55556607..55564136	438-672	2370	789	5.78	Cytoplasmic
GbDMT11	Gbscaffold9562.4.0	Dt04:6380024..6388975+	1126-1555	4686	1561	5.6	Cytoplasmic
GbDMT12	Gbscaffold9562.5.0	Dt04:6390322..6394029+	475-834	2523	840	6.49	Cytoplasmic
GbDMT13	Gbscaffold12826.2.0	Dt04:9853138..9856849+	511-630	1923	640	4.93	Cytoplasmic
GbDMT14	Gbscaffold12826.3.0	Dt04:9869411..9871104+	219-338	1047	348	8.6	Cytoplasmic
GbDMT15	Gbscaffold8153.13.0	Dt07: 5581094..5588192	492-866	2709	902	5.2	Cytoplasmic
GbDMT16	Gbscaffold34888.4.0	Dt08:67685650..67693483-	19-642	1962	653	5.21	OuterMembrane
GbDMT17	Gbscaffold8535.6.0	scaffold8535:88760..90489+	7-125	486	161	9.24	Periplasmic
GbDMT18	Gbscaffold12265.1.0	scaffold12265:8693..15154+	576-694	2103	700	4.67	Cytoplasmic

Table 2 Basic information of related species in analyzing the phylogenetic tree

species name	short	classification	species name	short	classification
<i>Ricinus communis</i>	Re	D	<i>Chlamydomonas reinhardtii</i>	Cr	A
<i>grapevine</i>	Vv	D	<i>Medicago truncatula</i>	Mt	D
<i>Oryza sativa</i>	Os	M	<i>Arabidopsis thaliana</i>	At	D
<i>Glycine max</i>	Gly	D	<i>Solanum lycopersicum</i>	Sl	D
<i>Zea mays</i>	Zm	M	<i>Solanum tuberosum</i>	St	D
<i>cacao</i>	Co	D			

D, M and A represent Dicotyledon, Monocotyledon and Algae, respectively.