# **Cytogenetic analysis of progeny from interspecific hybridization between** *Jatropha curcas* **and** *Jatropha integerrima* **using the GISH method**

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**ABSTRACT**: Vigorous interspecific hybrids have been obtained from cross-pollination between two tropical species of *Jatropha*, *J. curcas* and *J. integerrima*, in a project improving *J. curcas* for use as a biodiesel source. The F<sub>1</sub> hybrids have been confirmed using co-dominant DNA markers and some can be successfully backcrossed to *J. curcas*. These interspecific hybrids show segregation of leaf, seed, and flower characters compared to their parents. Although codominant DNA markers can be used to effectively verify the  $\mathrm{F_{1}}$  interspecific hybrids, it is difficult to confirm the hybridity of the backcross hybrids using DNA markers after many backcross generations. Therefore, this study used the genomic *in situ* hybridization (GISH) method, using genomic DNA probes from *J. curcas* and *J. integerrima*, to analyze the chromosome composition of the interspecific *Jatropha* hybrids from various generations. Seven samples, including one sample of  $F_1$ , one sample of open pollination of  $F_1$  (OPF<sub>1</sub>), two samples of BC<sub>1</sub>, two samples of BC<sub>2</sub>, and one sample of open pollination of BC<sub>1</sub> (OPBC<sub>1</sub>), were selected based on the presence of high seed yield or disease resistance. The GISH chromosome composition results indicated that the proportions of chromosomes of *J. curcas*: *J. integerrima* : crossover event assessed in meristematic tissues at the root tip of seeds from  $F_1#36$ , OPF<sub>1</sub>#36, BC<sub>1</sub>#201, BC<sub>1</sub>#202, BC<sub>2</sub>#524, BC<sub>2</sub>#525, and OPBC<sub>1</sub>#VH1 were 13:9:1, 20:2:1-2, 17-5:2, 21:1:1-2, 22:0:4, 22:0:3, and 22:0:2, respectively. The GISH method proved a valuable tool for genomic analysis as well as monitoring chromatin transfer and introgression in the interspecific hybrids, enhancing the *Jatropha* breeding program considerably.

**KEYWORDS**: *Jatropha curcas*, *Jatropha integerrima*, genomic *in situ* hybridization, cytogenetic analysis

## **INTRODUCTION**

*Jatropha curcas* L. (*J. curcas*) is a plant native to Mexico, and was introduced to Asia and Africa by Portuguese traders who used it as a hedge plant. Belonging to the family Euphorbiaceae, this plant has been recognized for its potential as a biodiesel source, primarily due to its oil-rich seeds. A significant challenge in biofuel production is the need for large plots of land, which are becoming an increasingly limited resource in the face of the growing global population [[1](#page-6-0)]. However, *J. curcas* stands out as a drought-tolerant perennial crop capable of thriving in wild and arid soils whose poor soil quality renders them unsuitable for farming or crop cultivation [[2](#page-6-1)].

*J. curcas* has two sets of genomes and a chromosome number of  $2n = 2x = 22$ , with a genome size of about 370 Mbp [[3](#page-6-2)]. The species is known to have a narrow genetic base [[4–](#page-6-3)[6](#page-6-4)] and low seed yield, prompting research to develop *J. curcas* lines with higher yields.

The improvement of the cultivar through conventional breeding within *J. curcas* may be challenging due to the close genetic similarities between conspecifics; the likelihood of obtaining new traits from such a combination is minimal. Therefore, recent research has focused on broadening the genetic diversity of *J. curcas* through crossbreeding (interspecific hybridization) with other *Jatropha* species [[7–](#page-6-5)[9](#page-6-6)]. The underlying principle of interspecific hybridization is to combine favorable characteristics—such as oil quantity and quality, yield, as well as resistance to insects (for example, army worms, aphids, mealy bugs) and diseases (for example, Anthracnose, Passalora leaf spot, Cercospora/Pseudocercospora leaf spot)—from parental plants in their progeny [[10](#page-6-7)].

Genomic *in situ* hybridization (GISH) is a method that utilizes whole-genomic DNA as a probe to investigate the relationships, divergence, and evolution of the genome in plants [[11](#page-6-8)]. It is also employed to identify chromosome fragments from alien species that have integrated into the chromosomes of a particular plant species [[12](#page-6-9)]. GISH was initially employed to differentiate the genomes of the intergeneric hybrids between *Hordeum chilense* and *Secale africanum* [[13](#page-6-10)] and in Tricolor and Wheat-Rye Migration Line [[14,](#page-6-11) [15](#page-6-12)]. Furthermore, the GISH technique has been utilized for karyotype analysis in numerous plant species [[16–](#page-6-13)[19](#page-6-14)].

Well-developed genetic *in situ* hybridization analysis allows for the cytological discrimination of closely related genomes in interspecific hybrids. This approach to investigate genome similarity is a powerful tool for biosystematic and evolutionary studies. More importantly, it often allows for the analysis of species interrelationships where conventional methods cannot be performed.

Gene flow in birch (*Betula*) was studied via interspecific hybridization between the diploid dwarf *B. nana* and the tetraploid downy *B. pubescens* using different approaches, from cytogenetic and botanical, to molecular and palynological [[20](#page-6-15)]. Backcrossing of the obtained triploid  $F_1$  hybrids to either male or female parent produced the progenies, belonging to diploid, triploid and tetraploid, which were successfully confirmed by genome size analysis based on flow cytometry and DNA densitometry. Variations in plant and pollen morphology as well as chloroplast DNA haplotype in the progenies supported the cytogenetic study. Genetic variation permits flexibility and survival of a population in the face of environmental changes. Other cytogenetic approach, like GISH, can be used for supporting the study of introgressive hybridization and determining the chromosome composition of the interspecific hybrids from different generations.

DNA markers have been widely used to confirm the  $F_1$  hybrid. Different alleles from both male and female parents can be detected effectively in the  $F_1$ hybrid using the co-dominant DNA marker. During backcrossing, the donor genome will typically be reduced by half in each generation, causing difficulties in using DNA markers to confirm the hybridity of the backcross generation hybrids.

The aim of the present study was to use the GISH technique to distinguish chromosomes from the different parental genomes (*J. curcas* and *J. integerrima*) in the interspecific hybrids from the  $F_1$  generation, backcross generation, and open pollination. This technique will be a useful tool for verifying hybrids for future breeding of *J. curcas* and other plants.

#### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### **Plant materials**

Seven hybrid samples originating from interspecific hybridization between *J. curcas* and *J. integerrima* in the *Jatropha* breeding program were selected from different generations. Sample selection was mainly based on these hybrids' potential to generate high seed yield or moderately high disease resistance. The samples included one sample of the first filial generation of *J. curcas* and *J. integerrima* ( $F_1 \# 36$ ); one sample originating from the open pollination of  $F_1$ , referring to pollination by insect pollinators in the experimental field (OPF<sub>1</sub>#325); two samples of the first backcross generation, meaning the  $\mathrm{F_{1}}$  crossing back to the recurrent parent *J. curcas* (BC<sub>1</sub>#201 and BC<sub>1</sub>#202); two

<span id="page-1-0"></span>

**Fig. 1** Breeding scheme of selected hybrid samples from different generations of interspecific hybridization, the seeds of which were used in the GISH analysis. *J. curcas* is the recurrent parent (OP = open pollination,  $F_1$  = first filial generation, BC = backcross).

samples of the second backcross generation, meaning the BC<sup>1</sup> crossing back to the recurrent parent *J. curcas*  $(BC<sub>2</sub>#524 and BC<sub>2</sub>#525);$  and one sample of the open-pollination of  $\mathtt{BC}_1$  (OPBC $_1$ #VH1). The breeding scheme of the samples is shown in [Fig. 1,](#page-1-0) and the pedigree and characters of the seven selected hybrids are listed in [Table 1.](#page-2-0) Seeds of the seven selected hybrids were collected and used for the GISH analysis. Seeds of  $F_1$ #36, OP $F_1$ #325, BC<sub>1</sub>#201, BC<sub>1</sub>#202, BC<sub>2</sub>#524, BC<sub>2</sub>#525, and OPBC<sub>1</sub>#VH1 were F<sub>2</sub>#36,  $F_1$  of #325, BC<sub>1</sub>F<sub>1</sub>#201, BC<sub>1</sub>F<sub>1</sub>#202, BC<sub>2</sub>F<sub>1</sub>#524,  $BC_2F_1#525$ , and  $F_1$  of #VH1, respectively.

#### **Slide preparation**

Seeds (five seeds/sample) were germinated at a controlled room temperature of 25 °C. Root tips about 1 cm long were collected and pretreated with 0.002 M 8 hydroxyquinoline (Sigma, MO, USA) solution at 20 °C for 3 h and then fixed in 3:1 absolute ethanol:glacial acetic acid for 16 h. Root tips were washed in distilled water prior to digestion in 20 µl of an enzyme mixture containing 2% cellulase (Yakult, Tokyo, Japan) and 5% pectolyase (Sigma, MO, USA) at 37 °C for 1.5–2 h, then washed in distilled water for 1 min. Root tips of only about 0.3–0.5 mm long were macerated and pressed onto a slide with a drop of 3:1 absolute ethanol:glacial acetic acid, then exposed to steam and air dried.

# **DNA probes and** *in situ* **hybridization**

Total genomic DNA from *J. curcas* and *J. integerrima*, as the parental generation, was extracted from young leaves using the standard cetyltrimethylammonium bromide (CTAB) method with some modifications [[21](#page-6-16)]. Genomic DNAs were digested and labeled by nick translation with digoxigenin-dUTP (Roche, Lewes, UK) (for *J. curcas*) and Cy3-dUTP (Cytiva, Carnegie Mellon University, USA) (for *J. integerrima*) and were used as GISH probes. Probe

Hybrid sample		Pedigree	Sample character
$F_1$	#36	J. curcas × J. integerrima $F_1#36$	Flowers (V-shaped and pink color), successfully backcrossing to J. curcas and complete seed setting, leaves similar to J. curcas* and seeds similar to J. integerrima**, semi-hard woody stem, moderate disease resistance ( $F_1$ = first filial generation).
OPF <sub>1</sub>	#325	$J.$ curcas $\times J.$ integerrima $F_1 \# 267 \times$ $OPF_1$ #325	Flowers (bell shaped and greenish-yellow color) similar to J. curcas, leaf shape and seeds similar to J. curcas, thick leaves, moderately high disease resistance $(OPF_1 = open$ pollination of $F_1$ ).
BC <sub>1</sub>	#201	J. curcas $\times$ J. integerrima J. curcas $\times$ F <sub>1</sub> #137 $BC_1 \# 201$	Flowers (bell-shaped and pinkish-white color), long pedunculated flowers, leaves and seeds similar to J. curcas, moderate disease resistance ( $BC = back-$ cross generation).
	#202	J. curcas $\times$ J. integerrima J. curcas $\times$ F <sub>1</sub> #137 $BC_1 \# 202$	Flowers (bell-shaped and greenish-white color), long pedunculated flowers, leaves and seeds similar to <i>J. curcas</i> , moderate disease resistance.
BC <sub>2</sub>	#524	$J.$ curcas $\times J.$ integerrima J. curcas $\times$ F <sub>1</sub> #137 $BC_1$ #202 × J. curcas $BC_2$ #524	Flowers (bell-shaped and greenish-yellow color) similar to J. curcas, leaves and seeds similar to J. curcas, high number of fruit per plant, moderate seed yield, moderate disease resistance.
	#525	$J.$ curcas $\times J.$ integerrima J. curcas $\times$ F <sub>1</sub> #137 $BC_1$ #202 × J. curcas $BC_2$ #525	Flowers (bell-shaped and greenish-yellow color) similar to J. curcas, leaves and seeds similar to J. curcas, high number of fruit per plant, moderate seed yield, moderate disease resistance.
OPBC <sub>1</sub>	#VH1	$J.$ curcas $\times J.$ integerrima J. curcas $\times$ F <sub>1</sub> #137 $BC_1 \# 202 \times$ OPBC <sub>1</sub> #VH1	Flowers (bell-shaped and greenish-yellow color) similar to J. curcas, leaves and seeds similar to J. curcas, high number of fruit per plant, moderate seed yield, moderate disease resistance. (OPBC1 = open pollination of $BC1$ )

<span id="page-2-0"></span>**Table 1** Pedigree and specific characters of selected hybrids whose seeds were used in the GISH analysis.

*J. curcas*\*: tree/shrub, highly branching, cordate-palmately lobed leaves, bell-shaped and greenish-yellow flowers, and tardily dehiscent fruits with black seeds.

*J. integerrima*\*\*: shrub, sparse branching, ovate fiddle-shaped leaves, star-shaped and crimson-red flowers, dehiscent fruits with small brown seeds with spots, semi-hard woody stem and disease resistance.

labeling and *in situ* hybridization followed the steps previously described by Ohmido and Fukui [[22](#page-6-17)] and Ohmido et al [[23](#page-6-18)], with minor modifications. Briefly, the hybridization mixture containing labeled probes in hybridization buffer (50% deionized formamide,  $2 \times SSC$  (saline-sodium citrate), and 10% sodium dextran sulphate) was denatured for 10 min at 80 °C and then immediately put on ice. Each slide was filled with 10 µl of hybridization mixture and covered with a slip. Then, slides were left overnight at 37°C in a moist chamber, followed by three 5-min immersions of the slides in 20% formamide in  $2 \times SSC$  and  $0.1 \times SSC$  at 42 °C. After that, 100 µl of anti-digoxigenin-fluorescein isothiocyanate (FITC) (Roche, Lewes, UK) in  $4 \times SSC$ 

were added and incubated in a humid dark box for 1– 2 h at 37 °C. The slides were then briefly washed with  $2 \times SSC$  three times for 5 min each time. Then, 70  $\mu$ l of 4′6-diamidino-2-phenylindole (Serva, Heidelberg, Germany) (DAPI,  $0.5 \mu g/ml$ ) was added to all slides for 10 min at room temperature. Finally, 10 µl of VS (Vectashield mounting medium) was applied to the slides and they were examined under a fluorescent microscope.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Seeds of the seven hybrids [\(Table 1\)](#page-2-0) selected from the  $F_1$ , OP $F_1$ , BC<sub>1</sub>, BC<sub>2</sub>, and OPBC<sub>1</sub> generations of the cross between *J. curcas* and *J. integerrima*

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**Fig. 2** GISH images of chromosomes at the root tip of seed samples of selected hybrids from different generations of interspecific hybridization; (A) flowers of the parental generation: *J. curcas* (bell-shaped and greenish-yellow flowers) and *J. integerrima* (star-shaped and crimson-red flowers); flower of (B)  $F_1#36$ /chromosomes of  $F_2#36$ , (C) OPF<sub>1</sub>#325/chromosomes of F<sub>1</sub> of #325, (D) BC<sub>1</sub>#201/chromosomes of BC<sub>1</sub>F<sub>1</sub>#201, (E) BC<sub>1</sub>#202/chromosomes of  $BC_1F_1#202$ , (F)  $BC_2#524/chromosomes$  of  $BC_2F_1#524$ , (G)  $BC_2#525/chromosomes$  of  $BC_2F_1#525$ , and (H) OPBC1#VH1/chromosomes of F<sup>1</sup> of #VH1, with chromosomes of *J. curcas* in green and *J. integerrima* in red. Small images at the side of each figure show an enlarged view of the chromosomes containing a crossover event (Jc:Ji:Co = *J. curcas*: *J. integerrima* : crossovers,  $F_1$  = first filial generation, BC = backcross, OP = open pollination).

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**Fig. 3** Chromosome patterns inherited from parents *J. curcas* (green chromosome) and *J. integerrima* (red chromosome), based on the GISH analysis of chromosomes at the root tip of seed samples of selected hybrids from different generations of interspecific hybridization, where flower color of the hybrids varied significantly.

[\(Fig. 2A](#page-3-0)) (the parental generation) were investigated using GISH. *J. curcas*, used as the recurrent parent, was selected from a previous *J. curcas* survey project in the country. The selected line produces moderate seed yield but has low disease resistance. The morphological characteristics of *J. curcas* are as follows: it grows as a tree/shrub and is highly branching, with cordatepalmately lobed leaves, greenish-yellow flowers, and tardily dehiscent fruits with black seeds. On the other hand, *J. integerrima* is an ornamental shrub whose morphological characteristics include sparse branching, ovate fiddle-shaped leaves, crimson-red flowers, and dehiscent fruits containing small brown seeds with spots. *J. integerrima* has the distinct characteristics of a semi-hard woody stem and disease resistance [[24](#page-6-19)]. The hybrids obtained from the interspecific hybridization exhibited a wide range of variation in vegetative traits, such as stem type, branching habit, and leaf size and shape, which were similar to those of the parent breeds. The F<sub>1</sub> hybrids of *J. curcas* and *J. in* $tegerrima$  have pink or white flowers. Some  $F_1$  can

successfully backcross to *J. curcas* and complete seed setting to produce the first backcross  $(BC<sub>1</sub>)$  generation, and subsequently to the second backcross  $(BC_2)$ generation. After many generations of backcrossing as well as open pollination, the obtained progeny had similar characteristics to the recurrent parent, *J. curcas*. The pedigree and specific characteristics of selected hybrids whose seeds were used in the GISH analysis are listed in [Table 1.](#page-2-0) Changjalern et al [[25](#page-6-20)] developed three specific DNA markers and used them effectively to confirm the hybrids from interspecific hybridization in *Jatropha* species. However, using DNA markers to trace donor genomes becomes increasingly difficult with progressive backcrossing due to the theoretical reduction by half of the donor genome in each generation. Therefore, we conducted a GISH analysis to visualize the presence of the donor parent genome and the recurrent parent genome in the hybrids from different generations of interspecific hybridization. In combination with previously used methods of genomic analysis, the results of our study will enhance the

success of the *Jatropha* breeding program.

The contribution of the parental genome to that of each hybrid sample could clearly be distinguished by GISH, and its configuration at the metaphase was also revealed. Images of the GISH results [\(Fig. 2B](#page-3-0)-H) show the chromosomes from *J. curcas* (in green) and *J. integerrima* (in red) of each hybrid sample. Hybridization distribution in the 22 chromosomes of the  $F_2$ #36 hybrid indicated that 13 chromosomes came from *J. curcas*, while the other nine chromosomes came from *J. integerrima*. One small fragment of *J. curcas* chromosome located on the distal end of a *J. integerrima* chromosome was seen from this sample, indicating a crossover event [\(Fig. 2B](#page-3-0)). The proportion of chromosomes from the GISH result of *J. curcas*: *J. integerrima* : crossovers in the  $F_2$ #36 hybrid was therefore 13:9:1.

For the result from seeds of the open-pollinated  $F_1$ hybrid,  $F_1$  of #325, the chromosomes consisted of two types of hybrid cell: (1) 20 *J. curcas* chromosomes, two chromosomes from *J. integerrima*, and one crossover, and (2) 20 *J. curcas* chromosomes, two chromosomes from *J. integerrima*, and two crossover events, as shown in [Fig. 2C](#page-3-0). Consequently, the proportion of chromosomes from the GISH result of *J. curcas*: *J. integerrima* : crossovers in  $F_1$  of #325 hybrid was 20:2:1-2.

For the GISH result from seeds of  $BC<sub>1</sub>$  hybrids, the chromosomes of  $BC_1F_1#201$  consisted of 17 *J. curcas* chromosomes, five chromosomes from *J. integerrima*, and two crossovers [\(Fig. 2D](#page-3-0)), while the chromosomes of  $BC_1F_1#202$  consisted of two types of hybrid cell: (1) 21 chromosomes from *J. curcas*, one chromosome from *J. integerrima*, and one crossover, and (2) 21 *J. curcas* chromosomes, one chromosome from *J. integerrima*, and two crossovers [\(Fig. 2E](#page-3-0)). The proportion of chromosomes of *J. curcas*: *J. integerrima* : crossovers was 17:5:2 in  $BC_1F_1#201$ , and 21:1:1-2 in  $BC_1F_1#202$ .

The GISH result from seeds of the  $BC_2$  and OPBC<sub>1</sub> samples indicated all hybrid chromosomes came from *J. curcas*, together with some small fragments of *J. integerrima* chromosome on some *J. curcas* chromosomes. The chromosomes of  $BC_2F_1#524$ ,  $BC_2F_1#525$ , and  $F_1$ of #VH1 consisted of 22 chromosomes from *J. curcas* and four, three, and two fragments of *J. integerrima* chromosomes located at the distal end of *J. curcas* chromosomes, respectively [\(Fig. 2F](#page-3-0)-H). The proportions of chromosomes of *J. curcas*: *J. integerrima* : crossovers in  $BC_2F_1#524$ ,  $BC_2F_1#525$ , and  $F_1$  of #VH1 were 22:0:4, 22:0:3, and 22:0:2, respectively. The genomic constitution of meristematic cells at the root tip of seed samples of the seven selected hybrids from different generations of the interspecific hybridization between *J. curcas* and *J. integerrima* indicated by the GISH analysis are summarized in [Fig. 3,](#page-4-0) with *J. curcas* chromosomes depicted in green and *J. integerrima* chromosomes in red.

Seed germination after self-pollination of  $F_1$  hybrids was low, as previously observed by Muakrong et al [[7](#page-6-5)], causing difficulties in the advance selection of the next generation. However, backcrossing to the production of  $BC_1$  of some  $F_1$ hybrids was successful in the *J. curcas* breeding program. GISH has been used recently to detect parental genomes of known origin in plant hybrid cells. For example, total rye DNA probes were used to identify rye chromosomes in the hybrids from *Hordeum chilense*×*Secale africanum* [[13](#page-6-10)] and in Tricolor and Wheat-Rye Migration Line [[14,](#page-6-11) [15](#page-6-12)]. However, the present study is the first to use the GISH technique to detect the genomes of *J. curcas* and *J. integerrima* in their progeny from different generations. *J. curcas* and *J. integerrima* have been reported to have small chromosome sizes [[26](#page-6-21)], with the length of the 11 *J. curcas* chromosomes that displayed homomorphic pairs ranging from 1.71– 1.24 µm [[27](#page-6-22)]; due to their size, it is quite difficult to study these chromosomes. However, we still obtained strong signals of *J. integerrima* in selected hybrids from different generations of the interspecific hybridization. The strongest signal of *J. integerrima* was seen in  $F_2$ #36, which was the closest relative of *J. integerrima* among the seven selected hybrids used in our GISH analysis. Interspecific *Jatropha* hybrids share common DNA sequences with parents, but the proportion of common repetitive sequence decreases in subsequent generations. Backcrossing can be used to generate populations that serve as a good source of variability and genetic improvement of *Jatropha* as well as other commercial plants. The interspecific translocation found in this study may be helpful in establishing introgression lines bearing the valuable agronomical traits of *J. integerrima*, such as seed yield, oil content [[28](#page-6-23)], dwarfism [[8](#page-6-24)], and even ornamental quality [[7](#page-6-5)], to create commercial *Jatropha* varieties.

In conclusion, we conducted a cytogenetic analysis using the GISH method to analyze progeny from the interspecific hybridization between *J. curcas* and *J. integerrima*. The results showed that GISH could be used effectively to detect donor genomes in *Jatropha* hybrids from different generations. The reduction of *J. integerrima* donor genome was detected in breeding populations as expected, indicating the efficacy of GISH as a valuable tool for genomic analysis in *Jatropha* interspecific hybrids. The chromosome proportions of *J. curcas*: *J. integerrima*: crossovers in the  $F_2$ #36,  $F_1$  of #325 from open pollination of  $F_1$ , BC<sub>1</sub>F<sub>1</sub>#201,  $BC_1F_1 \# 202$ ,  $BC_2F_1 \# 524$ ,  $BC_2F_1 \# 525$ , and  $F_1$  of  $\#VH1$ from open pollination of  $BC<sub>1</sub>$  generations were 13:9:1, 20:2:1-2, 17-5:2, 21:1:1-2, 22:0:4, 22:0:3, and 22:0:2, respectively. Currently, interspecific hybridization is an important technique for transferring genes into and between *Jatropha* species. The GISH method for *Jatropha* will be an important tool to monitor the success of donor genome introgression, opening up the possibility of substantially enhancing the *Jatropha* breeding program.

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