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1 **Natural interploidy hybridization among the key taxa involved in the origin of**  
2 **horticultural chrysanthemums**

3

4 Running title: Interploidy hybridization among *Chrysanthemum*

5

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25

26 **Abstract**

27 Understanding hybridization and introgression between natural plant populations can  
28 give important insights into the origins of cultivated species. Recent studies suggest  
29 differences in ploidy may not create such strong reproductive barriers as once thought,  
30 and thus studies into cultivated origins should examine all co-occurring taxa,  
31 including those with contrasting ploidy levels. Here, we characterized hybridization  
32 between *Chrysanthemum indicum*, *Chrysanthemum vestitum* and *Chrysanthemum*  
33 *vestitum* var. *latifolium*, the most important wild species involved in the origins of  
34 cultivated chrysanthemums. We analysed population structure of 317 *Chrysanthemum*  
35 accessions based on 13 microsatellite markers and sequenced chloroplast *trnL-trnF*  
36 for a subset of 103 *Chrysanthemum* accessions. We identified three distinct genetic  
37 clusters, corresponding to the three taxa. We detected 20 hybrids between species of  
38 different ploidy levels, of which 19 were between *C. indicum* (4x) and *C. vestitum* (6x)  
39 and one was between *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* (6x). Fourteen  
40 hybrids between *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* were from one of the five study sites.  
41 *Chrysanthemum vestitum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* share only one chloroplast  
42 haplotype. The substantially different number of hybrids between hybridizing species  
43 was likely due to different levels of reproductive isolation coupled with  
44 environmental selection against hybrids. In addition, human activities may play a role  
45 in the different patterns of hybridization among populations.

46

47 **Keywords** *Chrysanthemum*, hybrid, microsatellite marker, symmetrical introgression,  
48 *trnL-trnF*

49

50

## 51 **1. Introduction**

52 Hybridization has played an important role in plant domestication and diversification  
53 through human history (Arnold, 2014; Heslop-Harrison and Schwarzacher, 2007;  
54 Cornille et al., 2014). Multiple important crops have been generated through  
55 hybridization either between wild species or through introgression from crop wild  
56 relatives into cultivated lineages. Major examples include modern strawberries  
57 (*Fragaria ananassa*) (Bringham and Voth, 1984) and triploid bananas (Simmonds  
58 and Shepherd, 1955; Heslop-Harrison and Schwarzacher, 2007), but also ornamental  
59 species such as tree peonies (*Paeonia suffruticosa*) (Zhou et al., 2014), cherry (*Prunus*  
60 *yedoensis*) (Baek et al., 2018) and dahlia (*Dahlia variabilis*) (Saar et al., 2003).  
61 Understanding the frequency, phylogenetic distribution and propensity for  
62 hybridization in wild populations could not only inform breeders as to the possible  
63 range of interspecific hybrids, but could also reduce the laborious, time consuming  
64 and frequently unsuccessful process of artificial crossing and *de novo* hybrid  
65 generation (Lim et al., 2008; Kuligowska et al., 2016).

66 Hybridization occurs more easily between species of the same ploidy level than  
67 differing ploidy levels. For example, hybridization between diploid and tetraploid  
68 species is often limited as triploid hybrids are usually inviable and less fit, preventing  
69 backcross formation (Wang et al., 2014; Zohren et al., 2016; Husband and Sabara,  
70 2003). However, species of contrasting higher ploidy levels appear to have weaker  
71 reproductive barriers and hybridize more easily than diploids and tetraploids  
72 (Sonnleitner et al., 2013; Sutherland and Galloway, 2017). For example, within the  
73 *Campanula rotundifolia* polyploid complex, postzygotic isolation was lower in  
74 tetraploid–hexaploid species than in diploid–tetraploid crosses (Sutherland and  
75 Galloway, 2017). To date only a small number of studies have investigated

76 hybridization between higher ploidy levels, and the prevalence of higher level  
77 cross-ploidy hybridization across plant families remains unclear.

78 *Chrysanthemum* L. (Asteraceae) provides an excellent model for studying  
79 hybridization between high ploidy levels, with ploidy ranging from diploid ( $2n = 2x =$   
80 18) to decaploid ( $2n = 10x = 90$ ) (Ma et al., 2015; Zhou and Wang, 1997; Tahara,  
81 1915; Li et al., 2013; Luo et al., 2017) and with different cytotypes within species  
82 (Chen, 2012; Yan et al., 2019; Dowrick, 1952; Dowrick, 1953; Liu et al., 2012).

83 *Chrysanthemum* includes approximately 37 wild species, of which 17 occur in China  
84 (Shih and Fu, 1983) where they have captured great public interest. Multiple wild  
85 species have been crossed by humans to generate numerous cultivars, and they are  
86 among the most famous Chinese flowers, with significant commercial and medicinal  
87 value (Kim and Lee, 2005; Shahrajabian et al., 2019). The evolutionary history of  
88 polyploidy within *Chrysanthemum* is currently unknown, though some polyploids are  
89 thought to be allopolyploid in origin (Liu et al., 2012; Chen et al., 1996) and subject  
90 to multiple historical polyploidization events (Yang et al., 2006).

91 Chrysanthemums were first cultivated in China ~1600 years ago, and were later  
92 introduced to Japan and Europe (Chen, 2012; Shih et al., 2011; Chen, 1985). Modern  
93 cultivated chrysanthemums are mainly hexaploids and hybridization and subsequent  
94 artificial selection are thought to give rise to numerous cultivars (Chen, 1985; Dai et  
95 al., 2002). The ancestry of modern chrysanthemums remains elusive, but several wild  
96 species are thought to be involved, including *C. indicum* (4x), *C. vestitum* (6x), *C.*  
97 *lavandulifolium* (2x), *C. nankingense* (2x) and *C. zawadskii* (2x) (Chen, 1985; Dai  
98 and Chen, 1997; Fukai, 2003; Ma et al., 2016; Ma et al., 2020). *Chrysanthemum*  
99 *indicum* and *C. vestitum* are key species in the origin and evolution of cultivated  
100 chrysanthemums (Dai et al., 2002; Dai et al., 1998) based on two lines of evidence.

101 First, ancient literature documents multiple uses for *C. indicum* in central China,  
102 which is consistent with the geographic origin of modern cultivars (see Chen, 2012).  
103 Second, artificial hybridization between *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* can generate  
104 hybrids resembling the prototype of modern chrysanthemums (Chen, 2012).

105 In this study, we investigate whether hybridization occurs between  
106 *Chrysanthemum* species with different ploidy levels, focusing on *C. indicum* and *C.*  
107 *vestitum* as well as varieties of those species. We ask: (1) Does interploidy  
108 hybridization naturally occur between tetraploid and hexaploid *Chrysanthemum*  
109 species, which are likely involved in origin of modern cultivated chrysanthemums? (2)  
110 If hybridization occurs, is there evidence for a greater propensity at high ploidy levels?  
111 (3) Do some modern chrysanthemum cultivars share chloroplast haplotypes with the  
112 three wild *Chrysanthemum* taxa? To this end, we genotyped 317 samples at 13  
113 microsatellite markers and sequenced chloroplast *trnL-trnF* for a subset of 103  
114 samples. In addition, we extracted *trnL-trnF* from the chloroplast genomes of 28 taxa,  
115 representing 15 wild species of *Chrysanthemum*, 12 cultivars and one sample of  
116 *Ajania varifolium*. We analyze these data in a population genetic and phylogeography  
117 context, and use them to investigate a case where traditionally reproductive isolation  
118 caused by differences in ploidy levels would be expected to be strong.

## 119 **2. Material and Methods**

### 120 **2.1 Study species**

121 *Chrysanthemum indicum* is tetraploid with a wide distribution across China,  
122 though narrowly distributed diploid and hexaploid cytotypes have also been reported  
123 (Liu et al., 2012). *Chrysanthemum vestitum* is a hexaploid distributed across Hubei  
124 and Henan provinces in central China (Zhao and Chen, 1999) though the variety *C.*  
125 *vestitum* var. *latifolium* is hexaploid with a restricted distribution in the Dabie

126 Mountains in Anhui province.

127 The three taxa are outcrossing perennials (Chen, 2012) and are likely to be  
128 pollinated by bees (personal observations, N. Wang). Morphologically, *C. indicum*  
129 has yellow florets and smooth leaves with deep serrations. Both *C. vestitum* and *C.*  
130 *vestitum* var. *latifolium* have white floret and pubescent leaves and stems (Fig. 1).  
131 Putative hybrids either with an intermediate morphology or ploidy level between *C.*  
132 *indicum* and *C. vestitum* have been found in localities where the species co-occur  
133 (Nakata et al., 1992; Zhao and Chen, 1999). These hybrids exhibit continuous  
134 phenotypes between *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* (Zhao and Chen, 1999), indicating  
135 the existence of putative hybrid swarms.

## 136 **2.2 Sampling across hybridizing populations**

137 To understand the extent and distribution of hybridization, we surveyed sympatric  
138 populations of the three focal taxa: *C. indicum*, *C. vestitum*, and *C. vestitum* var.  
139 *latifolium*. We identified and sampled five populations where *C. indicum* and *C.*  
140 *vestitum* co-occur and two where *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* co-occur  
141 (Table S1). In addition, we collected *C. indicum* from two allopatric populations, TA  
142 and ZP (Table S1). Samples were collected at random within populations, ensuring at  
143 least ten meter spacing between individuals. Healthy and pest free leaf tissue was  
144 collected and stored in silica gel. A total of 317 samples were collected including  
145 between 14 and 74 from each of the seven hybridizing populations, five from TA and  
146 three from ZP (Table S1). A Global Position System (GPS, Unistrong) was used to  
147 record the coordinates of each population. Sampling locations are illustrated in Fig. 2.

## 148 **2.3 Microsatellite genotyping**

149 Genomic DNA was isolated from dried leaves of all individuals, following a modified  
150 2x CTAB (cetyltrimethylammoniumbromide) protocol (Wang et al., 2013). The

151 quality of isolated genomic DNA was assessed on 1.0 % agarose gels, and then  
152 diluted to a concentration of 10-20 ng/ul for genotyping and sequencing. Thirteen  
153 microsatellite loci were used for genotyping (Zhang et al., 2014; Jo et al., 2015). The  
154 5' terminus of the forward primer was labeled with FAM, HEX or TAM fluorescent  
155 probes. Each microsatellite locus was amplified individually prior to being combined  
156 into four multiplexes (Table S2). The PCR protocol follows Hu et al. (2019).

#### 157 **2.4 Population genetic analysis**

158 It is often difficult to assign microsatellite genotypes for mixed ploidy species, as the  
159 frequency of different alleles can be difficult to quantify. In hexaploids, each  
160 microsatellite locus would be expected to have up to six alleles per individual. We  
161 chose to score each allele separately using the software GENEMARKER 2.4.0  
162 (Softgenetics), and checked each genotype manually. We then calculated allele  
163 richness for each population using FSTAT 2.9.4 (Goudet, 1995) and performed  
164 principal coordinate (PCO) analysis in POLYSAT 1.7-4 (Clark and Jasieniuk, 2011),  
165 based on Bruvo's pairwise genetic distances (Bruvo et al., 2004).

166 We performed STRUCTURE analysis for each hybridizing population separately  
167 using STRUCTURE 2.3.4 (Pritchard et al., 2000) with ploidy specified as 6n. We  
168 combined XG, NX and PH into one hybridizing population as the three localities are  
169 separated by only a few kilometers. We set the number of genetic clusters (K) to 2  
170 when analyzing the genetic structure of each hybridizing population as only two  
171 parental species are present. The allopatric *C. indicum* populations (TA and ZP) were  
172 used as a reference population.

173 In addition, to identify the most likely K value across populations we included all  
174 populations in a combined STRUCTURE analysis, testing K values from 1 to 10. The  
175 number of genetic clusters was estimated using the Evanno test (Evanno et al., 2005)



176 in the program Structure Harvester 0.6.94 (Earl and vonHoldt, 2012). Ten replicates  
177 of the STRUCTURE analysis were performed with 1,000,000 iterations and a burn-in  
178 of 100,000 for each run. The admixture model, with an assumption of correlated allele  
179 frequencies, was used. Individuals were assigned to clusters based on the highest  
180 membership coefficient averaged over the ten independent runs. Replicate runs were  
181 grouped based on a symmetrical similarity coefficient of >0.9 using the Greedy  
182 algorithm in CLUMPP 1.1.2 (Jakobsson and Rosenberg, 2007) and visualized in  
183 DISTRUCT 1.1 (Rosenberg, 2004). In populations where *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum*  
184 or *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* co-occur, we estimated Q scores in  
185 STRUCTURE with 95% confidence intervals to define pure *C. indicum*, pure *C.*  
186 *vestitum*, pure *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* or putative hybrids. We distinguish  
187 individuals with confidence intervals overlapping 1 as pure *C. indicum*, with 0 as pure  
188 *C. vestitum* and those remaining as putative hybrids, in populations where the two  
189 species co-occur. Similarly, in populations where *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* var.  
190 *latifolium* co-occur, we distinguish individuals with confidence intervals overlapping  
191 with 1 as pure *C. indicum*, with 0 as pure *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* and those  
192 remaining as hybrids.

193 We compared the average allele number per individual between *C. indicum*, *C.*  
194 *vestitum*, *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* and their hybrids at each microsatellite locus,  
195 using the Kruskal–Wallis test in the R package agricolae v1.3-3 (de Mendiburu, 2020).  
196 We would expect that the average allele number is higher for *C. vestitum* and *C.*  
197 *vestitum* var. *latifolium* than *C. indicum*. In addition, we tested if introgression was  
198 symmetric between *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* or between *C. indicum* and *C.*  
199 *vestitum* var. *latifolium* in each hybridizing population, using the function ‘wilcox.test’  
200 in R v4.0.3 (R Core Team, 2020). The putative hybrids identified as above excluded

201 from such comparisons.

## 202 **2.6 *trnL-trnF* sequencing and analysis**

203 In order to detect the potential maternal parents of the hybrids, and to estimate the  
204 haplotype diversity of these taxa, we amplified *trnL-trnF* for a subset of 103 samples,  
205 including between five and 34 individuals from each population. Reactions were  
206 performed in 20 ul volumes containing 13 ul ddH<sub>2</sub>O, 5 ul 2×Taq PCR mix  
207 (TIANGEN, China), 0.5 ul each primer (*trnL* and *trnF* (Taberlet et al., 1991)) and 1 ul  
208 DNA template. PCR products were outsourced for purification and sequencing, to  
209 Qingdao, China. Sequences were manually edited and aligned using BioEdit v7.2.5  
210 (Hall, 1999) . The R package pegas v0.14 (Paradis, 2010) was used to construct  
211 haplotype networks, using default settings, with gaps treated as a fifth state. The total  
212 number of sites, polymorphic sites, parsimony informative sites, and nucleotide  
213 diversity were computed using DnaSPv6.12.03 (Rozas et al., 2017). All sequences  
214 obtained in this study were submitted to GenBank with accession number MZ032043  
215 - MZ032145.

216 To aid in a broader phylogenetic analysis, we extracted the *trnL-trnF* region  
217 from the available whole chloroplast genomes for 15 of the 17 wild species of  
218 *Chrysanthemum* occurring in China, 12 cultivars and *Ajania varifolium*. A  
219 phylogenetic tree was estimated using the maximum-likelihood method (ML) in  
220 RAxML v. 8.1.16 (Stamatakis, 2006). *Ajania varifolium* was selected as the outgroup.  
221 A rapid bootstrap analysis with 100 bootstrap replicates and 10 tree searches was  
222 performed under the GTR + GAMMA nucleotide substitution model. The consensus  
223 tree generated from the bootstrap replicates was visualized in FigTree v.1.3.1  
224 (Rambaut and Drummond, 2009).

225

## 226 **3. Results**

### 227 **3.1 Hybridization across ploidy levels inferred from microsatellites**

228 Genetic diversity estimates were similar among the three taxa and hybrids, with allelic  
229 richness ranging from 3.74 to 4.26 and gene diversity from 0.75 to 0.84 (Table S3).  
230 On average, the number of alleles scored in *C. vestitum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium*  
231 was significantly higher than *C. indicum* at eight and seven loci, respectively ( $P <$   
232 0.05); this was expected for a hexaploid possessing more chromosome copies than a  
233 tetraploid species (Fig. S1).

234 Principal Coordinate (PCO) analysis based on Bruvo's genetic distances among  
235 all samples revealed three clusters, with coordinates 1 and 2 explaining 13.8% and 7.8%  
236 of the total variation, respectively (Fig. 2). Coordinate 1 separated *C. indicum* from *C.*  
237 *vestitum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* and coordinate 2 separated *C. vestitum* from *C.*  
238 *vestitum* var. *latifolium* (Fig. 2). Most hybrids identified by the STRUCTURE  
239 analysis fell between *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* in the PCO plot (Fig. 2).

240 The combined STRUCTURE analysis across all samples identified  $K = 3$  as the  
241 optimal  $K$  value (Fig. S2a), with the three clusters corresponding to *C. indicum*, *C.*  
242 *vestitum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* (Fig. 3a). At  $K = 2$ , *C. indicum* formed one  
243 cluster and *C. vestitum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* formed another cluster (Fig.  
244 S2b), supporting the close relationship between these two taxa and the inference that  
245 *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* is a subspecies of *C. vestitum*. Interestingly, there are three  
246 *C. vestitum* individuals possessing a considerable level of introgression from *C.*  
247 *vestitum* var. *latifolium* and one *C. indicum* individual in population TZ with  
248 substantial introgression from *C. vestitum* (Fig. 3a).

249 A total of 20 hybrids were detected when STRUCTURE was performed for each  
250 hybridizing population separately, of which 19 were hybrids between *C. indicum* and

251 *C. vestitum* and one was a hybrid between *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium*.  
252 Fourteen hybrids between *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* were from population XG, two  
253 from each of NX and PH and one from WFS. The only hybrid between *C. indicum*  
254 and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* was from population TZ. No hybrids were detected  
255 from population LJS where *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* co-occur and from BMJ where  
256 *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* co-occur (Fig. 3b).

257 Introgression occurred symmetrically between *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* and  
258 between *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* in all hybridizing populations  
259 except WFS where only three *C. indicum* were collected (Fig. 3c). Introgression was  
260 limited in populations TZ, BMJ and LJS but was extensive in population XG (Fig.  
261 3c).

### 262 **3.2 Plastid diversity and directionality of hybrid formation**

263 A total of 17 chloroplast haplotypes were detected across samples, with 12, nine, and  
264 four in *C. indicum*, *C. vestitum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium*, respectively (Fig. 4;  
265 Table S4). Both *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* harbored three private haplotypes and *C.*  
266 *vestitum* var. *latifolium* harbored one (haplotype H3). *Chrysanthemum indicum* shared  
267 six haplotypes with *C. vestitum* and three haplotypes with *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium*.  
268 By contrast, *C. vestitum* only shared the most common haplotype, H6, with *C.*  
269 *vestitum* var. *latifolium*. Frequencies of particular haplotypes varied considerably  
270 between species as some haplotypes found in *C. indicum* or *C. vestitum* were absent in  
271 *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* (Fig. 4). Three haplotypes (H6, H16 and H17) were found  
272 in hybrids, with haplotype H6 shared among the three taxa, and haplotype H16 found  
273 to be private to the hybrid (Fig. 4). One hybrid shared haplotype H17 with *C. indicum*,  
274 whereas this haplotype is absent from all *C. vestitum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium*  
275 samples (Fig. 4).

276 All modern *C. morifolium* cultivars formed a clade with full support, and this clade  
277 was nested in a large monophyletic clade including *C. dichrum*, *C. zawadskii*, *C.*  
278 *chanetii* (Fig. 5). Five haplotypes (1, 3, 6, 16 and 17) from the three taxa and hybrid  
279 were also nested in this monophyletic clade (Fig. 5).

#### 280 **4. Discussion**

281 In this study, we provide genetic evidence of natural interploidy hybridization  
282 between two pairs of taxa involved in the formation of modern *Chrysanthemum*  
283 horticultural hybrids. We detected more hybrids between *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum*  
284 than between *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium*, possibly due to different  
285 levels of reproductive isolation. In addition, we show that *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium*  
286 formed a genetic cluster distinct from *C. vestitum*, and as such deserves its varietal  
287 status. Here, we first discuss the importance of hybridization between different ploidy  
288 levels in natural *Chrysanthemum* populations, before considering the dynamics of  
289 different hybrid swarms. We finish with the wider implications of our findings for  
290 understanding the origin of horticultural chrysanthemum hybrids.

##### 291 **4.1 Tetraploid-hexaploid hybridization and symmetrical introgression**

292 Interploidy hybridization is more common in genera containing many polyploids, and  
293 where species readily co-occur and hybridize, such as *Betula* (Hu et al., 2019; Zohren  
294 et al., 2016) and *Spartina* (Ainouche et al., 2003). Diploid-tetraploid hybridization  
295 produces mostly sterile triploids, though where hybrids are fertile introgression  
296 usually occurs preferentially from diploids to tetraploids (Moraes et al., 2013;  
297 Pinheiro et al., 2010). In contrast, hybridization between tetraploids and hexaploids  
298 has been proposed to be easier, as pentaploid hybrids are formed frequently (Hülber et  
299 al., 2015) and are more fertile than triploids (Sutherland and Galloway, 2017).  
300 Consistent with this, we detected 20 hybrids among *C. indicum*, *C. vestitum* and *C.*

301 *vestitum* var. *latifolium*, indicating incomplete reproductive isolation. The number of  
302 hybrids is likely to be underestimated in our study, because of the stringent  
303 confidence threshold applied in the STRUCTURE analysis. Three individuals with  
304 admixture between 26.2%-31.4 from population XG and two individuals with  
305 admixture between 34.5%-48.7% were not supported by Q scores with 95% CIs, but  
306 may prove to be hybrids such as later generation backcrosses.

307 Nineteen out of the 20 hybrids were between *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* and one  
308 was between *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium*. This difference may reflect  
309 different levels of reproductive isolation. Higher fruit set in artificial *C. indicum*-*C.*  
310 *vestitum* crosses than artificial *C. indicum*-*C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* crosses, partially  
311 supports this hypothesis (Zhou, 2009). However, environmental selection against  
312 hybrids between *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* may also account for its  
313 rarity. *Chrysanthemum indicum* and *C. vestitum* occupy similar habitats and are  
314 usually intermixed in sympatric populations (Shuai Qi, personal observations). This  
315 may enhance their opportunity for hybridization, while their similar habitat  
316 preferences may reduce the chance of ecological selection on the hybrids. In contrast,  
317 *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* and *C. indicum* are adapted to different conditions, and  
318 hybrids may fail to survive due to the breakdown of suites of co-adapted genes.  
319 Within some diploid-tetraploid systems, introgression is more common from diploids  
320 to tetraploids (Zohren et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2020). However, we observe  
321 symmetrical introgression between *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* and between *C.*  
322 *indicum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium*, indicating that hybrids can backcross with  
323 both parents. This is in line with recent studies showing that pentaploids can mediate  
324 gene flow between species with different ploidy levels (Peskoller et al., 2021). We  
325 couldn't distinguish clearly between male and female parental taxa because *C.*

326 *indicum* and *C. vestitum* share some plastid haplotypes. However, *C. indicum* can  
327 serve as maternal parent as one hybrid shared a haplotype with *C. indicum* whereas  
328 this haplotype is absent from all *C. vestitum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* samples.  
329 In addition, one hybrid had a unique haplotype (H16), which is possibly from  
330 unsampled *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* or introgressed from other *Chrysanthemum*  
331 species.

#### 332 **4.2 Variable hybridizing among populations**

333 The number of hybrids between *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* varied substantially  
334 among the hybridizing populations (Fig. 3b). Fourteen out of 19 hybrids are in  
335 population XG, and no hybrids are found in population LJS. These populations are  
336 approximately 50 km apart, and differential reproductive isolation seems unlikely to  
337 account for such differences. However, we note that population LJS is closer to  
338 human habitation and human activities may have an impact on the persistence of  
339 hybrids.

340 Unexpectedly, one hybrid between *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* is  
341 from population TZ and none are from BMJ. Moreover, the extent of genetic  
342 admixture in TZ seems to be higher than in BMJ (Fig. S1). In TZ, *C. indicum* and *C.*  
343 *vestitum* var. *latifolium* grow closely together, meaning there are enhanced  
344 opportunities for hybridization, and likely relaxed selection against hybrids. However,  
345 in BMJ, *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* are segregated by altitude; this  
346 may limit the survival of hybrids due to environmental selection.

347 However, under future climate change, *C. indicum* may move to higher altitudes  
348 and come into closer contact with *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium*, producing more hybrids,  
349 as seen in population TZ. This has implications for conserving *C. vestitum* var.  
350 *latifolium*. *Chrysanthemum indicum* is widespread and abundant whereas *C. vestitum*



351 var. *latifolium* is restricted to the Dabie Mountains. Hybridization between abundant  
352 *C. indicum* and rare *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* may be predicted to drive the rare  
353 species to extinction through genetic or demographic swamping (Todesco et al.,  
354 2016).

### 355 **4.3 The presence of orphan hybrids**

356 Hybrids usually occur in sympatry with their parental species, but sometimes they  
357 occur separately, due to (often human-mediated) long-distance dispersal of hybrids, or  
358 natural colonization of sterile hybrid taxa (James and Abbott, 2005). Alternatively  
359 parental species may die out due to genetic swamping or competitive exclusion  
360 (Huxel, 1999; Levin et al., 1996). Regardless of the mechanism, these result in orphan  
361 hybrids (Marques et al., 2010; Groh et al., 2019).

362 We detected a few individuals showing considerable admixture between *C.*  
363 *vestitum* var. *latifolium* and *C. vestitum* in populations WFS and NX where *C.*  
364 *vestitum* var. *latifolium* is not known to occur. We also detected one *C. indicum*  
365 individual showing considerable admixture from *C. vestitum* in population TS in  
366 Shandong province. This indicates the presence of hybrids in the absence of one or  
367 both parental species, which has been demonstrated in some plant species, such as  
368 oaks (Dodd and Afzal-Rafii, 2004) and pines (Lanner and Phillips, 1992). A plausible  
369 explanation is the existence of undetected *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* near populations  
370 WFS and NX, or within travelling distance of pollinators or seed dispersal.

### 371 **4.4 Implications for the origins of cultivated chrysanthemums**

372 Our results based on an analysis of plastid *trnL-trnF* showed a monophyletic clade  
373 composed of *C. lavandulifolium*, *C. chanetii*, *C. zawadskii* and five haplotypes of *C.*  
374 *indicum*, *C. vestitum*, *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* and the hybrid between *C. indicum*  
375 and *C. vestitum* (Fig. 5). This indicates that either of these species potentially acted as



376 the maternal parent of cultivated chrysanthemums. This is consistent with previous  
377 research implicating their involvement (Dai et al., 1998; Dai et al., 2005; Fukai, 2003).  
378 However, the specific maternal parental progenitor of modern cultivated  
379 chrysanthemums remains elusive. The modern cultivated chrysanthemums were  
380 placed in a monophyletic clade that was sister to *C. lavandulifolium*. However, the  
381 chloroplast genome of *C. lavandulifolium* has some unique mutations compared with  
382 cultivated chrysanthemums. This leads to the hypothesis that the maternal progenitor  
383 of modern cultivated chrysanthemums has gone extinct (Ma et al., 2020). However,  
384 this requires further evaluation as only one or two whole chloroplast genomes were  
385 included for each wild *Chrysanthemum* species and cultivar. This means the diversity  
386 of chloroplast genomes was not sufficiently represented. Given the high haplotype  
387 diversity of the three taxa and the fact that these haplotypes did not form a  
388 monophyletic clade (Fig. 5), we predict that the ultimate maternal progenitor of  
389 modern cultivated chrysanthemums may potentially be any of the wild  
390 *Chrysanthemum* species, and there may be multiple maternal progenitors for  
391 chrysanthemum cultivars.

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613 **Tables**

614 **Table S1** Detailed sampling information for natural populations of *C. indicum*, *C.*

615 *vestitum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium*.

616 **Table S2** Details of microsatellite markers used in this study.

617 **Table S3** Genetic diversity of 14 populations of *C. indicum*, *C. vestitum* and *C.*

618 *vestitum* var. *latifolium* based on microsatellite markers.

619 **Table S4** The chloroplast haplotypes and their variable sites based on *trnL-trnF*

620 sequences.

621

622 **Figure legends**

623 **Fig. 1** Diversity present in wild *Chrysanthemum* species included in this study.

624 Individual photographs and leaf morphology for *C. indicum* (a), *C. vestitum* (b) and *C.*  
625 *vestitum* var. *latifolium* (c).

626 **Fig. 2** Principal coordinate analysis of *Chrysanthemum* samples based on 13  
627 microsatellite markers. Hybrids were defined based on Q scores in a STRUCTURE  
628 analysis (see text).

629 **Fig. 3** Hybridization among *C. indicum*, *C. vestitum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium*. (a)

630 Hybridization across natural populations in a combined analysis of *C. indicum*, *C.*

631 *vestitum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* with K = 3. (b) Admixture in sympatric

632 population of *C. indicum* and *C. vestitum* and each sympatric population of *C.*

633 *indicum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium*. Barplots on the left or the right of

634 STRUCTURE plot represent the number of individuals having different levels of

635 genetic admixture. Populations XG, NX and PH were analyzed together due to their

636 short geographic distance. Allopatric populations TA and ZP were served as a control.

637 Blue, green and orange represent *C. indicum*, *C. vestitum* and *C. vestitum* var.

638 *latifolium*, respectively. (c) Admixture value for each population among *C. indicum*, *C.*

639 *vestitum* and *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium*. Hybrids were excluded for such comparisons.

640 **Fig. 4** Haplotype network based on plastid *trnL-trnF* sequences in natural

641 *Chrysanthemum* populations. (a) The geographic distribution of haplotypes. Number

642 in brackets indicates the number of samples used for sequencing; (b) Haplotype

643 network graph. Each haplotype is represented by a circle with size proportional to the

644 number of individuals. Color within the circle represents species sharing the

645 haplotype.

646 **Fig. 5** The phylogenetic relationships of *Chrysanthemum* species inferred from the

647 chloroplast *trnL-trnF* region. Branch support values above 50% are depicted.  
648 Haplotypes identified in the present study are indicated in brackets. Species names  
649 before the identified haplotypes represent species sharing the haplotype. Colored in  
650 blue, green, orange and purple represent *C. indicum*, *C. vestitum*, *C. vestitum* var.  
651 *latifolium* and hybrids, respectively.

652 **Fig. S1** Allele number per individual at each of the 13 microsatellite loci among *C.*  
653 *indicum*, *C. vestitum*, *C. vestitum* var. *latifolium* and hybrids. The difference in the  
654 number of allele was assessed using Kruskal–Wallis test. \* $P < 0.05$ , \*\* $P < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $P <$   
655 0.001.

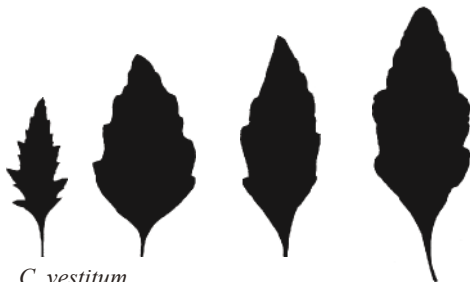
656 **Fig. S2** The output of Structure Harvester showing that  $K = 3$  is the optimal value (a)  
657 and STRUCTURE results at  $K = 2$  and 3 (b).

658

659



*C. indicum*



*C. vestitum*



*C. vestitum* var. *latifolium*

2 cm

Coordinate 2 (7.8%)

