The explosive radiation of the Neotropical *Tillandsia* subgenus *Tillandsia* (Bromeliaceae) has been facilitated by pervasive hybridization

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Abstract

The recent rapid radiation of *Tillandsia* subgenus *Tillandsia* (Bromeliaceae) provides an attractive system to study the drivers and limits of species diversification. This species-rich Neotropical monocot clade includes predominantly epiphytic species displaying vast phenotypic diversity. Recent in-depth phylogenomic work revealed that the subgenus originated within the last 7 MY while expanding through one major event from South into Central America within the last 5 MY. However, disagreements between phylogenies and lack of resolution at shallow nodes suggested that hybridization occurred throughout the radiation, together with frequent incomplete lineage sorting and/or considerable gene family evolution. We used whole-genome resequencing data and a newly available reference genome to explore the evolutionary history of 34 representative ingroup species employing both a tree-based and a network approach. Our results indicate that lineage co-occurrence does not predict relatedness and confirm significant deviations from a tree-like structure, coupled with pervasive gene tree discordance. Focusing on hybridization, ABBA-BABA and related statistics were used to infer the rates and relative timing of introgression, while topology weighting uncovered high heterogeneity of the phylogenetic signal along the genome. High rates of hybridization within and among clades suggest that, in contrast to previous hypotheses, the expansion of subgenus *Tillandsia* into Central America proceeded in several dispersal events, punctuated by episodes of diversification and gene flow. Network analysis revealed reticulation as a prominent propeller during radiation and establishment in different ecological niches. This work contributes a plant example of prevalent hybridization

34 during rapid species diversification, supporting the hypothesis that interspecific gene flow

35 facilitates explosive diversification.

36 **Keywords:** *Tillandsia*, gene tree discordance, hybridization, phylogenomics, bromeliad,

37 Neotropical diversity, species network

Rapid evolutionary radiations are characterised by accelerated and substantial diversification, usually following dispersal into a novel geographic area. As a myriad of diverse ecological spaces become available, a lineage can opportunistically adapt to quickly occupy them in a process termed adaptive radiation (Hughes et al. 2015; Linder 2008; Naciri and Linder 2020; Rundell and Price 2009; Stroud and Losos 2016). Rapid radiations provide ample opportunities to investigate the mechanisms driving diversification. While not all rapid radiations are adaptive, i.e., not necessarily associated with an increase in ecological occupancy (Givnish 2015; Schluter 2000; Stroud and Losos 2016), evolutionary radiations are generally connected with habitat heterogeneity (Paun et al. 2016; Soltis et al. 2019), climatic fluctuations (Slovak et al. 2023), landscape fragmentation (Hughes and Atchison 2015) and/or orogenesis (Boschman and Condamine 2022). Ubiquitous among angiosperms in general and in the Neotropics in particular, plant radiations remain to date understudied and enigmatic, especially when compared to animal systems (but see e.g., Drummond et al. 2012; Lagomarsino et al. 2016; Linder 2008; Paun et al. 2016; Pérez-Escobar et al. 2017; Richardson et al. 2001).

Phylogenomic studies of young rapid radiations must overcome multiple challenges, as low sequence divergence and incomplete reproductive barriers increase the probability of short internal branches and impede phylogenomic resolution (Giarla and Esselstyn 2015; Straub et al. 2014; Whitfield and Lockhart 2007). Frequent shifts at key traits can be distinctly associated with phylogenetic conflict, stemming from population-level processes like changes in population size, incomplete lineage sorting (ILS) and reticulation (Oliver 2013; Parins-Fukuchi et al. 2021). Such processes were traditionally deemed as analytical noise when aiming to reconstruct bifurcating species trees. Yet an increasing amount of

research indicates that episodes of phylogenomic conflict represent typical signatures of

microevolutionary processes during rapid species diversification (Filiault et al. 2018; Parins-

Fukuchi et al. 2021). Hence, gene-tree conflict and non-bifurcating relationships should be

viewed and studied as defining features of diversification processes during rapid radiations

(Malinsky et al. 2018; Slovak et al. 2023; Wogan et al. 2023).

Introgression has recently emerged as a key driver of species' diversification (e.g.

Abbott et al. 2013; Seehausen 2004) with gene flow regarded as an important process during

speciation (Barth et al. 2020; Linck and Battey 2019; Mallet et al. 2016). Gene flow between

recently diverged species is thought to increase their genetic variability and enrich the

genomic substrate for natural selection to act on. Interspecific hybridization can prompt

ecological diversification through heterosis and adaptive introgression, a process in which

advantageous alleles are incorporated in new genomic backgrounds from one gene pool to

another. Furthermore, introgression can introduce advantageous alleles upon which selection

has already acted, thus catalysing evolutionary radiations (Abbott et al. 2013; Edelman et al.

2019; Harrison and Larson 2014; Meier et al. 2019; Suarez-Gonzalez et al. 2018).

The rapidly radiating and highly diverse Neotropical *Tillandsia* subg. *Tillandsia*

provides a particularly relevant study system to investigate the drivers of radiations.

Subgenus *Tillandsia* is the most diverse of seven subgenera within genus *Tillandsia* (family

Bromeliaceae). It consists of more than 250 species of predominantly epiphytic plants,

distributed from southeastern United States to central Argentina (Barfuss et al. 2016).

Members of the subgenus exhibit tremendous morphological diversity of adaptive traits

which allows them to occupy disparate habitats, from tropical rainforests to deserts, and from

low- to highlands (Benzing 2000; Givnish et al. 2011). Adaptations such as adventitious

roots, trichomes modified for water and nutrient absorption, a water-impounding leaf rosette

tank and Crassulacean acid metabolism (CAM) appear to have undergone in some cases

correlated and in others contingent evolution, resulting in adaptive syndromes (Givnish et al.

2014). Early efforts employing conserved plastid and nuclear markers recovered largely

inconsistent phylogenetic relationships within the subgenus (Barfuss et al. 2005; 2016; Chew

et al. 2010; Granados Mendoza et al. 2017; Pinzón et al. 2016). Using plastome

phylogenomics, Vera-Paz et al. (2023) confirmed the monophyly of the subgenus and the

presence of three main clades within the subgenus, including a monophyletic, radiated 'clade

K' with members distinctly distributed in North and Central America (Barfuss et al. 2016;

Granados Mendoza et al. 2017). They further identified clades K.1 and K.2 as subclades of

clade K which we have further renamed to reflect phylogenetic groups (see Methods;

Supporting Table S1). Several studies (Givnish et al. 2014; Till 2000; Vera-Paz et al. 2023;

Winkler, 1990) discussed that the ancestor of 'clade K' was most likely South American and

expanded to Central America approximately 4.9 Mya, and subsequently dispersed multiple

times to North America. However, the relationships within the clade remained elusive and

disagreements between gene trees are common, calling to consider the role of different

evolutionary processes in the *Tillandsia* radiation. As a result, hybridization was put forward

as especially prevalent in the subgenus (Till 2000; Vera-Paz et al. 2023).

Using whole-genome resequencing data and a newly available reference genome, our

study aims to shed light on the evolutionary history of the radiation of *Tillandsia* subgenus

Tillandsia, focusing on Central American groups within the radiated 'clade K' and

representatives of South American species. Specifically, our objectives are to infer

relationships between representative species and investigate the signals of phylogenetic

conflict, with a ultimate aim to characterise and quantify hybridization and gene-flow.

Additionally, we highlight patterns of gene-flow which may have contributed to adaptive trait

shift in this Neotropical rapid radiation. Our detailed analyses provide evidence of a deeply

reticulated history within the subgenus and of at least two colonisation events from South into

Central America, surprisingly refuting the monophyly of the so-called 'clade K'.

Materials and Methods

Plant Material Collection

Leaf material was collected from 69 individuals belonging to 37 *Tillandsia* species. Material from field collections was cut lengthwise and immediately dried in powdered silica gel. Samples from the botanical collection of the University of Vienna were extracted fresh (Supporting Tables S1, S3). 69 accessions correspond to 34 species of *Tillandsia* subg. *Tillandsia*, while the remaining two belong to subg. *Allardtia* sensu Smith & Downs (1977) and were used as outgroups. Of the 34 ingroup species, 26 represent the Central-North American 'clade K' radiation and eight species represent South American *Tillandsia* (henceforth: SA clades; Supporting Fig. 1, Supporting Table S1). Albeit not exhaustive, our sampling was performed with the intention to represent the variety of morphological and physiological syndromes within clades SA and 'K' (Supporting Table S2). Species in 'clade K' are mostly epiphytic and ornithophilous, whereas clade SA includes epiphytic, saxicolous and tank forming xerophitic species, predominantly endemic to Peru (with the exception of *Tillandsia adpressiflora*; Supporting Tables S1-2). The *T. fasciculata* clade (previously K.2.3) includes species largely exhibiting CAM photosynthetic syndrome with typical water-absorbing trichomes. In addition, species within this clade present varying distributions, from endemic to widespread, some extending into the Antilles. The *T. guatemalensis* clade (previously K.2.2) is a small group of widespread and predominantly-C3 plants, exhibiting smooth leaves and a prominent tank habit. The *T. punctulata* (K.1) and *T. utriculata* (K.2.1) clades include widespread or endemic species with intermediate CAM-C3 syndromes or various CAM-like photosynthetic syndromes, respectively.

DNA Library Preparation

DNA extractions were performed as previously described (Yardeni et al. 2022) using a modified CTAB protocol (Doyle and Doyle, 1987) or the QIAGEN DNeasy® Plant Mini Kit (Qiagen, USA). They have been further purified using the Nucleospin® gDNA cleanup kit from Macherey-Nagel (Hudlow et al. 2011). The extracts were subsequently diluted in water and quantified with a Qubit® 3.0 Fluorometer (Life Technologies, Carlsbad, CA, USA). Prior to library preparation, a maximum of 600 ng of DNA per accession was sheared at 4°C to a target average length of 400 bp using a Bioruptor® Pico sonication device (Diagenode, Denville, NJ, USA). Illumina libraries were prepared using a modified KAPA protocol with the KAPA LTP Library Preparation Kit (Roche, Basel, Switzerland) with adaptor ligation and adaptor fill-in reactions based on Meyer and Kircher (2010). Some libraries have been instead prepared with the NEBNext Ultra II DNA PCR-free Library Prep Kit (New England Biolabs, Ipswich, MA, USA). Samples were either double indexed with a set of 60 dual-index primers, as recommended by Kircher et al. (2012) and described in Loiseau et al. (2019), or with Illumina TrueSeq PCR-free dual indexes. Finally, the libraries underwent size selection steps using AMPure Beads (Agencourt). Libraries were then pooled and sequenced at Vienna BioCenter Core Facilities on Illumina HiSeqV4 PE125 or on NovaSeqS1 PE150. Protocol details for all accessions are listed in Supporting Table S3.

Data Processing

The raw sequence data was demultiplexed using deML v.1.1.3 (Renaud et al. 2015) and bamtools v.2.5.1 (Barnett et al. 2011) and converted from BAM to fastq format using

bedtools v.2.29.2 (Quinlan and Hall 2010). Reads were trimmed for adapter content and

quality using trimgalore v.0.6.5 (Krueger 2019), a wrapper tool around fastqc and cutadapt,

using --fastqc --retain unpaired. Sequence quality and adapter removal were confirmed with

FastQC v.0.11.9 (Andrews 2010).

Quality- and adapter-trimmed reads were aligned to the *T. fasciculata* reference

genome v.1.0 (GenBank Assembly accession GCA_029168755.1, Groot Crego et al., 2023)

using bowtie2 v.2.3.5.1 (Langmead and Salzberg 2012) with the --very-sensitive-local option

to increase accuracy. Low-quality mapped reads were removed, alignments were sorted by

position using samtools v.1.15.1 (Li et al. 2009), and PCR duplicates were marked using

MarkDuplicates from PicardTools v.2.25.2 (Picard Toolkit 2018). Relatedness between

accessions was inferred with kinship coefficients in KING v.2.2.6 (Manichaikul et al. 2010),

both for confirming technical replicates and to infer unexpected relatedness. Samples with an

average coverage below 2x or a first degree relationship (consistent with full-sib or direct

parent-offspring relationships; i.e., kinship > 0.177) were removed from subsequent analysis

(Supporting Table S3).

Next, variants were called using a dedicated pipeline available at

https://github.com/giyany/TillandsiaPhylo. In brief, we used GATK HaplotypeCaller

v.4.1.9.0 followed by joint calling with GenotypeGVCFs (Poplin et al. 2018). The resulting

variant call file (VCF) was filtered to exclude indels and any SNPs 3bp or closer from indels

using bcftools v.1.15 (Li 2011) and GATK SelectVariants (DePristo et al. 2011). Regions

annotated as transportable elements were excluded using bedtools intersect (Quinlan and Hall

2010). We used the transition/transversion ratio as a guideline to define the filtering

parameter values leading to a set of SNPs exhibiting the highest ratio, calculated with SnpSift

(Cingolani et al. 2012). The following filtering parameters were finally used: MQ < 15, DP <

4, QD < 4, FS > 40, SOR > 3, MAF < 0.045 and missing rate > 0.2. Summary statistics were

generated using bcftools stats (Li 2011).

Phylogenetic Tree Inference

We inferred phylogenetic relationships for all samples using both a maximum-

likelihood and a coalescent-based method. We included a coalescent-based method in order

to explicitly account for gene tree incongruence, which may result in high support for an

incorrect topology (Kubatko and Degnan 2007). Gene tree incongruence further provides

insight into molecular genome evolution, including the extent of incomplete lineage sorting

and other genomic processes such as hybridization and introgression (Galtier and Daubin

2008; Wendel and Doyle 1998). First, a concatenated matrix was prepared by converting a

gVCF into a phylip file with vcf2phylip (Ortiz 2019). A maximum-likelihood tree was

inferred on a dataset of concatenated SNPs with IQ-TREE v.1.6.12, using IQ-TREE's

ModelFinder to select the best-fitting model and including an ascertainment bias correction

(Nguyen et al. 2015, Kalyaanamoorthy et al., 2017). The available *T. zoquensis* accession

grouped within *T. fasciculata* (Supporting Fig. S2), suggesting a need to revise its species

status. After removing this sample, we constructed ML trees on a whole-genome, as well as

on a chromosome-by-chromosome basis, on a concatenated supermatrix partitioned by genes

including both variant and invariant sites. The matrix was prepared as described above and

IQ-TREE 2's ModelFinder was used to select the best-fitting partitioning scheme and

models. Node support was inferred with 1,000 nonparametric bootstrap replicates

(Chernomor et al. 2016). To construct a species tree, ML trees were estimated on non-

overlapping genomic windows of 100kb after excluding windows with fewer than 40 SNPs.

Since loci with insufficient signal may reduce the accuracy of species tree estimation

(Mirarab 2019), nodes with a bootstrap support below ten were collapsed across all trees with

Newick utilities v.1.1.0 (Junier and Zdobnov 2010). ASTRAL-III v.5.7.8 (hereafter:

ASTRAL) was then used to infer a species tree, measuring branch support as posterior

probabilities (Zhang et al. 2018). To explore gene tree discordance, we used phyparts to

calculate quartet support for the main, alternative and second alternative topologies as well as

the number of concordant and discordant bipartitions on each node with a cutoff of ten for

informative bootstrap values (-s 10; Smith et al. 2015). Gene tree discordance was visualised

with   phypartspiecharts.py   (available   from

https://github.com/mossmatters/MJPythonNotebooks).

Investigating Monophyly and Deviations from a Bifurcating Tree Structure

We used several variations of the ABBA-BABA test (D-statistic) to further explore

the relationships within and between clades and to assess deviations from tree structure

(Durand et al. 2011; Green et al. 2010; Martin et al. 2015). The D-statistic we implemented in

Dsuite v.0.5r45 (Malinsky et al. 2021) specifically uses allele frequency estimates, which

allows to include several individuals per taxon and does not require the implicit assumption

that the outgroup is fixed for the ancestral allele (Malinsky et al. 2021). *Tillandsia*

complanata was used as the outgroup for all comparisons. We first examined the consistency

of assigning individuals to a clade. Following Malinsky et al. (2018), we tested whether

individuals assigned to the same clade always share more derived alleles with each other than

with individuals from another clade. For this comparison and all related D-statistics hereafter,

significance was assessed using a jackknife procedure with 200kb window size, and family-

wise error rate (FWER) was calculated and corrected for multiple comparisons following the

Holm–Bonferroni method with the p.adjust function in R (R Core Team 2020).

To further characterise the relationships among clades, we examined the consistency

of clade monophyly within our set of window-based trees using the check_monophyly

function in the ETE Toolkit v.3 (Huerta-Cepas et al. 2016). A cloudogram of ML trees was

visualised using ggdensitree from the R package ggtree v.3.4.0 (Yu 2020). Trees were

modified using R packages phytool v.1.0-3 (Revell 2012) and treeio v.1.20.0 (Wang et al.

2020), with branch lengths forced into ultrametric structure for visualisation purposes only.

We next used D_{min}, another variation of the D-statistic (Malinsky et al. 2018), to assess if

allele-sharing among clades is consistent with a tree-like structure. D_{min} measures the minimal

amount of gene flow within a trio by providing the minimal absolute value of D across all

possible arrangements within it. A significantly positive score signifies allele sharing that is

inconsistent with a single species tree, even in the presence of incomplete lineage sorting. In

addition, a principal components analysis (PCA) was performed with SNPRelate v.1.20.1

(Zheng et al. 2012) on a set of biallelic SNPs, filtered to allow a maximum of 10% missing

data and pruned to be 10kb or more apart.

Finally, to quantify and visualise the relationship among clades along the genome we

used topology weighting by iterative sampling of subtrees with *Twisst* v.0.2 (Martin and Van

Belleghem 2017). This method considers all the possible topologies relating several

taxonomic groups and quantifies the contribution of each individual taxon topology to the full

tree, enabling to locate genomic regions that are associated with certain topologies. We

focused on the three largest clades and reduced the number of possible topologies by

including only clades *T. extensa*, *T. utriculata* and *T. fasciculata*, then chose windows of 50

SNPs following the strategy of Martin and Van Belleghem (2017). Subtrees were produced

by partitioning the VCF with the biostar497922 script from Jvarkit (Lindenbaum 2015) and

ML trees were inferred for each window as described above. A summary of all topologies

and visualisation of topologies along genomic coordinates were produced using the

plot_twisst.R script, modified to avoid averaging the signal over regions with high rates of

missing data (Martin and Van Belleghem 2017).

Characterising Hybridization and Introgression

To quantify the rates of hybridization between all species in our dataset, we obtained

a genome-wide signal of introgression using the original implementation of the D-statistic

and estimates of admixture fraction f (henceforth: f_4-ratio) in Dsuite v.0.5r45 (Malinsky et al.

2021). We additionally computed D-statistic for each reference chromosome, obtaining p-

values using a jackknife procedure with windows of 150 SNPs. Given a certain level of

uncertainty regarding the true relationship between species, we set no *a priori* knowledge of

taxon relationships. Instead, Dsuite ordered each trio so that the BBAA pattern is more

common, principally to focus on topologies with minimal discordant patterns.

Since groups that are involved in hybridization may share branches on a phylogenetic

tree, a single hybridization event can present multiple correlated instances of significantly

elevated D-statistic. This is especially expected when introgression involves ancestral

lineages, hence affecting internal branches of a phylogenetic tree. We used Dsuite to

calculate the *f*-branch metric (henceforth: $f_b(C)$), an estimator developed to create a summary

of gene flow events with minimized correlation by utilising multiple $f4$-ratio calculations

(Malinsky et al. 2021). The $f_b(C)$ results invited several hypotheses regarding hybridization

events, which we examined by inferring a species network under a maximum pseudo-

likelihood approach using PhyloNet v.3.8.0 (Cao et al. 2019; Than et al. 2008; Y. Yu and

Nakhleh 2015), allowing different numbers of reticulation events. We reduced our sampling

to one outgroup and 18 ingroup taxa to include representatives from each highly-supported

clade and inferred ML trees on non-overlapping windows as previously described.

To investigate the signature of introgression on specific loci and to locate highly

admixed loci in regions of interest (see Results), we used the Dinvestigate function

implemented in Dsuite which calculates statistics suitable for analysis in sliding genomic

windows. Our analysis was performed on windows of 50 SNPs with a step size of ten. The D-

statistic itself shows large variance when applied to genomic windows (Martin et al. 2015),

hence we used f_{dM}, a statistic designed to investigate introgression in small genomic windows.

f_{dM} accounts for allele sharing across all possible taxon arrangements in a species trio

(Malinsky et al. 2015; Martin et al. 2015). After finding a significantly elevated D-statistic on

chromosome 18 involving *T. achyrostachys* (from *T. punctulata* clade) and most species in

the CAM clade *T. fasciculata* (see Results), we investigated patterns of hybridization between

T. punctulata, *T. butzii* and *T. achyrostachys* (P1, P2 and P3). This allowed us to account for

phylogenomic relatedness (between *T. achyrostachys* and *T. punctulata*) and for similar

photosynthetic syndromes (between *T. achyrostachys* and *T. butzii*). Species in the *T.*

punctulata clade putatively possess an intermediate C3-CAM photosynthetic syndrom, as

they tend to express intermediary values of stable carbon isotope ratios ($\delta^{13}C$: see Supporting

Table S2, but see also Messerschmid et al. 2021) and exhibit small to intermediate tank

structures. *T. achyrostachys* was documented to express the strongest CAM phenotype and

δ^{13}C values (−14.7; Crayn et al. 2015) within our sampling. We finally identified regions

exhibiting D-statistic values exceeding the 95% quantile of the distribution to gain insight

into the possible functional basis of genes that were involved in ancient hybridization.

Results

Read Mapping and Variant Calling

After removing samples with low coverage, those sharing high kinship coefficients, and the

T. zoquensis accession that clustered in an unexpected position we retained 64 *Tillandsia*

accessions, corresponding to 36 recognized species. The average number of reads retained

per accession was $5.11\text{x}10^7$ (range $4.7\text{x}10^6$-$1.2\text{x}10^8$, SD=$2.5\text{x}10^7$) and average mapping rates

were 89.6% (range 69.4%-97.5%, SD=6.31), with slightly higher rates for members of the *T.*

fasciculata clade and slightly lower for the SA clades (97.5% and 89.6% on average

respectively). The differences between the main clades (see below and Fig. 1) were not

significant (Kruskal–Wallis test, p-value = 0.22), suggesting no or limited biases towards the

used reference genome. An average sequence coverage of 11.5x (range 2.6x-26.6x, SD=5.0x)

was obtained. After variant calling and filtering (see Methods) we retained 2,162,143 high-

quality SNPs.

Figure 1. Coalescent-based species trees generated on 3,785 genomic windows with ASTRAL-III for 64 individuals representing 34 species of *Tillandsia* subg. *Tillandsia*, plus

two outgroups. Branch lengths are given in coalescent units. Node values represent local

posterior probabilities for the main topology and are equal to one unless noted otherwise. Pie

charts at the nodes show levels of gene tree discordance: the percentages of concordant gene

trees (blue), the top alternative bipartition (green), other conflicting topologies (red) and

uninformative gene trees (grey).

Phylogenomic Inference Contradicts clade Monophyly

The concatenated matrix was partitioned to 14,392 genes and coalescent-based analyses were

performed on 3,785 genomic windows. The species tree (Fig. 1) and concatenated maximum-

likelihood (ML) tree (Supporting Fig. S1) yielded consistent results regarding the main clades

and relationships. Contrary to among-clade relationships previously reported for this

subgenus (Barfuss et al. 2016; Granados Mendoza et al. 2017; Rivera 2019; Vera-Paz et al.,

2023), neither the South American species nor the Central American 'K' clades formed

monophyletic groups. Instead, the South American species were separated into two clades:

one consisted of endemic Peruvian species and the widespread species *T. adpressiflora*,

placed as sister group to the T. *utriculata* clade (previously K.2.1), while a second clade

contained *T. marnier-lapostollei* and *T. mima*. The clades do not correspond to the

previously-inferred *T. paniculata* and *T. secunda* clades (Vera-Paz et al. 2003), hence we

newly refer to them as *T. extensa* and *T. mima* clades, respectively.

'Clade K' was similarly recovered as polyphyletic. The *T. utriculata* clade (K.2.1),

previously considered a sister to the clades of *T. fasciculata* (K.2.3) and of *T. guatemalensis*

(K.2.2), was unexpectedly recovered as a sister to the South American *T. extensa* clade (thus

incongruent with a monophyly of the previous inferred 'clade K.2'). The assignment of

species to clades and all other relationships between sub-clades remained overall congruent

with previous phylogenies (Granados Mendoza et al. 2017; Vera-Paz et al., 2023). Several

within-clade topological differences appeared in trees inferred with different methods,

especially within the *T. fasciculata* clade. The latter were highly supported in the

concatenated tree yet coupled with high levels of gene tree incongruence (see below),

suggesting substantial allele sharing and high rates of gene flow within this clade.

Gene tree discordance was widespread within the dataset, affecting both deep and

shallow nodes (Fig. 1; Supporting Fig. S3). The relationships between the South American

species and the *T. utriculata* clade were characterised by short internode distances and many

alternative topologies. Frequently, the majority of inferred gene tree topologies were

discordant with a single main topology: for example, in the node preceding the separation of

the SA clades only 587 (15.5%) of all gene windows supported the main topology (Fig. 1;

Supporting Fig. S3). Similar levels of discordance characterised many of the internal nodes

within the *T. fasciculata* clade and high levels of discordance were also found within the

intermediate CAM clade *T. punctulata* (Fig. 1; Supporting Fig. S3).

Maximum-likelihood trees constructed separately for concatenated matrices of each

reference chromosome retrieved many different topologies: solely considering relationships

between main clades we recognized ten different topologies among the 25 different trees (see

Supporting file 1). The placement of the *T. mima* clade showed the greatest incongruence

between trees, as well as the placement of *T. adpressiflora*. Within-clade relationships, like

the whole-genome topology, were recovered from three chromosome-by-chromosome trees.

The South American species formed a monophyly in six chromosome trees and 'clade K' was

recovered as monophyletic in two. While each chromosome tree contains high amounts of

gene tree discordance, the abundance of different topologies imply that several evolutionary

histories can be traced along the genome of *Tillandsia*, as disparate genomic processes

muddy the relationship between gene trees and the true species tree.

Lack of Monophyly and Deviations from Tree-like Structure

The multitude of tree topologies along the genome led us to hypothesise that a single

bifurcating tree misrepresents the true relationships between Central American *Tillandsia*

(i.e., previous 'clade K'). To investigate potential deviations from a tree-like structure, we

analysed the patterns of allele sharing between species and between clades. Assuming no

inter-specific gene-flow, allele sharing is expected to be consistent with the main tree

topology, whereas asymmetrical allele sharing indicates deviations from that assumption.

We first calculated allele sharing between all species to test the robustness of the

assignment of species to clades, utilising allele frequency estimates as performed with D-

statistic. We found high support for clade monophyly, as species assigned to the same clade

always shared more alleles with other species within the clade than with species from other

clades. Except for the *T. punctulata* clade, consistency of clade monophyly was further

supported in analyses performed in genomic windows: monophyly was confirmed in 92.0%,

79.4%, 67.0% and 39.7% of the windows for clades *T. utriculata*, *T. guatemalensis*, *T.*

fasciculata and *T. punctulata*, respectively.

We next characterised allele sharing between clades by computing the D_{min} statistic

for a total of 7,141 trios. We found widespread deviations from a tree-like structure, driven

mostly by allele sharing between Central American taxa (previous 'clade K'): D_{min} values

were significantly elevated in 3,650 comparisons (P<0.05) with more than 95% of those

being highly significant (P<0.01). The rate of significant D values was highest for

comparisons involving accessions assigned to *T. utriculata* clade (58.7% of the trios),

followed by *T. punctulata, T. guatemalensis* and *T. fasciculata* (57.9%, 56.1% and 51.4%,

respectively; Supporting Fig. S4b). After distance-pruning and allowing for maximum 10%

missing data we retained 16,204 SNPs for a PCA analysis. The analysis provided evidence

for consistent interspecific genetic structure, separating the South American clades and the *T.*

utriculata clade, while the remainder of the Central American clades clustered densely

(Supporting Fig. S4c).

Finally, to obtain a better understanding of how clade relationships vary along the

genome, we considered three distinct tree topologies for topology weighting with *Twisst*: the

most frequent topology was congruent with the one recovered in the species tree, which

placed the *T. extensa* clade as sister to the *T. utriculata clade* in 42% of the windows. A

second topology, with the *T. fasciculata* and *T. utriculata* clades as sister clades, was

recovered from 35% of the genomic windows while a third topology appeared in 23%

(Supporting Fig. S5). The three topologies were broadly equally distributed along the genome

– however, in some chromosomes 4 (for example, chromosome 4; Supporting Fig. S5) the

first topology frequented the centromeric regions (discussed in Gill et al. 2008; Yan and Jiang

2007). Topology weighing is a descriptive method which does not explicitly test for

introgression or ILS, hence, we could not discern the processes underlying the recovered

phylogenetic signal. Regardless, the prevalence of the main topology in regions of low

recombination rates and reduced genic density suggests that it represents the backbone

phylogeny, while other topologies are likely the result of gene flow or deep coalescence.

Correlated and Widespread Gene-flow Events

D-statistics results for trios arranged to maximise the observed number of BBAA patterns indicated that all species in our dataset were involved in potential hybridization (Fig. 2). Out of 7,141 tests in total, 4,331 returned significantly elevated values, with D values ranging between 0.021 and 0.581. Chromosome-by-chromosome analyses found that the signal was not localised to a specific chromosome (Supporting file 2). A prominent signal revealed introgression between species in the *T. utriculata* clade and all other Central American clades. Notable gene-flow signals were also indicated within the *T. fasciculata* clade. $f4$-ratio scores ranged between 0.0017 and 0.357, but in most hybridization events the proportion of the genome involved was estimated as smaller than 10% (Supporting Fig. S6). A few exceptions where larger parts of the genome were admixed were found within the main clades: for example, *T. caput-medusae* was involved in two hybridization events with *T. butzii* and T. *fasciculata* involving ca 31.7% of the genome (Supporting Fig. S4).

Figure 2. Heatmap summarizing 7,141 four-taxon D-statistic tests. *Tillandsia complanata* was used as the outgroup in all tests. The four taxa in each test have been rearranged to always obtain positive D values and P2 and P3 are shown on the axes. Colour indicates the value of D and the log value of p-value, the latter estimated using a block jackknife procedure with a 200kb window size and corrected for family-wise error rate. Colours on the bars correspond to the clades in Figure 1.

Further analysis suggested that past hybridization events involved the ancestor of the *T. urticulata* clade and an ancestor of the other three Central American clades. The f-branch metric assigned elevated $f_b(C)$ scores with an average of 5.9% to events involving these clades (Fig. 3). Networks were inferred in PhyloNet on a total of 3,337 windows. Analyses allowing for four reticulation events resulted in less than four events reported, so we present here results for up to three reticulations allowed (Fig. 4). The results repeatedly indicated the involvement of the *T. utriculata* clade in hybridization with both the South American *T. extensa* and the Central American clades, with notably higher weights assigned to the former. Additional gene-flow events occurred within clades: 16.9% of $f_b(C)$ values were significantly elevated (P<0.05), but most high values occurred for events within clades (Fig. 3). In addition, the f-branch values supported the identification of a cryptic hybrid sample (*T. tricolor* x *fasciculata*) as a hybrid between *T. tricolor* and *T. fasciculata*. Overall, these findings confirm the extensive violations of a tree-like structure revealed in the previous part of the analysis and suggest a frequent occurrence of inter-specific gene-flow throughout the evolutionary history of the radiation.

Pervasive hybridization in radiated *Tillandsia*

Figure 3. Heatmap summarising the statistic $f_b(C)$, where excess sharing of derived alleles is

inferred between the branch of the tree on the Y axis and the species C on the X axis. The

ASTRAL species tree was used as input topology for the branch statistic. The matrix is

colored according to the legend of the $f_b(C)$ values and grey squares correspond to tests that

are inconsistent with the ASTRAL phylogeny. Dots within the matrix denote a significant p-

value, estimated using a block jackknife procedure and corrected for family wise error rate.

Colours correspond to the clades in Figure 1.

Figure 4. Best maximum pseudo-likelihood species networks inferred with PhyloNet for zero

to three reticulation events. Curved branches indicate reticulation events. Numbers next to

curved branches indicate inheritance probabilities for each event. Colours correspond to the

clades in Figure 1.

Local footprint of introgression associated with photosynthetic syndrome

Elevated D-statistics, signifying introgression, generally affected all chromosomes

(Supporting file 2). In contrast, a significantly elevated, but localized D-statistic was found on

chromosome 18 involving *T. achyrostachys* (*T. punctulata* clade) and most of the species in

the CAM clade *T. fasciculata* (Supporting file 2). To further investigate this elevated but

highly localised signal, f_{dM} statistics were calculated on a total of 9,185 windows between *T.*

punctulata, *T. butzii* and *T. achyrostachys*. The first and last species are assigned to the *T*

punctulata clade whereas *T. butzii* is a member of the *T. fasciculata* clade. Across all

chromosomes, mean values were negative at an average of -0.043 fitting the expectation for

higher rates of gene flow between closely related species (Supporting Fig. S7). Chromosome

18 was however characterised by two regions of high positive values, which were also

evident with topology weighting. Considering centromere localization, we found that the loci

exhibiting high D-statistic values coincide with low genic density and contain 194 genes

(Supporting Fig. S7). In a detailed survey of gene annotations, we found this set of genes

were potentially associated with a variety of functions. For example, serine/threonine-protein

kinase prpf4B is known to have a role in pre-mRNA splicing in yeast and humans (Eckert et

al. 2016), and was found to be associated with stress response in millet (Parvathi et al. 2019).

Another example is the S-adenosyl-L-methionine-dependent methyltransferase superfamily

protein (SAM-Mtase), a key enzyme in plant metabolic pathways like the phenylpropanoid

and flavonoid pathway (Joshi and Chiang, 1998; Sistla and Rao 2004; Supporting Fig. S7).

Discussion

Hybridization is widely researched for its different roles in plant speciation. Based on

a multi-species genomic dataset and phylogenomic approaches we highlight here the genus

Tillandsia as a striking example of a highly reticulated radiation. The radiation likely

proceeded in the presence of rampant inter-specific gene-flow, rather than by refined

reproductive barriers (Loiseau et al. 2019; Koch et al. 2022; Vera-Paz 2023). An abundance

of sequencing data tends to generate high branch support in both concatenated alignments

and a coalescent-based tree-building method (Pease et al. 2016; Salichos and Rokas 2013),

yet a detailed investigation in *Tillandsia* subg. *Tillandsia* revealed that a bifurcating tree

offers an incomplete picture of the true relationships between species. Viewing reticulation as

the genomic signature of cardinal molecular processes rather than uninformative 'noise', we

offer a nuanced view into the complex evolutionary history of this Neotropic radiation. With

that, *Tillandsia* provides a compelling example to the mounting evidence of the important

contribution of gene flow in species diversification (Arnold et al. 2016; Filiault et al. 2018;

Keller et al. 2013; Nosil 2008; Seehausen et al. 2014; Slovak et al. 2023; Stankowski et al.

2019; D. Zhang et al. 2021).

In stark contrast to previously inferred phylogenies, we retrieved the Central

American 'clade K' as polyphyletic. First inferred based on morphological characters and

later on a limited number of genomic markers, the generic and sub-generic classification of

subfamily Tillandsioideae in general and of the genus *Tillandsia* in particular shifted

throughout decades of phylogenetic research. Overall, phylogenies based on plastid

sequences and on relatively few nuclear genomic regions offered little resolution for shallow

phylogenetic in this young genus, particularly within Central American taxa (Pinzón et al.

2016; Barfuss et al. 2016; Granados Mendoza et al. 2017). Recently, a full plastome

phylogeny greatly improved the phylogenomic resolution while statistical support remained

low in shallow nodes (Vera-Paz et al., 2023). We suggest that incongruence between

Tillandsia phylogenies reflects both the local scarcity of genomic divergence within this

young radiation and the complicating role of hybridization. Moreover, considering the

prevalence of recent inter-specific gene-flow, the monophyly of the Central American clades

within plastid phylogenies seems particularly driven by chloroplast capture (Pham et al.,

2017). Beyond insight on clade relationship, our analyses produced several novel insights

regarding cryptic species: for example, our inference suggests that *T. mima* and *T. mima var.*

chiletensis are distinct species, despite morphological similarities. Similarly, *T. fuchsii* and *T.*

fuchsii var. *stephanii* did not form a monophyletic clade, raising a need to revise their

taxonomic status (Fig. 1; Supporting Fig. S1).

Hybridization played a central role in the evolution of Central American *Tillandsia*,

reflected in departures from tree structure encompassing all clades and species. D-statistics

revealed both recent and ancient gene flow while allele sharing did not compromise species

or clade boundaries. Notably, the obtained $f_b(C)$ ranges were in general far higher than those

previously inferred for ancestral introgressions between species of Malawi cichlids (Malinsky

et al. 2018) or of hares (Ferreira et al. 2021), but comparable to other rapid radiations (De-

Kayne et al. 2022; Slovak et al. 2023; Suvorov et al. 2022). The interplay of genomic signals

and our limited clade sampling complicate inference on the timing of gene-flow events, yet

their high prevalence suggests they occured during both ancestral and recent history. High

rates of gene flow are compatible with *Tillandsia* ecology and evolution: *Tillandsia* is known

to produce natural hybrids (Luther 1985; Koch et al. 2022; Till 2000) and bears copious seed

adapted to wind dispersal, which may facilitate high rates of inter- and intra-specific gene

flow (Mondragon and Calvo-Irabien 2006; Victoriano-Romero et al., 2017). Previous studies

proposed that the South American ancestor of *Tillandsia* subg. *Tillandsia* colonised North

and Central America in a long-distance dispersal event 4.86 Mya (Barfuss et al. 2016;

Granados Mendoza et al. 2017; Vera-Paz et al. 2023) and our results offer intriguing

hypotheses on multiple, likely polytopic origins of Central American *Tillandsia*. Instead of a

single dispersal event, South American ancestors may have dispersed in several migration

events into Central America. Strong population bottlenecks, producing phylogenies with

relatively long internal branches, were followed by concomitant episodes of gene admixture

and increased isolation. It is further possible that gene-flow increased allelic diversity in

founder populations, thus fueling adaptation (see below).

Apart from hybridization, other molecular processes can contribute to violations of a

strictly bifurcating species tree, such as ILS, paralogy, and gene duplication and loss

(Edwards 2009; Galtier and Daubin 2008; Smith et al. 2015). Previous studies on *Tillandsia*

subg. *Tillandsia* indeed found evidence for changes in population sizes and elevated rates of

gene duplication and loss, specifically associated with photosynthetic syndrome shifts (de La

Harpe et al. 2020; Groot Crego et al. 2023; Yardeni et al. 2022). We suggest there is strong

evidence for ancestral hybridization as the source of discordance between the *T. utriculata*

clade and other Central American clades: f-statistic and D-statistic tests are robust to the

presence of ILS, as is PhyloNet (Malinsky et al. 2021; Martin et al. 2015; Wen et al. 2018)

and ancestral population structure is unlikely to segregate through the demographic events

that accompanied *Tillandsia*'s dispersal into Central America. Regardless, the generality of

the obtained signal could be influenced by our limited sampling; a study employing a wider

sampling could further infer if introgression involved related or ancient lineages, while

considering disparate molecular processes.

Genetic variation introduced through hybridization can be maladaptive, neutral or

adaptive (Moran et al., 2021; Wong et al 2022; Zeberg & Pääbo 2020). While its

consequences remain difficult to predict and negative consequences may not be observable

for long periods, an adaptive role of hybridization has been demonstrated in numerous animal

and plant taxa (Arnold et al. 2016; Dasmahapatra et al. 2012; Lamichhaney et al. 2015; Leroy

et al. 2020; Taylor and Larson 2019). In this study, we have identified two introgressed

regions on chromosome 18, involving species that share a photosynthetic syndrome.

Interestingly, the introgressed regions coincide with low gene density and one of them occurs

at a chromosome edge. These findings echo the general expectation regarding the theory,

posing that higher rates of introgression correlate with regions of low gene density, since

introgressed fragments in gene-rich regions are more likely to be detrimental (Barton and

Bengtsson, 1986; Martin and Jiggins 2017; Sankararaman et al. 2014). The incomplete taxon

sampling in our current study limits our ability to draw generalities about adaptive

introgression in *Tillandsia*: however, the conspicuously rapid accumulation of morphological

and physiological disparity suggests that hybridization in *Tillandsia* may have contributed to

its success in a wide range of habitats, potentially introducing novel alleles through porous

species boundaries and driving this evolutionary radiation. Further efforts will be needed to

identify additional potential adaptive regions and uncover the key genes within.

We used whole-genome sequencing to deeply investigate the phylogenomics of a

remarkable *Tillandsia* radiation. Recent research addressed questions on the genus'

evolutionary history, simultaneously expanding bromeliad and *Tillandsia* genomic resources

and facilitating a range of evolutionary analyses. Ultimately, the complex history of

Tillandsia retains elusiveness and invites further investigations to uncover the interplay of

processes that drove this rapid diversification. Future studies employing both a wider

sampling and a deeper genomic coverage can characterise the genomic properties associated

with diversification and explore the prevalence of hybridization across different evolutionary

scales.

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Figures

Figure 1. Coalescent-based species trees generated on 3,785 genomic windows with

ASTRAL-III for 64 individuals representing 34 species of *Tillandsia* subg. *Tillandsia*, plus

two outgroups. Branch lengths are given in coalescent units. Node values represent local

posterior probabilities for the main topology and are equal to one unless noted otherwise. Pie

charts at the nodes show levels of gene tree discordance: the percentages of concordant gene

trees (blue), the top alternative bipartition (green), other conflicting topologies (red) and

uninformative gene trees (grey).

Pervasive hybridization in radiated *Tillandsia*

Figure 2. Heatmap summarizing 7,141 four-taxon D-statistic tests. *Tillandsia complanata* was used as the outgroup in all tests. The four taxa in each test have been rearranged to always obtain positive D values and P2 and P3 are shown on the axes. Colour indicates the value of D and the log value of p-value, the latter estimated using a block jackknife procedure with a 200kb window size and corrected for family-wise error rate. Colours on the bars correspond to the clades in Figure 1.

Figure 3. Heatmap summarising the statistic $f_b(C)$, where excess sharing of derived alleles is

inferred between the branch of the tree on the Y axis and the species C on the X axis. The

ASTRAL species tree was used as input topology for the branch statistic. The matrix is

colored according to the legend of the $f_b(C)$ values and grey squares correspond to tests that

are inconsistent with the ASTRAL phylogeny. Dots within the matrix denote a significant p-

value, estimated using a block jackknife procedure and corrected for family wise error rate.

Colours correspond to the clades in Figure 1.

Figure 4. Best maximum pseudo-likelihood species networks inferred with PhyloNet for zero

to three reticulation events. Curved branches indicate reticulation events. Numbers next to

curved branches indicate inheritance probabilities for each event. Colours correspond to the

clades in Figure 1.