Conservation of molecular responses upon viral infection in the non-vascular plant *Marchantia polymorpha*

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Abstract

After their transition from water to land around 450 million years ago, plants colonized new habitats facing unprecedented pathogenic microbes. After their first arrival to land, their further expansion reaching new habitats was mostly supported by a growing anatomical complexity in plants based on the acquisition of developmental innovations, such as roots, stomata and vascular tissue. Despite several of those innovations became central for the interaction between plants and their associated microbes, little is known about their impact on plant immune programs and on the diversification of infection strategies of their pathogens. A paradigmatic case is the close relationship between plant vasculature and viruses. Vascular tissues provide a unique cellular environment for viral replication and existence, besides constituting a fast track for viral systemic spread throughout the plant. Since most of our knowledge about plant-virus interactions come from studies in vascular plants, we here present a comparative study to contribute to the understanding of the evolution of plant-virus interactions by molecularly characterizing the interplay between the bryophyte *Marchantia polymorpha* and viruses. Virome analysis of Marchantia plants shows that they are primarily associated with RNA viruses in

natural settings. Additional molecular characterization of the interaction between Marchantia

and tobacco mosaic virus (TMV) show conserved basic processes with vascular plants and

divergent features. Viral infection triggers an extensive transcriptional reprogramming in

Marchantia encompassing broad range defense responses, inhibition of cell cycle and

photosynthesis and a sustained wound response that prevents further viral movement.

Additionally, infected plants show premature aging and organ maturation. Notably, we found

that some core responses that occur in infected areas in Marchantia, were described to be

restricted to vascular tissues in Nicotiana, suggesting that evolutionary appearance of

developmental innovations that became central in plants-virus interactions resulted in re-routing

of defense responses. Finally, we uncover the conserved role of a transcription factor interacting

with the TMV silencing suppressor p126 in specifically abrogating TMV infection.

Introduction

It is estimated that plants developed a functional vascular system through repurposing of pre-

existing genes around 420 million years ago, which facilitated the growth of larger plants by

providing mechanical support and enabling long distant transport of water, nutrients, and

signalling molecules (Bowles et al., 2022, Lucas et al., 2013). Viruses are obligate parasites that

can infect virtually any living organism hijacking central host cellular functions to replicate and

spread within and intra hosts. Coincidentally with land colonization, the repertoire of viruses

(virome) associated to plants enlarged and diversified both in nature and infection strategies.

Although our current knowledge lacks information about virome composition at intermediately

divergent plant lineages, it appears that viruses with large DNA genomes majorly infecting

unicellular chlorophyte algae were displaced by an increasing population of viruses with RNA

and small DNA genomes found in vascular plants (Mushegian et al., 2016). Plant vasculature has

become central for the success of viral infections in tracheophytes, not only serving as fast track

for viral systemic spread, but also providing a unique cellular environment for some viruses

which replication is restricted to that tissue (Kappagantu et al., 2020). Accordingly, vascular cells

are thought to present specific responses to viral infection when compared to other leaf cell-

types (Collum and Culver, 2017).

Our current understanding of the molecular events governing plant-virus interactions is vastly

shaped by studies focusing on vascular plants, mainly crops. Plants respond to viral infections via

at least three different but interconnected defense mechanisms (Mandadi and Scholthof, 2013).

Firstly, plants have an extracellular surveillance system that monitors the presence of pathogens

through the recognition of highly conserved microbe patterns dubbed as Pattern-associated

molecular patterns (PAMPs), such as viral derived double-strand RNAs (dsRNAS), the bacterial

flagellin or the fungal chitin. Detection of those molecules by specialized surface-localized

receptor kinases (Pattern recognition receptors, PRRs), triggers a first layer of defense called

PAMP-triggered immunity (PTI). PRRs expression is often restricted to focal points for microbial

interaction and invasion (Beck et al., 2014, Yotsui et al., 2023). Two additional surveillance

mechanisms monitor the intracellular presence of microbe-derived molecules. Highly stable

dsRNAs produced by viruses during their life cycle, independently of the DNA or RNA nature of

their genomes, are detected by the RNA silencing machinery which constitutes a conserved

antiviral defense mechanism both in plants and animals (Ding et al., 2018, Ding and Voinnet,

2007). Additionally, RNA silencing machinery also recognizes dsRNA generated from the

conversion of exogenous and endogenous single strand RNAs (ssRNA) by RNA-dependent RNA

polymerases (RDRs). RDR1 and RDR6 have been involved in antiviral defense in *Arabidopsis*

thaliana and *Nicotiana tabacum* (Garcia-Ruiz et al., 2010, Rakhshandehroo et al., 2017, Ying et

al., 2010), even though *Nicotiana benthamiana* has only a functional RDR6 (Bally et al., 2015).

Upon recognition, viral dsRNAs are trimmed in small RNAs (visRNAs) of 21 to 24 nucleotides in

length by members of the DICER-like family, mainly DCL2, DCL3 and DCL4 in Arabidopsis and

Nicotiana (Garcia-Ruiz et al., 2010, Lewsey and Carr, 2009). The resulting visRNA duplexes are

subsequently loaded into proteins from the ARGONAUTE family, which are the core elements of

the RNA-induced silencing complex (RiSC), and used to scan the intracellular space for the source

of dsRNA precursors in a sequence complementary manner abrogating viral infection (Lopez-

Gomollon and Baulcombe, 2022). In turn, viruses produce countermeasures, known as silencing

suppressors, targeted to interfere with different steps of the host RNA silencing machinery

(Lopez-Gomollon and Baulcombe, 2022). In response to these silencing suppressors, host micro

RNAs (miRNA, one of the two main classes of endogenous sRNAs in plants) are no longer

functional, allowing the translation of their targets and licensing a new layer of defense. Among

the miRNA targets involved in such counter-counter measure, members of the Nucleotide-

binding domain leucine-rich repeat (NLR) family are central. Thus, it has been suggested that

host miRNAs might work as sensors for the presence of pathogen-derived silencing suppressors

enabling a rapid host defense response based on the activation of otherwise silenced miRNA

targets (Vasseur et al., 2022, Silvestri et al., 2024). NLRs are core elements of the third

intracellular surveillance system for directly monitoring the intracellular presence of pathogen-

derived molecules, such as the prototypical case of the tobacco mosaic virus (TMV) replicase by

the gene *N* in tobacco (Erickson et al., 1999), or their impact on host cellular homeostasis. NLR-

activation triggers the so-called Effector-triggered immunity (ETI), which normally triggers a

hypersensitive response (HR) culminating in cell death. Those three defense systems, PTI, RNA

silencing and ETI largely rely on the action of the plant hormone Salicylic acid (SA). PTI and ETI

responses encompass activation of SA signalling (Pruitt et al., 2021) while SA activates RDR1 in

Arabidopsis and Nicotiana (Lee et al., 2016, Ying et al., 2010, Yu et al., 2003). Additionally, RDR1

expression is also induced by treatment with jasmonates (Liu et al., 2009, Xu et al., 2013),

another central hormone in plant defense. Many of those immunity components and networks

were already present in the last common land plant ancestor, while others have been acquired

alongside the increasing plant cellular and anatomical complexity (de Vries et al., 2018, Belanger

et al., 2023, Chia et al., 2024).

A Central question in plant-microbe interactions is how the evolution of different plant

developmental trajectories, including the acquisition of major innovations, impacts host defense

and pathogen infection strategies. In animals, comparative studies have proved very informative

about the origin and diversification of their innate immune responses against virus (Iwama and

Moran, 2023). Likewise, comparative studies including non-vascular plants, like the liverwort

Marchantia polymorpha, have been instrumental in understanding the evolution of the

interactions between plants and pathogens other than viruses (Carella et al., 2018, Gimenez-

Ibanez et al., 2019, Redkar et al., 2022). Comparative studies in plants have traditionally relied

on both model plant species and microbes, despite the lack of prior experimental evidence that

those interactions occur in nature. Incorporating bryophytes into those comparative studies not

only provides important information about how plant immune programs may have evolved, but

it also bears the potential to determine the contribution of developmental innovations, such as

roots, stomata or vasculature, to their diversification.

To enable comparative studies towards understanding the evolution of plant-virus interactions,

we here present the characterization of the molecular interplay between the non-vascular

liverwort *Marchantia polymorpha* and viruses. We firstly defined the composition of the virome

of Marchantia plants living in the wild and used that information to select a virus with similar

genomic features to those found in nature for further molecular characterization and that can

be tagged with a fluorescent protein that enables monitoring of infection. Additionally, the

selected virus should be able to infect a broad range of hosts, in which their molecular interactions have been studied. Following those criteria, we focused on the first ever isolated virus, the tobacco mosaic virus (TMV). TMV is a ssRNA virus from the Tobamovirus genus showing a broad host range in nature (Zamfir et al., 2023). Additionally, TMV has been extensively used for studying plant-virus interactions in a wealth of plant species, including several Solanaceae species, like tomato and tobacco, and the model plant *Arabidopsis thaliana*, which provide strong foundation for comparative studies. TMV infects through wound entry points from where it moves cell-to-cell via plasmodesmata, until it reaches the vascular system for systemic infection of distal parts of the plant following the stream of photoassimilates (Liu and Nelson, 2013).

Our results show that *Marchantia polymorpha* is associated with RNA viruses in natural populations that can replicate in lab grown Marchantia plants. Additionally, TMV can replicate in Marchantia plants triggering a conserved transcriptional reprogramming encompassing increased wounding and PTI responses in detriment of photosynthesis and cell cycle progression and leading to changes in life-history traits, such as aging and senescence. Induction of a wealth of NLR proteins and core elements from the RNA silencing machinery were also observed, including DCL4 that, in absence of a DCL2 gene in the Marchantia genome (Belanger et al., 2023), seems to be the main antiviral DCL protein according to the predominant 21 nuleotides in length presented by TMV-derived vsRNAs. Noteworthy, the general response of the RNA silencing machinery observed in Marchantia upon TMV infection is equivalent to that found specifically in vascular tissues of *Nicotiana benthamiana*, suggesting an evolutionary anatomical rerouting of antiviral defense towards newly acquired focal points for viral infection.

We additionally identified a conserved host interactor with the TMV silencing suppressor p126 that triggers cross-species defense against TMV.

Results

Marchantia polymorpha **is associated to RNA viruses in nature.**

To identify viruses associated with *Marchantia polymorpha* in nature, we performed a virome analysis of two composite plant samples including 21 individuals growing naturally, not cultivated, in 5 different locations spanning 4 different countries and accessible to possible viral vectors. First contained Marchantia individuals obtained from three open air botanical gardens throughout Europe: Tübingen (Germany), Bern (Switzerland) and Cambridge (UK). The second

encompassed individuals growing open air at the botanical garden in Osnabrück (Germany) and

individuals growing in urban sites in Ljubljana (Slovenia). In addition to the expected background

of bacteriophage sequences, we detected several known viruses, including some capable of

infecting or being associated with plants, fungi or invertebrates (Supplementary Table 1).

Putatively new virus-like sequences, possibly associated with *M. polymorpha*, were selected for

further analyses from the first dataset, based on i) their relatively high average sequencing

depths and ii) similarity to viruses previously associated with eukaryotic organisms, including

plants and invertebrates (Supplementary Table 2). Two previously described and three newly

identified viruses were hence selected for further RT-qPCR confirmation of their association with

the different *M. polymorpha* individuals, along with plants from the Tak-1 reference accession

grown in sterile conditions. Specific primers to detect Ligustrum necrotic ringspot virus (LNRV,

known to infect plants), Hubei picorna-like virus 51, (detected in a metagenomics study and

putatively associated with diverse sample types by datamining – see results below) a newly

identified picorna-like virus (which we named Tübingen picorna-like virus 1, with average

mapping depth of 2230x and contig length of 7801 nts), a new tombus-like virus (Tübingen

tombus-like virus 1, with average mapping depth of 218x and contig length of 4521 nts), and a

new sobemo-like virus (Bern sobemo-like virus 1, with average mapping depth of 88x and contig

length of 2569 nts) were used for these analysis. While none of those viruses were detected in

negative control Tak-1 plants, individuals from Tübingen were associated with all tested viruses

but the Bern sobemo-like virus 1, which in turn was present in individuals from Bern along with

Tübingen picorna-like virus 1. Individuals from the Cambridge population were associated with

Hubei picorna-like virus 51 and Tübingen picorna-like virus 1 (Supplementary Table 3). Further,

we used a datamining approach to search for the presence of conserved RdRp domain

fingerprints (palmprints) of the selected viruses in global short reads sequence datasets using

Serratus infrastructure (Edgar et al., 2022). The results of the analysis suggested that palmprint

RdRp sequences with high similarity to those of queried viruses, can be associated with diverse

sample types, mostly including environmental samples, such as wastewater, water, rhizosphere,

soil and plants (Supplementary Table 4).

Given that Tübingen picorna-like virus 1 was present in all tested populations from the first

sampling, we decided to further characterize its genomic features and interaction with

Marchantia polymorpha. Indeed, Tübingen picorna-like virus 1 had the highest mapping depth

of all contigs in our virome analysis and showed a similar genome structure as other unclassified

picorna-like viruses (Shi et al., 2016), consisting of two predicted genome open reading frames
(ORFs), first containing domains with homology to superfamily 3 helicase, peptidase C3 and RNA-
dependent RNA polymerase (RdRp) and second three domains with homology to a coat protein
with 8-stranded jelly roll β-barrel motif (Figure 1A). Phylogenetic analysis (Figure 1B) of the RdRp
protein sequence and its closest NCBI GenBank homologues showed high similarity (80% identity
of aligned sequences) of this virus isolate with a recently reported plant associated picorna-like
virus (Trichosanthes kirilowii picorna-like virus, QKK82970.1). Much lower identities were
observed for Tübingen picorna-like virus 1 (29-42%) and other viruses associated with diverse
sources (plants, gastropods, water, crayfish, artropods and bird feces). However, given that they
were discovered in metagenomics studies their association with these hosts is only speculative.
Thus, we performed and additional phylogenetic analysis, comparing the RdRp sequence of
Tübingen picorna-like virus 1 with most similar RdRp sequences from RNA Viruses in
Metatranscriptomes (RVMT) database (https://riboviria.org/) (Neri et al., 2022). The analysis
revealed high similarity of the viral RdRp to several sequences included in family-level cluster
f.0032 with order *Picornavirales* (Supplementary Figure 1A). Even if this cluster contains diverse
representatives, none of those has confirmed host associations at the moment (Supplementary
Table 5). Similarly, as found in Serratus analysis, sequences most similar to investigated virus
were associated, e.g., with wastewater, wetlands, and peat soil samples (Supplementary figure
1b, Supplementary Table 5).

Next, we tested whether the Tübingen picorna-like virus 1 was able to replicate in *M. polymorpha*
by incubating two-weeks old Tak-1 individuals with extracts isolated from the Tübingen
population, which contained the highest levels of Tübingen picorna-like virus 1, as determined
by RT-qPCR analysis, or from Tak-1 plants grown in sterile conditions. Individual Marchantia
plants were collected one and two weeks after incubation and the levels of viral accumulation
were measured by RT-qPCR. Individuals exposed to extracts from virus-positive plants showed a
trend of increased viral levels over time, while no amplification was observed in plants incubated
with extracts from Tak-1 plants (Figure 1C). This indicated that Tübingen picorna-like virus 1 can
replicate in Marchantia.

Collectively, those results show that *Marchantia polymorpha* can be associated with RNA viruses
in nature.

Additionally, we performed data mining to search for possible DNA viruses associated with
Marchantia polymorpha. Sequencing data from 74 biological samples (obtained from natural

environments; Beauliue et al., 2023) was analyzed for the presence of viral contigs. Analysis
revealed that most of the examined samples contained virus-like sequences, with the majority
exhibiting similarity to bacteriophages (Supplementary Table 6). Within the dataset we also
found virus-like sequences with similarity to members of *Phycodnaviridae,* which can infect
unicellular green algae. Since only few relatively short contig sequences like this group of viruses
were identified in different datasets, and the data was primarily not produced with microbiome
study in mind (e.g., no surface washing) the association with *M. polymorpha* with viruses from
this taxon is dubious and could be further explored in future studies.

Tobacco mosaic virus replicates in *Marchantia polymorpha*

Since its identification in the 19th century, tobacco mosaic virus has been extensively used for
studying plant-virus interactions in several vascular plant species like Arabidopsis and Nicotiana
(Scholthof, 2004). As a first step for comparative studies on plant-virus interactions between
vascular and non-vascular plants, we aimed to infect *Marchantia polymorpha* plants with a GFP
labelled clone of TMV (Peart et al., 2002). Sap from leaves of healthy and infected *Nicotiana*
benthamiana plants were isolated and used to incubate two-weeks old Tak-1 plants grown in
sterile conditions. After incubation, Marchantia plants were transferred to soil and part of the
remaining sap was inoculated mechanically with an abrasive (carborundrum) in basal leaves
from 1 month old Nicotiana plants, as control for its infectivity. After two weeks, Nicotiana plants
showed systemic GFP signal under UV light along with symptoms of infection (Supplementary
Figure 2), whereas Tak-1 plants displayed GFP signal in discrete infection foci that increased their
size over time (Figure 2A, Supplementary Figure 3), suggestive of viral replication. This was
further corroborated by RT-qPCR amplification of pooled samples including four GFP positive
individuals at the first (T1) and second weeks after incubation (T2), in comparison with mock and
freshly incubated (T0) plants (Figure 2B, Supplementary Figure 4). sRNA profiling in GFP positive
areas from Marchantia thalli identified TMV-derived vsRNAs enriched in 21 nucleotides long
fragments, consistent with DCL4-mediated processing, and mapping to the TMV-GFP sequence
(Figure 2C, Supplementary Figure 5).

Histological sections of the infected area showed presence of the virus in all cell types, as inferred
from GFP fluorescence and when compared to sections from mock treated plants, suggesting no
preference for a specific cell-type during viral infection (Figure 2D).

Those results confirmed that TMV can replicate in *M. polymoprha* plants pointing to Marchantia-
TMV as a suitable pathosystem for comparative studies.

TMV infection triggers profound molecular reprogramming in *M. polymoprha*

To characterize the molecular reprogramming caused by TMV infection, we performed
transcriptomic assays. TMV-GFP infected tissue was collected in four pools including 5 plants
each, along with the very same area from mock treated plants as control (Supplementary Figure
6A). RNA was isolated and the presence of TMV was confirmed by RT-qPCR in each pool
(Supplementary Figure 6B). Principal component analysis (PCA, Supplementary Figure 6C) of the
transcriptome supported the RT-qPCR results showing a clear separation of infected and mock
samples. Since separation among infected samples correlated with viral RT-qPCR levels, we
selected the three replicates that had the highest levels of TMV and clustered together for
further analysis. A total of 1879 genes were found to be up regulated while 1645 were reduced
(padjust<0.05, Log2(fold-change) =1) in response to TMV infection (Supplementary Table 7).
Consistently with an ongoing pathogenic interaction, we found several defense related marker
genes among the differentially expressed genes (DEG). Members of the pathogenesis-related
(PR) family are prime markers of immune responses in several plant species, including
Marchantia (Carella et al., 2019, Gimenez-Ibanez et al., 2019) and we found that the expression
of several homologues showed opposite expression patterns when compared to mock treated
plants (Supplementary Table 8). Several PTI marker genes have been identified in Marchantia
based on their orthology to those established in Arabidopsis (Gimenez-Ibanez et al., 2019) and
their activation in the presence of bacterial and fungal extracts (Gimenez-Ibanez et al., 2019,
Redkar et al., 2022). We observed that a set of those conserved PTI markers were also induced
in response to TMV infection (Figure 3A). Additionally, a significant number of intracellular
receptors from the NLR family displayed upregulated expression upon TMV infection (p < 6.245e-
05 with those described by (Bowman et al., 2017); p < 1.308e-05 with those described by (Chia
et al., 2022, Chia et al., 2024); Supplementary Table 9). Nevertheless, in line with the absence of
TNL genes in Marchantia (Chia et al., 2024), none of those showed significant sequence similarity
to the NLR N gene triggering ETI responses in TMV infected tobacco plants (Whitham et al.,
1994). Likewise, several components from the RNA silencing machinery upregulated in tobacco
plants upon TMV infection (Sheng et al., 2019), were also differentially expressed in response to
TMV in Marchantia plants. The non-canonical MpDCL1b (Mp6g09830), MpDCL4 (Mp7g11720),

and MpRDR6 (Mp8g14970) were upregulated, whereas MpDCL3 (Mp1g02840), MpAGO9

(Mp8g08610) and MpNRPE1b (Mp6g00230) were suppressed.

Gene Ontology (GO) analysis of the upregulated genes revealed an enrichment (padjust<0.05)

of biological processes related to reactive oxygen species, wounding, light intensity, heat

responses and responses to fungus and the presence of their constituent chitin (Supplementary

Table 10, Supplementary Figure 7A). Photosynthesis, DNA packaging and cell cycle, microtubule

organization or regulation of salicylic acid metabolism were among the downregulated processes

(padjust<0.05; Supplementary Table 11, Supplementary Figure 7B).

Notably, TMV is mainly transmitted through wounds and wounding response was one of the

processes to which upregulated genes belonged in the GO analysis, which prompted us analysing

this response. ERF transcription factors are central to trigger wounding responses in vascular

plants such as *A. thaliana* (Heyman et al., 2018) with a conserved set of ERF transcription factors

being also recently described to respond to wounding in *Marchantia polymorpha* plants (Liang

et al., 2022). A subset of these wounding responsive ERF transcription factors showed the same

expression pattern upon TMV infection as that observed upon intensive wounding (Figure 3B,

(Liang et al., 2022). To determine the whole transcriptional overlap between wounding and TMV

responses, we reanalysed published tissue incision transcriptomic responses (Liang et al., 2022)

using the same pipeline we used for the TMV samples. Comparison of both datasets showed a

significant overlap both in up-regulated (593 genes; p<6.631e-235) and down-regulated genes

(162 genes; p<2.137e-70; Figure 3C), suggesting that TMV infection contributes to a sustained

wound response in Marchantia.

Chitin is one of the most abundant polysaccharides in nature and it is a primary component of

cell walls in fungi and exoskeletons of arthropods such as insects, which in turn can work as viral

vectors in a range of plants species (Campbell, 1996). According to the GO enrichment in

response to chitin and fungi, and besides the fungal responsive genes described above as part

of a conserved PTI response, we also observed upregulation of a set of fungal responsive WRKY

transcription factors (Figure 3D; (Redkar et al., 2022, Yotsui et al., 2023).

Photosynthetic deficiency is a hallmark for several stress responses, including those involving

viral infections. Accordingly, downregulation of transcripts involved in photosynthesis was one

of the main processes affected in our GO study as consequence of TMV infection. We determined

the photosynthetic efficiency in TMV infected areas from 10 4-weeks old Tak-1 plants after 2-

weeks of infection along with the very same area in mock treated plants. TMV infected areas

showed a significant reduction in photosynthetic competency when compared to similar areas

from mock treated plants (Figure 3E). Notably, parts of those very same plants distant to the

infection foci, showed also reduced photosynthetic capability, although to a lesser extent (Figure

3F). Those results suggest that TMV responses might be systemic in *Marchantia polymorpha*

plants.

Overall, those results show that TMV engages in a compatible interaction with *Marchantia*

polymorpha.

Salicylic and OPDA-dependent signaling pathways are active at TMV infected areas.

The plant hormones Salicylic acid (SA) and Jasmonic acid (JA) are central in defense responses

against most pathogens of vascular plants, acting both in a synergistic and antagonistic manner.

Whereas the SA biosynthesis and signalling pathway are mostly conserved in *Marchantia*

polymoprha (Jia et al., 2023), the active molecules binding to the COI1 receptor and triggering

jasmonate signaling are a group of long chain polyunsaturated fatty acids, including dinor-OPDA,

instead of JA-Ile (Kneeshaw et al., 2022, Monte et al., 2018). Therefore, we compared the SA and

jasmonate-related transcriptomic responses with those found during TMV infection. To that end,

we used the time course datasets obtained on incubation of Marchantia with 1mM SA during 2,

6 and 12 hours (Jeon et al., 2022), SA concentration shown to promote defense against bacterial

and to increase susceptibility to fungal pathogens (Jeon et al., 2022, Matsui et al., 2020).

Comparison of the DEGs identified on SA treatment showed a significant overlap with those

responding to TMV infection (Figure 4A; Supplementary Figure 8). A total of 225 genes were

commonly up-regulated by 2 hours SA treatment or TMV (p<1.799e-100), 306 (p < 1.382e-172)

were shared after 6 hours treatment, and 92 (p < 3.580e-47) by 12 hours of SA incubation.

Likewise, TMV infection shared 47 down regulated genes (p<1.618e-14) with 2 hours, 38 (p <

2.897e-13) with the 6 hours, and 17 genes with 12 hours incubation samples (p < 1.720e-05),

showing that TMV infection activates SA-dependent transcriptional responses.

To ascertain a possible contribution from the jasmonate signalling pathway, we compared the

TMV transcriptional response with that of plants treated with dn-OPDA (Monte et al., 2018) or

having a constitutively activated jasmonate pathway as a consequence of the mutation of the

JAZ signalling repressor (Mpjaz-1 KO plants; (Monte et al., 2019). A total of 143 and 81 genes

were commonly up-regulated upon TMV infection and *Mpjaz* deficiency or dn-OPDA treatment,

while 238 were downregulated in TMV infected and Mpjaz-1 KO plants (Figure 4B), suggesting

that TMV infection also activates the jasmonate signalling pathway in Marchantia. Finally, we

found that 64 genes were commonly up-regulated by TMV infection, SA 6 h treatment and

absence of a functional MpJAZ protein, while 54 genes were up-regulated by TMV infection, SA

6h and dn-OPDA treatments (Figure 4C).

Next, we performed a GO analysis in the different sets of genes that were found to be commonly

regulated by TMV infections and each of the different hormone-related transcriptomes (i.e. Up

regulated genes by TMV and SA 6 h treatment from Figure 4A). That approach showed that the

JA pathway might contribute to the activation of wounding, reactive oxygen species and virus

responses, in addition to the catabolism of several compounds, including lipids,

phenylpropanoids and salicylic acid, in TMV infected Marchantia plants. Interestingly, some of

these processes were also commonly upregulated by TMV infection and SA treatment, including

wounding, SA and lignin catabolism among others. The SA response pathway might on the other

side also contribute to the observed transcriptional up-regulation of defense genes against

bacteria and fungi, as well as responsive to chitin in TMV infected plants (Figure 4D,

Supplementary Table 12). Amongst the downregulated processes by MpJAZ deficiency and TMV

infection were translational elongation, mucilage and cell wall biosynthesis, response to

fructose, photosynthesis, microtubule-based process, growth, and response to abscisic acid

(ABA; Figure 4E, Supplementary Table 12)

Furthermore, genes found to be commonly upregulated by TMV, SA and dn-OPDA treatment

were related to oxylipin and phenylalanine metabolism, wounding and drought recovery, among

other Gene ontology groups(Figure 4F; Supplementary Table 13). Meanwhile, those genes found

to be commonly upregulated by TMV infection, SA 6 h treatment and enhanced JA signalling in

Mpjaz-1 plants were related to antiviral defense and lipid catabolism, which has been also

recently found to contribute to SA activation and antiviral defense ((Xu et al., 2022); Figure 4G,

Supplementary Table 13)

Collectively, those results suggest that SA and JA signalling pathways are activated in Marchantia

during TMV infection.

TMV infection triggers aging in *Marchantia polymorpha.*

Interactions with pathogens, including viruses, can result in the modification of life-history traits

and developmental trajectories both in plants and animal (Pagan et al., 2008, R.C., 1978).

Senescence is the final stage of the life cycle of a cell, tissue or organism and it is gradually triggered throughout aging. This process can be accelerated by the interaction with different pathogens, including the crucifer infecting TMV-Cg strain capable of compatible interactions with the Arabidopsis UK-4 ecotype (Espinoza et al., 2007, Lim and Nam, 2005). Wound response, mitotic cell arrest, and reduced photosynthetic efficiency are hallmarks for plant cell senescence (Espinoza et al., 2007, Gan, 2003). Additionally, SA and JA, along with ET, contribute to senescence in *Arabidopsis thaliana* (Schommer et al., 2008, Yu et al., 2021).. Since all those senescence hallmarks were present in our molecular characterization of the Marchantia-TMV interaction, we first checked the expression levels of several senescence marker genes in our transcriptomic data (Kulshrestha et al., 2022). We found that many of those senescence markers, such as MpMYB14 (Mp5g19050), MpORE1 (Mp2g07720), MpNYE1 (Mp1g17090) and MpWRKY7 (Mp3g17660), were induced upon TMV infection, hence suggesting that TMV infection could trigger aging and tissue maturation in Marchantia. Transcriptional trajectories orchestrating maturation and aging in Marchantia, both at organism and tissue level, have been recently reported through transcriptional studies over developmental time, including individuals from different ages (spanning from 1 day after germination - D1- to 31 days old Marchantia plants - D31) , or by analysing sections along the thalli from top to base, being slice 1 (S1) at the top, considered the youngest part of the organ, and being slice 6 (S6) at the base and considered the oldest (Wang et al., 2023). To assay whether TMV infection could modified the life-history of Marchantia plants we compared the transcriptional profile from mock and TMV infected Marchantia plants with those from the maturation and developmental trajectories. Clustering the transcriptional profile of mock and TMV infected plants with those datasets, based on Pearson's correlation coefficient and regression model, showed that TMV infection promotes maturation and aging. Thus, while the transcriptome from mock treated plants clustered with juvenile state samples (slide 2 and Day 1), that from TMV infected plants clustered with slide 4 and day 31 of development (Figure 5A, 5B).

Those results indicated that TMV infection triggers premature tissue maturation and senescence in Marchantia, a characteristic trait from compatible plant - virus interactions.

MpNAC7 is a conserved interactor of the TMV silencing suppressor p126 and enhances defense against TMV in tobacco plants.

The TMV replicase p126 is essential for viral replication and movement, but it also works as a silencing suppressor in vascular plants (Ding et al., 2004). To gain insights into its possible role

during TMV infection in Marchantia plants, we first established its subcellular localization. We

found that p126 fused to GFP accumulated within the cytoplasm and, occasionally, as discrete

spot-like inclusions (Figure 6A) consistently with earlier studies in onion epidermal cells, where

the full length p126 protein fused to GFP was found associated to the endoplasmic reticulum

(dos Reis Figueira et al., 2002).

Constitutive expression of viral-derived silencing suppressors often leads to plant developmental

defects, like growth stunting (Kasschau et al., 2003). Accordingly, four-weeks old Marchantia

plants constitutively expressing p126 were smaller in size when compared to control plants

(Figure 6B, Supplementary Figure 9).

The TMV replicase p126 is known to associate with several host factors in Arabidopsis, including

TOM1 (Yamanaka et al., 2000), GDI2 (Kramer et al., 2011) and the transcription factor ATAF2

(Wang et al., 2009). To assess whether those interactions were conserved between p126 and the

corresponding orthologs in Marchantia, we performed Y2H assays. Orthologs were identified by

blasting the Arabidopsis protein sequences at MarpolBase (https//Marchantia.info) and

PlantRegMap (http://plantregmap.gao-lab.org/). The P126 full length and helicase domain

(Δp126, nt 2442 to 3636) were fused to the GAL4 binding domain and used as baits, while the

putative interactors fused to the GAL4-activation domain, were used as preys. Notably, the only

conserved interaction was that of the ortholog of the NAC transcription factor ATAF2, *MpNAC7*

(Mp6g02620), with Δp126 (Figure 6C). As for Δp126-ATAF2 binding (Wang et al., 2009) Δp126-

MpNAC7 interaction could be confirmed *in planta* using bimolecular luminescence

complementation (Figure 6D). Additionally, both the helicase domain alone and the full-length

p126 were found to interact *in planta* with either NAC transcription factors. Such discrepancy

between the results obtained by the two different protein-protein assays can be potentially

attributed to the presence of additional protein partners in Nicotiana or variable intracellular

conditions, such as pH, that modify protein folding allowing the interaction with the full length

p126.

In Arabidopsis, ATAF2 expression is triggered by TMV infection (Wang et al., 2009). Likewise, we

found that MpNAC7 expression is also increased on TMV infection (Log2(fold-change)= 0.991),

wounding (Log2(fold-change)= 2.67), dn-OPDA and after 6 hours of SA treatment (Log2(fold-

change)= 1,23) in Marchantia. Likewise, ATAF2 is induced by wounding, SA and JA treatments

(Delessert et al., 2005) and contributes to defense against TMV in Arabidopsis (Wang et al.,

2009). Here, to ascertain the role of MpNAC7 in defense against TMV, and rule out a possible

connection with RNA silencing- mediated responses, we infected 1 month old Nicotiana plants

deficient in RDR6 (rdr6i; (Schwach et al., 2005)) with MpNAC7, or GUS as control, in the presence

of TMV or an unrelated ssRNA virus, such as turnip mosaic virus (TuMV). TMV and TuMV strains

were labelled with the ROS1 gene which triggers anthocyanin production, and hence we

followed presence of the viruses by the purple colour (Bedoya et al., 2012). We observed that

co-expression of MpNAC7 abrogated local and systemic TMV infection with respect to plants co-

expressing the GUS control. By contrast, MpNAC7 co-expression was of no effect on TuMV

infected plants, that displayed a similar local and systemic presence of the virus as the GUS co-

infiltrated controls (Figure 6E, Supplementary Figure 10).

Collectively, those results show that molecular interaction between the TMV silencing

suppressor p126 and the host NAC transcription factor is conserved in Marchantia, as well as the

role of this transcription factor in defense.

Discussion

In this work, we have characterized the interaction of the non-vascular liverwort *Marchantia*

polymorpha with viruses. First, we have defined known and unknown viruses that associate with

Marchantia in natural settings. These studies show that Marchantia is primarily associated with

RNA viruses in nature, validating previous predictions based on the presence of viral gene

hallmarks in the transcriptomes from the 1000 Plants Genome Project (Mushegian et al., 2016).

We also showed that at least one of these newly discovered viruses (Tübingen picorna-like virus

1) can replicate in laboratory grown Marchantia Tak-1 plants. In-depth phylogenetic analyses

placed this virus within a larger, poorly characterised cluster composed of viruses discovered

with metagenomics approaches, mostly associated with environmental samples, within

Picornavirales order. Viruses from this order infect mostly animals, but also protists and plants

(Koonin et al., 2020) Tübingen picorna-like virus 1 codes for the hallmark protein domains

characteristic for picornaviruses, but seems to lack movement protein (MP) that is present in

most of the plant-infecting viruses, with the exception of some vertically transmitted viruses,

e.g., from families *Paritiviridae* and *Amalgavirida (Dolja et al., 2020)*.Although kinetics of viral

replication is not linear, in our infection experiment we observed only modest virus titre increase

over time, which might be connected to limited ability of virus to move from cell-to-cell due to

the lack of MP. Few viruses have been identified by metagenomic approaches in non-vascular

plants, such as *M. polymorpha*, some with (Debat et al., 2023, Mifsud et al., 2022) and other

without MP (Mushegian et al., 2016, Vendrell-Mir et al., 2021). On the other hand, it is predicted

that plasmodesmata have evolved along with the acquisition of vasculature to assist in the

transport of nutrients throughout the plant by likely changing the way they control their aperture

(Benitez et al., 2018, Hernandez-Hernandez et al., 2020). Therefore, it is plausible that the way

in which viruses interact with host plasmodesmata to move from cell-to-cell has also differed

over time. Additionally, it has also been recently proposed that viruses lacking a MP can

systemically infect vascular plants exploiting host proteins that are also predicted to be present

in Marchantia, such as those belonging to the Phloem Protein 2 (PP2) gene family (Ying et al.,

2024). Since we only started to uncover *M. polymorpha* virome, and, at the same time, little is

known about the structure and function of *M. polymorpha* plasmodesmata (Zeinsmaster D.D

and Carothers Z.B, 1974), which are involved in interaction with MP in vascular plants, further

research on the topic, building also on *M. polymorpha* inoculation procedures developed in this

study, can shed a light on repertoire of viruses infecting non-vascular plants. Recent study

proposed a horizontal transfer of MP-encoding viruses infecting higher plants to nonvascular

plants (Butkovic et al., 2023), whereas discovery of Tübingen picorna-like virus 1 suggests

another possible route of virus emergence in non-vascular plants. This may be linked with

horizontal virus transfer from invertebrates or protists and could, very speculatively, represent a

missing link in a recently suggested evolution of single jelly roll type CP to MP (Butkovic et al.,

2023).

Second, we have found that TMV engages into a compatible interaction with Marchantia plants.

That interaction encompasses an extensive transcriptional reprogramming reminiscent of that

found in vascular plants such as Arabidopsis and Nicotiana, albeit involving also previously

uncovered differences like the activation of a sustained wounding response. Third, we have

found that the TMV silencing suppressor p126 displays similar subcellular localization in

Marchantia cells, as in onion epidermal cells (dos Reis Figueira et al., 2002), and that it interacts

with a NAC transcription factor ortholog of the Arabidopsis ATAF2 transcription factor involved

in defense against TMV (Wang et al., 2009), MpNAC7. Additionally, transient expression of

MpNAC7 specifically abrogates TMV infection in Nicotiana plants. All those commonalities show

that core molecular events of plant-virus interactions found in vascular plants might be also

present in non-vascular plants.

Marchantia plants infected with TMV undergo a transcriptional reprogramming consistent with

a pathogenic process and characterized by the activation of the defense related PR proteins and

a conserved PTI response. Perception of dsRNAs have been found to trigger PTI in response to

TMV infection in Arabidopsis, which in turn contributes to antiviral defense (Korner et al., 2013).

Indeed, dsRNA-triggered PTI is dependent on the Arabidopsis PRR co-receptor SERK1 (Niehl et

al., 2016), which has a corresponding ortholog in the Marchantia genome (Mp7g09160), and

which was shown to be involved in PTI against *Pseudomonas syringae,* and to be targeted by the

PTI suppressors AvrPto (Gimenez-Ibanez et al., 2019). Thus, it will be interesting in future studies

to analyse the role of MpSERK1 in viral PTI responses. Additionally, TMV infection triggers the

expression of a significant number of NLR genes that can potentially contribute to an ETI

response. While in *Nicotiana benthamiana*, both DCL2 and DCL4 process TMV RNAs into 22 and

21 nucleotides long vsRNAs (Guo and Wong, 2017), the solely presence of DCL4 in Marchantia

results in the predominant processing in 21 nucleotides long vsRNAs. We also observed changes

on the expression of core genes of the RNA silencing machinery in response to TMV infection. In

contrast to the repression of elements from the RNA-Directed DNA methylation pathway, such

as MpDCL3, MpAGO9 and MpNRPE1b, the central elements within the RNA antiviral machinery

MpDCL4 and MpRDR6 were activated. Such general switch on RNA silencing pathways in

Marchantia is reminiscent of that found specifically restricted to the vasculature of *Nicotiana*

benthamiana in response to TMV (Collum and Culver, 2017). Those results suggest an

evolutionary re-routing of defense mechanisms after acquisition of novel tissues or cell-types

that become new focal points for plant-virus interactions.

Interestingly, our results also uncover a previously unknown potential role of wound response

as an antiviral defense mechanism. Plant cells undergoing wound responses experience

inhibition of their photosynthetic ability becoming sink tissues on the transport of

photoassimilates (Quilliam et al., 2006), attracting TMV movement (Brants, 1961). This wound

response might be, at least partially, sustained by the activation of the salicylic and jasmonate

pathways. Thus, it is tempting to speculate that sustained wound response in Marchantia plants,

along with local and systemic decreased on photosynthetic capability, confine TMV infection

limiting its movement throughout the plant. Additionally, premature senescence of infected

tissues might further abrogate viral infection. Therefore, modification of host´s life-history traits,

such as senescence, can constitute a defensive mechanism in Marchantia.

Salicylic and jasmonate pathways are central for defense against several pathogens. Although

the interaction between both hormones has been traditionally considered antagonistic, recent

studies suggest that such antagonism might have been evolutionary acquired after the split of

gymnosperms and angiosperms (de Vries et al., 2018). Our comparative analysis of the

transcriptional changes in response to TMV infection in Marchantia and those found in response to treatments with Salicylic and jasmonates (dn-OPDA), as well as in Mpjaz-1 KO plants, show that both SA and jasmonates pathways might contribute to the activation of genes involved in phenylpropanoid metabolism. Those findings are in line with Salicylic and jasmonates triggering this very same pathway in the moss *Physcomitrium patens,* which in turn is responsible for the production of defense-related compounds. (de Vries et al., 2018). Likewise, in line with their synergistic interaction is responsible for local and systemic resistance against TMV in *Nicotiana benthamiana* (Zhu et al., 2014), both salicylic and jasmonates activate genes involved in antiviral defense responses that are also responsive to TMV infection in Marchantia. Finally, a set of SA/dn-OPDA commonly upregulated genes might contribute to the above mentioned sustained wound response, and therefore, to contain virus spread.

Our work also highlights the conservation of central players, such as MpNAC7, in the specific defense against TMV. Future research might focus on comparative studies to ascertain the conservation of the genetic networks under MpNAC7 and ATAF2 regulation both in Marchantia and Arabidopsis.

Collectively, results from this work suggest the presence of evolutionary conserved and divergent plant strategies to cope with viral infections. Those might include gain and loss of defense strategies, such as those involving wound responses. Evolution of plant-virus interactions might also encompass the gradual acquisition of new elements within the underlying gene networks, as those physically interacting with pathogen-derived proteins. Finally, defense mechanisms might undergo anatomical re-location to newly pathogen-targeted cell-types and tissues over evolutionary times.

Material and methods

Plant growth conditions

Male *Marchantia polymorpha* plants Takaragaike-1 (Tak-1) were grown on plates with half strength Gamborg´s B5 medium (Duchefa) containing 1% agar and 1% sucrose under continuous light and 22ºC.

Nicotiana benthamiana plants were grown on soil under long day conditions (16h light/ 8h dark) and 25ºC.

Arabidopsis thaliana plants were grown on soil under long day conditions and 23 ºC.

Infection assays

Frozen tissue from Marchantia plants from the Tübingen population or lab grown Tak-1 plants

was homogenized in liquid nitrogen cold mortars, resuspended in phosphate buffer pH7.2,

filtered using 70 µM filters and kept at 4ºC. Two-week old Tak-1 plants grown in sterile conditions

in plates were vacuum incubated with each of both extracts and transferred to plates containing

wet soil. Eight Tak-1 individuals exposed to each sap were collected either one or two weeks

after incubation to assess viral replication.

Two weeks-old *Nicotiana benthamiana* plants were infiltrated with an agrobacterium solution

(0.5 O.D) carrying the TMV-GFP clone (Peart et al., 2002). Infected Nicotiana plants were grown

for 3 additional weeks along with non-infected plants and upper leaves displaying infection

symptoms were collected, along with equivalent ones from non-infected plants and frozen in

liquid nitrogen. Subsequently, leaf tissue was grinded in a liquid nitrogen cold mortar. Sap was

isolated from grinded leaf tissue using phosphate buffer pH 7.2, filtered with 70 µM filters and

maintained at 4ºC. Two-weeks old Tak-1 plants were incubated either in TMV-GFP containing sap

or sap from non-infected plants (mock) for 5 minutes in vacuum. After incubation, Tak-1 plants

were transferred to plates containing wet soil and brought back to the growth chamber. GFP

signal was monitored 1 and 2 weeks after incubation using a portable UV lamp or with a

magnifying stereoscope couple to a UV light source.

RNA isolation and expression analysis

Total RNA was extracted from Marchantia plants and Arabidopsis inflorescences using the

protocol described in (Box et al., 2011). Marchantia isolated RNA was further cleaned using the

RNeasy Kit (Qiagen). 500 ngs of total RNA were DNase I treated (Fisher Scientific) and converted

into cDNA using the RevertAid first strand kit (Fisher Scientific) following the manufacturer

instructions. RT-qPCR experiments were performed in a lightcycler (ROCHE) device. Relative

expression changes were calculated using the $2^{-\Delta\Delta Ct}$ method using *MpACTIN7* (Mp6g11010) gene

as housekeeping. Primers utilized can be found in supplementary table 14.

RNA-seq analysis

For virome studies, 1 µg of total RNA from each of the 21 individuals included in the study was

pooled and 4 µg from the mixture were used for preparing two independent libraries using total

ribo-depleted RNA following the manufacturer instructions (Illumina TruSeq Stranded total RNA

LT sample prep Kit, plant). The first library containing samples from 14 individuals wassequenced

on an Illumina NovaSeq 6000 device in 2x150 bp mode, while the second one containing RNA

from 7 individuals, was sequenced in an Illumina NovaseqX device. A total of 306,895,552 and

506,670,250 reads were respectively obtained. The reads were trimmed and further analysed

using QIAGEN CLC Genomics Workbench 21 (https://digitalinsights.qiagen.com/). Dataset was

analysed for the presence of known and new viruses using an established virus detection

pipeline (Pecman et al., 2017), which includes: reads trimming, *de novo* assembly of trimmed

reads, mapping of reads and contigs to NCBI viral RefSeq database (search for known viruses)

and pFam domain search for contig sequences (search for known and unknown viruses). To

detect known viruses, results of reads mapping to viral RefSeq database were inspected and

filtered for viruses for which at least 1000 nts of the reference sequence were covered by

mapped reads (Supplementary table 1). In parallel, to detect known viruses and search for new

ones, results of the pFam domain search of contig sequences were filtered for hits to viral

proteins. Then, this candidate list of viral contigs was additionally queried for similarity against

complete NCBI *nr* database (October 2020) using blastx (Gish and States, 1993) and the similarity

search results were visualized and taxonomically classified using MEGAN 6 (Huson et al., 2016b).

Contigs corresponding to cellular organisms in this analysis were excluded from the list to obtain

a final list of putative viral-like sequences (Supplementary table 2). Trimmed sequencing reads

were mapped to the list of putative viral-like sequences, to estimate the abundance of

corresponding nucleic acids in the sequenced sample and the results were reported as average

mapping depth (number of times a position is covered by sequencing reads, averaged over a

complete contig length; Supplementary table 2).

The presence of selected viruses (three new and two known) was tested by RT-qPCR in RNA

extracts of collected samples as described above and datamining approach was used to search

for association of those viruses with different sample types linked with publicly available short

read datasets. This was performed by querying Serratus infrastructure palmprint database

(Edgar et al., 2022) by RdRp sequences of selected viruses using palmID tool

(https://serratus.io/palmid).

For a newly discovered picorna-like virus, named Tübingen picorna-like virus 1, additional

analyses were performed, aiming to ascertain its association with *M. polymorpha*. Putative

protein domains were annotated on the viral genome by InterProScan search

(https://www.ebi.ac.uk/interpro/search/sequence/, May 2024) of the two discovered open

reading frames against all included databases. Amino acid sequence of ORF 1 of the virus

(containing RNA-dependent polymerase (RdRp) domain) was queried for similarity against

complete NCBI *nr* database (January 2022) using blastp. Fifteen best hits according to bit score

values (which have at least 33% identity with the conserved part of the RdRp domain of the

queried virus) were included into phylogenetic analysis. Alignment of the sequences of the

conserved part of RdRp was performed using MAFFT 7.48 (Katoh and Standley, 2013), followed

by alignment trimming using TrimAI 1.3 in Automated 1 mode (Capella-Gutiérrez et al., 2009).

Then, best protein substitution model was selected using Model Finder (Kalyaanamoorthy et al.,

2017) and maximum likelihood phylogenetic tree inference was performed based on the

trimmed alignment using IQ-Tree 1.6.12 (Nguyen et al., 2015), using 1000 ultrafast bootstrap

replicates (Hoang et al., 2018). The resulting phylogenetic tree was visualized using iTOL 6.5

(Letunic and Bork, 2021) and viral taxa on the tree were coloured according to the associated

sample source, as designated in NCBI GenBank. To obtain even more in-depth information about

the phylogenetic position of the newly discovered virus, its sequence was aligned also against

members of the most related family-level cluster of RdRp sequences (f.0032) from RNA Viruses

in Metatranscriptomes (RVMT) database (https://riboviria.org/) (Neri et al., 2022). Alignment

and phylogenetic analyses were performed as described above, excluding TrimAI step.

For analysing the transcriptional response in Marchantia plants to TMV infection, 1 ug of total

RNA was used for preparing each stranded library by mRNA enrichment following manufacturer

indications (TrueSeq kit from Illumina). Libraries were sequenced on a Novaseq 6000 device. A

total of 20-21 million pairs were obtained per sample. Adapter removal and trimming of low

quality bases was done using Trim Galore! v0.6.1

(https://www.bioinformatics.babraham.ac.uk/projects/trim_galore/), removing reads shorter

than 20 bps and non-paired reads after the trimming step. Ribosomal RNA reads were removed

using SortMeRNA v2.1b (Kopylova et al., 2012), removing also reads that become unpaired after

this filtering step.

Cleaned reads together with the transcriptome of *Marchantia polymorpha* were used to quantify

gene expression at transcript level using Salmon v1.1.0 (Patro et al., 2017).

For this, the file MpTak1v5.1_r1.mrna.fasta containing the Marchantia transcriptome (v5.1) was

downloaded from https://marchantia.info/download/tak1v5.1/ (as of 19-Jan-2021). This file was

indexed using *Salmon index* and then used as input for *Salmon quant*, which was ran with

parameters -l A, –validateMappings, --recoverOrphans, --rangeFactorizationBins 4, --seqBias,
and –gcBias. Mapping rate was found to be in the 89.5%-92.58% range.

The R progam tximport v1.14.2 (Soneson et al., 2015) was used to aggregate Salmon's transcript
expression estimates at gene level and the *DESeqDataSetFromTximport* from the R package
DESeq2 v1.26.0 (Love et al., 2014) was used to create an R object with count data and
experimental information for all samples. A low-expression filter was then applied to remove any
gene with less than 10 counts across all 8 analyzed samples, resulting in a final set of 14,980
genes (from 19,217 annotated genes). Then, the *DESeq* function, which, among other things,
computes size factors for sample normalization, was applied to the filtered object. DESeq2's *rlog*
function was used to transform count data to the log2 scale while minimizing for differences
between samples for low-expressed genes. The transformed data was fed to DESeq2's *plotPCA*
function to visualize a PCA plot of the samples.

The analysis of differential expression was done using DESeq2's *results* function with the filtered
and normalized object as input and parameter *alpha = 0.05.*

All datasets used in this study for comparative analysis (wound response and salicylic acid time
course) were analysed in the very same way as described above.

All   Gene   ontology   analysis   (GO)   were   performed   using   PLAZA
(https://bioinformatics.psb.ugent.be/plaza/). Redundancy on representative categories was
reduced using Revigo (http://revigo.irb.hr/).

For correlation analysis of transcriptome responses between developmental trajectories and
TMV response, raw reads were processed as described above, except that rRNA was removed
using ribodetector_cpu v0.2.7 (Deng et al., 2022) and Salmon version was v1.9.0. Salmon's
counts were converted into a DESeq2 object and a low-expression filter was applied as described
above. Next, the existing batch effect between time course samples and sliced tissue ones was
removed using the Combat seq function from the sva package (Leek et al., 2023), v3.48.0. Then,
values for biological replicates were averaged and Pearson correlation was computed for the
resulting count matrix and displayed using the Heatmap function from the ComplexHeatmap
package (Gu, 2022). The batch correction, correlation and heatmap plotting steps were based
on the R script used in (Wang et al., 2023) and kindly provided by the authors.

DNA-seq data mining

Data mining was utilized to search for possible DNA viruses associated with *M. polymorpha.*
DNA-seq data from a recent study of *M. polymorpha* from natural populations (Beauliue et al.,
2023) was retrieved from the SRA database (BioProject PRJNA931118). 74 biosample accessions
were selected to encompass diverse geographical locations and various *M. polymorpha*
subspecies. Datasets were analyzed using a customized pipeline for virus detection, designed
with the Snakemake workflow management system (v.7.32.4) (Köster et al., 2021). Some of the
chosen accessions contained sequencing data from multiple runs, which were merged before
analysis. The downloaded reads were processed using a custom script: (available at:
https://github.com/LanaVogrinec/snakemake-marchantia). Briefly, reads were trimmed with
trimmomatic (v.0.39) (Bolger et al., 2014) and assembled into contigs with MEGAHIT (v.1.2.9) (Li
et al., 2015). A similarity search was performed against the NCBI *nr* database (February 2024)
using DIAMOND (v.0.9.14) blastx (Buchfink et al., 2015) and the hits were taxonomically classified
with MEGAN6 (v.6.25.9) (Huson et al., 2016). Contig sequences classified as viral (group 'Viruses'
in MEGAN analysis) were extracted and are available, together with their classifications, in
Supplementary Table 6.

sRNA library construction and data processing

TMV-GFP positive areas were collected from 2 Marchantia plants infected for 2 weeks in two
biological replicates. RNA was isolated following the protocol described in (Box et al., 2011). 10
ngs of total RNA were used to build two independent libraries following manufacturer indications
(RealSeq-AC, Somagenics). Libraries were sequenced in an Illumina NovaSeq device. A total of
26-35 million single-end reads (101 bp) were obtained per sample. Adapter removal and
trimming of low quality bases was done using Trim Galore! v0.6.1
(https://www.bioinformatics.babraham.ac.uk/projects/trim_galore/) with parameters *-q 15 --*
clip_R1 1 --length 16.

Cleaned reads were then mapped to the TMV-GFP sequence using hisat2 (v2.1.0, (Kim et al.,
2019)) with default parameters. The resulting sam files were sorted and indexed using Samtools
(v1.15.1, (Danecek et al., 2021)) and the length distribution of reads mapping to the TMV-GFP
sequence was computed using samtools stats.

Constructs and plant transformation

cDNA from Marchantia mock treated plants was used to amplify the coding regions of *MpTOM1*

(Mp3g00660), *MpGDI2* (Mp6g05010) and *MpNAC7* (Mp6g02620) by PCR using Phusion

polymerase (NEB). Arabidopsis *Bobber1* (At5g53400) and *ATAF2* (At5g08790) were amplified

using cDNA synthesized from RNA from Arabidopsis inflorescences. p126 and Δp126 were

amplified using DNA from the TMV-GFP containing plasmid. All obtained fragments were further

incubated with dATP and Taq DNA polymerase (NEB) for 1 hour before cloned into the gateway

compatible vector PCR8/GW/TOPO TA (Invitrogen) or directly cloned to pENTR D-TOPO

(Invitrogen) in the case of ATAF2. An entry vector containing the Arabidopsis AGO1 was kindly

provided by Pablo Manavella. Inserts were cloned into their final vectors through LR reaction

using LR clonase II (Invitrogen). All plasmids were submitted to Sanger sequencing to corroborate

their integrity before used in the corresponding experiments. A list of used primers and

constructs can be found in supplementary table 14 and supplementary table 15.

Plant transformation was performed as described in (Ishizaki et al., 2008)and selected in

Gamborg´s B5 media supplemented with Kanamycin 100mg/ml and Cefotaxime 100mg/ml.

Histology and imaging

Marchantia plants were embedded in 8% agarose and cross-sections of around 200 μM were

obtained using a vibratome. Confocal imaging was performed using Leica SP5. Images were

processed using Fiji (Schindelin et al., 2012).

Protein-protein interaction assays

Interactions in the yeast two-hybrid system was assayed on selective medium (L$^-$, W$^-$, H$^-$). The

assay was repeated 3 times. For the luciferase complementation assay, one-month old rdr6i

Nicotiana plants were used. *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* cultures with the different constructs

were mixed in the same amounts at a final OD$_{600}$=0.6. Leaves were imaged three days after

inoculation using a LAS4000 device.

Photosynthetic measurements

10 infected and 10 mock treated plants were subjected to 10 measures each using a IMAGING-

PAM Maxi device (Heinz Walz GmbH). Quantification was done using the ImagingWing integrated

software.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Juan Jose López-Moya, Miguel A. Blázquez and Salomé Prat for critical

reading of the manuscript. Sebastian Schornack, Phil Carella, Alexander Summers, the CUBG

curation team (Samuel Brockington and Mar Millan), Klaus Schlaeppi, Katja Rembold, Alba

Gonzalez, Detlef Weigel, Alexandra Kehl, Brigitte Fiebig, Luisa Lanfranco, Mara Novero, Isabel

Monte, Adrián Vojtassák, Sabine Zachgo and Claudia Gieshoidt for their help in obtaining

Marchantia individuals for the virome assays. Neža Pajek Arambašić for help with pipeline

automation. We would like to thank Eduardo Bejarano for providing the plasmid containing TMV-

GFP and Antonio Darós for providing TuMV-ROS1 and TMV-ROS1 containing plasmids. Pablo

Manavella for the AtAGO1-pEntr plasmid. Phil Carella for an updated annotation of NLR genes in

Marchantia. We would also thank to Jia-Wei Wang, Long Wang and Jie Xu for sharing the code

used for correlation analysis between TMV transcriptional responses and the different samples

from Marchantia developmental trajectories.

The work in the MoRE lab is funded by RYC-2015-19154 (funded by MCIN/AEI/

10.13039/501100011033 and by "ESF Investing in your future"), RTI2018-097262-B-I00 (funded

by MCIN/AEI/ 10.13039/501100011033 and by "ERDF A way of making Europe") and through

the "Severo Ochoa Programme for Centres of Excellence in R&D" 2016-2019 (SEV-2015-0533)

and 2020-2023 (CEX2019-000902-S) funded by MCIN/AEI/ 10.13039/501100011033 and the

CERCA programme from the Generalitat de Catalunya to I-R-S. T J-G was recipient of a

Postdoctoral Fellowship from CRAG through the "Severo Ochoa Programme for Centres of

Excellence in R&D" 2016-2019 (SEV-2015- 0533). L. V-M was supported by BES-2016-076986

(funded by MCIN/AEI/ 10.13039/501100011033 and by "ESF Investing in your future"). The work

at NIB was funded by Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency core and project financing P4-

0407, P4-0165 and J4-4553.

Data access: Raw data from the virome has been deposited in SRA and GenBank under Bioproject

(PRJNA1022866) and BioSamples (SAMN37631837 and SAMN40978195). Raw data from TMV

infected vs. Mock treated plants have been deposit GEO (GSE241827). Reconstructed genomic

sequences of three novel viruses uncovered by virome analysis were deposited in NCBI GenBank

(OR640980-82).

Figure legends

Figure 1. *Marchantia polymorpha is infected by RNA viruses.*

(A) Genome structure of Tübingen picorna-like virus 1, newly discovered in composite *M.*
polymorpha sample with two predicted open reading frames (ORFs) and corresponding
average reads mapping depth in sequenced composite sample. Black empty boxes
represent predicted protein domains detected by InterProScan: S3H – superfamily 3
helicase, 3C-Pro – peptidase C3, RdRp – RNA-dependent RNA polymerase and CP-SJR – coat
protein with 8-stranded jelly roll β-barrel motif.

(B) Maximum likelihood phylogenetic tree obtained based on the alignment of the
conserved part of RdRd of Tübingen picorna-like virus 1 and fifteen other most similar
viruses. The tree was midpoint rooted. Coloured virus names correspond to the sources
associated with a particular virus, according to the legend on the right side of the panel.
Numbers next to the branches represent statistical support (%) of the clades according to
the ultrafast bootstrap analysis. Branch length represents the average number of amino acid
substitutions per site. Codes next to the taxon names in round brackets are the
corresponding NCBI GenBank protein accession numbers. Next to them, fractions in square
brackets represent % of identity of Tübingen picorna-like virus 1 to other individual taxons
for the aligned part of the RdRp domain.

(C) Results of the viral concentration measurements for *M. polmorpha* plants inoculated
with Tübingen picorna-like virus 1 positive plant extracts. On the right, relative
concentrations of Tübingen picorna-like virus 1 in inoculated plants one- and two-weeks
post inoculation are shown; measurements of concentrations in individual plants are shown
as dots and the box-whisker plots represent the distribution of values for the two time
points (at 1 WPI, x represent an outlier measurement). On the top of the plot, the horizontal
connecting line designates statistically significant difference in the means of the two
distributions, with the corresponding p-value, according to the nonparametric Wilcoxon
rank sum test. Control represents results for Tak-1 incubated plants (N.A. –no virus was
detected). BIORENDER was used to prepare this figure.

Figure 2. *Tobacco mosaic virus replicates in Marchantia plants*.

(A) GFP fluorescent signal increases in thalli from 3 week old plants after 1 week, (left panel)
compared to thalli from 4 weeks old and 2-weeks infected plants (right panel). Both
images show the same part or an infected plant under a magnification device under UV
light. Red shows chlorophyll autofluorescence. White bar scale shows 100 µms.

(B) TMV-GFP transcripts increase over time in infected plants. Pools of three infected plants were used for each time point. The result from 3 technical replicates is shown. Mock, 4 weeks old plants incubated with sap from untreated plants. T0, 2 weeks old plants collected right after incubation with sap from infected plants. T1, 3 weeks old plants collected after 1 week from incubation. T2, 4 weeks old plants collected after 3 weeks from incubation. Expression of TMV is relative to the expression of Marchantia actine.

(C) Length distribution of TMV-derived vsRNAs populations found in thalli from 4 weeks old plants after 2 weeks of infection. Nts stans for nucleotides.

(D) TMV-GFP infects all cell types. Transversal sections of an Marchantia thalli from a mock treated plant that was 4 weeks old (left) and equivalent area in a plant 2 weeks after infection (right) under confocal image. The pictures show the merge between green (virus) and red (autofluorescence) channels. Merge was performed using Fiji. P stands for Photosynthetic region, S for storage region and E stands for lower epidermis. White bar scale shows 100 μm.

Figure 3. *TMV triggers stress-related molecular reprogramming in Marchantia.*

(A) Set of common PTI marker genes responsive to bacteria and fungal extracts and TMV infection.

(B) Set of wound and TMV responsive ERF transcription factors.

(C) Venn diagram showing that transcriptional reprogramming upon TMV infection largely overlaps with that found upon wounding.

(D) Set of chitin and TMV responsive WRKY transcription factors in Marchantia.

(E) Photosynthetic efficiency (Fv/Fm) in infected areas in thalli from 4 weeks old plants after 2 weeks of infection compared to equivalent areas from mock treated plants. Statistical assessment was performed using a parametric T-test. Marchantia plants and cameras depicting measured areas come from Biorender. Light green area indicated TMV-GFP positive areas.

(F) Photosynthetic efficiency (Fv/Fm) in non-infected areas, in thalli from 4 weeks old plants after 2 weeks of infection, compared to equivalent areas from mock treated plants. Statistical assessment was performed using a parametric T-test. Marchantia plants and cameras depicting measured areas come from Biorender. Light green area indicated TMV-GFP positive areas.

Figure 4. *Salicylic and jasmonate signalling pathways are activated during Marchantia-TMV*

interaction.

(A) Venn diagrams showing the overlap between the transcriptional responses under TMV

infection ad a salicylic treatment time course (2 and 6 hours).

(B) Overlap between the trancriptome responses to TMV and Mpjaz1ko mutants with

constitutively active jasmonate signalling (left), and treatment with the active dn-OPDA

jasmonate (right).

(C) Overlap between the trancriptome responses commonly found in TMV infection and the

different hormone-related transcriptomes.

(D) Biological processes to which genes commonly upregulated in response to TMV infection,

SA treatment (2,6 and 12h) and activation of jasmonate signalling belong

(E) Biological processes to which genes commonly downregulated in response to TMV

infection, SA treatment (12h) and activation of jasmonate signalling belong.

(F) Biological processes to which commonly upregulated in response to TMV infection, SA

treatment (6 h) and activation of jasmonate signalling in Mpjaz1KO plants belong.

(G) Biological processes to which commonly upregulated in response to TMV infection, SA (6 h)

and dn-OPDA treatments belong.

Figure 5. *TMV infection triggers maturation and aging in Marchantia*.

(A) Pairwise comparison between transcriptomes from mock and TMV samples along with

those from sliced thallus samples. Slice 1(S1) corresponds to the top of thalli (youngest

part), while slide 6 (S6), corresponds to the base of thalli encompassing the oldest part.

(B) Pairwise comparison between transcriptomes from mock and TMV samples along with

those from Marchantia developmental series Day 1 (D1) samples correspond to 1 day

after germination (youngest), while day 31 (31D) corresponds to fully mature Marchantia

thalli 31 days after germination.

Figure 6. *Conservation of the interaction between Marchantia and the TMV silencing suppressor*

p126.

(A) P126-GFP shows accumulation in the cytoplasm of Marchantia cells in cross-sections of

thalli from 4 weeks old plants (right) compared to thalli from untransformed plants of

the same age plants (left). The pictures show the merge between green (GFP) and red

(autofluorescence) channels. Merge was performed using Fiji Scale bars are 100 μMs.

(B) Overexpression of p126 inhibits growth (area) when compared to Tak-1 control plants.
874   Analysis was done in 4 weeks old plants in 3 biological replicates (n=12). Statistical
875   significance was assessed using a Wilcoxon-test.

876   (C) MpNAC7 interacts with the helicase domain of p126 in yeast.

877   (D) MpNAC7 and ATAF2 interact both with the helicase and the full length p126 in planta.

878   (E) Transient expression of MpNAC7 in Nicotiana plants abrogates local and systemic TMV
879   infection. TMV presence is shown as purple.

880   **Supplementary figure 1**. Phylogenetic position of a newly discovered Tübingen picorna-like virus
881   1 in regard to the most related RNA-dependent RNA polymerase (RdRp) sequences from RNA
882   Viruses in Metatranscriptomes (RVMT) database (https://riboviria.org/).

883   (A) Maximum likelihood phylogenetic tree obtained based on the alignment of the RdRd of
884   Tübingen picorna-like virus 1 and 476 sequences corresponding to f.0032 cluster (within
885   Picornavirales) from RVMT database. The tree was midpoint rooted. Tübingen picorna-
886   like virus 1 is designated by green arrow. Ultrafast bootstrap support (>90%) is shown as
887   circles according to the legend on the left. Branch length represents the average number
888   of amino acid substitutions per site. Leaf labels represent RdRp sequences from RVMT
889   database with additional info given in Supplementary table #.

890   (B) A pruned phylogenetic tree from (A) showing in detail the clade containing RdRp
891   sequences most similar to Tübingen picorna-like virus 1 (red box in (A)). Source sample
892   environments linked with those RdRp sequences in RVMT database are shown in round
893   brackets, with additional info given in Supplementary table #. Numbers next to the
894   branches represent statistical support (%) of the clades according to the ultrafast
895   bootstrap analysis.

896   **Supplementary figure 2.** *Nicotiana benthamiana plants inoculated with sap from*
897   *Marchantia infection experiments.*

898   (A) Nicotiana plants inoculated with sap from mock treated plants. Upper panel, top view
899   of plant with white light. Down panel, same Nicotiana plant under UV light. Scale bars
900   signify 1 cm.

901   (B) Nicotiana plants inoculated with sap from TMV-GFP treated plants. Upper panel, top
902   view of plant with white light showing crinkled and yellowish leaves as result of TMV

infection. Down panel, same Nicotiana plant under UV light showing GFP signal from

TMV infection in leaves showing symptoms. Scale bars signify 1 cm.

(C) Inset from a TMV-GFP infected leaf showing symptoms of infection (reduced chlorophyll

content) in the upper panel, coinciding with TMV-derived GFP signal under UV light.

Scale bars signify 1 cm.

Supplementary figure 3. *TMV infections progress in Marhantia thalli over time.*

Thalli from Marchantia plants showing the progression of TMV infection inferred by GFP signal.

Left, 3 weeks old plant after 1 week inoculation. Right, 4 weeks old plant after 2 weeks

inoculation. Additional replicate to that shown in Figure 2A.

Supplementary figure 4. *TMV replicates in Marchantia plants.*

Two additional biological replicates to the one shown in Figure 2B. Whole individuals were

collected in pools of 3 for each time point. Mock, 4 weeks old plants incubated with sap from

untreated plants. T0, 2 weeks old plants collected right after incubation with sap from infected

plants. T1, 3 weeks old plants collected after 1 week from incubation. T2, 4 weeks old plants

collected after 3 weeks from incubation. Expression of TMV is relative to the expression of

Marchantia actine.

Supplementary figure 5. *Marchantia infected thalli accumulate TMV-derived vsRNAs.*

(A). Length distribution of TMV-derived vsRNAs profiled by sRNA sequencing showing that the

predominant population belong to 21 nts long consistent with the absence of DCL2 and the

presence of DCL4 in the Marchantia´s genome. Data shown belongs to replicate 2, being replicate

1 that shown in Figure 2B. Nts stans for nucleotides.

(B). Mapping of vsRNAs to the TMV-GFP sequence from both Replicate 1 (Figure 2B) and

Replicate 2 (Sup. Figure 5A).

Supplementary figure 6. *Sampling and validation of samples for transcriptomic assays.*

(A) Example of areas collected from mock, upper panel, and TMV-GFP infected plants for

transcriptomic assays. Scale bars signify 1 cm.

(B) RT-qPCR validation of TMV-GFP levels in the 4 pools used for RNA-seq.

(C) Principal component analysis of the different replicates from RNA-seq experiment.

Supplementary figure 7. *Gene ontology analysis of biological processes to which DEGs in respond*
to TMV infection belong.

(A) GO categories from upregulated genes in response to TMV infection.
(B) Selected GO categories from downregulated genes in response to TMV infection.

Supplementary figure 8. *Overlap between DEGs responding to 12 hours of incubation in salicylic*
acid and those responsive TMV infection.

Supplementary figure 9. P126 overexpression results in reduced growth.

Representative 4 weeks old individuals from the phenotypic assay presented in Figure 6B. Scale
bars represent 1 cm.

Supplementary figure 10. *MpNAC7 specifically abrogates TMV infection in Nicotiana plants.*

(A) Picture of inoculated leaves showing that MpNAC7 abrogates local TMV but not turnip
942   mosaic virus (TuMV) infection (purple colour).
(B) Effect in systemic leaves.
(C) Upper view of infected plants.

Supplementary table 1. *Detection of viral sequences of known viruses*.

Supplementary table 2. *Detection of known and putative novel virus-like sequences*.

Supplementary table 3. *Demographic study for the presence of a set of known and newly*
identified virus in individuals from the different sampling sites.

Supplementary table 4. *Results of the palmID scan (https://serratus.io/palmid) for set of known*
and newly identified viruses.

Supplementary table 5. *Metadata for RdRp clusters showed on Supplementary figure 1.*

Supplementary table 6. *Results of the mining of DNA sequencing data (BioProject PRJNA931118)*
for the presence of known and putative novel viral sequences.

Supplementary table 7. *List of DEG in response to TMV infection in Marchantia.*

Supplementary table 8. *List of Pathogenesis-related (PR) genes differentially expressed upon*
TMV infection.

Supplementary table 9. *List of NLR genes differentially expressed upon TMV infection.*

Supplementary table 10. *List of GO categories of the biological processes to which upregulated*

genes in response to TMV infection belong.

Supplementary table 11. *List of GO categories of the biological processes to which*

downregulated genes in response to TMV infection belong.

Supplementary table 12. *List of GO categories of the biological processes to which commonly*

responsive genes to TMV infection and salicylic acid time course treatment, Mpjaz-1ko mutants

and dn-OPDA treatment belong.

Supplementary table 13. *List of GO categories of the biological processes to which commonly*

responsive genes to TMV infection and different hormone-related transcriptomes belong.

Supplementary table 14. *Table of primers used in this study.*

Supplementary table 15. *Table of constructs used in this study.*

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1311

A Tübingen picorna-like virus 1

ORF 1 — S3H, 3C-Pro, RdRp

ORF 2 — CP-SJR, CP-SJR, CP-SJR

Reads mapping depth

B

Beihai picorna-like virus 93 (APG76720) [29%]
Wenzhou channeled applesnail virus 2 (APG78498) [30%]
Riboviria sp. (QRQ90142.1) [30%]
Riboviria sp. (QRQ90158.1) [30%]
Trichosanthes kirilowii picorna-like virus (QKK82968.1) [37%]
Trichosanthes kirilowii picorna-like virus (QKK82970.1) [80%]
Tübingen picorna-like virus 1
Wenzhou picorna-like virus 42 (APG78519) [33%]
Shahe picorna-like virus 12 (APG77372) [42%]
Cragig virus 7 (QBP32757.1) [37%]
Ginkgo biloba picorna-like virus (QKK82974.1) [38%]
Wenzhou picorna-like virus 41 (APG78514) [38%]
Marnaviridae sp. (UGO57158.1) [35%]
Beihai picorna-like virus 102 (APG78882) [35%]
Shahe heteroptera virus 4 (APG77358) [35%]
Wenzhou picorna-like virus 40 (APG78510) [35%]

Source:
crayfish
mollusc
fresh water
plant
freshwater arthropod
bird feces

Branch length: 0.5

C

Extracts from Tübingen picorna-like virus 1 positive individuals + controls (Tak-1) → Inoculation of Tübingen picorna-like virus 1 negative individuals (Tak-1) → Measurement of Tübingen picorna-like virus 1 concentrations one and two weeks post inoculation

p = 0.02

A

PTI Marker genes

Name	ID	Relative expression level	padj
MpPR9	Mp5g21510	4.04	1.18E-21
MpSYP13B	Mp2g21910	2.34	0.00089
MpCML42	Mp6g18000	1.79	3.01E-17
MpWRKY22	Mp7g17200	1.74	1.82E-32
MpACRE132	Mp1g27170	1.22	1.30E-10

B

Wound and TMV responsive ERFs

Name	ID	Relative expression level	padj
MpERF1	Mp7g09350	4.24	0.28
MpERF21	Mp5g22160	1.68	5.91E-05
MpERF8	Mp6g18650	1.48	1.33E-41
MpERF18	Mp5g12480	1.14	0.0015
MpERF15	Mp7g09350	1.06	0.028
MpAP2L1	Mp8g11450	-1.62	4.18E-13
MpERF10	Mp7g00860	-2.83	9.05E-11
MpERF17	Mp4g22280	-2.38	0.00058
MpERF12	Mp6g06870	-2.95	0.014
MpERF16	Mp4g22290	-3.11	0.0004
MpERF13	Mp6g08690	-3.25	4.72E-05

C

D

Chitin and TMV responsive WRKYs

Name	ID	Relative expression level	padj
MpWRKY7	Mp3g17660	3.56	1.68E-34
MpWRKY6	Mp1g08960	2.52	3.71E-17
MpWRKY12	Mp4g00200	1.89	1.90E-11
MpWRKY10	Mp7g06550	1.79	7.31E-06
MpWRKY9	Mp7g17200	1.74	1.82E-32
MpWRKY13	Mp4g00180	1.64	7.72E-11
MpWRKY1	Mp3g00010	1.28	3.79E-25
MpWRKY14	Mp6g16800	1.16	0.013

E

Infected area

Independent t-test, p=6.92e-05

F

Non-infected area

Independent t-test, p=0.0012

A

P35S:p126-citrine

Tak 1

B

Wilcoxon-test, p=4.43e-05

Area (cm²)

P35S:p126-citrine

Tak 1

C

-AD/-BD

L⁻W⁻H⁻

L⁻W⁻

-/p126
MpGDI2/p126
MpTOM1/p126
MpNAC7/p126
-/Δp126
MpGDI2/Δp126
MpNAC7/Δp126
MpTOM1/Δp126

D

-N-Luc/C-Luc-

GUS   TMV

MpNAC7/AtBOB1
AtATAF2/AtBOB1
AtAGO1/ Δ p126
AtAGO1/p126
MpNAC7/Δp126
MpNAC7/p126
AtATF2/Δp126
AtATAF2/p126

High

Low

E

TMV-ROS1/GUS

TMV-ROS1/*MpNac7*

Inoculated leaves

Systemic leaves