Heterochronic Developmental Shifts Underlie Floral Diversity within *Jaltomata*

(Solanaceae)

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Abstract

Background: Haeckel and Darwin, respectively, proposed heterochronic shifts during mid to

late stages of organismal development as key mechanisms generating phenotypic diversity. To

determine whether late heterochronic shifts underlie derived floral morphologies within

Jaltomata – a genus with extensive and recently evolved floral diversity – we compared floral

development of four diverse species (including an ambiguously ancestral or secondarily derived

rotate, two putatively independently evolved campanulate, and a tubular morph) to the ancestral

rotate floral form, as well as to an outgroup that shares this ancestral floral morphology.

Results: We determined that early floral development (<1 mm bud stage) is very similar among

all species, but that different mature floral forms are distinguishable by mid-development (3-4

mm stages) due to differential growth acceleration of corolla traits. Floral ontogeny among

similar mature forms remains comparable until late stages (>5 mm), followed by species-specific

heterochronic shifts in corolla traits.

Conclusions: Our data suggest shared floral patterning during early-stage development,

continued shared patterning or re-use of similar floral developmental pathways at mid-stage

development, and distinct heterochronic shifts during late-stage development. Heterochrony thus

appears to have been important in the rapid and repeated diversification of *Jaltomata* flowers.

Keywords: Convergent Evolution, Flower development, Heterochrony, *Jaltomata*, Solanaceae.

Background

In The Origin of Species, Darwin stated "we can actually see in embryonic crustaceans and in

many other animals, and in flowers, that organs, which when mature become extremely different,

are at an early stage of growth exactly alike." [1-2]. This prescient statement both suggests the

importance of understanding diversity in a developmental and phylogenetic framework, and

raises the question about which mechanisms underlie these hypothesized mid to late stage shifts

in ontogeny. Heterochrony—a change in the relative timing or rate of a developmental process

between a derived lineage and its ancestor—is one potential mechanism contributing to such trait

variation [3-4]. Since being formally defined by Haeckel [5], and expanded upon by Gould [6-7],

the concept of heterochrony has been applied to understanding morphological changes,

predominantly in animal taxa. For instance, the classic example of axolotls that retain more

juvenilized features than their ancestors [8], the large variation in cranial morphology among

different dog breeds [9], and even the evolution of extremely complex traits such as

metamorphosis in insects [10], have largely be attributed to heterochronic shifts during

development.

The general concept of heterochrony, as well as the distinct processes that comprise this

mechanism of developmental change, can also be meaningfully applied to plant evolution [11-

12]. However, while heterochronic shifts are typically determined in animals by comparing the

relative timing of reproductive versus somatic maturation, in plants this can be challenging given

their indeterminate development. Despite this, heterochrony can still be identified in plants by

examining individual organs or functional units, such as flowers or individual leaves [4].

Broadly, heterochronic shifts include changes in the relative timing of initiation (i.e. onset) or

termination (i.e. offset) of a developmental process – which together determine the duration of

this developmental process. Additionally, changes can occur in the rate at which a developmental

process proceeds. Shorter developmental duration or decreased growth rate (termed

pedomorphosis) often results in the reduction or juvenilization of a trait, while longer

developmental duration or increased growth rate (termed peramorphosis) often results in the

elaboration of a trait. Both types of shifts – duration or rate – can conceivably contribute to

observed variation in plant traits [3-4, 13].

Unlike plant architecture in general, flowers undergo determinate development, and thus

are particularly attractive subjects for studying the contribution of heterochrony to morphological

divergence. While most flowers conform to a shared ground plan, i.e. egg and pollen-producing

structures surrounded by a non-reproductive perianth (sepals and petals), many lineages exhibit

abundant inter- and intra-specific variation in the organization (phyllotaxy), number (merosity),

size and shape, degree of fusion, and specific identity of floral organs [14-15]. Numerous studies

have examined the potential role of heterochronic changes in floral trait evolution, most often

those associated with mating system transitions. The shift from outcrossing to predominately

selfing is considered one of the most common evolutionary transitions among plants [16-17], and

is typically associated with reduction of flower size, petal size, and/or anther-stigma separation

(herkogamy) – collectively referred to as the 'selfing syndrome' [18-19]. Comparative work

examining closely related outcrossing and selfing species has generally revealed that reductions

in floral size result from pedomorphic changes, either from decreased growth rates (i.e. neoteny;

e.g. [20]), or truncation of the growth period [21]. However, some studies have also found that

smaller flowers or those with reduced herkogamy in selfing lineages result from an increased

growth rate over either short [22-23] or long [24] developmental periods. Thus, several distinct

heterochronic processes can result in convergent selfing syndromes.

Apart from developmental studies of mating system transitions, comparative ontogenetic

studies have examined floral trait variation likely related to pollinator shifts [25-26]. A classic

example is Guerrant's [27] examination of developmental differences between a pair of

Delphinium species – one bee-pollinated, the other hummingbird-pollinated. In that instance, the

derived hummingbird-pollinated flower results from an overall decreased growth rate

(pedomorphosis via neoteny), but also accelerated growth for an extended period (peramorphosis

via acceleration and hypermorphosis) specifically in the reward-providing nectariferous petals.

Nonetheless, despite this increasing attention to the role of heterochrony in plant development,

several critical questions remain, including how frequently heterochronic shifts underlie changes

in floral form, and whether convergent phenotypes may be the result of similar or divergent

developmental mechanisms.

Jaltomata (Solanaceae) includes approximately 60-80 species distributed from the

Southwestern United States to the Andean region of South America, with extensive and recently

evolved floral diversity [28-30]. Although the pollination biology of this genus has yet to be

formally evaluated, field observations (T. Mione, pers. comm.) reveal that different species are

visited by bees and hummingbirds. In addition, *Jaltomata* produce varying amounts of floral

nectar as a pollinator reward, unlike close relatives like *Solanum* [31-32]. Molecular phylogenies

based on one to several loci [28-30], as well as phylogenomic reconstruction using whole

transcriptomes (Wu, Kostyun, Moyle, unpubl.), indicate that the ancestor of *Jaltomata* had

flattened 'rotate' flowers, while both bell-shaped 'campanulate' and elongated 'tubular' flowers are

derived specifically within the genus (Fig. 1). Further, species with derived campanulate or

tubular forms generally produce more nectar per flower than those with ancestral rotate forms

[30]. Ancestral state reconstruction [30] also suggests that some of the derived campanulate and

tubular floral forms found in different *Jaltomata* species evolved independently, allowing

comparison of developmental mechanisms underlying putatively convergent forms.

Because both derived campanulate and tubular forms might represent elaborated versions

of the ancestral rotate form, we hypothesized that heterochronic changes (specifically

peramorphic changes such as longer duration of development and/or growth acceleration, which

often produce larger or more elaborated structures) underlie these transitions, particularly during

later stages of ontology [1-2, 4]. In addition to evaluating the role of heterochrony in the

evolution of derived floral forms, we also expected that comparing floral development between

species with similar mature morphs--but unresolved phylogenetic relatedness--would provide

insight into their evolutionary origin [30] (Wu, Kostyun, Moyle, unpub.). For instance, if similar

mature forms result from similar developmental processes, this could suggest re-use of similar

pathways or a shared single origin. In contrast, if they result from distinct developmental

processes, this could indicate that these forms are independently derived, or that these forms

share a common evolutionary origin (i.e. are homologous) but underwent developmental systems

drift during their divergence. Follow-up analyses at the molecular level, identifying causative

mutations contributing to trait divergence, could then be used to discriminate further between

hypotheses, with shared mutations being more likely attributed to common descent than to

parallel evolution.

Given these considerations, our main goals in this study were to: 1) assess evidence for

heterochronic changes during floral development in species with derived campanulate and

tubular forms; 2) determine which type(s) of heterochronic changes are associated with specific

floral trait changes; and 3) assess whether putatively convergent forms might result from similar

or different developmental processes (i.e. are associated with the same or different types of

heterochronic shifts). To address these goals, we examined floral ontogeny of five florally

diverse *Jaltomata* species (including one species with an ancestrally representative rotate corolla

form), as well as an outgroup species that also has an ancestrally representative rotate corolla

form. Our findings support the inference that a combination of parallel and convergent allometric

changes (i.e. shifts in the size of particular floral organs in relation to the entire flower) have

given rise to floral variation in this group, and show that heterochronic shifts explain these

changes. In particular, two types of peramorphic changes (extended duration of floral

development and accelerated growth) predominately explain changes in corolla traits. Thus,

peramorphism emerges as an important developmental mechanism controlling diversity of

Jaltomata corolla forms. Finally, species with similar mature campanulate corollas follow

similar but clearly not identical growth trajectories, consistent with phylogenetic inferences that

these campanulate floral morphs have independent origins (Wu, Kostyun, Moyle, unpubl.) (Fig.

1). In contrast, we found that species with similar mature rotate corollas follow nearly identical

developmental trajectories until the very last stages of ontology, suggesting a single evolutionary

origin in this case.

Methods

Plant materials and growth conditions

Field-collected seeds of our five target *Jaltomata* species were provided by Dr. Thomas Mione

(Central Connecticut State University), and seed for one wild tomato outgroup (*Solanum*

pimpinellifolium, accession LA1589) was obtained from the Tomato Genetics Resource Center at

the University of California, Davis (Table S1). We selected this outgroup because *Solanum* is the

sister genus to *Jaltomata* [28-29], this species has an ancestrally representative rotate corolla

[32], floral development in this species has previously been characterized [21, 33], and--as a wild

species--its floral development has not been influenced by domestication (i.e. compared to

domestic tomato, *S. lycopersicum*). Our focal *Jaltomata* species included the Central American

species *Jaltomata darcyana* that has an ancestrally representative rotate corolla, and four species

found as natives exclusively in South America: *Jaltomata calliantha* and *Jaltomata dendroidea*

with putatively independently derived campanulate corollas, *Jaltomata umbellata* with a tubular

corolla, and *Jaltomata sinuosa* with a rotate corolla that is ambiguously ancestral or secondarily

derived (Fig. 1). Plants were cultivated in the Indiana University Research Greenhouse, under

standardized temperature (15-20°C) and light (16-hour days) conditions. All plants were watered

to field capacity on automatic driplines, and received weekly fertilizer treatment.

Floral development

To estimate the duration of floral development, young inflorescences were first identified when

the largest bud was approximately 1 mm, and then evaluated and measured every second day

until first anthesis. To assess relative organ growth during development, buds up to 4 mm in

diameter were collected into 70% ethanol or formalin-acetic acid-alcohol (FAA), dissected as

required, dehydrated through an ethanol series at room temperature, and incubated in a 4°C

fridge over-night. Samples were critical point dried, mounted on aluminum stubs, and sputter-

coated with gold-palladium. They were then imaged using a JEOL 6060 or a JEOL 5800LV

scanning electron microscope (SEM) at the University of Vermont or Indiana University,

respectively. Morphological traits were measured on the resulting bud micrographs using ImageJ

[34]. For buds greater than 4 mm in diameter, morphological traits were measured by hand on

freshly collected samples using digital calipers. Given the potential role of trichomes in

regulating corolla shape during bud development [35], we also determined the developmental

timing of trichome initiation and maturation. Because our focal species also vary in nectar

volume per flower, we determined the onset of nectar secretion using a 20x hand-lens.

Mature floral trait measurements

Mature floral traits were measured with hand-held digital calipers on three flowers each for at

least three individuals per species, and included calyx diameter, sepal length, corolla diameter,

corolla depth, corolla fusion, petal length, lobe length, stamen length, anther length, ovary

diameter, style length, and herkogamy (stigma-anther separation) (Fig. S1). We also measured

nectar volume per flower to the nearest 1 μL with a pipette. To reduce potential environmental

effects on nectar production, nectar volume per flower was always measured during the early

afternoon following watering. Trichome type(s) present on sepals and petals was also scored

using a 20x hand lens.

Statistical analyses

We used analyses of variance (ANOVA), followed by Tukey's honest significant difference

(HSD) post-hoc tests, to assess differences among species in three comparisons: floral traits on

mature flowers; log-transformed floral organ size at discrete stages during development; and

duration (i.e. number of days) of floral development. To compare relative floral organ growth

rates during development, we used linear regression on log-transformed bud measurements. In

particular, we regressed organ sizes on bud diameter (as a standard measure of developmental

floral stage; e.g. [21]), and assessed whether there were significant interaction effects between

bud diameter and species, as a measure of differential growth rates. We used *J. darcyana* as the

baseline in these analyses to assess differences between ancestral and derived floral forms, and *J.*

calliantha as the baseline when comparing the two derived campanulate forms (i.e. *J. calliantha*

versus *J. dendroidea*). All analyses were performed within the R statistical environment [36].

Results

The early sequence of floral development is similar across *Jaltomata* species

As expected based on their common origin, the five focal species of *Jaltomata* share a common

floral ground plan with each other as well as with the *Solanum* outgroup *S. pimpinellifolium*. All

six species have very similar development up until the 1 mm bud diameter stage. Sepals are the

first floral organs to emerge from the ~0.15 mm diameter floral meristem, and do so in an

asymmetric manner from the abaxial, to adaxial, to lateral sides (Figs. 2a, 3a, 5a-b, 6a, 7a). Once

sepals are approximately the same size and have started to accumulate trichomes, they elongate

from a ring primordium at the base to form a partially fused structure (Figs. 2b, 3b, 4a, 5c, 6b,

7a). At the ~0.25-0.3 mm floral diameter stage, petals and stamens emerge almost

simultaneously, but slightly asymmetrically, followed by gynoecial development by the ~0.5 mm

diameter stage (Figs. 2c-d, 3c, 4b-c, 5d-e, 6c-d, 7b-c). Similar to sepals, petals initially emerge as

free strap-like primordia, but begin to elongate from the congenitally fused region at the base

(just above the stamen attachment point) prior to the ~1 mm diameter bud stage in all species

(Figs. 2e, 3d, 4e-f, 5g, 6g, 7d). Because floral organs initiate at the same developmental stage

across species, observed differences in mature flowers are therefore not a result of differences in

growth onset.

Despite these general ontogenetic similarities, specific differences in growth rate are

apparent by the 1 mm stage (Fig. 8). This includes when style elongation is first apparent, which

ranges from ~0.8 mm in *S. pimpinellifolium* and *J. sinuosa*, to ~1.5 mm in *J. darcyana* and *J.*

calliantha. Relative to all *Jaltomata* species, *S. pimpinellifolium* shows significantly longer

sepals, petals, corolla depth, and stamens (ANOVA $p < 0.00001$; all Tukey HSD, $p < 0.00001$),

and wider ovaries (Tukey HSD, $p < 0.04$) at the 1 to 1.5 mm stage (Figs. 7-8). Among *Jaltomata*

species, differences in sepal and corolla traits are also apparent by the 1 mm bud stage, but are

not associated with rotate vs. campanulate vs. tubular mature floral morphologies (Fig. 1): sepals

are significantly longer in campanulate *J. calliantha* compared to campanulate *J. dendroidea* and

rotate *J. darcyana* (ANOVA $p < 0.001$; Tukey HSD, $p < 0.001$ and $p < 0.02$), while petals are

longer in *J. calliantha* and tubular *J. umbellata* than *J. dendroidea* (ANOVA $p < 0.0001$; Tukey

HSD, $p < 0.05$) (Fig. 8).

Developmental timing of trichome initiation on sepals and petals is similar among all

species. However, qualitative differences become apparent by the 0.3-0.4 mm bud stage (Figs. 2-

7). Trichomes are first initiated on sepals in all species around the 0.2 mm stage, but both simple

(i.e. uniseriate) and non-viscous (i.e. non-secreting) glandular trichomes are apparent on *S.*

pimpinellifolium sepals, compared to just simple ones on *Jaltomata* species (Figs. 2a-b, 3a-b, 4a,

5d, 6a-b, 7a). By the 0.3 mm and 0.5 mm stages, dendritic (i.e. branched) trichomes become

apparent on *J. sinuosa*, *J. dendroidea*, and *J. umbellata* sepals, and viscous glandular trichomes

develop on *J. sinuosa* sepals, respectively (Figs. 3c-e, 5e, 6f). Trichomes on petals are initiated

by ~0.5 mm in all species (Figs. 2e, 3d, 4e, 5g, 6f, 7e) but, compared to only simple trichomes in

Jaltomata species, both simple and non-viscous glandular trichomes are present on *S.*

pimpinellifolium petals by this stage. By the 1.0 mm diameter bud stage (Figs. 2e-f, 5g), dendritic

trichomes in *J. dendroidea* and viscous glandular trichomes in *J. sinuosa*, are present on petals.

Mid stage corolla patterning distinguishes divergent adult *Jaltomata* corolla types

While *S. pimpinellifolium* is conspicuously dissimilar from *Jaltomata* species by the 2 mm stage,

pronounced differences in corolla traits among *Jaltomata* species are not apparent until the 3-5

mm stages (Fig. 8). Furthermore, these corolla trait differences are associated with the divergent

mature corolla forms. Specifically, by the 3 mm stage, petal length, corolla depth, and the extent

of congenital corolla fusion are significantly longer in tubular *J. umbellata* than in all other

Jaltomata species (ANOVA $p < 0.00001$; all Tukey HSD, $p < 0.00001$). Further, by this stage

rotate and campanulate species have superficial post-genital corolla fusion via interlocking

trichomes that extends from the region of congenital fusion to petal tips (Figs. 2j-k, 3h-i, 4i).

This is in striking contrast to development of rotate *S. pimpinellifolium* petals that remain only

slightly fused at the base at this stage (Figs. 7j, 8). By the 4 mm stage, the extent of the

congenitally fused corolla region becomes significantly longer in both campanulate species

compared to both rotate species. Finally, by the 5 mm stage, both campanulate-flowered species

also have significantly longer petals and corolla depths relative to the ancestrally rotate *J.*

darcyana (ANOVA $p < 0.0004$; Tukey HSD, $p < 0.001$) (Fig. 8).

In addition to differences in corolla traits between species with divergent mature corolla

forms, several species-specific differences in other floral traits are apparent during mid-

development stages. For instance, sepals are shortest in rotate *J. darcyana* and longest in

campanulate *J. calliantha* (ANOVA $p < 0.0001$; Tukey HSD, $p < 0.001$ and $p < 0.03$), stamens

and styles (in addition to petals and corollas) are longest in tubular *J. umbellata* (ANOVA $p <$

0.00001; all Tukey HSD, $p < 0.004$), and the ovary is widest in *J. darcyana* (ANOVA $p <$

0.00001; Tukey HSD, $p < 0.05$) (Fig. 8).

Corolla trait differences between species with similar forms arise during late floral

development

For species with similar corolla forms in mature flowers, major species-specific corolla trait

differences only arise during late stages (i.e. after the 5 mm bud stage). The ancestrally rotate

flowers of *J. darcyana* and the ambiguously ancestral or secondarily derived rotate flowers of *J.*

sinuosa appear nearly identical up until this stage. Indeed, none of the petal or corolla traits

significantly differ between them until flowers of *J. darcyana* open shortly after the 5 mm stage,

whereas the buds of *J. sinuosa* continue to grow until they open following the 6 mm stage (Table

1). Likewise, corolla traits are very similar between species with campanulate corollas (*J.*

calliantha and *J. dendroidea*) until the 5 mm stage (although petals are shorter in *J. dendroidea*

at the 1 mm stage). However, after the 5 mm stage, petal length, corolla depth, and corolla fusion

all become significantly longer in *J. dendroidea* (Tukey HSD, $p < 0.007$; $p < 0.0001$; $p < 0.007$).

Both petal length and corolla depth remain significantly longer in *J. dendroidea* until anthesis;

however, by the 7 mm stage, corolla fusion expands in *J. calliantha* to match that in *J.*

dendroidea. Finally, lobe length remains similar in these two species until the 8 mm stage, when

it becomes significantly longer in *J. dendroidea* until anthesis (Tukey HSD, $p < 0.021$).

Overall duration of floral development and relative growth rates differ among species

We measured the duration of floral development in days to assess evidence that an extended

growth period underpinned species floral differences, and calculated an average overall growth

rate (bud diameter in mm per day) to assess potential accelerated growth of whole flowers. In

addition, given observed allometric differences in organ sizes among species (Table 3), we also

calculated relative growth rates of individual floral organs. For instance, even if species do not

differ in their overall absolute growth rate (diameter per day), differences in the relative growth

rates among floral organs (floral organ in mm per mm of bud diameter) could explain observed

differences in mature flowers.

Floral development duration ranged from 14 days in outgroup *S. pimpinellifolium* to 32.4

days in *J. dendroidea* (Table 1). Among *Jaltomata* species, the ancestrally rotate flowers of *J.*

darcyana (19.23 days) and derived tubular flowers of *J. umbellata* (18.62 days) had the shortest

development times (ANOVA $p < 0.00001$; Tukey HSD against all other species, $p < 0.00001$;

Tukey HSD against each other, $p = 0.525$). Similarly, overall average bud growth rate (bud

diameter in mm per day) ranged from 0.172 mm/day in *S. pimpinellifolium* to 0.448 mm/day in

campanulate *J. dendroidea* (Table 1). Among *Jaltomata* species, tubular *J. umbellata* had the

slowest overall growth rate at 0.181 mm/day (ANOVA $p < 0.00001$; Tukey HSD, $p < 0.0004$).

In addition to species differing in duration of floral development and overall average

growth rate, we also detected several differences in relative growth rates for particular floral

organs. First, growth rates for all measured floral traits (except ovary diameter) were

significantly higher in *S. pimpinellifolium* than in *J. darcyana* (both ancestrally rotate); growth

rates for petals and stamens (which primarily determine the overall size and shape of *S.*

pimpinellifolium flowers), and for the style, are significantly higher in *S. pimpinellifolium* than

all *Jaltomata* species except *J. umbellata* (Table 2; Fig. 8). Compared to the ancestrally rotate

flowers in *J. darcyana*, all other *Jaltomata* species have significantly elevated growth rates for

all floral organs except lobe length and ovary diameter. The tubular flowers of *J. umbellata* have

the highest growth rates for corolla depth, corolla fusion, petal length, stamen length, and style

length, while both species with campanulate flowers (*J. calliantha and J. dendroidea*) have the

next highest growth rates for corolla fusion (and are not statistically different from one another; p

= 0.45) (Table 2).

Mature floral traits differ markedly across species

Mature, post-anthesis flowers differ substantially in overall size, as well as in relative sizes of

individual organs (Table 3). *Jaltomata calliantha* and *J. dendroidea* have the largest flowers,

while *S. pimpinellifolium* has the smallest; *Jaltomata* flowers also differ from *S. pimpinellifolium*

in having free stamens (compared to a fused anther cone, considered a derived trait in the wild

tomatoes [32]), and in producing nectar. Calyx diameter significantly differs across all species,

while both corolla and ovary diameter significantly differ between all species pairs, except *J.*

umbellata versus *S. pimpinellifolium* (ANOVA $p < 0.00001$; Tukey HSD, $p < 0.0001$) which

both have comparatively small flowers. Although floral organ sizes vary substantially amongst

Jaltomata species, ancestral rotate flowers of *J. darcyana* have the shortest petals (ANOVA $p <$

0.00001; Tukey HSD, $p < 0.0001$), and the smallest amount of corolla fusion (ANOVA $p <$

0.00001; Tukey HSD, $p < 0.00001$) (Table 3).

In addition to organ size and shape, our focal species also differ in the amount of nectar

produced per flower (ANOVA $p < 0.00001$; Tukey HSD, $p < 0.0001$) (Table 3), and the timing

of nectar secretion. The ancestral rotate species *J. darcyana* produces significantly less nectar

than the four other examined *Jaltomata* species. *Jaltomata darcyana* also produces nectar at the

earliest point during its developmental timeline; minute amounts of nectar are apparent in this

species in mid-day -1 day buds (i.e. the afternoon of the day before anthesis, or flower opening).

In contrast, for *J. calliantha*, *J. dendroidea*, and *J. sinuosa,* nectar is first apparent during the

morning in 0 day buds (i.e. the morning of the day the flower opens, typically a few hours prior

to full anthesis); in *J. umbellata*, nectar secretion is not apparent until the evening of day 0

flowers (after anthesis has occurred), or until the morning of +1 day flowers (i.e. the day

following anthesis, just prior to anther dehiscence in this species). Nectar secretion dynamics

therefore appear to have undergone a combination of heterochronic shifts in more derived forms,

including a delayed onset of the start of nectar secretion, as well as increased rates of nectar

production.

Finally, mature flowers differ in the types and density of trichomes on mature floral

tissues. From simple to complex: *J. darcyana* has sparse simple (uniseriate) trichomes on both

sepals and petals, *J. calliantha* dense simple trichomes on both sepals and petals, *J. umbellata*

dense simple and dendritic trichomes on sepals but only dense simple ones on petals, *J.*

dendroidea very dense dendritic trichomes on both sepals and petals, *S. pimpinellifolium* dense

simple and non-viscous glandular trichomes on both sepals and petals, and *J. sinuosa* very dense

simple, dendritic and viscous glandular trichomes on sepals and dense simple and viscous

glandular ones on petals.

Discussion

Heterochronic shifts during development are often considered a primary mechanism underlying

phenotypic evolution [6]. Indeed, heterochrony appears to be a common mechanism underlying

morphological diversification in numerous animal lineages [8], as well as in flowers, including

shifts in both duration of floral development and growth rates leading to phenotypic shifts in

descendent lineages [3-4, 13]. In this study, we examined floral ontogeny in five florally diverse

species of *Jaltomata*, as well as a closely related outgroup that shares the ancestral rotate corolla

form, to assess evidence for heterochrony contributing to observed variation in adult corolla

forms and other floral traits. We found that early floral development (<1 mm stage) is very

similar among all examined species, that differences between *Jaltomata* and *Solanum* are

apparent by the 2 mm stage, and that corolla trait differences associated with divergent corolla

shapes among *Jaltomata* species first arise during mid-developmental stages (3-5 mm stages).

Elevated growth rates of corolla traits, combined with additional heterochronic and allometric

changes during late development (>5 mm stage), lead to observed differences in mature floral

traits among species (Table 3). Our data are therefore consistent with Darwin's insight that

diversity of form results from changes in later developmental stages [1-2]. In particular, these

developmental changes are heterochronic, with predominately accelerated growth rates and

extended development duration (that is, peramorphic changes) associated with variation in adult

corolla form.

Extended duration of floral development and accelerated growth rates underlie derived

tubular and campanulate adult corolla shapes in *Jaltomata*

One goal of this study was to assess whether derived tubular and campanulate corolla forms in

Jaltomata arise due to heterochronic developmental shifts. In particular, we hypothesized that

derived campanulate and tubular forms are elaborated versions of the ancestral rotate form, and

therefore might result from peramorphic changes (i.e. longer duration of floral development or

accelerated growth rates). Indeed, compared to ancestrally rotate flowers of *J. darcyana*, all

derived *Jaltomata* species show peramorphic changes during floral development. First, all

species except *J. umbellata* have significantly longer development duration (Table 1). Because

floral organs initiated at the same developmental stage across species, differences in the duration

of floral development in derived forms result from changes in the timing of offset (i.e. growth

period is extended). Second, growth rates for most of our measured floral traits are significantly

elevated in *J. umbellata*, including petal length and extent of corolla fusion (Table 2, even

though *J. darcyana* and *J. umbellata* have similar development periods (19.23 days vs. 18.62

days)). These differences appear to explain how flowers of *J. umbellata* are generally smaller

than those of *J. darcyana*, but nonetheless have significantly longer petals, stamens, and styles,

and greater corolla fusion at anthesis (Table 3). Similarly, growth rates of most floral organs are

significantly elevated in both campanulate species – including rates of petal length and extent of

corolla fusion – in comparison to *J. darcyana* (Table 2), even though both also have longer

development periods and faster overall growth rates in terms of bud diameter (Table 1). Thus,

derived campanulate flowers in *J. calliantha* and *J. dendroidea* result from both accelerated

organ growth rates and an extended development period, while derived tubular flowers in *J.*

umbellata appear to result from accelerated growth rates of particular floral organs/features.

Alike adult corolla forms result from similar heterochronic changes during mid-stages, but

not necessarily during late stages

Another goal of this study was to assess whether similar mature corolla shapes arise from similar

or divergent developmental trajectories. Overall, we found that floral development was very

similar, including nearly identical corolla development, during early and mid-stages within both

species with rotate flowers, suggesting that these forms may share a single evolutionary origin.

In contrast, the two species with campanulate flowers showed similar heterochronic changes in

direction but not in magnitude during mid-stages.

Floral ontology in general and corolla development in particular are very similar between

rotate flowers of *J. sinuosa* and ancestrally rotate flowers of *J. darcyana*, until shortly after the 5

mm bud stage when anthesis occurs in *J. darcyana*. Indeed, both average overall growth rate and

growth rates for corolla traits do not differ between these species until this stage (Table 1). After

the 5 mm stage, *J. sinuosa* continues to develop for significantly longer (Table 1), and

experiences an elevated growth rate for corolla fusion (Table 2). These data indicate that the

shared rotate floral morphology in these two species arises through a very similar developmental

process, but peramorphic changes (both an extended development period and growth

acceleration) during late floral development lead to an overall increased size of *J. sinuosa*

flowers, and a proportionately greater extent of corolla fusion (Table 3). These observations

again suggest that the rotate flowers in these species share a single evolutionary origin.

In contrast, in the two species with campanulate flowers (*J. calliantha* and *J.*

dendroidea), both exhibit extended development periods and accelerated growth rates in corolla

traits compared to *J. darcyana*; however, they differ from each other in the magnitude of change

(Tables 2-3). While both show significantly elevated overall rates for corolla depth, corolla

fusion, and petal length, rates for corolla depth and petal length are significantly elevated in *J.*

dendroidea compared to *J. calliantha*. Interestingly, *J. calliantha* actually shows a significantly

decreased growth rate (i.e. neoteny) for lobe length compared to *J. darcyana* (Table 2), whereas

the growth rate of lobe length does not significantly differ between *J. dendroidea* and *J.*

darcyana. Therefore, both campanulate species have similar corolla trait development until the 5

mm bud stage, including common differences compared to *J. darcyana* during the 3-5 mm

stages, but undergo different heterochronic changes during late development. These changes

include significantly greater corolla fusion in *J. dendroidea* during the 5-7 mm bud stages

(although *overall* rates of corolla fusion are similar between species (Table 2)), as well as

pedomorphosis via neoteny in lobe length growth in *J. calliantha*. These differences, as well as

shorter petals in *J. dendroidea* at the 1 mm stage (see above), suggest that campanulate corollas

in these two species are independently derived. Alternatively, these forms could share a single

origin, but could have experienced subsequent developmental changes without large changes in

the mature phenotype (i.e. developmental systems drift) during lineage divergence. In the

absence of other data, we prefer the former hypothesis based on our phylogenetic inference (Wu,

Kostyun, Moyle, unpubl.) (Fig. 1). Together, these observations agree with prior studies

suggesting that different heterochronic changes contributing to similar mature floral phenotypes

may actually be quite common; for instance, multiple distinct developmental shifts have been

shown to produce flowers with the 'selfing syndrome' across lineages [3-4, 19] and among

closely related populations and species [37].

Heterochronic shifts as a first step to identifying specific mechanisms underlying floral

divergence and convergence in *Jaltomata*

Our data suggest an important role for several different heterochronic developmental shifts in

generating floral trait diversity among *Jaltomata* species, especially peramorphism (via growth

acceleration and extended growth period), in shaping corolla diversity. If these heterochronic

shifts are caused by relatively simple genetic changes, this could have contributed to the apparent

rapid floral trait diversification within the genus (<5 my; [29]). Future work identifying the

specific genetic and developmental mechanisms underlying these heterochronic shifts will

provide a better understanding of the pace of phenotypic change, as well as likely candidate

genes contributing to these developmental shifts. For instance, changes in the regulation of cell

proliferation and/or cell expansion can lead to variation in overall floral size or size of particular

floral organs, and several key candidate genes have been identified in *Arabidopsis* that function

during these processes [19, 38]. Given our observed patterns of developmental heterochrony (i.e.

extended floral development duration and accelerated growth), we anticipate that a combination

of molecular heterochrony (e.g. growth promoting factors are expressed for longer) and

heterometry (e.g. a higher amount of growth promoting gene products are produced) might

underlie these shifts.

In addition to intrinsic (genetic) regulation of cell growth within floral organs, external

signals or structures could also influence mature floral morphology [39-40]. For instance, the

involvement of trichomes in regulating flower shape was recently reported in cotton (*Gossypium*

hirsutum), in which the petal trichome gene *GhMYB-MIXTA-Like10* (*GhMYBML10*) is strongly

expressed at the point of petal overlap, resulting in trichome cross-linking that physically hold

petals in place [35]. We identified similar superficial corolla fusion via interlocking trichomes in

both rotate and campanulate *Jaltomata* species examined here, although different growth

dynamics during mid- and late-stages was observed between these forms. In particular, in rotate

corollas of *J. darcyana* and *J. sinuosa*, the proportion of the congenitally to post-genitally fused

(via interlocking trichomes) region remains similar throughout mid-stages; in contrast, in

campanulate corollas of *J. calliantha* and *J. dendroidea* the congenitally fused region becomes

proportionately larger during this time. In both rotate and campanulate species however,

trichomes in post-genitally fused regions become unlocked during anthesis, releasing petals,

while congenitally fused regions of the corolla remained fused in mature flowers. Although

trichome cross-linking occurs in these species, it remains to be determined whether it is essential

for normal corolla development (as in [35]) and if this phenotype is regulated by a *MYBML10*

orthologue (including whether expression differs between rotate and campanulate vs. tubular

Jaltomata forms).

The identification of specific developmental mechanisms and candidate genes will also

clarify whether similar mature floral morphs result from shared evolutionary history or from

convergent or parallel changes at the molecular level. In the *Jaltomata* species that we examined

here, floral development (especially for corolla traits) in both rotate species was extremely

similar until *J. darcyana* matured shortly after the 5 mm stage, while in the campanulate species,

we identified heterochronic shifts in the same direction but not of the same magnitude. Thus, it is

likely that *J. darcyana* and *J. sinuosa* share their rotate form from common ancestry, while *J.*

calliantha and *J. dendroidea* represent convergent or parallel evolution of the campanulate form.

In this way, determining the developmental mechanisms underlying these heterochronic shifts

can be used both to pinpoint how changes in existing floral development pathways lead to

phenotypic variation, and to differentiate alternative evolutionary histories (common ancestry

versus convergence) for similar mature floral forms. In particular, shared mutations would be

more indicative of common descent rather than parallel evolution.

Pollinator-mediated selection may have shaped *Jaltomata* floral diversification

Understanding how developmental trajectories differ between species with different

mature floral traits also broadly informs the ways in which these traits are most able to respond

to selection (e.g. whether there is developmental constraint). Such inferences are especially

relevant to floral trait evolution across the *Jaltomata* genus, which shows both high levels of

floral trait divergence, as well as multiple putatively independent shifts to similar floral forms,

within a relatively short timescale (<5mya, [29]). From an evolutionary perspective, such shifts

are likely to have been shaped by pollinator behavior. Observations indicate that some species

are predominantly visited by distinct pollinator functional groups (e.g. hymenopterans vs.

hummingbirds, T. Mione, pers. comm.; J.L. Kostyun, unpub.), and these species have floral trait

suites consistent with different pollinator syndromes [41]. In particular, hummingbirds have been

observed visiting campanulate *J. calliantha* and tubular *Jaltomata viridiflora* whose flowers have

copious amounts of dilute nectar, while hymenopterans have been observed visiting *J. sinuosa*

and *Jaltomata repandidentata* (a close relative to *J. darcyana*; [30]) that have rotate corollas

with relatively small amounts of concentrated nectar. Because differential pollinator behavior

often leads to reproductive isolation between lineages [42], understanding the underlying

developmental basis of floral trait evolution can also reveal factors that could accelerate

speciation in this rapidly-evolving and florally diverse system.

Conclusions

As initially proposed by Darwin, much diversity of form (including in flowers) likely results

from changes in late developmental stages. One such type of developmental change is

heterochrony, which is a shift in rate or timing in a descendant compared to its ancestor. By

comparing floral ontogeny among five *Jaltomata* species and an outgroup, we determined that

heterochronic shifts during mid- and late stages of floral development distinguish divergent

corolla forms. In particular, two types of peramorphosis (differential growth acceleration and

delayed offset leading to an extended development period) predominately explain these changes.

Our data therefore support Darwin's insight that even highly divergent mature floral traits result

from modifications to initially similar structures. These relatively simple heterochronic shifts

during later stages of development contribute to observed floral trait variation among *Jaltomata*

species and, as such, could act as a mechanism allowing rapid floral trait diversification in this

florally diverse system.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Availability of data and material

The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding

author on reasonable request.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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Authors' contributions

All authors planned and designed the research, JLK performed the experiments, JLK and JCP

analyzed the data, and all wrote the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final

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Figure legends

Fig. 1. Simplified phylogenetic relationships in *Jaltomata* and the outgroup *Solanum*

pimpinellifolium based on [30, 43] and (Wu, Kostyun, Moyle, unpubl.). Representative mature

flowers are depicted for the species examined here (in bold font). White scale bars = 1 cm. R,

rotate; C, campanulate; T, tubular.

Fig. 2. *Jaltomata darcyana* rotate flower development. (a-b) Sepals develop asymmetrically

from the abaxial side, and once of similar lengths, grow from a basal ring meristem to form a

fused tube. (c) Removal of sepals reveals simultaneous development of petal and stamen

primordia. (d-e) Petals grow freely as stamen thecae become differentiated. (f-g) Carpels become

fused during gynoecial development. (h-k) Petals are congentially fused at the base just above

the stamen insertion point (i), but then become superficially and postgenitally fused via

interlocking trichomes along their lengths by the 3.5 mm flower diameter stage. Scale bars = 100

μm.

Fig. 3. *Jaltomata sinuosa* rotate flower development. (a-b) Sepals initiate in an asymmetric

fashion from the abaxial side, and quickly fuse at the base. (c) Five free petals develop around

initiating stamen primordia. (d-e) As anther thecae differentiate, petals remain mostly free, but

are fused at the base. (f-g) Removal of mostly free petals reveals development of fused carpels.

(h-i) Opening of the corolla in 2.5-4 mm wide flowers shows a fused petal base from just above

the stamen attachment point to about mid-way up the length of the corolla (i), and superficial

fusion of petals above the mid-point, post-genitally via interlocking trichomes. Scale bars = 100

μm.

Fig. 4. *Jaltomata calliantha* campanulate flower development. (a) Free sepals extend through the

growth of a basal ring primordium to form a lower fused tube. (b) Opening of partially fused

sepals reveals initiation of petal, followed by stamen, primordia. (c) Free petals and stamens

grow simultaneously prior to initiation of the carpel primordia. (d-f) Free petals develop

trichomes on the adaxial side, becoming slightly fused just above the stamen attachment point

during stamen thecae emergence. (g-h) Fused carpel development. (i) Petals remain only slightly

congenitally fused above the stamen filament in 3.5 mm wide flowers (corolla was opened prior

to fixation, so superficial fusion via trichomes is not visible). Scale bars = 100 μm.

Fig. 5. *Jaltomata dendroidea* campanulate flower development. (a-b) Sepals develop

asymmetrically from the abaxial side. (c) Once equal in size, sepals extend through growth of the

underlying ring meristem, giving rise to a fused tube. (d-e) Partial removal of sepals reveals

simultaneous development of petals and stamens. (f-h) Petals are largely free from early

development to the stamen thecae differentiation stage in 1.6 mm wide flowers, however, there is

a small zone of fusion above the stamen attachment point. (i) Carpels are partially fused above

the developing ovary. Scale bars = 100 μm.

Fig. 6. *Jaltomata umbellata* tubular flower development. (a) Sepal development occurs

asymmetrically, with the first sepal initiating on the abaxial side. (b) Once all sepal primordia

have expanded, organs become fused at the base to form a tube. (c-d) Removal of partially fused

sepals reveals the simultaneous initiation of petal and stamen primordia in an asymmetric

progression. (e-g) Separate petal primordia elongate without fusion until differentiation of

stamen thecae. (h-k) As stamen thecae differentiate, petals of ~1-3 mm diameter flowers become

increasingly fused above the stamen attachment point to form a corolla tube. (l-m) Carpel

development, including formation of the disk nectary by ~2 mm diameter buds. Scale bars = 100

μm.

Fig. 7. *Solanum pimpinellifolium* rotate flower development. (a) Sepals develop asymmetrically

and fuse at their base to form a fused ring. (b-c) Removal of sepals reveals simultaneous

development of petals and stamens, followed by carpel development (c). (d-h) Petals are fused at

the base above the stamen attachment point (visible in g) from early development (d), however,

most of the petal margin is free. (i) Late carpel development. (j) At the 2 mm flower diameter

stage, when anther thecae are well established, petals are mostly free, but remain partially fused

at the base. Scale bars = 100 μm.

Fig. 8. Growth trajectories for the focal floral organs and features. For all panels, the x-axis is

bud diameter (mm) and the y-axis is the focal organ (mm). Each species is color coded.

Additional files

Additional file 1: Table S1. Accessions of the species used in the present study and their

collection locations. All *Jaltomata* seed material provided by Dr. Thomas Mione at Central

Connecticut State University (CCSU); *S. pimpinellifolium* seed provided by the Tomato Genetics

Resource Center at UC Davis. Additional file 1 is in .docx format.

Additional file 2: Figure S1. Measured morphological traits on mature flowers. Floral organs

were measured on three flowers per individual, for at least three individuals per species, using

hand-held digital calipers to the nearest 0.01 mm. Additional file 2 is in .pdf format.

Table 1. Average length of development, size of -1 day buds (day before anthesis), and overall bud growth rates for the 5 *Jaltomata*

species and *Solanum pimpinellifolium*.

Species	Length (days)	-Day Bud Diameter (mm)	Growth rate (mm/day)
J. darcyana (n=13)	19.23 [a]	4.52 [a]	0.236 [a]
J. sinuosa (n=11)	28.55 [b]	6.36 [b]	0.223 [a]
J. calliantha (n=10)	28.80 [b]	11.35 [c]	0.395 [b]
J. dendroidea (n=5)	32.40 [c]	14.50 [d]	0.448 [c]
J. umbellata (n=13)	18.62 [a]	3.37 [e]	0.181 [d]
S. pimpinellifolium (n=8)	14.00 [d]	2.41 [f]	0.172 [d]

733 Bud diameter was measured every other day, from 1 mm buds to anthesis. Significant differences among species are indicated by different letters (following

734 ANOVA and Tukey's HSD).

743 **Table 2.** Relative growth rates for focal floral organs and features for the examined species, measured against bud diameter.

	J. darcyana (100)		J. sinuosa (88)		J. calliantha (66)		J. dendroidea (85)		J. umbellata (96)		S. pimpinellifolium (106)	
	Slope	Intercept	Slope	Intercept	Slope	Intercept	Slope	Intercept	Slope	Intercept	Slope	Intercept
Sepal Length	0.826	0.043	0.967***	-0.002*	1.159***	0.013^	0.948***^^^	0.013^	1.153***	-0.083***	0.960**	0.061
Corolla Depth	0.906	-0.024	1.012*	-0.063	1.032*	-0.173***^	1.225***^^^	-0.173***^	1.881***	-0.423***	1.651***	-0.253***
Corolla Fusion	0.522	0.085	0.887***	-0.071***	1.015***	-0.166***	1.067***	-0.166***	1.652***	-0.386***	0.767**	0.015
Lobe Length	0.734	0.049	0.683	0.069	0.537***	0.037^^^	0.721^^^	0.037^^^	0.795	0.029	1.354***	-0.143***
Petal Length	1.005	-0.060	1.149**	-0.122*	1.129*	-0.183***	1.244***^^	-0.183***	1.873***	-0.418***	1.633***	-0.239***
Stamen Length	0.722	0.035	0.863**	-0.027*	0.928***	-0.009^	0.815**^	-0.009^	1.577***	-0.320***	1.540***	-0.232***
Ovary Diameter	0.551	0.107	0.449***	0.152*	0.667***	0.116^^^	0.524^^^	0.116^^^	0.519	0.112	0.387***	0.177**
Style Length	0.481	0.116	0.802*	-0.031	0.896***	-0.160***	1.059***	-0.160***	1.747***	-0.408***	1.684***	-0.330***

744 Measurements were log-transformed prior to analysis. Significant differences against *J. darcyana* (ancestral rotate) indicated by * (* p < 0.05; ** p < 0.001; ***

745 p < 0.0001); significant differences between *J. calliantha* and *J. dendroidea* (campanulate) indicated by ^ (^ p < 0.05; ^^ p < 0.001; ^^^ p < 0.0001).

759 **Table 3.** Mature floral trait means for the five included *Jaltomata* species and *Solanum pimpinellifolium*.

	J. darcyana (7)		*J. sinuosa* (7)		*J. calliantha* (7)		*J. dendroidea* (3)		*J. umbellata* (5)		*S. pimpinellifolium* (5)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Calyx Diameter (mm)	11.88 [a]	0.37	15.49 [b]	0.40	33.88 [c]	1.21	19.69 [d]	1.74	8.14 [e]	1.63	5.77 [f]	0.43
Sepal Length (mm)	6.32 [a]	0.16	7.48 [b]	0.25	18.01 [c]	1.10	9.67 [d]	0.80	4.41 [e]	0.73	3.45 [f]	0.23
Corolla Diameter (mm)	20.48 [a]	2.18	29.82 [b]	2.27	27.48 [c]	3.48	35.35 [d]	3.27	15.32 [e]	2.52	15.58 [e]	0.58
Corolla Depth (mm)	0.77 [a]	0.09	1.38 [a]	0.27	15.57 [b]	1.84	12.72 [c]	0.88	10.25 [d]	2.27	0.45 [a]	0.07
Corolla Fusion (mm)	3.96 [a]	0.28	9.45 [b]	0.46	15.64 [c]	0.44	14.91 [c]	3.78	10.33 [b]	1.22	1.60 [d]	0.25
Corolla Fusion Proportion	0.42 [a]	0.07	0.64 [b]	0.05	0.86 [c]	0.08	0.65 [b]	0.10	0.72 [b]	0.08	0.21 [d]	0.03
Lobe Length (mm)	5.48 [a]	1.42	5.40 [a]	0.70	2.77 [b]	1.83	7.65 [c]	0.66	4.08 [a]	0.96	5.97 [a]	0.11
Petal Length (mm)	9.53 [a]	1.39	14.85 [b]	1.04	18.41 [c]	1.92	22.56 [d]	2.98	14.40 [b]	0.81	7.57 [e]	0.22
Stamen Length (mm)	4.76 [a]	0.38	10.80 [b]	0.60	10.48 [b]	1.00	10.94 [b]	0.35	10.45 [b]	0.57	6.15 [c]	0.09
Anther Length (mm)	1.43 [a]	0.10	1.59 [b]	0.10	3.27 [c]	0.19	1.86 [d]	0.05	1.34 [a]	0.15	5.75 [e]	0.12
Ovary Diameter (mm)	1.78 [a]	0.14	2.28 [b]	0.19	5.30 [c]	0.41	3.15 [d]	0.18	1.37 [e]	0.26	1.12 [e]	0.06
Style Length (mm)	4.79 [a]	0.53	7.90 [b]	0.73	8.38 [b]	0.66	12.74 [c]	0.86	14.64 [d]	1.47	5.45 [a]	0.21
Herkogamy (mm)	1.47 [a]	0.14	-2.20 [b]	0.19	5.19 [c]	0.75	4.85 [c]	0.35	5.37 [c]	2.14	-0.08 [d]	0.12
Nectar Volume (μl)	2.19 [a]	0.48	6.86 [b]	1.31	50.62 [c]	3.76	32.89 [d]	7.03	17.80 [e]	3.84	0.00 [a]	0.00

760 Sample sizes in parentheses refer to the number of individuals measured (at least three flowers per individual). Significant differences among species are

761 indicated by different letters (p<0.001, ANOVA and Tukey's HSD). *Jaltomata* data from [43].

J. grandibaccata C

J. dendroidea C

J. yungayensis R

J. umbellata T

J. sinuosa R

J. quipuscoae C

J. calliantha C

J. procumbens R

J. darcyana R

J. repandidentata R

Solanum pimpinellifolium R