

# Highly asymmetric intergeneric nuclear hybrids between *Nicotiana* and *Petunia*: evidence for recombinogenic and translocation events in somatic hybrid plants after “gamma”-fusion

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**Summary.** Extremely asymmetric nuclear hybrids have been obtained via protoplast fusion in an intergeneric combination. Irradiated (cobalt<sup>60</sup>, 100 krad) kanamycin-resistant *Petunia hybrida* mesophyll protoplasts were chemically fused with wild-type mesophyll protoplasts of *Nicotiana plumbaginifolia*. Eighty-six hybrid colonies were selected on kanamycin-containing medium, and twenty-four of these could be induced to regenerate numerous shoots. Cytological analysis of the regenerants showed the presence of a few chromosome fragments in some lines, and even a metacentric chromosome in yet another line. Besides additional chromosome fragments some lines only possessed typical *Nicotiana* chromosomes, and this at the diploid ( $2n = 2X = 20$ ) as well as the tetraploid ( $2n = 2X = 40$ ) level. Biochemical analysis showed that all regenerants had neomycin phosphotransferase activity (NPTII), which suggests that intergenomic recombination and or translocation events took place at least in those lines where no additional chromosome fragments could be detected. The presence of the NPTII gene was shown by Southern hybridization. All regenerants tested were fertile, and the segregation ratios for the kanamycin gene (for self and backcross pollinations to the recipient partner) for some of the regenerants correspond with Mendelian rules for a monogenic dominant marker. Most of the regenerants showed abnormal segregation ratios; in this case, no correlation could be made between segregation ratio and chromosome composition.

Our results demonstrate the existence of intergenomic recombination and translocations evens in nuclear somatic hybrid plants obtained via “gamma”-fusion.

**Key words:** “Gamma”-fusion – Highly asymmetric nuclear hybrids – Intergenomic recombination – Translocation

## Introduction

Sexual incompatibility barriers strongly restrict gene exchange between different species. The use of somatic cells as targets in somatic hybridization experiments has opened new possibilities for combining different plant genomes. Moreover, recent advances in plant tissue culture techniques, especially the development of protoplast-regenerating systems in some major crops, has enabled researchers to extend genetic variability by using protoplast fusion technology. As a result, a wide range of hybrid types, with respect to their nuclear and cytoplasmic constitution, has been produced by protoplast fusion (Yang et al. 1988; Tanno-Suenaga et al. 1988; Smith et al. 1989; Sjödin and Glimelius 1989a; Pehu et al. 1989; Han San et al. 1990). In somatic hybrids of remote species, however, various levels of somatic incompatibility reactions become evident (Harms 1983). Fusion products between remote species generally eliminate spontaneously one of the parental genomes thereby creating asymmetric hybrids that contain in addition to a complete recipient genome a few chromosomes derived from the donor. Since one often wants to introduce only a small number of traits from the donor into the recipient, methods for transferring part of the plant genome have been developed. At present, the most frequently used technique for creating asymmetric somatic hybrids is the donor-recipient method – also called “gamma”-fusion. A number of interesting nuclear asymmetric hybrids have been created in this way (Dudits et al. 1980; Gupta et al.

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1982, 1984; Somers et al. 1986; Gleba et al. 1988; Sjödin et al. 1989 b; Yamashita et al. 1989). From these results it has become clear that while irradiation directs the process of chromosome elimination, it does not control the process single handedly. Indeed, highly asymmetric hybrids containing only one or a few donor chromosomes have only rarely been described, irrespective of the irradiation dose used (Dudits et al. 1980; Bates et al. 1987; Agoudgil et al. 1990).

In the present article we report on the isolation of extremely asymmetric nuclear hybrids after donor-recipient fusions between irradiated kanamycin-resistant *Petunia hybrida* and wild-type *Nicotiana plumbaginifolia* mesophyll protoplasts. Hybrid colonies were easily selected from non-fused cells on culture media supplemented with kanamycin. Hybrid regenerants were analysed at biochemical, molecular, cytological and genetic levels.

## Material and methods

### Plant material

Wild-type *Nicotiana plumbaginifolia* viviani plants ( $P_2$ ,  $2n=2X=20$ ) were aseptically grown on basal Murashige and Skoog medium (1962).

Transgenic *Petunia* plants were obtained by leaf disc transformation of a  $F_1$  hybrid of *Petunia hybrida* (Violet 23  $\times$  Red 51) using a disarmed *A. tumefaciens* strains harbouring the pTiB6S3::pMON200 cointegrate plasmid as described in Wallroth et al. (1986). Seeds from the backcross of transformant 2828 to the parental line V23 (kindly provided by A. G. M. Gerats, Department of Genetics University of Amsterdam) were sown on basal medium supplemented with 100 mg/l kanamycin monosulphate. Resistant plants were aseptically grown on basal medium supplemented with 75 mg/l kanamycin monosulphate.

### Isolation, fusion and culture of protoplasts

Mesophyll protoplasts were isolated from 4- to 6-week-old plants of *N. plumbaginifolia* ( $P_2$ ) and kanamycin-resistant *Petunia hybrida* (transformant VR2828  $\times$  V23) as described by Negrutiu et al. (1986). Before fusion kanamycin-resistant *Petunia* protoplasts were irradiated with gamma-rays (100 krad) from a cobalt<sup>60</sup> source. Fusions were carried out as described by Menczel et al. (1982). The protoplasts were further cultured in  $K_3$  medium and subsequently diluted in selection medium (MDn) supplemented with 25 mg/l kanamycin monosulphate. After 1–2 months visible calli were transferred to solid selection medium and subsequently regenerated as described by Installé et al. (1985). Control experiments were carried out under the same conditions.

### Cytological analysis

For chromosome analysis metaphase plates were prepared using the protoplast method as described by Mouras et al. (1978). Alternatively, metaphase spreads were also obtained from the root tips of regenerated plants as described by Pijnacker and Ferwerda (1984).

### DNA analysis

Total genomic DNA from leaf tissue was prepared as described by Shure et al. (1983). The DNA (2–10  $\mu$ g) was restricted with

endonucleases according to the suppliers instructions. Electrophoresis, Southern blotting, Nick translation, hybridization and autoradiography were performed as described by Maniatis et al. (1982). As a probe we used the EcoRI/SalI fragment (representing a complete kanamycin gene) from plasmid pLGVneo1103.

### Enzymatic assay for neomycin phosphotransferase activity (NPTII)

The NPTII activity in hybrid regenerants was detected using the in situ gel assay developed by Reiss et al. (1984) adapted for plant tissue as described by Paszkowski et al. (1984).

### Genetic analysis

Hybrid regenerants with a well-developed rooting system were transferred into the greenhouse. Self pollinations and backcrosses to the recipient partner *N. plumbaginifolia* were made. Seeds were collected and sown on basal medium supplemented with 100 mg/l kanamycin monosulphate. Segregation ratios for the kanamycin gene were then determined.

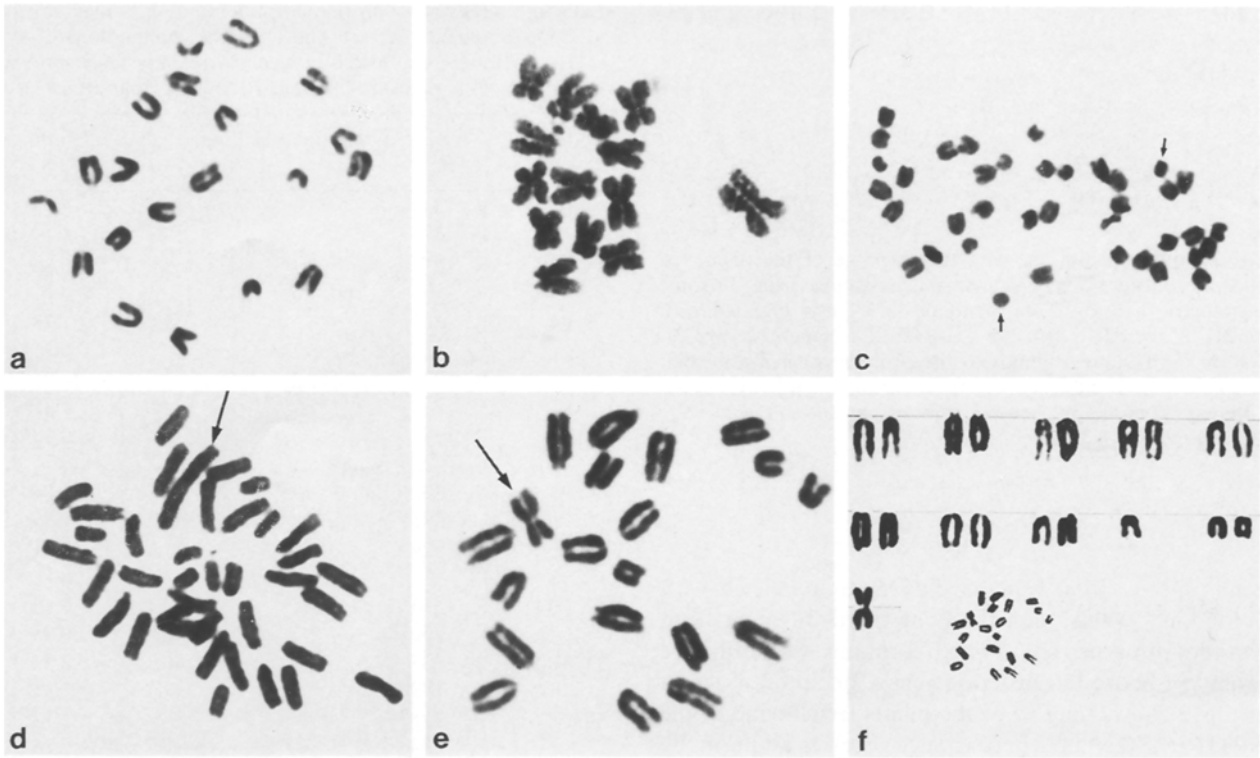
## Results

### Hybrid isolation

One to two weeks after fusion of wild-type *N. plumbaginifolia* ( $P_2$ ) protoplasts with irradiated (100 krad) kanamycin-resistant *Petunia hybrida* (transformant VR2828  $\times$  V23) protoplasts kanamycin monosulphate at a concentration of 25 mg/l was added to the culture medium. After a further culture of 1 to 2 months, green resistant calli could be obtained at a frequency of about  $10^{-4}$ . This transformation frequency is in the range of "gamma"-fusion experiments. In total 86 stable kanamycin-resistant calli were recovered and 24 (28%) could easily be regenerated into plants that resembled the recipient partner *N. plumbaginifolia*. Moreover, organogenic hybrid calli regenerated numerous shoots that were analysed at the cytological, molecular and genetic levels. As expected, control experiments did not result at all in the production of resistant colonies on the selection medium.

### Cytological analysis

The analysis of the chromosome composition of the hybrids was greatly facilitated by the fact that metaphase chromosomes of both parents are clearly distinguishable (Fig. 1 A, B). All *N. plumbaginifolia* chromosomes are telocentric except for one pair that is subtelocentric (Mouras et al. 1986), while *Petunia* chromosomes are meta- and submetacentric. Data on the karyological analysis are summarized in Table 1. In total 14 lines have been analysed. Most of them possessed only *Nicotiana* chromosomes at the diploid ( $2n=2x=20$ ) or tetraploid ( $2n=4x=40$ ) level. However, in 5 lines [1 at the diploid (VN12) and 4 nearly at the tetraploid ( $P_6$ ,  $VN_6$ ,  $N_{12}$ ,  $N_{12}$ ,  $N_{14}$ ) level] a few (2–3) chromosome fragments



**Fig. 1 a–f.** Metaphase plates of several *Nicotiana* + *Petunia* hybrid regenerants and their parents. *Petunia* chromosomes or chromosome fragments are indicated by *arrows*. **a** Diploid karyotype of *Nicotiana plumbaginifolia* ( $P_2$ ); **b** diploid karyotype of *Petunia hybrida* (kanamycin resistant); **c** line P6; 2-3 chromosome fragments in a nearly tetraploid *Nicotiana* background; **d** line N14; 1 megachromosome in a nearly tetraploid *Nicotiana* background; **e** line P1; 19 *Nicotiana* chromosomes + 1 metacentric chromosome; **f** line P1; karyotype according to chromosome length

**Table 1.** Chromosome composition of hybrid regenerants obtained after “gamma”-fusion between *Nicotiana plumbaginifolia* and kanamycin-resistant *Petunia hybrida* protoplasts

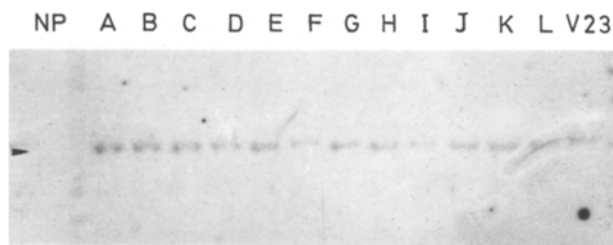
Code	Chromosome number	
	<i>Nicotiana</i>	<i>Petunia</i> + mini-chromosomes
$P_2 + V_{23}$		
$P_2$	20	–
$V_{23}$	–	14
8, N13	40	–
28, N12	38	1
46, P7	20	–
44, P8	20	–
44, N11	20	–
23, N15	20	–
57, P1	19	1
42, P9	40	–
14, P10	40	–
28, P5a	≈40	–
5, P6	36	1-2
VN12	20	2
VN6	≈40	3-4
14, N14	38	1

–, Not detectable;  $P_2$  *Nicotiana plumbaginifolia* (wild type);  $V_{23}$  *Petunia hybrida* (kanamycin resistant)

could be identified (Fig. 1C, D). In yet another line ( $P_1$ ) we identified a metacentric chromosome in addition to nearly a complete *Nicotiana* complement (Fig. 1E). Due to the availability of detailed knowledge of the *Nicotiana plumbaginifolia* karyotype (Mouras et al. 1986), we were able to figure out that it is probably 1 chromosome of pair 9 from *Nicotiana* that is missing. However, by observing Fig. 1F, which shows the karyotype of this  $P_1$  line, one could also speculate that the metacentric chromosome is not a complete *Petunia* chromosome piece onto chromosome 9 of *Nicotiana plumbaginifolia*. In order to sort out these two possibilities we are currently analysing this particular line for chromosome pairing during meiosis and also by in situ hybridization.

#### Molecular analysis

Although all hybrids could be grown and rooted on basal medium supplemented with 50 mg/l kanamycin monosulphate, proof for the presence of the neomycin phosphotransferase gene (kanamycin resistance gene) in these hybrids was obtained by Southern hybridization of ge-



**Fig. 2.** Southern blot showing the presence of the neomycin phosphotransferase gene (kanamycin resistance gene) in some asymmetric hybrids. Total genomic DNA was digested with EcoRI and probed with the EcoRI/SalI fragment of pLGV-neo1103, which corresponds to the entire neomycin phosphotransferase gene. N<sub>p</sub>, *Nicotiana plumbaginifolia* wild-type, A-L different asymmetric between *Nicotiana* and *Petunia*, V<sub>23</sub> *Petunia hybrida* kanamycin resistant

genic DNA. Total genomic DNA was restricted with EcoRI and probed with the EcoRI/SalI fragment from plasmid pLGVneo1103, which contains the authentic neomycin phosphotransferase gene. The autoradiogram in Fig. 2 shows that all of the plants tested contain the NPTII gene (kanamycin resistance gene). In addition, by using the in situ gel assay on leaf extracts, we showed that these plants contained neomycin phosphotransferase activity (NPTII) (data not shown).

#### Genetic analysis

All hybrid regenerants with a well-developed rooting system were transferred into the greenhouse and subsequently, self pollinated and backcrossed to wild-type *N. plumbaginifolia*. Seed set for most of the hybrids was good, although somewhat lower than in wild-type *N. plumbaginifolia*. Typical data for segregation of the kanamycin gene in these fusion hybrids are given in Table 2. The gene for kanamycin resistance is inherited as a dominant Mendelian trait. Since the donor partner *Petunia hybrida* is known to contain only one copy of the kanamycin gene (Wallroth et al. 1986), it was expected that self pollination of the hybrids would result in a 3:1 ratio of resistant (R) and sensitive (S) progeny, while a 1R:1S segregation would be expected after backcrossing to the recipient partner *N. plumbaginifolia*. From the data in Table 2 it is clear that while the segregation ratios of some of the hybrids are consistent with the expected ratios most of the hybrids show deviating segregation patterns. No correlation could be found between the segregation pattern and the chromosome composition of the hybrids. The high fertility (self and backcross) of the obtained hybrid regenerants is unique for asymmetric nuclear hybrids and could be explained by the high level of asymmetry of the regenerants in their chromosome composition.

**Table 2.** Segregations on kanamycin-containing medium of seedlings obtained after self and backcross pollinations of hybrid regenerants from fusions between *Nicotiana plumbaginifolia* and irradiated kanamycin-resistant *Petunia hybrida* protoplasts

Code	Segregation seedlings		Ratio R:S	
	P <sub>2</sub> + V <sub>23</sub>	S		
57, P1	R <sub>1</sub>	457	142	3.22:1
	F <sub>1</sub>	174	146	1.19:1
48, P2	R <sub>1</sub>	1219	34	35.85:1
	F <sub>1</sub>	nd	nd	nd
8, P4	R <sub>1</sub>	501	23	21.78:1
	F <sub>1</sub>	nd	nd	nd
28, P5	R <sub>1</sub>	734	21	34.95:1
	F <sub>1</sub>	232	45	5.15:1
5, P6	R <sub>1</sub>	988	34	29.05:1
	F <sub>1</sub>	233	62	3.76:1
46, P7	R <sub>1</sub>	397	140	2.84:1
	F <sub>1</sub>	203	206	0.99:1
42, P9	R <sub>1</sub>	929	18	51.61:1
	F <sub>1</sub>	nd	nd	nd
44, N11	R <sub>1</sub>	1534	572	2.68:1
	F <sub>1</sub>	130	133	0.98:1
23, N15	R <sub>1</sub>	1335	401	3.33:1
	F <sub>1</sub>	138	117	1.18:1
VN9	R <sub>1</sub>	211	8	26.38:1
	F <sub>1</sub>	54	7	7.7 :1
VN12	R <sub>1</sub>	392	133	2.9 :1
	F <sub>1</sub>	246	240	1.02:1
3, P3	R <sub>1</sub>	170	6	28.33:1
	F <sub>1</sub>	171	28	6.11:1
65A	R <sub>1</sub>	28	6	4.67:1
	F <sub>1</sub>	33	27	1.22:1
65B	R <sub>1</sub>	120	2	60 :1
	F <sub>1</sub>	134	30	4.47:1
VN3	R <sub>1</sub>	257	11	23.36:1
	F <sub>1</sub>	100	28	3.57:1
14, N14	R <sub>1</sub>	99	23	4.30:1
	F <sub>1</sub>	13	20	0.65:1
14, P10	R <sub>1</sub>	274	15	18.17:1
	F <sub>1</sub>	70	64	1.09:1
8, N13	R <sub>1</sub>	276	7	39.42:1
	F <sub>1</sub>	41	12	3.42:1
VN16	R <sub>1</sub>	539	20	26.95:1
	F <sub>1</sub>	267	56	4.77:1
VN11	R <sub>1</sub>	417	20	20.85:1
	F <sub>1</sub>	nd	nd	nd
23	R <sub>1</sub>	339	88	3.85:1
	R <sub>1</sub>	145	132	1.10:1
VN10	R <sub>1</sub>	382	16	23.88:1
	F <sub>1</sub>	177	35	5.06:1

P<sub>2</sub>, *N. Plumbaginifolia*; V<sub>23</sub>, *Petunia hybrida*; R, resistant; S, sensitive; R<sub>1</sub>, self pollination; F<sub>1</sub>, backcross pollination to wild-type *N. Plumbaginifolia*; nd, not determined

## Discussion

The treatment of plant cells with lethal doses of irradiation and subsequent use in fusion experiments has resulted in the production of a number of asymmetric nuclear hybrid clones (Hinnisdaels et al. 1988). From the results obtained so far one can conclude that irradiation can be used to direct the process of chromosome elimination, but the absence of a trivial dose effect (Gleba et al. 1988) suggests that the elimination process is not only due to the mutagenic effect of the irradiation rays. As a matter of fact, highly asymmetric clones containing only 1–2 donor chromosomes have only rarely been obtained, and this usually after the screening of large numbers of fusion products (Dudits et al. 1980; Gupta et al. 1984; Bates et al. 1987; Agoudgil et al. 1990). Biochemical (isozymes), molecular (species-specific probes, organelle DNA, . . .) and cytological analysis have been the usual means employed to prove hybridity and to show the preferential loss of irradiated donor DNA (Imamura et al. 1987). In many cases plant structures could be regenerated, but progeny analysis has only been reported by Dudits et al. 1987; Bates et al. 1987; Gleba et al. 1988 and Agoudgil et al. 1990. So far little evidence exists for gene introgression or translocation events in plants from protoplast fusion experiments (de Vries et al. 1987; Wijbrandi et al. 1990); Piastuch and Bates 1990).

In the present article we report on the production of completely fertile highly asymmetric nuclear hybrids between *Nicotiana plumbaginifolia* and *Petunia hybrida*. Hybrid selection relied on the presence of kanamycin resistance in the irradiated donor species (*Petunia*). All of the regenerated shoots resembled the recipient partner *N. plumbaginifolia*. The presence of the kanamycin gene in hybrid regenerants has been shown at the biochemical level (NPTII assay) and also by Southern hybridization on genomic DNA. The high fertility (self as well as back-cross pollinations to the recipient partner) is unique for "gamma"-fusion hybrids. In a number of the regenerants the kanamycin gene segregated in a Mendelian fashion, or with some deviations. Most interesting results were obtained from cytological analysis. Our detailed knowledge of the karyotype of both fusion partners enabled us to characterize the hybrids precisely. Most of the lines analysed contained only *Nicotiana* chromosomes, which probably reflects their high fertility. In some lines we were able to demonstrate the presence of a few chromosome fragments that were probably created by the irradiation of the *Petunia* protoplasts. In yet another line one clearly metacentric chromosome could be identified in addition to a nearly complete (at least in morphology) *Nicotiana* complement. Indeed, besides the metacentric chromosome only 19 *Nicotiana* chromosomes could be identified. Two possible explanations can be envisaged for this chromosome composition: firstly, the metac-

tric chromosome is a complete *Petunia* chromosome and secondly, the metacentric chromosome represents a translocation of a chromosome fragment from *Petunia* onto a *Nicotiana* chromosome. To discover what the answer is we are currently analysing this very interesting line for chromosome pairing at meiosis and by *in situ* hybridization. These results might help us to demonstrate the existence of recombinogenic or translocation events in somatic hybrid plants.

The fact that we were able to obtain a number of extremely asymmetric nuclear hybrids in this combination is not so surprising and probably due to an efficient selection. Indeed, it is well known from previous experiments that these species show a very high level of somatic incompatibility (Xianghui et al. 1982; Lavergne 1984; Pental et al. 1986). Moreover, *Nicotiana* cybrids with *Petunia* chloroplasts were easily obtained by Glimelius and Bonnett (1986). Therefore, we conclude that donor-recipient fusions, especially with species combinations that show a high level of somatic incompatibility, in association, with a good selection scheme are promising protocols for transferring small amounts of genetic material between plant species. Interesting addition or substitution lines might be created in this way which, due to their fertility, immediately could be integrated into a breeding scheme.

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