

LEAF MORPHOGENESIS IN DICOTYLEDONS: CURRENT ISSUES

Nancy G. Dengler^{1,*} and Hirokazu Tsukaya†

^{*}Department of Botany, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1A1, Canada; and [†]National Institute for Basic Biology (Center for Integrated Bioscience, Okazaki Research Institutes), Okazaki 444-8585, Japan, and Form and Function, PRESTO, Japan Science and Technology Corporation, 4-1-8 Honcho, Kawaguchi 332-0012, Japan

The last decade of the twentieth century has witnessed a period of renewed interest, redefinition of questions, and some dramatic advances toward resolving some of the long-standing issues related to the developmental regulation of leaf morphogenesis. New interest has been sparked by the application of developmental genetics, molecular biology, and mosaic analysis to the study of genetic model species. The integration of knowledge gained from these newer approaches with that derived from more than a century of comparative developmental morphology is crucial for advancing understanding of leaf morphogenesis. This link is particularly important for the interpretation of mutant phenotypes and gene expression patterns. In this brief review article, we provide a general framework for the study of leaf morphogenesis and identify areas where we believe that important issues remain unresolved.

Keywords: leaf development, symmetry, leaf initiation, expansion, primary morphogenesis, secondary morphogenesis.

Introduction

A major source of diversity in flowering plant form is a striking variation in leaf shape and size. Leaves vary from those having a simple blade with entire, serrate, or lobed margins to those having compound blades with pinnately or palmately arranged leaflets and, in some species, secondary and tertiary levels of segmentation. Not only does leaf shape vary dramatically among taxonomic groups, but individual leaves on the same plant may display quite different forms. Most plants express some degree of heteroblasty in which the shapes of leaves on an individual shoot vary with position. In some groups of plants, changes in environmental conditions induce a switch in leaf shape, a phenomenon known as environmentally induced heterophylly. This great variation in form, as well as its developmental basis, has intrigued botanists for over 150 yr.

The last decade of the twentieth century has witnessed a period of renewed interest, redefinition of questions, and some dramatic advances toward answering some of the long-standing questions about development of leaf form. New interest has been sparked by the application of developmental genetics and molecular biology to the study of genetic model species, such as *Arabidopsis thaliana*, *Antirrhinum majus*, and *Zea mays*, as well as other species known for a range of leaf shape mutants, such as *Lycopersicon esculentum* and *Pisum sativum*. Developmental investigations of these species have addressed major issues in leaf morphogenesis, such as the regulation of leaf initiation, the acquisition of leaf symmetry, the elaboration of leaf shape, the definition of leaf subregions, and the rela-

tionship between whole-organ development and events at the cellular level.

Our goals in this brief review article are to give an overview of leaf morphogenesis in dicotyledons and to identify the major unresolved issues of the developmental biology underlying the great diversity of mature dicot leaf form. The impetus to write this review came from organizing a symposium on leaf morphogenesis at the Sixteenth International Botanical Congress (1999). In this article, we emphasize issues discussed at that meeting; other perspectives are provided in a number of recent reviews of leaf morphogenesis (Cusset 1986; Dale 1988, 1992; Freeling 1992; Smith and Hake 1992; Tsukaya 1995; Hagemann and Gleissberg 1996; Sylvester et al. 1996; Poethig 1997; Brutnell and Langdale 1998; Tsiantis and Langdale 1998; Van Lijsebettens and Clarke 1998; Dengler 1999; Goliber et al. 1999; Sinha 1999; Van Volkenburgh 1999).

Leaf Attributes

Despite the great variation in mature shape, all leaves are thought to share a number of defining attributes: (1) a lateral position on the stem; (2) a determinate growth pattern; (3) association with an axillary bud on the adaxial side of the leaf base; (4) possession of subregions along the longitudinal leaf axis, usually represented by blade, petiole, and leaf base (and stipules, if present); and (5) dorsiventral symmetry with flattening in the transverse plane (fig. 1A, 1B). In addition, leaves develop in an environment where two additional polarities are imposed by the morphology of the shoot system as a whole. These are the longitudinal polarity of the shoot axis and the polarity of the phyllotactic system; the latter is particularly likely to influence leaf morphogenesis in species with helical phyllotaxis (fig. 1C; Tsukaya 1998).

While the five features listed above are generally accepted as diagnostic, interpretation of each is not always straight-

¹ Author for correspondence; e-mail dengler@botany.utoronto.ca.

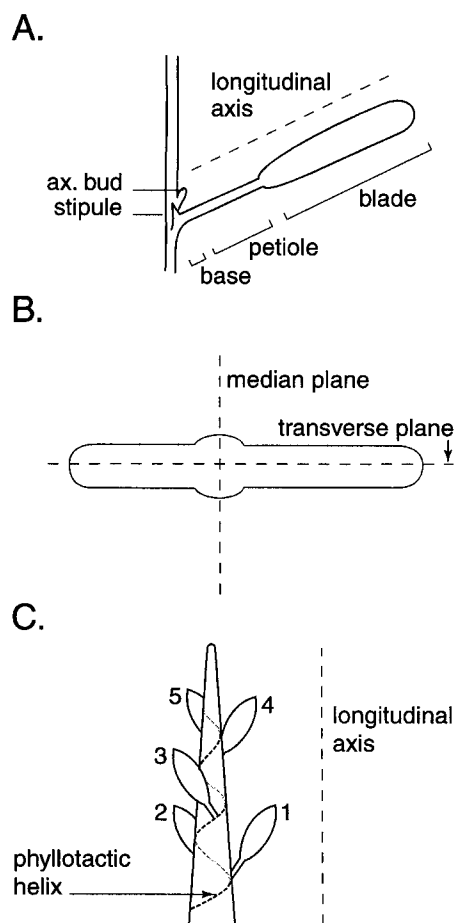


Fig. 1 Leaf symmetry and regions. A, Subdivision of leaf into blade, petiole, and leaf base regions along axis of longitudinal symmetry, giving proximo-distal symmetry. B, Leaf transsectional symmetry in the median plane (dorsiventral symmetry) and in the transverse plane (centromedial asymmetry). C, Shoot polarities that influence leaf symmetry are the longitudinal polarity of the shoot axis and polarity related to helical phyllotaxis.

forward. For example, in certain plant taxa and mutants, leaves may appear to arise *de novo* on the surface of other leaves (Dickinson 1978; Barton and Poethig 1993). Definitive evidence that such leaves arise without the mediation of a shoot apical meristem is lacking, but these observations invoke questions about the role of the shoot apical meristem in the formation and determination of leaf identity. While dorsiventral symmetry characterizes leaves from inception in all cases that have been critically studied, all or some portions of mature leaves in many taxa are radially symmetrical. How this initial symmetry becomes either accentuated or lost during development is still unknown, at least at a molecular level (Kaplan 2001).

Similarly, while leaves are typically determinate, those of the genera *Guarea* and *Chisocheton* (Meliaceae) retain prolonged apical development, in which the leaf tip may continue to produce new leaflet primordia for more than 4 yr (Steingraeber and Fisher 1986; Fisher and Rutishauser 1990). Prolonged leaf growth also occurs in the genera *Monophyllaea* and *Strepto-*

carpus (Gesneriaceae; Jong and Burt 1975; Cronk and Moller 1997; Tsukaya 1997). In these unusual species, the entire shoot system consists of a single cotyledon bearing epiphyllous inflorescences. The basal meristem of the cotyledon remains active throughout the life of the plant, producing new blade tissue and additional inflorescences. Although these developmental patterns are very unusual, such observations raise questions about the nature and regulation of the more typical determinate growth pattern. Thus, while the unifying general properties of leaves hold generally, unusual natural variants and, increasingly, mutations affecting these properties are being used to study their developmental regulation.

Phases of Leaf Morphogenesis

The process of leaf morphogenesis encompasses all aspects of the generation of leaf form from inception to maturity. Subdivision of this continuous process into separate phases has been conceptually useful for studying various aspects of leaf development (Jeune 1983; Jeune and LaCroix 1993; Poethig 1997). Here, we define three phases: (1) initiation, (2) primary morphogenesis, and (3) expansion and secondary morphogenesis (fig. 2). Each of the first three phases makes a unique contribution to the genesis of mature leaf form, but they also mesh together to provide a well-integrated developmental whole. We believe that it is useful to consider them separately since some contradictory results may arise simply from making observations on different phases of development.

Leaf Initiation

The regulation of leaf initiation (and its spatial pattern, phyllotaxis) is still one of the great unanswered questions of plant developmental biology. Although studies of leaf morphogenesis often focus on the postinitiation phases of leaf development, many aspects of leaf morphology arise at the time of leaf inception. For instance, the extent of the leaf initiation zone around the circumference of the apical meristem strongly influences the morphology of the leaf base (fig. 2A). Mutations that disrupt the process of initiation can have a dramatic impact on mature leaf form (Scanlon et al. 1996; Timmermans et al. 1998). The earliest known molecular marker of leaf initiation is the downregulation of class 1 homeobox (*KNOX*) genes, such as *Knotted-1* in *Zea mays* (Jackson et al. 1994) and *KNAT1* and *KNAT2* in *Arabidopsis* (Lincoln et al. 1994). These homeobox genes are reported to be negatively regulated by the *ASYMMETRIC1*, *ASYMMETRIC2*, and *SERRATE* genes in leaf primordia of *Arabidopsis* (Bryne et al. 2000; Ori et al. 2000; Semiarti et al. 2001). Details of the regulation of *KNOX* gene expression in the shoot apical meristem and leaf primordia are still unclear but, when known, will provide insight into the mechanism of establishment of a distinct identity for leaf primordia.

One intriguing hypothesis about the mechanism of leaf initiation is that it may be partly or wholly controlled by physical factors. Observations of localized changes in the orientation of cortical microtubules and cellulose microfibrils in regions of the shoot apical meristem have indicated that leaf primordia arise simply in response to the mechanical buckling of the meristem surface, allowing a new axis of growth (Green 1999).

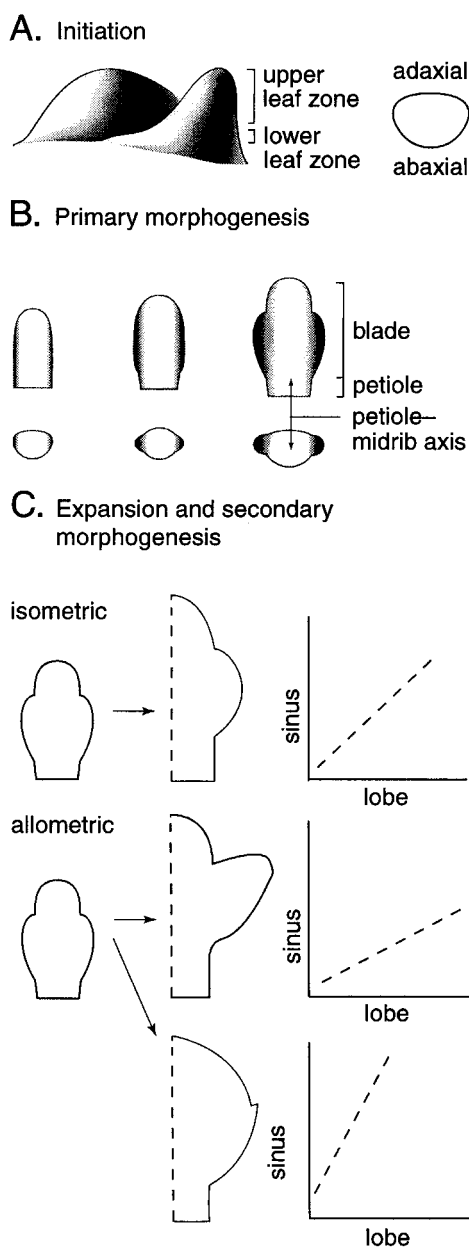


Fig. 2 Three phases of leaf morphogenesis. **A**, Leaf initiation. Leaf primordium expresses longitudinal symmetry (upper and lower leaf zones) and dorsiventral symmetry (differences between adaxial and abaxial sides). **B**, Primary morphogenesis. Marginal blastozone (stippled) expresses morphogenetic potential to form blade, lobes, and leaflets. Top row, adaxial view of leaf; bottom row, blade transverse sectional view. **C**, Expansion and secondary morphogenesis. Top, isometric expansion; bottom, allometric expansion of lobes and sinuses produced during primary morphogenesis.

Direct support for this idea has been provided by experiments in which the application of expansin protein to the shoot apical meristem resulted in leaf primordium-like outgrowths (Fleming et al. 1997, 1999). It is possible that such physical changes have a direct role in the downregulation of *KNOX* genes and in the initial expression of others. Leaf initiation can be in-

duced by the local application of auxin on otherwise leafless shoot apical meristems (Reinhardt 2000). Auxin can also induce localized growth (Cleland 1995) and gene expression (Guilfoyle et al. 1998). Knowledge of the interplay among physical factors, hormones, gene expression, and growth processes will be crucial for understanding the mechanisms and regulation of leaf initiation, as well as for later stages of morphogenesis.

Primary Morphogenesis

The term "primary morphogenesis" is used to describe developmental processes that establish the basic form of the leaf and, in doing so, determine both leaf symmetry and the major subregions of the leaf (Hagemann and Gleissberg 1996). In dicots, initiation of the lamina region is one of the earliest expressions of primary morphogenesis (fig. 2B). Initiation of a lamina at the primordium periphery typically coincides with the thickening growth of the petiole-midrib axis, delimiting the lamina and midrib domains within the distal portion of the leaf. At the same time, the longitudinal extent of lamina formation distinguishes the distal blade from the proximal petiole and leaf base regions. Although development of the blade is a fundamental property of primary morphogenesis in almost all dicot leaves, the mechanisms and their spatial and temporal regulation is poorly understood.

Currently, much attention has focused on the relationship between blade formation and the expression of dorsiventral symmetry. Extreme phenotypes of *phantastica* mutants in *Antirrhinum* have radially symmetrical leaves in which tissues normally found on the adaxial side of the leaf are missing or are ectopically expressed (Waites and Hudson 1995; Waites et al. 1998). A complementary phenotype has been described for the *phabulosa-1d* mutant of *Arabidopsis* in which leaves are also radialized, but abaxial tissues appear to be absent or misplaced (McConnell and Barton 1998). These genotypes have been hypothesized to reflect a requirement for expression of both adaxial and abaxial identity factors for the continued development of dorsiventral symmetry. Waites and Hudson (1995) further postulated that juxtaposition of expression domains of adaxial and abaxial genes is required for the alteration of growth direction that results in blade formation in wild-type leaves. This is an intriguing idea that requires further experimental and genetic testing. Thus far, recognition of adaxial and abaxial morphological domains has relied on using cell and tissue traits as markers of morphological identity (Waites and Hudson 1995; McConnell and Barton 1998). At present, the developmental coupling between morphological and histological characteristics is not well understood (Kaplan 2001). Recent observations on the expression pattern of genes, such as the *YABBY* family of transcriptional regulators, may help link the development of morphological symmetry with tissue and cell-specific traits (Siegfried et al. 1999; Bowman 2000). These genes are expressed solely in the abaxial half of the leaf primordium, indicating that they could regulate the patterns of tissue development specific to that side of the leaf.

Regardless of the molecular mechanisms by which the leaf blade is formed and dorsiventrality regulated, the strip of tissue at the margin of the primordium is part of the leaf that possesses morphogenetic potential (fig. 2B). This region has been

termed the “marginal blastozone” in order to emphasize its role in morphogenesis and to avoid the histogenetic implications of the term “marginal meristem” (Hagemann 1970; Hagemann and Gleissberg 1996). In simple leaves with entire margins, the marginal blastozone is active for a very short time, as indicated by cellular markers such as cell enlargement and the differentiation of trichomes (Hagemann and Gleissberg 1996; Donnelly et al. 1999). In leaves with more complex shapes, localized enhancement and suppression of growth results in the formation of leaflets, lobes, and marginal serrations (fig. 2B). Variation in both the relative position and timing of blastozone activity and of leaf primordium elongation can result in a great diversity of leaf shapes (Hagemann 1970; Jeune and LaCroix 1993; Gleissberg 1998a, 1998b; Gleissberg and Kadereit 1999).

Prolonged blastozone activity is associated with the formation of compound (i.e., dissected) leaves (DeMason and Villani 2001; Kaplan 2001; Kessler et al. 2001). In *Lycopersicon*, the delayed termination of meristematic activity has been shown to be correlated with a high level of expression of *KNOX* genes both at sites of leaf initiation and within developing leaves (Hareven et al. 1996; Chen et al. 1997). Furthermore, overexpression of *KNOX* genes in *Lycopersicon* promote branching during leaf development, resulting in highly ramified leaf forms (Hareven et al. 1996; Chen et al. 1997; Janssen et al. 1998). Together these results strongly implicate *KNOX* genes in compound leaf primary morphogenesis, at least in *Lycopersicon*. In *Pisum*, *UNIFOLIA*, a homolog of the floral meristem identity genes *FLORICAULA* and *LEAFY*, appears to play a similar role (Hofer et al. 1997; Gurlay et al. 2000; DeMason and Villani 2001).

The process of primary morphogenesis requires regional control over growth enhancement and suppression. Mature morphology, the differing developmental pathways followed by different regions of a developing leaf, and the genetic interactions among genes affecting leaf form all have supported the idea that the leaf is subdivided into distinct domains along its longitudinal and transverse axes (Gurlay et al. 2000; Kessler et al. 2001). For instance, in *Pisum*, the *AFILA* gene appears to interact with *UNIFOLIA* to produce leaflets in a proximal domain, while both *AFILA* and *TENDRILLESS* interact with *UNIFOLIA* to produce tendrils in a distal domain (Gurlay et al. 2000). In *Lycopersicon*, Kessler et al. (2001) found morphological and anatomical evidence for a marginal domain that appeared to be deleted in *wiry* mutants. In addition, the expression patterns of the *YABBY* genes provide evidence for abaxial and adaxial domains within *Arabidopsis* leaf primordia (Siegfried et al. 1999; Bowman 2000). The concept of domains and criteria for recognition of developmentally important domains is in need of critical evaluation; nevertheless, this term has been a useful one, both for describing the different behaviors of regions within developing leaves and for the interpretation of mutant phenotypes.

Expansion and Secondary Morphogenesis

Primary morphogenesis occurs during very young stages when the leaf is still protected by older leaves at the shoot apex. The third phase of leaf morphogenesis, expansion and secondary leaf morphogenesis, encompasses a much longer

time period and represents an increase in surface area and volume of several thousandfold (Dale 1988). The pattern of expansion may be either isometric or allometric and may either retain or alter the shape established by primary morphogenesis (fig. 2C). For example, in *Begonia dregei*, differences in the sizes of leaf lobes and marginal teeth are established during the primary morphogenetic phase and are then maintained by isometric growth (McLellan and Dengler 1995). Allometric expansion, the more common growth pattern, is the basis of secondary morphogenesis. For instance, differences in lobe shape between subspecies of *Curcubita argyrosperma* only appear during the expansion phase, well after the primary morphogenetic phases of growth (Jones 1993). In *Gossypium barbadense*, lobe shape differences between genotypes appear during primary morphogenesis but are greatly enhanced during allometric expansion (Dolan and Poethig 1991).

The correlation between leaf shape and the patterns of cell division and enlargement has long been a focus of research on leaf morphogenesis (Ashby 1948). As many as 95% of all leaf cells are formed during the expansion phase, and cell divisions may continue until the leaf reaches 90% of its final size (Dale 1976). For example, in *Lycopus europaeus*, both the initial formation (primary morphogenesis) and extension (secondary morphogenesis) of leaf lobes are associated with altered planes of cell divisions within the lobe (Jeune 1983). Such linkages can be interpreted as either that (1) the altered plane of cell divisions causes lobe formation or that (2) lobe formation results from a dramatic change in division plane. Careful experimentation will be required to distinguish between these alternatives. Likewise, the mutant phenotypes of the *ROTUNDIFOLIA3* and *ANGUSTIFOLIA* genes of *Arabidopsis thaliana* illustrate a close association between the polarity of individual cell expansion and the leaf expansion phase of morphogenesis (Tsuge et al. 1996; Kim et al. 1998, 1999). *ROTUNDIFOLIA3* mutants have short, rounded leaves, and the defect in leaf elongation is reflected in a suppression of cell enlargement along the longitudinal axis. In contrast, the *ANGUSTIFOLIA* mutant displays reduced growth in the transverse plane, resulting in long, narrow leaves. Like *ROTUNDIFOLIA3*, the leaf shape defect is also expressed in the axis of expansion of individual leaf cells.

The nature of the association between cell division, cell expansion, and overall leaf morphogenesis is still controversial (Kaplan 1992, 2001; Smith 1996; Marcotrigiano 2001). Certainly a number of studies indicate that leaf morphogenesis can compensate for perturbations in the normal course of cell proliferation and cell enlargement (Haber 1962; Hemerly et al. 1995; Traas et al. 1995; Smith et al. 1996; Mizukami and Fischer 2000). In these experimentally or genetically manipulated leaves, shapes are usually similar to wild type despite defects in cell division, but sizes are smaller, indicating a role for cell proliferation in providing the raw material for normal growth and in histogenetic events (Donnelly et al. 1999).

One distinctive feature of leaf development is the formation of internal layers through the predominantly anticlinal orientation of cell divisions within the leaf blade during the expansion and secondary morphogenesis phase (Maksymowych and Wochok 1969). As cell proliferation ceases, each tissue layer undergoes a characteristic pattern of histogenesis. Signaling between layers and cell types is also likely required for

normal cell differentiation (Brutnell and Langdale 1998). During normal leaf morphogenesis and histogenesis, growth of tissue layers must be coordinated to prevent buckling and curling. Recent experiments using graft chimeras between different genotypes or between species of contrasting leaf shapes have indicated that tissue layers differ in their influence on leaf shape (Dolan and Poethig 1998; McHale and Marcotrigiano 1998; Marcotrigiano 2001). Graft chimeras also demonstrate that, while regions of genetically distinct tissue play out their own developmental programs, there is a striking degree of coordination among tissues and regions of the leaf (Marcotrigiano 2001). These observations serve to highlight questions about the relationship between whole-organ morphogenesis and developmental events at the cellular and tissue levels.

Conclusions

Recent research in diverse areas, from comparative morphology to developmental genetics and molecular biology, has led to the definition of the major unresolved questions about the mechanisms and regulation of leaf morphogenesis. We regard the most significant of these as follows: (1) What regulates the formation of a leaf primordium from the shoot apical meristem? (2) How does leaf growth become determinate and what

is the significance of expression of meristem-specific genes within the leaf primordium? (3) How are regional domains along the longitudinal axis (leaf base, petiole, and blade), the medial plane (adaxial and abaxial regions), and the transverse plane (right and left leaf halves) delimited from each other and their differential development regulated? (4) During primary morphogenesis, how are spatial and temporal patterns of growth suppression and enhancement regulated? (5) What is the relationship between regulation at the whole-organ or regional level and regulation of cellular events, including the differential influence of tissue layers? Observations gained over the last decade have contributed at least partial answers to some of these questions but, more importantly, have served to define and focus interest on them. Ten years from now, we expect to have more complete answers and a better understanding of their universality.

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