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Ability of native ectomycorrhizal fungi from northern Spain to colonize Douglas-fir and other introduced conifers

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Abstract Thirty-six isolates from 27 species of native ectomycorrhizal fungi collected in northern Spain were tested for ectomycorrhiza formation with *Pseudotsuga menziesii* seedlings in pure culture syntheses. Thirteen of those species were also tested for ectomycorrhiza formation with six other species of conifers (two native and four introduced) to compare their colonization potential. Twenty-three fungal isolates from 18 species formed ectomycorrhizas with *Pseudotsuga menziesii*. The colonization level of the root system varied markedly among the different fungal species. Eight fungi colonized over 50% of the short roots. Nine fungi did not form ectomycorrhizas even though some of them were collected in pure stands of *Pseudotsuga menziesii*. *Laccaria laccata*, *Lyophyllum decastes*, *Pisolithus tinctorius*, and *Scleroderma citrinum* formed abundant ectomycorrhizas on all the conifers tested. *Lactarius deliciosus*, *Rhizopogon* spp., and *Suillus luteus* showed the greatest host specificity. The success in the introduction of some exotic conifers for reforestation in northern Spain is discussed in relation to their compatibility with native ectomycorrhizal fungi.

Key words Douglas-fir · Ectomycorrhizas · Host specificity · Pure culture syntheses · Reforestation

Introduction

Douglas-fir [*Pseudotsuga menziesii* (Mirb.) Franco] was introduced to Europe in 1827. It was extensively planted after 1945 in many countries, and has become the most important North American tree for timber production in Europe, especially in France and Germany (Matthews 1983). Experimental tests to select ade-

quate provenances of Douglas-fir for Spain have been carried out since 1963 (Toval et al. 1993). The ecological conditions in many areas of northern Spain are appropriate for the growth of Douglas-fir. Also, economic analysis of the revenues obtained per hectare from plantations of different conifer or hardwood species in this region indicate that Douglas-fir plantations are the most profitable (Anonymous 1992). Despite this, Douglas-fir has not been planted extensively in this region.

The strategy for the introduction of an exotic tree species should consider the occurrence of populations of compatible mycorrhizal fungi in the outplanting area (Trappe 1977; Marx 1980; Alvarez et al. 1993). Although Douglas-fir-associated ectomycorrhizal fungi may exceed 2000 species in its natural range (Trappe 1962a, 1977), the diversity of fungi associated with nursery seedlings is low, and fungal species present in nurseries may be replaced by others after outplanting (Le Tacon et al. 1984). Also, native populations of mycorrhizal fungi may be low in both afforested and disturbed areas (Le Tacon et al. 1984; Perry et al. 1987) or incompatible with the introduced species. In such cases, nursery inoculations with selected ectomycorrhizal fungi adapted to the ecological conditions of the planting area may be necessary (Mikola 1973; Trappe 1977; Marx 1980). Field trials of seedlings inoculated with selected ectomycorrhizal fungi often show increased seedling survival and growth in relation to uninoculated plants, especially in areas where compatible ectomycorrhizal fungi are lacking (Castellano and Trappe 1985; Stenström et al. 1985; Marx and Cordell 1988; Villedieu et al. 1991; Le Tacon et al. 1992).

In this study, we conducted pure culture synthesis experiments between isolates from native ectomycorrhizal fungi collected in northern Spain and seven different species of conifers as part of a screening program to select ectomycorrhizal fungi for reforestation purposes. Our objectives were: (1) to test the symbiotic compatibility of the native fungi with Douglas-fir seedlings, and (2) to compare the colonization potential of different

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Table 1 Collections of the fungal isolates tested in pure culture synthesis with Douglas-fir. Fungal isolates preceded by an asterisk were also tested with Norway spruce, lodgepole pine, Monterey pine, ponderosa pine, maritime pine and black pine. (A.gra *Abies grandis* (Dougl.) Lindl., C.sat *Castanea sativa* Mill., F.syl *Fagus*

sylvatica L., P.abi *Picea abies* (L.) Karst., P.men *Pseudotsuga menziesii* (Mirb.) Franco, P.pin *Pinus pinaster* Ait., P.rad *Pinus radiata* D. Don, P.syl *Pinus sylvestris* L., Q.ile *Quercus ilex* L., Q.rob *Quercus robur* L., Q.sub *Quercus suber* L.)

| Fungal species | Isolate | Associated tree | Province | Altitude (m) | Soil pH | Isolation year |
|--|---------|-----------------|------------|--------------|---------|----------------|
| * <i>Amanita aspera</i> (Fr.) Hooker | A-48 | Q.rob | Oviedo | 320 | 3.7 | 1986 |
| <i>A. citrina</i> (Schff.) S. F. Gray | A-145 | A.gra | Girona | 1100 | 5.6 | 1990 |
| * <i>A. muscaria</i> (L. ex Fr.) Hooker | A-17 | C.sat | Pontevedra | 40 | 5.2 | 1985 |
| <i>A. muscaria</i> (L. ex Fr.) Hooker | A-124 | A.gra | Girona | 1100 | 5.5 | 1989 |
| <i>A. rubescens</i> (Pers. ex Fr.) Gray | A-148 | F.syl | Girona | 1100 | 5.6 | 1990 |
| <i>Boletus edulis</i> Bull. ex Fr. | A-39 | P.syl | Oviedo | 460 | 3.7 | 1986 |
| <i>B. erythropus</i> Fr. ex Pers. | A-45 | F.syl | Oviedo | 530 | 4.1 | 1986 |
| <i>B. pulverulentus</i> Opat. | A-146 | P.men | Girona | 1000 | 5.6 | 1990 |
| <i>Cenococcum geophilum</i> Fr. | A-144 | F.syl | Girona | 1200 | 5.5 | 1990 |
| <i>Cortinarius purpurascens</i> Fr. | A-14 | C.sat | Pontevedra | 10 | — | 1985 |
| <i>Hebeloma sinapizans</i> (Paulet ex Fr.) Gill. | A-126 | P.abi | Barcelona | 20 | 7.5 | 1990 |
| * <i>Laccaria laccata</i> (Scop. ex Fr.) Bk. & Br. | A-127 | Q.ile | Girona | 1000 | 4.9 | 1989 |
| <i>Lactarius deliciosus</i> Fr. | A-81 | P.pin | Oviedo | 80 | — | 1986 |
| * <i>L. deliciosus</i> Fr. | A-120 | P.pin | Girona | 200 | 5.6 | 1988 |
| <i>L. deliciosus</i> Fr. | A-159 | P.pin | Barcelona | 200 | 5.6 | 1990 |
| <i>L. rufus</i> (Scop.) Fr. | A-34 | P.syl | Oviedo | 610 | 5.8 | 1986 |
| * <i>Lyophyllum decastes</i> (Fr.) Sing | A-71 | P.rad | Oviedo | 240 | 4.2 | 1986 |
| <i>Melanogaster ambiguus</i> (Vitt.) Tul. & Tul. | A-132 | P.men | Girona | 1100 | 5.6 | 1989 |
| * <i>Paxillus involutus</i> (Batsch) Fr. | A-87 | C.sat | Pontevedra | — | 4.7 | 1986 |
| * <i>Pisolithus tinctorius</i> (Pers.) Coker & Couch | A-93 | Q.sub | Girona | 50 | — | 1986 |
| * <i>Rhizopogon luteolus</i> Fr. Nord. | A-5 | P.pin | Pontevedra | 5 | — | 1985 |
| <i>R. luteolus</i> Fr. Nord. | A-106 | P.pin | Pontevedra | 400 | 4.7 | 1987 |
| <i>R. roseolus</i> (Corda ex Sturm) Th. Fr. | A-7 | P.rad | Oviedo | 350 | — | 1985 |
| * <i>R. roseolus</i> (Corda ex Sturm) Th. Fr. | A-96 | P.syl | Tarragona | 1000 | 7.2 | 1987 |
| <i>R. subareolatus</i> Smith | A-116 | P.men | Girona | 1100 | 5.5 | 1987 |
| <i>R. ventricisporus</i> Smith | A-97 | P.syl | Tarragona | 1000 | 7.2 | 1987 |
| <i>R. vulgaris</i> (Vitt.) M. Lange | A-56 | P.rad | Oviedo | 100 | 5.1 | 1986 |
| * <i>R. vulgaris</i> (Vitt.) M. Lange | A-101 | P.pin | Pontevedra | — | 4.7 | 1987 |
| <i>R. vulgaris</i> (Vitt.) M. Lange | A-98 | P.pin | Pontevedra | — | 4.7 | 1987 |
| * <i>Scleroderma citrinum</i> Pers. | A-37 | C.sat | Oviedo | — | — | 1986 |
| * <i>Suillus bovinus</i> (L. ex Fr.) O. Kuntze | A-75 | C.sat | Pontevedra | — | 4.7 | 1986 |
| <i>S. bovinus</i> (L. ex Fr.) O. Kuntze | A-21 | P.rad | Oviedo | 350 | — | 1985 |
| * <i>S. luteus</i> (L. ex Fr.) S. F. Gray | A-33 | P.rad | Oviedo | 100 | — | 1986 |
| <i>Tricholoma saponaceum</i> (Fr.) Kummer | A-121 | P.men | Girona | 1100 | 5.5 | 1988 |
| <i>Xerocomus chrysenteron</i> (Bull. ex St. Am.) Quél. | A-119 | P.men | Girona | 1100 | 5.5 | 1988 |
| <i>X. chrysenteron</i> (Bull. ex St. Am.) Quél. | A-147 | P.men | Girona | 1100 | 5.5 | 1990 |

species of fungi on introduced and native conifer species.

Materials and methods

Seeds of seven species of conifers, five introduced into Spain [Douglas-fir *Pseudotsuga menziesii* (Mirb.) Franco, Norway spruce *Picea abies* (L.) Karst., lodgepole pine *Pinus contorta* Dougl. ex Loud., Monterey pine *Pinus radiata* D. Don. and ponderosa pine *Pinus ponderosa* Dougl. ex Laws.] and two native (maritime pine *Pinus pinaster* Ait. and black pine *Pinus nigra* Arnold) were surface sterilized with 30% hydrogen peroxide for 1 h, rinsed with sterile distilled water and germinated in glass vials containing 2% malt agar (Difco). When the radicle was 2 cm long, seedlings were transferred into glass synthesis tubes prepared according to the technique described by Molina (1979), modified with double the amount of peat.

Sporocarps of putative ectomycorrhizal fungi were collected in northern Spain in association with a variety of host plants and ecological habitats (Table 1). Fungal cultures were isolated from fragments of sporocarp tissue grown on modified MMN (Marx 1969) or PDA (Difco) as described by Molina and Palmer (1982).

Cenococcum geophilum was isolated from surface-sterilized sclerotia (Trappe 1969) collected by sieving forest soil.

One month after sowing, seedlings were inoculated with 12 ml of mycelial slurries. Slurries were prepared by homogenizing 25-day-old fungal colonies in a Waring blender in sterile distilled water. A total of 36 fungal isolates, belonging to 27 species, was tested in pure culture with Douglas-fir seedlings. From them, a subset of 13 fungal species previously reported as mycorrhizal with *Pinus pinaster* (Pera and Alvarez 1995) was also tested on the remaining six species of conifers (Table 1). A total of five replicates was prepared for each host-fungus combination. The synthesis tubes were maintained for 3 months in a pure culture synthesis apparatus as described by Parladé and Alvarez (1993).

At the end of the growing period, seedlings were carefully removed from the tubes and the roots gently washed in tap water to clean off the substrate. Root systems were examined by stereomicroscopy to evaluate the percentage of ectomycorrhizal short roots. Four colonization levels were established from the median of five replicates: 1=1–25% of the short roots colonized, 2=26–50%, 3=51–75%, and 4=76–100%. The median was chosen over the mean because the former is unaffected by erratic extreme values (Snedecor and Cochran 1980). Doubtful ectomycorrhizas were checked microscopically for Hartig net formation. Reisolation of the fungus from the substrate was carried out at the end of the growing period to detect possible contaminants.

Table 2 Fungal isolates that formed ectomycorrhizas with Douglas-fir seedlings in pure culture synthesis. Root colonization levels are assigned from the median of the percentage of ectomy-

corrhizas from five replicates: 1=1–25%, 2=26–50%, 3=51–75%, 4=76–100%

| Fungal species | Isolate | Colonization level | First reference to association |
|---|---------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>Amanita aspera</i> (Fr.) Hooker | A-48 | 2 | — |
| <i>A. muscaria</i> (L. ex Fr.) Hooker | A-17 | 1 | Chu-Chou and Grace (1983) |
| <i>A. muscaria</i> (L. ex Fr.) Hooker | A-124 | 1 | Chu-Chou and Grace (1983) |
| <i>A. rubescens</i> (Pers. ex Fr.) Gray | A-148 | 3 | — |
| <i>Cenococcum geophilum</i> Fr. | A-144 | 1 | Trappe (1962b) |
| <i>Hebeloma sinapizans</i> (Paulet ex Fr.) Gill. | A-126 | 3 | — |
| <i>Laccaria laccata</i> (Scop. ex Fr.) Bk & Br. | A-127 | 4 | Trappe and Strand (1969) |
| <i>Lactarius deliciosus</i> Fr. | A-159 | 1 | Molina and Trappe (1982) |
| <i>L. rufus</i> (Scop.) Fr. | A-34 | 1 | — |
| <i>Lyophyllum decastes</i> (Fr.) Sing | A-71 | 4 | — |
| <i>Melanogaster ambiguus</i> (Vitt.) Tul. & Tul. | A-132 | 2 | — |
| <i>Paxillus involutus</i> (Batsch) Fr. | A-87 | 3 | Laiho (1970) |
| <i>Pisolithus tinctorius</i> (Pers.) Coker & Couch | A-93 | 3 | Marx (1977) |
| <i>Rhizopogon roseolus</i> (Corda ex Sturm) Th. Fr. | A-7 | 2 | Parladé and Alvarez (1993) |
| <i>R. roseolus</i> (Corda ex Sturm) Th. Fr. | A-96 | 1 | Parladé and Alvarez (1993) |
| <i>R. subareolatus</i> Smith | A-116 | 4 | Parladé and Alvarez (1993) |
| <i>R. vulgaris</i> (Vitt.) M. Lange | A-56 | 2 | — |
| <i>R. vulgaris</i> (Vitt.) M. Lange | A-98 | 1 | — |
| <i>R. vulgaris</i> (Vitt.) M. Lange | A-101 | 1 | — |
| <i>Scleroderma citrinum</i> Pers. | A-37 | 3 | Jansen and De Nie (1988) |
| <i>Suillus bovinus</i> (L. ex Fr.) O. Kuntze | A-75 | 2 | — |
| <i>S. bovinus</i> (L. ex Fr.) O. Kuntze | A-21 | 1 | — |
| <i>S. luteus</i> (L. ex Fr.) S. F. Gray | A-33 | 1 | — |

Results

Douglas-fir seedlings were on average 9 cm tall after the growing period and formed well-developed root systems in all fungal treatments. All the fungi totally or partially colonized the substrate of the synthesis tubes by the end of the experiment. Twenty-three isolates in 18 species formed ectomycorrhizas (Table 2). Of these, nine species are confirmed as ectomycorrhizal with Douglas-fir for the first time.

The percentage of ectomycorrhizas formed on Douglas-fir seedlings varied markedly among species. *Amanita rubescens*, *Hebeloma sinapizans*, *Laccaria laccata*, *Lyophyllum decastes*, *Paxillus involutus*, *Pisolithus tinctorius*, *Rhizopogon subareolatus* and *Scleroderma citrinum* colonized over 50% of the short roots. *Amanita citrina*, *Boletus edulis*, *Boletus erythropus*, *Boletus pulverulentus*, *Cortinarius purpurascens*, *Rhizopogon luteolus*, *Rhizopogon ventricisporus*, *Tricholoma saponaceum*, and *Xerocomus chrysenteron* did not form ectomycorrhizas. Less variation in the level of colonization was observed within isolates of the same species in *Amanita muscaria*, *Rhizopogon roseolus*, *Rhizopogon vulgaris*, and *Suillus bovinus*. In almost all cases, variability among replicates in each host-fungus combination was not so high as to change the colonization levels, irrespective of whether we calculate them from the mean or from the median.

Of the 13 species of fungi tested on native and introduced conifers, *Laccaria laccata*, *Lyophyllum decastes*, *Pisolithus tinctorius*, and *Scleroderma citrinum* formed a high percentage of mycorrhizas with all host plants

(Table 3). *Amanita aspera*, *Amanita muscaria*, *Paxillus involutus*, and *Suillus bovinus* were compatible with all the host plants but showed variable colonization levels. *Lactarius deliciosus*, *Rhizopogon* spp., and *Suillus luteus* showed higher specificity than the other fungi tested and reached maximal root colonization levels on *Pinus* spp., especially on *P. pinaster* and *P. radiata*.

Discussion

Many of the fungi associated with either conifers or hardwoods in northern Spain are able to form mycorrhizas with Douglas-fir under aseptic conditions. Among them are known broad-host-range, worldwide fungi such as *Laccaria laccata*, *Paxillus involutus*, and *Pisolithus tinctorius* (Trappe 1962a; Molina and Trappe 1982). The successful adaptation of Douglas-fir to many areas in Europe may be related to its compatibility with broad-host-range fungi, as Malajczuk et al. (1982) found when comparing the ectomycorrhizal fungi of *Pinus radiata* to those of *Eucalyptus* spp. In addition, Le Tacon et al. (1984) pointed out that Douglas-fir shares fungal symbionts with *Betula*, *Fagus*, *Picea* and *Quercus* species in *Calluna* heathlands in central France.

Of the fungal species tested in pure culture with Douglas-fir, eight colonized over 50% of the short roots. Positive field responses to inoculation with certain fungi may require a high colonization level of the root system (Marx and Cordell 1988; Marx et al. 1991). Therefore, those fungi showing a high colonization po-

Table 3 Level of mycorrhizal colonization obtained by pure culture synthesis on seven species of conifers (two native and five exotic) inoculated with 13 species of native ectomycorrhizal fungi. Colonization levels as in Table 2. Species abbreviations as in Ta-

ble 1 plus P.con *Pinus contorta* Dougl. ex Loud., P.nig *Pinus nigra* Arnold, P.pon *Pinus ponderosa* Dougl. ex Laws (— no mycorrhizas, nd not determined)

| Fungal species | Isolate | Colonization level | | | | | | |
|--|---------|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | P.men | P.nig | P.pin | P.abi | P.con | P.pon | P.rad |
| <i>Amanita aspera</i> (Fr.) Hooker | A-48 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| <i>A. muscaria</i> (L. ex Fr.) Hooker | A-17 | 1 | nd | 2 | 4 | 3 | nd | 3 |
| <i>Laccaria laccata</i> (Scop. ex Fr.) Bk. & Br. | A-127 | 4 | 4 | 4 | nd | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| <i>Lactarius deliciosus</i> Fr. | A-120 | — | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3 | — | 3 |
| <i>Lyophyllum decastes</i> (Fr.) Sing | A-71 | 4 | 2 | 3 | nd | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| <i>Paxillus involutus</i> (Batsch) Fr. | A-87 | 3 | nd | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| <i>Pisolithus tinctorius</i> (Pers.) Coker & Couch | A-93 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| <i>Rhizopogon luteolus</i> Fr. Nord. | A-5 | — | — | 3 | 3 | — | 3 | 2 |
| <i>R. roseolus</i> (Corda ex Sturm) Th. Fr. | A-96 | 1 | 1 | 3 | — | nd | — | 1 |
| <i>R. vulgaris</i> (Vitt.) M. Lange | A-101 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | — | 1 | 4 |
| <i>Scleroderma citrinum</i> Pers. | A-37 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| <i>Suillus bovinus</i> (L. ex Fr.) O. Kuntze | A-75 | 2 | 1 | 3 | nd | nd | 2 | 1 |
| <i>S. luteus</i> (L. ex Fr.) S. F. Gray | A-33 | 1 | 2 | 3 | — | — | 1 | 1 |

tential would be preferred as potential candidates for further research in the selection process for nursery inoculations.

Positive results in pure culture syntheses should be interpreted in the light of the artificial experimental conditions. They may not reflect the ectomycorrhizal associations occurring in the field (Harley and Smith 1983). *Rhizopogon roseolus* and *Rhizopogon vulgaris* belong to the section *Rhizopogon* within the genus (Smith and Zeller 1966) and are considered pine specific (Molina and Trappe 1994). In our experiments, they formed a relatively low percentage of mycorrhizas with Douglas-fir and, although they developed a Hartig net, they lacked some of the typical morphological features of *Rhizopogon* mycorrhizas, such as the presence of abundant rhizomorphs. All the isolates of *Rhizopogon subareolatus* of Spanish origin proved to be good colonizers of Douglas-fir roots in pure culture synthesis.

The negative results obtained indicate that the experimental conditions were not adequate for the establishment of the symbiosis, but it cannot be inferred that the association is not possible in nature. Thus, the lack of effectivity of *Boletus pulverulentus*, *Tricholoma saponaceum*, and *Xerocomus chrysenteron*, collected in pure stands of Douglas-fir, may be due to the inappropriate experimental conditions. These species also grew slowly in the synthesis tubes.

Of the sporocarps collected regularly from northern Spain, only *Rhizopogon subareolatus* has been considered host specific to Douglas-fir (Molina and Trappe 1982, 1994; Ho and Trappe 1987). The origin of this fungal species and its mode of entry into Spain is still unknown (Alvarez et al. 1993). Malajczuk et al. (1982) suggested that successful long-term development of exotic plantations is generally accompanied by the appearance of host-specific fungi. Searches for the presence of specific mycorrhizal fungi in adult plantations of Douglas-fir in Spain and other European countries

have not been extensive. Further mycological investigations are needed in European exotic plantations of Douglas-fir.

Cross-tests between several native fungi and both native and introduced conifers allowed us to demonstrate similar patterns of specificity to those described by Molina and Trappe (1982) for native conifers from the northwestern United States. Broad-host-range fungi colonized all host species, irrespective of their origin (native or introduced) and formed a relatively high percentage of mycorrhizas. A second group of fungi was able to colonize all the species of conifers but showed host preferences with marked variation in colonization level. Some of the mycorrhizas formed by fungi from this group lacked typical morphological characteristics of the species, or the colonization level was very low. Finally, a third group showed a narrow range of host compatibility. Species in this group were not able to form mycorrhizas with several host plants and showed a marked affinity for the genus *Pinus*, especially in the genera *Lactarius*, *Suillus* and pine-specific *Rhizopogon*.

The information obtained from pure culture synthesis experiments is useful to complement field observations of sporocarp-host associations. The presence of a fungal species forming mycorrhizas with several hosts does not necessarily mean that the fungus will produce sporocarps (Trappe 1962a). Also, the number of potential ectomycorrhizal hosts may be more than expected from observed associations in the field (Molina and Trappe 1982). In spite of the limitations of the methodology, Massicotte et al. (1994) found clear similarities in patterns of specificity when comparing pure culture (mycelium inoculations) and greenhouse (spore inoculations) experiments for the genus *Rhizopogon*.

This study provides experimental evidence of the degree of potential compatibility between some native ectomycorrhizal fungi from Spain and introduced conif-

ers. These data will be used in studies aimed to elucidate the need for inoculation of conifer seedlings with appropriate ectomycorrhizal fungi and to improve reforestation practices in northern Spain.

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