

## Biotechnological Applications in *Populus* Species<sup>1\*</sup>

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## 포플러類의 Biotechnology 應用<sup>1\*</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

The development of tissue culture systems for *Populus* species, and the utilization of tissue culture biotechnology will be reviewed and discussed. Special emphasis will be placed on prospects for genetic transformation by *Agrobacterium*-mediated gene transfer methods.

### 要 約

포플러類에 對한 組織培養法과 *Agrobacterium* 에 의한 遺傳子 插入法등의 開發 및 利用 現況과 그 가능성에 對하여 調査 分析하였으며, 이들 새로운 技術을 포플러類에 適用할 時 豫상되는 問題點과 그 利用 展望에 對하여 記述 하였다.

### INTRODUCTION

It was first reported in 1983 that a plant gene was transferred to and expressed in a plant of a different species using an *Agrobacterium*-mediated gene transfer method (Hoekema *et al.*, 1983; Murai *et al.*, 1983). Since then, gene transfer methods have been developed for several important forest tree species such as *Populus alba* X *P. grandidentata* (Fillatti *et al.*, 1987), *Pinus taeda* (Sederoff *et al.*, 1986) and *Pseudotsuga menziesii* (Dandekar *et al.*, 1987). In addition, major applications of tissue culture techniques for forest

tree improvement were utilized for *Populus* species (Frohlich and Weisgerber, 1985), *Pinus taeda* (McKeand and Weir, 1984), and *Pinus radiata* (Aitken-Christie and Gleed, 1984). Because of rapid progress in developing biotechnological applications with *Populus* species, this genus is well-suited as a model system for deciduous forest tree species.

### FOREST BIOTECHNOLOGY

There are several different definitions of biotechnology. Biotechnology can be defined broadly as a technology that uses living organisms

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(or parts of organisms) to make or modify products, to improve plants or animals, or to develop micro-organisms for specific uses (Sederoff and Ledig, 1984). Torrey (1985) defined plant biotechnology as "the application of existing techniques of plant organ, tissue, and cell culture, plant molecular biology, and genetic engineering to the improvement of plants and of plant productivity for the benefit of man". Recently, Nelson and Haissig (1984) defined forest biotechnology as micropropagation and pollen suppression as well as genetic engineering including DNA recombination and protoplast fusion. Gupta and Durzan (1987) and Haissig et al. (1987) also used the biotechnology term in the area of tissue culture as tissue culture biotechnology. Chun (1985b) defined forest biotechnology as shown in Figure 1. For other discussions of the potential applications of biotechnology to forest tree species, the reader is referred to other reviews by Sommers and Brown (1979), Karnosky (1981), Farnum *et al.* (1983), Faltonson et al. (1984), Sederoff and Ledig (1984), Chun (1985a),

Ahuja (1986) and Haissig et al. (1987).

One of the most valuable features of forest biotechnology is that it allows rapid incorporation of specific improvements within a short period of time. Nelson and Haissig (1984) and Riemenschneider et al. (1987) have shown that biotechnology can reduce the long time periods required for tree improvement by conventional tree breeding technology alone.

### POPULUS AS A MODEL SYSTEM FOR BIOTECHNOLOGICAL APPLICATIONS WITH DECIDUOUS FOREST TREE SPECIES

With regard to silvicultural aspects, *Populus* species are among the fastest growing deciduous forest tree species and are distributed throughout temperate forests of the northern hemisphere (Dickmann and Stuart, 1983). Because of their rapid growth, ease of establishment through stem or root cuttings, apparent ease of coppice

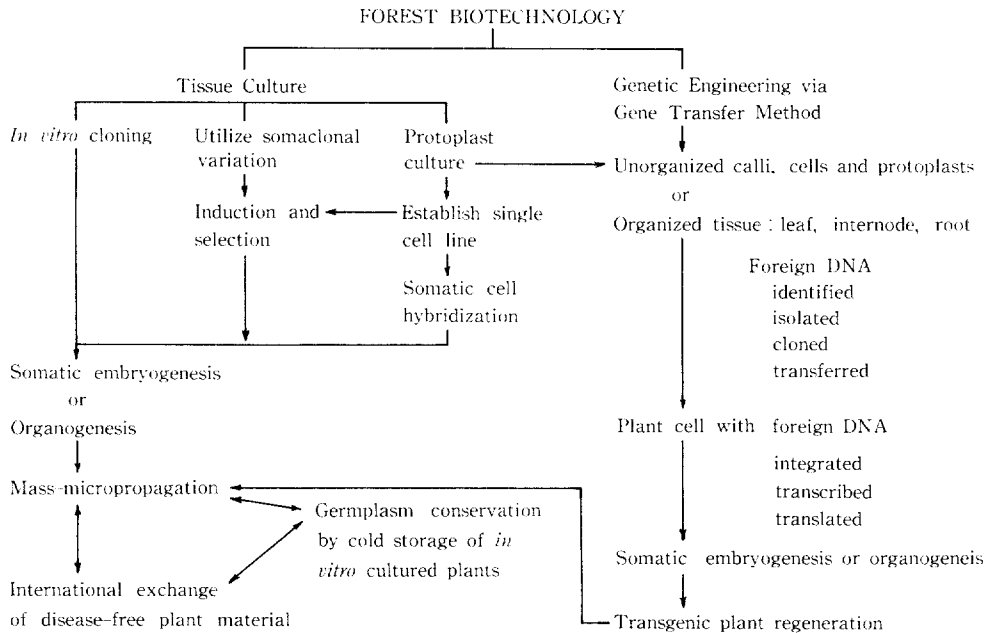


Fig. 1. Forest biotechnology by tissue culture and genetic engineering. On the left, established and developing *in vitro* techniques; on the right, prospective genetic engineering developments.

**Table 1.** Tissue culture research with *Populus* species.

Year	Species	Culture <sup>a</sup>	Regen. <sup>b</sup>	Reference
1964	<i>P. tremuloides</i>	C	S R	Mathes a, b
1968	<i>P. tremuloides</i>	C	S R W	Winton a, b
	<i>P. tremuloides</i>	C	S R	Wolter
1970	<i>P. tremuloides</i>	C	S R W	Winton
1971	<i>P. tremula</i>	C	S R W	Winton
1972	<i>P. deltoides</i> X <i>P. nigra</i>	C	S R W	Berbee <i>et al.</i>
	<i>P. trichocarpa</i>	Cat	S	Bawa and Stettle
1973	<i>P. nigra</i> 'Italica'	C	S R	Venverloo
1974	<i>P. euramericana</i>	C	S R	Chalupa
	<i>P. tremula</i>	C	S R	Chalupa
	<i>P. deltoides</i>	A	S R	Sato
	<i>P. Sieboldii</i> X <i>P. grandidentata</i>	A	S R	Sato
	<i>P. maximowiczii</i>	A	S R	Sato
1975	<i>P. nigra</i>	A	S R	Wang <i>et al.</i>
	<i>P. tremuloides</i>	C		Wolter and Gordon
	<i>P. ussuriensis</i>	A	S R	Heilungkiang Inst.
	<i>P. simonii</i> X <i>P. nigra</i>	A	S R	Heilungkiang Inst.
1977	<i>P. euramericana</i>	C	S R	Lester and Berbee
	<i>P. tristis</i> X <i>P. balsamifera</i>	A, M	S R W	Thompson and Gordon
	<i>P. nigra</i> 'Italica'	S	S R W	Whitehead and Giles
	<i>P. deltoides</i> X <i>P. nigra</i>	S	S R W	Whitehead and Giles
	<i>P. yunnanensis</i>	S	S R W	Whitehead and Giles
	<i>P. berolinensis</i>	A	S R W	North East For. Acad.
	<i>P. harbinensis</i> X <i>P. pyramidalis</i>	A	S R W	North East For. Acad.
	<i>P. canadensis</i> X <i>P. koreana</i>	A	S R W	North East For. Acad.
1978	<i>P. alba</i> ; <i>P. canescens</i>	S	S R W	Christie
	<i>P. tremula</i> ; <i>P. alba</i>	S	S R W	Christie
	<i>P. alba</i> X <i>P. tremula</i>	S	S R W	Christie
	<i>P. tremuloides</i>	S	S R W	Christie
	<i>P. alba</i> X <i>P. glandulosa</i>	S	S R W	Christie
1980	<i>P. 14 species</i>	A	S R W	Zhu <i>et al.</i>
	<i>P. euramericana</i> I-214	C	S	Saito a
	<i>P. euramericana</i> I-45/51	C	S	Saito b
	<i>P. deltoides</i>	C	S	Saito b
1981	<i>P. Sieboldii</i> X <i>P. grandidentata</i>	C	S R	Saito and Kawanobe
	<i>P. alba</i> X <i>P. glandulosa</i>	C	S R W	Kim <i>et al.</i>
1982	<i>P. maximowiczii</i> X <i>P. deltoides</i>	A	S R	Ho
1983	<i>P. tremula</i>	S	S R W	Ahuja a
	<i>P. tremuloides</i>	S	S R W	Ahuja a
	<i>P. glandulosa</i>	A	S R W	Kim <i>et al.</i>

<sup>a</sup> Culture=type of tissue culture. C : callus culture ; S : shoot tip (axillary bud) culture ; Cat : catkin culture ; AM : apical meristem culture ; A : anther culture ; I : internode culture ; IC : immature embryo culture ; EP : cultured explant culture ; CS : *in vitro* cold storage ; ER : immature embryo rescue ; T : transformation ; SV : induction and selection of somaclonal variation ; IE : *in vitro* culture for international exchange.

<sup>b</sup> Regen. =S : shoot regeneration ; R : root regeneration ; W : whole plant regeneration.

Table 1. Continued

Year	Species	Culture	Regen	Reference	
1984	<i>P. alba</i> X				
	<i>P. grandidentata</i>	S	S R W	Chun and Hall	
	<i>P. trichocarpa</i> X				
	<i>P. tacamahaca</i>	I	S R W	Douglas	
	<i>P. deltooides</i>	IC	S R	Kouider <i>et al.</i>	
1985	<i>P. heterophylla</i>	IC	S R	Savka and Dawson	
1986	<i>P. alba</i> X				
	<i>P. grandidentata</i>	S, CS	S R W	Chun and Hall	
	<i>P. tremuloides</i>	C	S R W	Noh and Minocha	
	<i>P. tremuloides</i>	EP	S R W	Wann and Einspahr	
	<i>P. maximowiczii</i>	A	S R W	Kim <i>et al.</i>	
	<i>P. alba</i> X <i>P. glandulosa</i>	C	S R W	Kim <i>et al.</i>	
	<i>P. davidiana</i> X				
	<i>P. deltooides</i>	ER	S R W	Noh <i>et al.</i>	
	<i>P. maximowiczii</i> X				
	<i>P. glandulosa</i>	ER	S R W	Noh <i>et al.</i>	
	<i>P. nigra</i> X <i>P. trichocarpa</i>	SV	S R W	Ettinger <i>et al.</i>	
	<i>P. trichocarpa</i>	IE	S R W	McNabb <i>et al.</i>	
	<i>P. deltooides</i> X				
	<i>P. trichocarpa</i>	IE	S R W	McNabb <i>et al.</i>	
	<i>P. nigra</i> X				
	<i>P. trichocarpa</i>	IE	S R W	McNabb <i>et al.</i>	
	<i>P. deltooides</i> X				
	<i>P. maximowiczii</i>	IE	S R W	McNabb <i>et al.</i>	
	1987	<i>P. nigra</i> X <i>P. trichocarpa</i>	SV	S R W	Ostry and Skilling
		<i>P. maximowiczii</i> X			
<i>P. trichocarpa</i>		SV	S R W	Michler and Bauer	
<i>P. alba</i> X					
<i>P. grandidentata</i>		T	S R W	Fillatti <i>et al.</i>	
	<i>P. alba</i> X				
	<i>P. grandidentata</i>	EP	S R W	Chun	

regeneration, *Populus* species have been considered ideal species for pulpwood and lumber production (Schreiner, 1974; Hall *et al.*, 1982). In addition, species and hybrids of *Populus* have been studied extensively for use in short-rotation, intensively cultured plantation systems for woody biomass production (Hall, 1985). Trees of this genus also represent wide genetic diversity, exhibit a wide range of site requirements, and respond well to cultural inputs (Schreiner, 1974).

There is a firm basis to support the use of *Populus* species as a model system for biotechnological applications with deciduous forest tree species. Most biotechnological applications with plants hinge on the ability to manipulate the

morphogenetic potential of cells and tissue in culture.

Among the forest tree species, *Populus* species are the most well-studied in the area of tissue culture (Table 1). Tissue of *Populus* exhibits a high degree of developmental plasticity, similar to that of tobacco in the herbaceous species. *Populus* species are the only forest tree species for which *in vitro* systems have been defined to date for regeneration from protoplasts of leaf mesophyll tissue, sporophytic calli, gametophytic (anther) calli, leaf discs, internodes, root segments, axillary buds, and apical meristems. *Populus* species are the only woody species that have been transformed with a silviculturally-useful gene by

**Table 2.** Range of 1C nuclear DNA content per cell values for selected plants.

species	DNA content (picogram)	Reference
Soybena	1.2	Grierson and Covey, 1984
Tobacco	2.0	Grierson and Covey, 1984
<i>Populus deltoides</i>	0.535	Dhillon, 1987
<i>Pinus taeda</i>	12.0	Sederoff et al., 1986
<i>Pinus lambertiana</i>	43.8	Rake et al., 1980
<i>Picea glauca</i>	9.65	Rake et al., 1980
<i>Pinus banksiana</i>	14.9	Rake et al., 1980
<i>Pinus resinosa</i>	21.55	Rake et al., 1980
<i>Pinus strobus</i>	19.4	Kriebel, 1985
<i>Pinus caribaea</i>	12.5	Berlyn et al., 1987

an *Agrobacterium*-mediated gene transfer method (Fillatti *et al.*, 1987). There is also one report in which embryo rescue techniques were utilized to circumvent incompatibility of pollination between two different *Populus* species (Noh *et al.*, 1986).

In relation to other aspects of molecular biology, *Populus* species have a relatively small genome size which greatly facilitates the production and screening of genomic libraries (Parsons *et al.*, 1986) (Table 2). *Populus* species also are promising candidates as recipients for Ti plasmid-mediated gene transfer. Earlier work reports the susceptibility of various *Populus* species to infection by naturally-occurring *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* (De Cleene and Deley, 1976). Phytohormone independent callus growth has been obtained from stem and shoot segments of *Populus trichocarpa* x *P. deltoides* (*P.* x *interamericana* Brockh.) following transformation by wild type *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* strains A281 and A348 (Parrsons *et al.*, 1986).

## TISSUE CULTURE BIOTECHNOLOGY OF *POPULUS*

1. MICROPROPAGATION: Tissue culture systems for woody plant species have been developed primarily during the past two decades (Hartmann and Kester, 1983). For a diverse woody species, the application of tissue culture techniques for mass-propagation has become a primary alternative to more conventional propagation procedures. Economic factors currently restrict the large-scale

utilization of tissue culture for mass propagation of poplar species (Haissig *et al.*, 1987); however, two routine methods, axillary bud production (also termed axillary shoot production) and adventitious shoot initiation, have been developed for experimental use with these woody species.

Several *Populus* species have been successfully micropropagated in tissue culture systems using axillary bud culture and adventitious shoot initiation from cultured explants. Whitehead and Giles (1977) and Christie (1978) have shown that *Populus* species can be mass-propagated by axillary bud culture.

The advantages of using *in vitro* bud-cultured plantlets as a source material for biotechnological application are based on the following: 1) *in vitro* bud culture provides stable genotype sources (Lawrence, 1981; Karp and Bright, 1985), 2) a juvenile growth condition can be maintained under *in vitro* conditions (Scorza and Janick, 1980), 3) it provides a high morphogenetic potential for organogenesis (Wann and Einspahr, 1986; Chun, 1987), and 4) it also can provide a year-round plant source with a cyclical growth phase, which can be contained within a small space. There are also several reports that demonstrate the versatility of *in vitro* cultured poplar plantlets as a source material for biotechnological applications in manners such as: 1) direct morphogenesis from culture explants (Wann and Einspahr, 1986; Chun, 1987), 2) induction and selection of somaclonal variation for disease resistance (Ettinger *et al.*, 1986; Ostry and Skilling, 1987)

or herbicide tolerance (Nelson and Haissig, 1986; Michler and Bauer, 1987), 3) protoplast isolation and culture (Chun, 1985b; Russell and McCown, 1986; Park and Son, 1988), 4) ploidy level manipulation (Chun, 1987), 5) international exchange of disease-free plant materials (McNabb *et al.*, 1986), 6) germplasm preservation through cold storage (Chun and Hall, 1986; Chun, 1987), and 7) regeneration of shoots transformed via co-culture with a genetically engineered *Agrobacterium* Ti plasmid binary vector system (Fillatti *et al.*, 1987; Chun *et al.*, 1988).

2) SOMACLONAL VARIATION: The technology of introducing and (or) selecting genetic variation by using tissue culture has been termed somaclonal variation (Larkin and Scowcroft, 1981; Evans *et al.*, 1984). Somaclonal variation has been observed for several phenotypic characteristics (Skirvin, 1978; Karp and Bright, 1985). The phenotypic characteristics of somaclonal variation can be caused by a range of genotypic or epigenetic changes. One of the most promising features of somaclonal variation is that it can involve agronomically-useful traits such as yield or disease resistance. The potential of somaclonal variation for improvement for woody species and crops has been reviewed by several scientists (Larkin and Scowcroft, 1981; Evans, 1986; Haissig *et al.*, 1987). Somaclonal variation has been utilized with a range of plant species including cereals (maize, oats, wheat, rice), seed crops (tobacco, tomato, alfalfa), vegetatively propagated crops (sugarcane, potato) and woody species (poplar) (Lester and Berbee, 1977). It is evident that the tools of somaclonal variation are technologies that can permit short-term accomplishment of breeding objectives (Haissig *et al.*, 1987). Somaclonal variation cannot replace conventional plant breeding, but it can generate or select desired variation to facilitate conventional breeding processes (Haissig *et al.*, 1987).

With regard to *Populus* species, Lester and Berbee (1977) demonstrated that callus culture-derived hybrid poplar (*P. deltoides* X *P. nigra*)

exhibited somaclonal variation in height, number of branches, and leaf traits after one growing season. There are other reports in which somaclonal variation was utilized to select septoria leafspot-canker tolerant, hybrid poplar (Ettinger *et al.*, 1986; Ostry *et al.*, 1986; Ostry and Skilling, 1987) and herbicide tolerant, hybrid poplar (Nelson and Haissig, 1986; Michler and Bauer, 1987). Haissig *et al.* (1987) predict that applications of somaclonal and gametoclonal variation in tissue culture biotechnology of woody species will be the primary strategies for specific tree improvements of a monogenic or oligogenic nature.

3) PROTOPLAST CULTURE: One of the most significant developments in tissue culture techniques within recent years has been the isolation and culture of protoplasts. Such techniques have several potential applications, including: 1) selection of useful somaclonal variation in plants regenerated from protoplasts (Shepard *et al.*, 1980; Kemble and Shepard, 1984), 2) insertion of silviculturally-important genes by micro-injection, electroporation, or *Agrobacterium* Ti plasmid-derived system (Ahuja, 1985; Cocking and Davey, 1987), 3) producing somatic cellular hybridization (Gleba and Sytnik, 1984), 4) uptake of nuclei, organelles, chromosomes or macromolecules such as DNA and RNA (Saxena *et al.*, 1986), and 5) physiological studies (Vasil, 1976). In recent years, protoplasts have been routinely isolated, cultured, and regenerated with a number of plant species (Ahuja, 1982; 1984). Most woody plants, however, remain among the recalcitrant species that are difficult to regenerate from the protoplast cultures. Nevertheless, successful protoplast isolations or cultures have been regenerated with a few species of *Populus* (Table 3). Recently, Russell and McCown (1986) regenerated whole plants from single protoplasts of *Populus alba* X *P. grandidentata*. Since protoplasts from forest tree species remain difficult to grow and differentiate *in vitro*, it has not yet been possible to effectively utilize somatic hybridi-

**Table 3.** Protoplast research in *Populus* species

Species	Reference
<i>P. euramericana</i> cv. I-45/51	Saito, 1976, 1980c
<i>P. trichocarpa</i> X <i>P. tacamahaca</i>	Douglas, 1982
<i>P. tremulooides</i>	Verma and Wann, 1983
<i>P. alba</i> X <i>P. grandidentata</i>	Ahuja, 1983b
	Chun, 1985b
	Russell and McCown, 1986
<i>P. tremula</i> X <i>P. tremulooides</i>	Ahuja, 1984
<i>P. tremula</i>	Ahuja, 1984
<i>P. nigra</i> X <i>P. laurifolia</i>	Russell and McCown, 1986
<i>P. tacatricho</i>	Butt, 1985
<i>P. euramericana</i>	Park and Son, 1986
<i>P. alba</i> X <i>P. glandulosa</i>	Park and Han, 1986
	Park and Son, 1988
<i>P. nigra</i>	Lee <i>et al.</i> , 1987

zation techniques to produce new genotypes.

#### 4) LIMITATION OF TISSUE CULTURE BIOTECHNOLOGY IN *POPULUS* SPECIES:

*Populus* species are promising candidates as the target species for tissue culture biotechnology applications because recent work has demonstrated rapid progress in specific areas such as micro-propagation, protoplast culture, and induction of beneficial somaclonal variation. This recent progress should stimulate more rapid incorporation of specific improvements with conventional tree breeding programs within a short period of time. There are still many basic problems, however, to overcome for utilization of biotechnology in *Populus* species. These problems include the limitations in 1) somatic embryogenesis, 2) generalized regeneration technique for protoplast culture, 3) uncontrolled somaclonal variation leading to a failure of true-to-type propagation in tissue culture.

#### GENETIC ENGINEERING OF *POPULUS*

To utilize genetic engineering in *Populus* species, there are four general considerations: 1) What genes and regulatory regions are available for transfer into target species? 2) What delivery systems can be used to transfer the specific gene? 3) Are systems established for regeneration from tissue culture? and 4) Are selection methods

available to screen for transformed tissue or whole plants?

1) POSSIBLE GENES FOR TRANSFORMATION: Recently, several research groups have isolated and transferred a few agriculturally-useful genes into plants. These include genes for insect resistance such as proteinase inhibitor II gene from potato (Thornburg *et al.*, 1987a: b), trypsin inhibitor gene from cowpea (Klausner, 1987), and insecticidal protein genes from *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Adang *et al.*, 1986; Fischhoff *et al.*, 1987), disease resistance such as coat protein genes from tobacco mosaic virus (Abel *et al.*, 1986) and alfalfa mosaic virus (Tumer *et al.*, 1987), and herbicide tolerance from bacteria (Comai *et al.*, 1984) or from a plant (Shah *et al.*, 1986). Sederoff and Ledig (1984) reported some possible gene systems with potential for tree improvement. These single dominant genes include a blister rust resistance gene in white pine, an apical dominance gene in Scots pine, and a cedar leaf blight-resistance gene in Western red cedar and Japanese red cedar. Like other tree species, *Populus* species have the same difficulties in identifying and manipulating genes responsible for expression of traits that are under single or oligogenic control. So far, the promoter region of proteinase inhibitor gene is the only identified one in *Populus* (Parsons at Department of Biochemistry, Univ. of Washington: personal communica-

tion). In addition, a bacterial 5-enolpyruvyl-shikimate 3-phosphate (EPSP) synthase gene was used to transform poplar and expressed to provide glyphosate tolerance (Fillatti *et al.*, 1987).

2) GENE TRANSFER METHOD: There presently are several non-sexual gene transfer methods available for introducing DNA sequences into plant cells (Goodman *et al.*, 1987; Perani *et al.*, 1986; Wilki-Douglas *et al.*, 1986; Konez *et al.*, 1987). These methods include: 1) protoplast (cell

fusion, 2) gene transfer by manipulating DNA directly, 3) *Agrobacterium*-mediated gene transfer, 4) microinjection, 5) virus-mediated gene transfer, and 6) transposon-mediated gene transfer. Among these different gene transfer methods, *Agrobacterium*-mediated gene transfer method is, apparently, the only method reportedly used thus far for woody species (Fillatti *et al.*, 1987). Direct DNA uptake methods of plant gene transfer require plant cell protoplasts, which are difficult

**Table 4.** Major events toward developing *Agrobacterium*-mediated gene transfer methods

Year	Major events
1974	-Identification of Ti plasmid (Zaenen <i>et al.</i> )
1977	Stable transformation of T-DNA into higher plant cells (Chilton <i>et al.</i> )
1980	-T-DNA integration into plant nuclear genome by insertion of a foreign gene into the T-DNA region of a Ti plasmid (Chilton <i>et al.</i> ; Willmitzer <i>et al.</i> )
1981	-Functional map of T-DNA delineated (Garfinkel <i>et al.</i> )
1982	Determination that virulence ( <i>vir</i> ) genes of Ti plasmid are required for T-DNA integration into plant nuclear genome (Iyer <i>et al.</i> )
1983	-Selective marker genes conferring resistance to antibiotics were inserted into a Ti plasmid for selection of transgenic plant tissue (Herrera-Estrella <i>et al.</i> , b) -Development of transformation techniques by homologous recombination of hybrid and wild type Ti plasmid in <i>Agrobacterium tumefaciens</i> (Barton <i>et al.</i> ; Zambryski <i>et al.</i> ) First plant gene (bean phaseolin gene) expressed in a plant of a different species (sunflower) by Ti plasmid (Murai <i>et al.</i> ) -Development of binary T-DNA vectors for the transfer of a foreign gene (pea small subunit gene of ribulose 1,5-bisphosphate carboxylase) into a plant (Hoekema <i>et al.</i> )
1984	Determined that T-DNA border sequences (right and left borders) are essential for transformation (Wang <i>et al.</i> ; Shaw <i>et al.</i> ) Obtained expression of foreign genes in regenerated plants and their progeny (Herrera-Estrella <i>et al.</i> )
1985	Utilized a binary vector system of <i>Agrobacterium</i> for transformation of leaf discs (An <i>et al.</i> ; Klee <i>et al.</i> )
1986	Transformation of hybrid poplar and loblolly pine ( <i>Pinus taeda</i> ) by Ti plasmid (Parsons <i>et al.</i> ; Sederoff <i>et al.</i> )
1987	-Regeneration of glyphosate-tolerant hybrid poplar produced by <i>Agrobacterium</i> binary vector system (Fillatti <i>et al.</i> ) -A kanamycin resistance marker gene was transferred to Douglas-fir by <i>Agrobacterium</i> (Dandekar <i>et al.</i> )



to regenerate for most woody species. This barrier can be circumvented with an *Agrobacterium*-mediated gene transfer system, because transformed plant material can be produced and regenerated with this gene transfer method without protoplast isolation and culture. As a result, such tissue culture-related limitations of woody species are diminished with *Agrobacterium*-mediated gene transfer methods.

3) *AGROBACTERIUM*-MEDIATED GENE TRANSFORMATION: *Agrobacterium*-mediated gene transfer utilizes the natural ability of *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* to infect many dicotyledonous and gymnospermous plants. *Agrobacterium* infection causes tumorous crown gall formation by introducing DNA into the plant cells at a wound site. Major events in the development of *Agrobacterium*-mediated gene transfer methods are summarized in Table 4. The recent discovery that the T-DNA and the *vir* region of *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* Ti plasmid could be separated into two different plasmids, without loss of the transfer capability of the T-DNA, promoted the construction of *Agrobacterium* binary vector systems. These binary vector plant transformation systems consist of two plasmids in *Agrobacterium*: the binary vector plasmid and a helper plasmid (Hoekema et al., 1983; An et al., 1985). A typical binary T-DNA plasmid vector contains several useful characteristics such as 1) T-DNA border sequences which are required for successful transfer of DNA from the *Agrobacterium* cell into the plant genome, 2) A wide host range replicon which can replicate in both *Escherichia coli* and *Agrobacterium* cell systems. The desired foreign gene is cloned into the engineered binary T-DNA plasmid between the border sequences, 3) A selectable marker gene that usually confers antibiotic resistance to allow selection of transformed plant material. The typical helper Ti plasmid is an intact wild type or a disarmed (T-DNA deleted) Ti plasmid that usually contain supervirulent (broad host range) *vir* genes.

The *vir* genes on a helper Ti plasmid can act in *cis* to promote transfer of the T-DNA of its own plasmid or in *trans*, to transfer the T-DNA on the binary plasmid (Hille et al., 1984).

4) SELECTABLE MARKERS FOR PLANT TRANSFORMATION: Several marker genes for plant transformation have been developed (Fraleigh et al., 1986). These markers for selection of plant transformation have two categories: selectable markers and scorable-assayable markers. The selectable markers include neomycin resistance, methotrexate resistance, hygromycin resistance, chloramphenicol resistance, and aminoethyl cysteine resistance. The scorable-assayable markers include opine synthesis, neomycin phosphotransferase activity, chloramphenicol acetyl transferase activity and luciferase activity.

LEAF DISC TRANSFORMATION: Because *Populus* species demonstrate high degree of developmental plasticity through tissue culture manipulation, we can regenerate whole plants through explant culture of leaf, internode, and root segments of *Populus* species. This adventitious shoot formation from cultured explants allows the utilization of the *Agrobacterium* binary vector system to transfer specific genes into *Populus* species through co-cultivation of *Agrobacterium* binary vectors with leaf discs. There are two co-cultivation methods which have become routine in some herbaceous plant species such as tobacco, tomato, petunia, cotton, and *Arabidopsis* (McCormick et al., 1986; Wei et al., 1986; An et al., 1986). One employs a nurse culture within feeder plates (Horsch et al., 1985; Lloyd et al., 1986; Fillatti et al., 1987). The use of feeder plates has some effects toward reducing the bacterial damage to the leaf pieces and stimulating transformation events. Another co-cultivation method is direct selection after co-cultivation of *Agrobacterium* with leaf segments without placing on feeder plates (An et al., 1985; An et al., 1986; Umbeck et al., 1987; Dandekar et al., 1987).

## CONCLUSION

*Populus* biotechnology can offer the following potential in the near future: 1) greatly shortened tree improvement cycles for specific traits that are controlled by a mono- or oligogenes; 2) incorporation of new gene combinations by recombinant DNA methods; 3) mass micropropagation of plants with specific gene combinations through *in vitro* culture; 4) induction and selection of somaclonal variation for improved pest tolerance or resistance.

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