The evolution of heteromorphic sex chromosomes in plants

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SUMMARY

Ancient heteromorphic sex chromosomes are common in mammals, but not in plants. Sex chromosomes in the plant family Cannabaceae, which includes species like hops and hemp, were identified a century ago because of their obviously heteromorphic XYs. However, we know very little about their structure, nor their role in the development of the economically, medicinally, and culturally important flowers. Here we assembled genomes, with phased sex chromosomes, for three XY male hops (*Humulus* sp.), two XY male *Cannabis*, and two monoecious *Cannabis* individuals. Most of the non-recombining regions evolved prior to the divergence between *Cannabis* and *Humulus* around 47 MYA supporting this sex chromosome origin is among the oldest known in flowering plants. The Y chromosomes are highly-degenerate, with very few genes remaining, and show substantial rearrangements, while the X also shows faster rates of molecular evolution. The Cannabaceae sex chromosomes contain critical genes for flower development and the production of key compounds like bitter acids and cannabinoids, which are important traits for the plants. The sex chromosomes thus have played a vital role in the domestication and breeding of these species, and more generally, the Cannabaceae family.

MAIN TEXT

Since their discovery [1], sex chromosomes have been of keen interest to study because of their unique inheritance patterns that can drive differences in their size, structure, and gene content. A century ago, the sex chromosomes of *Humulus* and *Cannabis* were among the first to be identified in flowering plants [2,3]. *Humulus lupulus* var. *lupulus*, the European hop, has one of the only known heteromorphic XY pairs in plants, where the Y chromosome is smaller than the X. *Cannabis*, instead, has a Y chromosome bigger than the X, but this form of heteromorphy is also apparently rare across angiosperms; most examined plant sex chromosomes are homomorphic [4]. Curiously, the XY pairs across other members of *Humulus* differ greatly in their cytology with homomorphic (American hops) and multiple sex chromosomes ($X_1X_2Y_1Y_2$ in *H. lupulus* var. *cordifolius* and $X_1Y_1Y_2$ in *H. scandens* [5]). The shared origin of sex chromosomes [6] in Cannabaceae, in addition to their extreme structural diversity (heteromorphic, homomorphic, multiple, polyploid), makes it an ideal clade for examining the genomic causes and consequences of sex chromosome evolution in angiosperms and more generally across eukaryotes.

The inflorescences in the Cannabaceae family have a deep history of human use, of which the females (XX) are typically the economically important sex. *Cannabis sativa* (hereafter, *Cannabis)* was domesticated by humans ~12 thousand years ago [7] and is still cultivated globally for bast fiber in stems, multi-purpose oil in 'grain' (achenes/seeds), and medicinal compounds (cannabinoids) concentrated in glandular trichomes on female inflorescences [8]. Records from over 1,200 years ago support the use of female hops in brewing beer [9], where they provide the characteristic bitterness and aroma. Like *Cannabis*, secondary compounds in hops are concentrated in glandular trichomes on female inflorescences, thus females in both genera have been strongly selected upon over millennia of human domestication. Despite their importance to the domestication and productivity of hops and *Cannabis*, very little is known about the origin and sequence structure of Cannabaceae sex chromosomes. Such an obvious knowledge gap is largely due to basic challenges of building and exploring highly repetitive and large X and Y sex chromosomes [10]. Despite these difficulties, here we assemble fully-phased, chromosome-scale reference genomes with both X and Y chromosomes for *Humulus lupulus* and *Cannabis sativa*, which represent easily the most complete genomic resources that include both sex chromosomes for the important crops of the Cannabaceae. We use these genomes to examine patterns of sex chromosome evolution across the Cannabaceae that contribute to these sex-specific dynamics.

PHASED CANNABACEAE SEX CHROMOSOME ASSEMBLIES

Until recently, assembling Cannabaceae genomes was a challenge, because its species exhibit highly-heterozygous and repeat-rich genomes [11,12]. Further, sex chromosomes are particularly arduous to contiguously assemble [13]; for example, the Y chromosome was the last to be included in the human 'T2T' genome [10], and sex chromosomes are incomplete in many mammalian genomes on NCBI. While progress has been made to identify sex-linked sequences (e.g., [14,15]), to our knowledge no approach has been designed to assemble and validate perfectly-phased sex

chromosomes. Therefore, we developed a custom pipeline to phase the sex chromosomes that
relies on the generation of sex-linked *k*-mers to identify X- versus Y-linked contigs
(Supplementary Discussion).
To examine the structure and gene content of the Cannabaceae sex chromosomes, we
built genomes that span their cytological range. This included males of three botanical varieties
of *H. lupulus* found across the breeding pedigree [16]: a line of *H. lupulus* var. *lupulus* (USDA
21110M) and two wild, American relatives, *H. lupulus* vars. *lupuloides* and *neomexicanus*. We
also built genomes for two male cultivars of *Cannabis* (Carmagnola and Otto II) and two
monoecious *Cannabis* cultivars (Uso 31 and Futura 75). We used hifiasm with HiFi long reads to
build contig assemblies and Omni-C incorporation to phase haplotypes [17] (Table S1). Prior to
scaffolding, we used male-specific *k*-mers (henceforth, Y-mers [18]) and a haplotype-combined
scaffolding approach to manually place the X/Y contigs into chromosomes (Table S2;
Supplementary Discussion). After sex chromosome phase correction, in *Cannabis*, the Haplotype
1 (HAP1) and 2 (HAP2) assemblies are ~760.6-828.8 Mb (initial contig N50s: 22-43.8 Mb). The
hop genomes are ~3 times larger at ~2.4-2.7 Gb (initial contig N50s: 56.1-167.6 Mb; Table S3).
The final assemblies are consistent with estimated genome sizes [19–21] and we recovered the
expected 10 chromosomes per haplotype in all individuals (Fig. S1-2). These seven new,
haplotype-resolved genomes contain very few gaps (Fig. S3-4) and exhibit Merqury *k*-mer
completeness values [22] of 92.95-98.31% (Table S3). We annotated Transposable Elements (TEs)
using EDTA [23] and found the *Cannabis* genomes to be on average 74.3% repetitive (Fig. 1),
consistent with recent assemblies [11]. Hops were higher for TEs at an average of 86.8%, an
increase from previous assemblies [12], likely due to greater contiguity of repetitive regions (Table
S4). Using a combination of RNAseq and protein homology, we annotated on average 34.9k
gene models using BRAKER [24,25], with BUSCOs ranging between 93-97.2% (Table S3-4). The
Y is the largest chromosome in the *Cannabis* genome at ~110.6-114 Mb, while the X is ~76%
smaller at 84.4-87.4 Mb (Fig. 1). Similar to the increased overall genome size, the Xs of the three
varieties of hops are ~3 times larger than in *Cannabis*, at ~267.4-272 Mb. The hop Y
chromosomes show the most drastic difference. The wild-collected American isolates are
cytologically homomorphic, where they are 89.3-92% the size of the X. The Y in *H. lupulus* var.
lupulus is the smallest chromosome in its genome and the smallest hop Y at 168.7 Mb, making it
~62.9% the size of the X and fitting the approximate 1.5:1 ratio observed in the cytotype [5]. Thus,
these sex chromosome assemblies meet the expected diverse range of cytological patterns (Fig.
1-2).
Sex chromosomes have unique inheritance patterns relative to autosomes. In an XY
system, the non-recombining sex-determination region (SDR) of the Y chromosome is only
inherited by males, while the remaining pseudoautosomal region (PAR) recombines relatively
freely with homologous regions of the X (HXR) [26]. To delineate the boundary between the SDR
and the PAR, we used a rigorous Y-mer mapping and gene tree approach. The hop and *Cannabis*
Y chromosomes contain a single PAR that represents between 20-30% of the Y sequence, also
matching cytological observations (Fig. 1) [27]. These near-perfect, phased sex chromosomes mark

a methodological advancement in the field of comparative genomics, enabling the generation of
chromosome-scale assemblies from a single heterogametic sex individual without trio-binning
(Supplemental Discussion).
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TIMING AND EVOLUTION OF CANNABACEAE SEX CHROMOSOMES

Reconstructions of sexual systems suggest that dioecy (i.e., female and male flowers develop on
separate individuals) is the ancestral state in Cannabaceae and its sister families Moraceae and
Urticaceae, that contain figs, mulberries, and nettles [28]. Example species within these families
have been shown to switch sex when ethylene is modified (e.g., ethephon treatment causes
karyotypic males to produce female flowers [29,30]) suggesting the possibility of a shared sex-
determining mechanism. Currently it is unknown if the two families share an ancestral XY pair;
however, recent assemblies in Moraceae [31,32] and our phased XYs, provide an opportunity to test
this and refine our understanding of the timing of the evolution of the Cannabaceae XYs.
To investigate the timing of stepwise changes in sex chromosome structure across the
phylogeny, we used a phylogeny based on whole-plastome sequences from across Rosales and
fossil records to calibrate and estimate a divergence time tree. Resulting age estimates were
transposed onto a species tree, inferred using a multi-species coalescent summary approach [33]
with 775 nuclear gene trees at concordant nodes (Fig. 3, S5). The ancestors of *Cannabis* and
Humulus began diverging between 33.9-41.4 (95% CI; mean=36.38) MYA, whereas
Cannabaceae diverged from Moraceae around 66-84.4 (95% CI; mean=74.2) MYA (Fig. 3, S5).
We next used evidence from synonymous protein changes (Ks) between one-to-one XY
orthologs (hereafter, gametologs) to estimate the SDR age. The maximum Ks in hops is 0.4
(mean Ks, top 10% = 0.325) and we estimate the age to be 39.1-48.8 MYA, firmly placing the
SDR origin on the stem branch leading to the split between *Cannabis* and *Humulus*. Consistent
with our age estimates and previous comparative analyses [6], our results support independent
evolutions of sex chromosomes from different autosomes in Moraceae and Cannabaceae and
using gene trees no topology suggests gene capture prior to their divergence. These analyses
support that the Cannabaceae XYs are among the oldest identified in plants.
Since the homologous SDRs do not recombine, genes captured in the same event are
expected to have similar levels of Ks, where the older captures will have higher Ks between the
X and Y compared to younger captures (i.e., evolutionary strata [34]). Genes with shared captures
prior to the divergence of *Cannabis* and *Humulus* will show a tree topology where all Y-linked
genes form a clade, sister to the X-linked clade (Fig. S6). Attributable to the difference in
generation times (1 year in *Cannabis*, 2-3 years hops), in *Cannabis*, the max Ks is twice as high
as hops (Ks = 0.81, mean=0.34). Importantly, Ks in both genera is largely consistent across the
entirety of the SDR or HXR (Fig. 1), suggesting most of the recombination suppression occurred
in one event. We additionally found 41 OrthoGroups shared across all Y SDRs (Table S5) and
for the majority we were able to construct a gene tree with a topology that supports these shared
captures (Fig. S6). In addition to the shared stratum, there is evidence for independent gene
captures in *Cannabis* and *Humulus*. In *Cannabis*, Ks along the SDR shows a clear, continuous

pattern of gene addition from the PAR boundary at 29.3 Mb to 35.7 Mb, suggesting that these 27
gametologs have been added into the SDR over time, rather than in a large SV (Fig. 1). This
gradual expansion of the SDR is likely related to centromere proximity (Fig. S7) as the existing
reduced recombination may facilitate sex-linkage [35,36]. In hops, we also found evidence for ~50
Y-linked genes that were captured in the American hops, that are clearly in the PAR in *H.*
lupulus var. *lupulus* (Fig. S6). Thus we found the Cannabaceae SDRs have two regions: a shared
region that was captured prior to the divergence of the two genera encompassing the majority of
the SDR, and a region of independent captures. After their initial evolution, the XYs have
continued to progress dynamically, resulting in the massive cytological variation extant today.
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STRUCTURAL EVOLUTION OF CANNABACEAE SEX CHROMOSOMES
These phased sex chromosomes allow for tracking the complex structural variant landscape
within and among species in the Cannabaceae, revealing PAR and SDR dynamics as they relate
to the evolution of novel reproductive forms. Sex chromosomes often show increased SVs across
all classes including inversions [37,38] and fusions that create neo-sex chromosomes [39]. Fusions
between an autosome and a sex chromosome are theorized to be favored when the autosome
contains sexually antagonistic loci, where the fusion increases linkage with the sex-determining
locus [40]. Models of sex chromosome:autosome fusions suggest that they more often occur in the
SDR or HXR than the PAR [41], but testing these models has been challenging due to the lack of
fully-phased sex chromosome assemblies in many plants.
Most genes on the Cannabaceae sex chromosomes reside on the PARs and maintain a
linear order between XY pairs within and across species, in stark contrast with the SDRs that
have very little synteny remaining (Fig. 1). Some large structural variations (SV) have occurred
following divergence of the two species; in hops, the X chromosome haplotypes have a large
inverted translocation (Fig. 1), which likely caused the previously observed inconsistency where
subtelomeric probes are interstitial compared to Xs on *H. scandens* and *Cannabis* [42,43]. This SV
is especially apparent in the gene landscape on the hop Xs; most chromosomes contain gene
dense arms towards the telomeres, but the SV has altered the location of this genic region
inwards. Within hops, we also found the predicted centromere locations differ across varieties.
The most striking difference in centromere location is between the X and Y of the *H. lupulus* var.
lupulus isolate. For the X, the centromere is ~142 Mb from the PAR, supporting its
submetacentric location, but the Y is acrocentric and ~20 Mb away (Fig. 4). This result is
consistent with observations that the XY bivalent only associates by a terminal chiasma between
the short arm of the Y and the long arm of the X during meiosis [5], unlike any other bivalent in
the karyotype. Interestingly, the centromere location differs among hop varieties; in *lupuloides*
and *neomexicanus* the X centromere changed locations, and was driven by an inversion (Fig.
S7).
Sex chromosome evolution, and particularly large-scale incorporation of autosomal
sequence, has co-occurred with the evolution of novelty in other systems [44]. We found a
translocation of part of an autosome to the *Cannabis* XYs, increasing their size. This

chromosome appears to have undergone a centric fission (based on the putative centromere
location in hops Chr01; Fig. 1, S7), then fused to the PAR of the *Cannabis* X and Y, forming a
neo-XY region (Fig. 1). In some lineages of hops, a second set of autosomes have also become
incorporated into the ancestral pair, forming neo-XYs. In *H. scandens*, cytological evidence
supports a fusion to the X chromosome of an autosome, but the two Ys remain unfused and both
show signatures of suppressed recombination [27]. Using F_{st} between the sexes and mapping of Y-
mers in *H. scandens,* we identified an ~160 Mb region of Chr03 that supports being the second
SDR of the Y_2 (Fig. S8) and differs from the chromosome fused in the *Cannabis* lineage. The
fusion between Chr03 and the HXR in *H. scandens* could involve a recessive, female beneficial
allele, in contrast with the *Cannabis* fusion, which occurred on the PAR end, and is expected to
be rarer based on models and observations across known neo-XY systems [41]. Given that the
PARs are a relatively small proportion (20-30%) of the Cannabaceae XYs (Fig. 1), both events
could also be explained by the Fragile Y hypothesis [45], which describes that recombination
within the PARs is expected to occur for the XY to properly pair at meiosis, and fusions of an
autosome to either the PAR or SDR can extend the size of the recombining region, reducing the
probability of aneuploidy.
In the closely-related and sympatric American hop varieties, *H. lupulus* vars. *lupuloides*
and *neomexicanus* [46], the Ys have evolved substantial structural variation since they diverged
~0.24 MYA (Fig. 3). The Ys between these varieties have evolved ~4.65 times more
translocations and ~4.34 times more inverted translocations than the autosomes, while the Xs are
more similar to the autosomes (1.27 times more translocations and 0.8 times more inverted
translocations; Fig. 1, Table S6). The Ys have ~⅓ fewer inversions compared to autosomes, but
they are large, representing ~35% of the assembled Y sequence. Extending this to comparisons
between the *H. lupulus* var. *lupulus* Y shows they are substantially less alignable than other
regions of the genome (Fig. 1), consistent with the greater divergence time between var. *lupulus*
and American hops (1.61 MYA; Fig. 3). In contrast to hops, the *Cannabis* Ys also contain SVs,
but fewer than the autosomes. The most likely explanation for this difference is that the
Cannabis isolates are more-closely related than the hops, consistent with the neutral evolution of
SVs on Ys, though it could reflect differences in *Cannabis*, such as with long-term breeding
practices.
Like SDRs, PARs are distinct regions of the genome that are often mistakenly thought to
evolve and recombine freely like autosomes, but their partial linkage to the SDR can drive
different evolutionary dynamics [26]. The PARs are also highly-structurally variable, especially in
the var. *lupulus* isolate, where there are two large inversions (each ~9Mb) and a translocation
(~4.8Mb) (Fig. 1); curiously these SVs co-locate at the PAR/SDR boundary, which may lead to
the expansions and contractions of sex chromosomes over time. This suggests that the PAR is
~34.2 Mb of the var. *lupulus* XYs, but only ~⅓ can freely recombine. Importantly, these results
highlight the massive variation within and between sex chromosome pairs and their associated
PAR and SDR regions. One sex chromosome reference is likely not sufficient to describe inter-
and intra-specific variation [47].

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Y DEGENERATION AND FASTER-X OF ANCIENT PLANT SEX CHROMOSOMES

Y DEGENERATION AND FASTER-X OF ANCIENT PLANT SEX CHROMOSOMES

The suppressed recombination of an SDR reduces the efficacy of natural selection and can drive

the accumulation of slightly deleterious mutations [48]. As a consequence, SDRs tend to

accumulate TEs, which can quickly increase the size of the Y and over greater time can lead to

gene loss and reduce its size [49,50]. If this linear trajectory holds true, then this process of Y

degeneration should increase with time, but the Cannabaceae sex chromosomes defy these

expectations as they have a shared origin with extreme cytological variation (Fig. 1, 2),

supporting the trend that time alone does not drive these changes [4].

The sex chromosomes show clear signs of degeneration, where the SDR is gene poor and

TE rich compared to the autosomes and X chromosome (Fig. 1). In *H. lupulus* var. *lupulus*, the

SDR contains only 382 gene models, ~17% the number in the HXR, with similarly low

proportions in the Ys of vars. *lupuloides* and *neomexicanus* (both ~20%; Table S7). In *Cannabis*,

which has the largest Y relative to its X counterpart, there is also evidence for substantial

degeneration (SDR models ~46% of the HXR), though to a lesser extent than in the hops. Given

the variation in the physical sizes of the Ys (Fig. 1), one potential cause is through the

differential loss of genes within the SDRs. However, in hops, which show the most extreme

variation in size within a species, the number of XY gametologs are nearly the same, suggesting

that the larger Ys in the wild hops have lost nearly as many genes as the smaller Y in *H. lupulus*

var. *lupulus*, and that physical size difference is likely driven by transposon accumulation.

Indeed, TE content of the SDR is 16% and 7% higher compared with the genome-wide averages

for *Cannabis* and *Humulus*, respectively, and mostly LTR elements (Table S8). Recent bursts in

TE activity are evident on the Y chromosomes compared to their X counterparts, consistent with

the increased overall percentages (Fig. 4). Importantly, the *H. lupulus* var. *lupulus* Y shows

reduced TE expansion relative to the other Ys since the SDRs evolved, which could explain its

smaller size (Fig. 4). Together these results support that the Cannabaceae Y chromosomes are

highly-degenerated and that the cytological variations in Y chromosome sizes are a complex,

ongoing interplay between gene loss and repeat expansions.

The hemizygous state of the X chromosome in males is predicted to cause elevated rates

of molecular evolution, a phenomenon referred to as the faster-X effect, that has mostly been

investigated in animal systems thus far [51] (but see [52]). There are two potential causes for faster-

X, the first being that the heterogamety in males leads to stronger purifying selection against

recessive deleterious mutations and positive selection for recessive beneficial mutations [53].

Another possibility is related to the effective population size (N_e) of the X [51], which controls the

rate of genetic drift, and is expected to be ¾ N_e of the autosomes under neutral processes [54]. We

used the McDonald Kreitman test (MKT), which uses within-species polymorphism and

between-species divergence data, to estimate adaptive substitution rates (α, [55,56] across the X and

autosomes. The HXR genes (n=370) show a significantly higher α relative to autosomal genes

(n=6,786; Wilcoxon rank-sum test with Benjamini-Hochberg correction, p=0.031). In contrast,

the PARs (n=212) were not significantly different from the HXR (p=0.13) nor from the

autosomes (p=0.82; Fig. 4). These results suggest that the hop X chromosomes show signatures
of the faster-X effect, which may be due to a reduction in drift, as the X has nearly the same
effective population size as the autosomes.
These molecular patterns are likely contributing to observations when crossing hops of
distinct varieties, as there is ongoing evidence that sex chromosomes play a critical role in
speciation [57]. The highly degenerated Y and faster-X, suggest the possibility of Haldane's Rule
(HR), where the inviability of one sex will be the heterogametic sex when crossing hybrids [58].
Hops have a strong female-biased sex ratio, which becomes more extreme when crossing distinct
varieties (e.g., 7:1 for within *lupulus*, 67:1 for *lupulus* to *cordifolius* [59]). The large-X effect, the
second of the "two rules of speciation" along with HR, proposes that the X plays a
disproportionate role in hybrid inviability, which may also play a role in the diversification of the
Humulus genus and could drive difficulties with crossing distinct varieties.
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291   **SEX CHROMOSOMES AND HOP CONES**
In hops, only XX females develop the prized "cones" that are used in brewing. Hop cones
(technically the inflorescences) contain modified trichomes, called lupulin glands, that produce
the characteristic bitter acids and flavors. The sex chromosomes contain the sex determination
genes required for XX female versus XY male sexual differentiation, but also genes that
contribute to secondary sex characteristics in both vegetative and reproductive tissues. Given the
shared origin of a sex chromosome in Cannabaceae, we searched for highly-conserved, putative
sex determination genes, which we expect to act early in flower development [5]. Five genes in
particular are shared across all Cannabaceae Ys, none of which appear to be obvious sex-
determination genes based on their developmental timing and orthologous functions, in the
absence of functional validation in hops (Table S5). For instance, the maintenance of *SIGNAL*
PEPTIDE PEPTIDASE (*AtSPP*) and *ROP ENHANCER 1* (*REN1*) suggests a conserved and
critical role in pollen in Cannabaceae. In *Arabidopsis*, *AtSPP* is required for pollen development
and pollen germination [60] and *REN1* plays an important role in pollen tube growth [61]. This line of
evidence could support that sex-determination in Cannabaceae is through a dosage system of X
chromosomes, rather than an active Y system, as has been suggested by crossing experiments [62].
Natural variation in sexual systems can be used to overcome limitations in functional
genomics. Reversions to monoecy, where a plant can produce both functional female and male
flowers, have been observed. One possible route to transitioning from dioecy to monoecy
involves movement of SDR-linked sequence to the X chromosome. To test this hypothesis, we
compared our dioecious to our monoecious assemblies in *Cannabis*. All monoecious karyotypes
were XX, consistent with genome size estimates [63]. The monoecious Xs (X_m) are highly-syntenic
to the dioecious Xs and show no clear synteny to the Y SDR (Fig. 3). There are no smaller-scale
signatures of the Y chromosome on the X_m, including no dense peaks of Y-mers mapping to the
X_m (Table S2) and assessing 1,581 gene trees have no evidence of a topology suggesting an
SDR-linked gene translocated. These data suggest that in these individuals, monoecy evolved
through a modification on the X chromosome and not movement of the Y chromosome SDR

sequence into the X. This also supports that sex-determination in Cannabaceae occurs through a
dosage system of X chromosomes, or that a novel mechanism has evolved in monoecious lines
that can influence sex-specific development.
Sex chromosomes can harbor genes that have functions beyond sex determination that
require their contextualization in the Y-linked SDR, the HXR, and the PAR regions. Indeed,
many critical floral development genes appear on the sex chromosomes (Table S9). Males flower
earlier in Cannabaceae [5,64] and the sex-linkage of many of the regulators of flowering suggests
that these genes may underlie these known phenological differences. For instance, homologs of
FLOWERING LOCUS D (*FD*), *TERMINAL FLOWER 1* (*TFL1*), *EMBRYONIC FLOWER 1*
(*EMF1*), and *EARLY FLOWERING IN SHORT DAYS 1* (*EFS1*) in the SDR or HXRs (Fig. S9).
The PAR also contains homologs of several critical genes in the photoperiod-dependent
pathways for flowering including *FLOWERING LOCUS T* (*FT*), *CONSTANS* (*CO*), and
GIGANTEA (*GI*), and their conservation across plants could suggest similar functions in
Cannabaceae [65,66]. Consistent with these findings, QTL analyses in *Cannabis* identified peaks for
flowering time on the X chromosome, though not exclusively [67]. Other critical floral
development genes, like *LEUNIG* (*LUG*) and *SEUSS* (*SEU*) are located on the HXR and PAR,
respectively, which function together as regulators of the class C (carpel and stamen identity)
homeotic gene *AGAMOUS* (*AG*) [68]. The abundance of floral genes on the Cannabaceae XYs
could suggest this chromosome was predisposed to take on the role of sex chromosomes [69,70].
Female hops are strongly artificially selected for their production of bitter acids and
metabolites used in the brewing process, but the impact of selection on the sex chromosome is
unknown. The bitter acids are prenylated acylphloroglucinols, commonly referred to as alpha
(e.g., humulone) and beta acid (e.g., lupulone). The bitter acid pathway has been well
characterized [71,72] and three of the key enzymes are Valerophenone Synthase (*VPS*) and
prenyltransferases (*PT1-2*). In hops that the *PT1-2* genes are tandem duplications located in the
PAR of the XY chromosomes and curiously within an inversion with *FT* (Fig. S9). Leveraging
the HLAGA7 sex-linked marker [73]), we traced one of the previously identified bitter acid QTLs
to the sex chromosomes, consistent with the location of the *PT* genes [73,74]. Because bitter acids
have been the target for breeding in hops, we tested for evidence of selection on these genes
using the MKT. *PT1*, *PT2*, and *VPS* show signatures of adaptive variation (alpha = 0.76, 0.1,
0.58, respectively), of which *PT1* shows the strongest signal under Fisher's exact test (p=0.03,
FDR= n.s.), consistent with selection on XX females for alpha and beta acid production, in
addition to the most abundant prenylated flavinoid, xanthohumol [75]. Sex chromosomes therefore
have been instrumental in the ongoing selection of genes in cultivated hop for the production of
beer, and this presents a unique parallel with *Cannabis*, where the same *PT* gene family is also
critical for the production of all cannabinoids [76] in XX females.
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355   **CONCLUSIONS**
356   Our near-complete assemblies have shown the evolution of sex chromosomes in *Cannabis* and
357   *Humulus* in unprecedented detail. Their shared origin, ~47 MYA, is among one of the oldest

known sex chromosome pairs in flowering plants. Substantial cytological variation exists, driven by differences in gene content, repeat variation, and structural variation. There is evidence of substantial degeneration of the Y chromosome, as well as faster-X. Many critical genes are found on the XY pairs, particularly involved with development of their economically important flowers. These massively diverse sex chromosomes, and their associated reproductive genes, played a pivotal role in the domestication, breeding, and ongoing production of hops to support the modern beer industry. The heteromorphic sex chromosomes thus have played an indispensable role in the domestication and ongoing breeding of these species, revealing that there is far more variability within and among sex chromosomes than can be gleaned from cytology alone.

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FIGURES

Figure 1. The genome architecture of *Cannabis* and *Humulus*. a) gene and repeat landscapes of *Cannabis* and *Humulus* and their syntenic relationships. These species exhibit a typical angiosperm architecture, with repeats increasing at the centromeres and gene dense arms. One exception is the X chromosome in hops, where an inverted translocation has altered the gene-dense region towards the centromere. The genera are also largely syntenic, though some

structural changes have occurred. The autosomes are represented with a single haplotype but

both sex chromosomes. Due to the genome size differences, *Humulus* was scaled to *Cannabis*. **b**)

gene and repeat content, and structural relationships between the X and Y chromosomes within

hops and *Cannabis* (**c**). Y-mer density highlights the sex-determination regions (SDR), while

synonymous protein changes (Ks) for one-to-one XY gametologs highlight the homologous

region of the Xs (HXR; values above one were removed). On the Ys, repeats sharply increase in

the SDRs relative to the pseudoautosomal regions (PAR), and become gene poor. The Y

chromosomes are highly structurally variable in hops, though more conserved in these *Cannabis*

isolates, and in both genera show very little synteny with the X chromosomes outside of the

PARs.

Figure 2. Model of sex chromosome evolution in Cannabaceae. The *Cannabis* and *Humulus* sex chromosomes have extreme structural diversity with heteromorphic, homomorphic, and multiple sex chromosome pairs. The sex chromosomes evolved from an ancestral autosomal pair and have been on independent trajectories once each lineage diverged. A fusion of part of an autosome to the pseudoautosomal region (PAR) expanded the size of *Cannabis* XYs and the sex-determination region (SDR) has expanded, and over time capturing more gene content into the non-recombining region. The American hops, *H. lupulus* vars. *neomexicanus* and *lupuloides* also had independent expansions of the SDRs. In *H. scandens*, a different chromosome independently fused to the X chromosome than in *Cannabis*, while the two Y chromosomes remain unfused. For clarity, chromosome numbers provided here are based on *Humulus*.

Figure 3. Phylogenetic relationships and synteny in Cannabaceae and Moraceae. Dates on
the cladogram are the mean age in millions of years. Green branches highlight the Cannabaceae
and purple the Moraceae families. The gray dashed lines connect species in the cladogram that
are represented in the GENESPACE synteny plot. Highlighted in green are the XY chromosomes
in Cannabaceae (the pseudoautosomal region only, as the sex-determination regions show very
little synteny, Fig. 1). In purple are the sex-determination regions in Moraceae, highlighting they
are on different chromosomes than in Cannabaceae, consistent with their independent evolutions.

Figure 4. Molecular evolution of Cannabaceae XYs. a) putative centromere location for the

Humulus lupulus var. *lupulus* Y and (**b**) X chromosomes showing their different proximities

from the pseudoautosomal regions (PAR). The X pericentromere features low-complexity

tandem repeats (gray) flanking a higher-complexity centromeric array (red arrow), a slight

increase in *Ty-3* elements and CRM retrotransposons, and a reduction in *Ty-1* elements and other

DNA transposons (DNA/DTM). The pericentromeric region is not observable on the Y, due to

the high repetitive content; however, the centromeric array and reduction in *Ty-1* indicate the

putative centromere location. (**b**) X chromosomes showing their different proximities from the

pseudoautosomal regions (PAR). **c**) Kimura substitution plots, with lower values closer to 0

representing more recent events and higher values approaching 50 representing older events.

Time was approximated by dividing the Kimura Distance by twice the mutation rate (we

assumed a value of 1×10^{-9}), and the black lines indicate the initial sex chromosome evolution. **d**)

boxplot for alpha values from the McDonald Kreitman test. Values above each box are the mean

and the asterisk indicates significance.

METHODS

Sequence generation

All sequencing was performed at HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology (Huntsville, AL, USA), unless otherwise noted. To obtain high molecular weight (HMW) DNA for the genome isolates (Table S1), we flash froze young leaf tissue in liquid nitrogen then extracted HMW genomic DNA using a Takara NucleoBond HMW kit (San Jose, CA) according to the manufacturer's protocol. Long-read sequencing was performed using circular consensus sequencing (CCS) mode on a PacBio Sequel II (Pacific Biosciences of California). Libraries were constructed using a SMRTbell Template Prep Kit 3.0, sheared using a Megaruptor (Diagenode), and sized on a Blue Pippin instrument (Sage Science, Beverly, MA, USA). Sequencing was performed using a 30 hour movie time with two hour pre-extension, and the resulting raw data were processed using the CCS6.2 algorithm.

To scaffold the genome assemblies, we generated Omni-C data. Libraries were constructed using standard protocols (Cantata Bio, Dovetail Omni-C Kit Catalog #21005). One gram of flash, frozen leaf tissue was ground and after nuclei isolation, the pellet was resuspended in 1x PBS, aliquoted into three tubes and centrifuged at 6000 rpm for five minutes. The supernatant was then discarded and the nuclei pellets flash frozen for storage at -80 degrees. One aliquoted nuclei pellet was then processed using the Dovetail Omni-C protocol V2. Libraries were run on an Illumina NovaSeq 6000 PE150.

To develop the male-specific k-mer lists (i.e., Y-mers), and data for the population genomic analyses, we generated Illumina whole-genome sequencing (WGS) for 22 *H. lupulus* individuals, spanning all five botanical varieties (Table S10). Isolates were extracted using a CTAB approach and sequencing libraries were constructed using an Illumina TruSeq DNA PCR-free library kit (Catalog #20015962) using standard protocols. Libraries were sequenced on an Illumina NovaSeq 6000 instrument using paired ends and a read length of 150 base pairs. For two isolates (64035M and Bullion) DNA was instead extracted using the BioEcho EchoLUTION Plant DNA 96 Kit (Product No. 010-103-002) and sequencing libraries were constructed using a seqWell purePlex DNA Library Preparation Kit. Sequencing was performed on an Illumina NovaSeq X Plus instrument using paired-end reads and a read length of 150 base pairs at NovoGene (Beijing, China).

To provide mRNA support for the gene annotations, we generated additional RNAseq data. We flash froze leaf (with some stem remnants likely) tissues and inflorescences for 21110M and Comet "male", respectively. We extracted RNA using a CTAB approach [77].

Sequencing libraries were constructed using an Illumina TruSeq Stranded mRNA Library Prep Kit (Catalog #20020595) using standard protocols. Libraries were sequenced on an Illumina NovaSeq 6000 instrument using paired ends and a read length of 150 base pairs.

Genome assemblies

For *Cannabis*, HiFi reads were assembled into contigs using hifiasm v0.16.0, with the Hi-C integration mode that incorporated Omni-C reads for phasing. For *Humulus*, we used hifiasm

v0.19.5. For 21110M, we also changed the '-s' parameter from 0.55 (default) to 0.2 to better
balance haplotypes out of the assembly. Using our HiFi data, we polished our contigs using
Racon v1.5.0 [78], removed contigs below 50 Kb using BBTools v38.18-0
(https://sourceforge.net/projects/bbmap/), and removed contigs identified as contamination using
FCS-GX v0.4.0 [79].
Prior to scaffolding, we manually placed the sex chromosomes into a single haplotype
(described in detail in the Supplementary Discussion). The sex chromosome-corrected assembly
was then scaffolded by first mapping the Omni-C reads using BWA-MEM, with parameters -5SP
and samtools version 1.10 with parameters view -S -h -b -F 2316. Next, we scaffolded the
assembly using Yet Another Hi-C Scaffolding tool (YaHS) v1.1 with default parameters [80]. We
edited contact maps manually with Juicebox Assembly Tools (JBAT) v2.15 [81] to produce the
expected 10 chromosomes per haplotype. Scaffolds containing assembled telomeres were
checked for correct orientation to the terminal ends by searching for the $(TTTAGGG)_n$ repeat
using GENESPACE v1.3.1 [82]. The *Cannabis* assemblies were reordered and oriented to the
existing cs10 reference [83] and hops were reordered and oriented to Cascade [12]. Final plots
showing the number of contigs and telomeric regions (density of the window for the telomeric
repeat set to 0.75) were generated using GENESPACE.
802
Genome annotations
To generate gene model annotations, for *Cannabis*, we annotated repeats and genes following
previously described methods [84]. In brief, we used a repeat library built from existing assemblies
and repeats were masked with RepeatMasker v4.1.2. We annotated gene models using Braker
v2.1.6 and TSEBRA [85]. For hops, we annotated repeats by building a *de novo* library for each
haplotype separately using RepeatModeler v2.0.5 [86], invoking the -LTRStruct parameter. We
then masked repeats using RepeatMasker v4.1.5 [87]. We annotated gene models by using
BRAKER3 v3.0.6 [25], using both protein and RNAseq as extrinsic evidence. For the proteins, we
used the OrthoDB v11 [88] for Viridiplantae, combined with proteins from genome references for
Parasponia [89], *Trema* [89], Cascade, and cs10. For RNAseq support, we used existing RNAseq
data for *Humulus*, as well as RNAseq generated here (Table S10). We assessed the gene
annotations using compleasm v0.2.6 [90] using the Eudicots database.
815
Repeat analyses
To examine the landscape of TEs, we additionally annotated repeats using EDTA v2.0.0 [23] for
each haplotype separately. To compare repeat landscapes between *Cannabis* and hops, we
generated a panEDTA library using EDTA v2.2.0 [91]. To identify putative centromere locations,
we used StainedGlass v0.5 [92] to visualize the massive tandem repeat arrays. To identify tandem
repeats, we used Tandem Repeats Finder v4.09.1 [93] (parameters 2 7 7 80 10 50 500 -f -d -m -h)
and to identify CRM elements we used BLAST v2.15.0 [94] using previously identified elements
[95]. To plot the landscape of repeats and genes in the context of the putative centromere locations,
we use sliding windows of 100kb and 200kb for the Y and X, respectively.

Identification of the sex chromosomes using Y-mers

We used whole-genome sequencing data, and HiFi long-reads (*H. lupulus* var. *lupulus* 21110M and *H. lupulus* var. *lupuloides* MN-1421 isolates only), to identify the sex-determining region (SDR) of the Y. All paired-end Illumina data had adapters removed and were quality filtered using TRIMMOMATIC v0.39 [96] with leading and trailing values of three, sliding window of 30, jump of 10, and a minimum remaining read length of 40. We next found all canonical 21-mers in each isolate using Jellyfish v2.3.0 [97] and used the bash *comm* command to identify all *k*-mers shared in all male isolates and not found in any female isolate (Y-mers). For *H. scandens* we used meryl v1.3 [22] to identify Y-mers. We used to meryl *count* to identify all 21-mers in each isolate and the *intersect* and *difference* commands for identifying Y-mers. We mapped the Y-mers to both haplotype assemblies using BWA-MEM, with parameters -k 21 -T 21 -a -c 10 and generated a table of coverage per contig using SAMtools v1.10 *coverage* [98].

Gene tree analyses

To compare the boundary of the SDR with the PAR when using Y-mer mapping, and examine the timing of gene capture into the SDR, we ran OrthoFinder v2.5.2, with the *Cannabis* and hop proteins and additional angiosperm genomes (Table S11), [99,100] in ultra-sensitive mode. For OrthoGroups that contained sex-linked genes, we aligned the genes using MAFFT v7.471 [101] with the parameter maxiterate set to 1000 and using genafpair. We built gene trees using RAxML v8.2.12 [102] with 100 bootstrap replicates and the model PROTGAMMAWAG. In total, we built 1,096 gene trees containing Y-linked gene models and visually examined the topology. To examine phylogenetic evidence of monoecy evolving from a Y-linked gene translocating to the X, we used ETE3 v3.1.1 [103] *check_monophyly* function.

Ka/Ks

To identify one-to-one orthologs on the XY and examine protein evolution, we ran OrthoFinder v2.5.2 [99,100] within a reference's haplotypes. We calculated synonymous (Ks) and nonsynonymous (Ka) changes in codons using Ka/Ks Calculator v2.0 [104]. To use Ks to estimate the age of the SDR, we used the following formula: time $(T)= (Ks/\pi-1)x(2N_e t_g)$, where we used a μ of $1x10^{-9}$, $\pi=0.0158$ (described below), and a generation time $(t_g)=2$.

Synteny analyses

To examine syntenic relationships between Cannabaceae and Moraceae, we use GENESPACE using default parameters. Visualization and analysis of local synteny was conducted with DEEPSPACE (https://github.com/jtlovell/DEEPSPACE), which aligns genomic windows between assemblies and uses GENESPACE machinery to infer syntenic blocks. Source code for the riparian plots was modified where needed to visually compare two genomes with such different total sizes.

Species tree inference

We used OrthoFinder v2.5.4 [99,100] to identify conserved, single-copy genes for species tree
inference with ASTRAL v5.7.8 [33], which employs a coalescent-based summary method that is
statistically consistent under the multi-species coalescent model. To identify orthologs conserved
as single copy across the Rosales order, we used gene annotations from the following Rosales
taxa: *H. lupulus* var. *lupuloides*, *H. lupulus* var. *lupulus*, *H. lupulus* var. *neomexicanus*, *C. sativa*,
Ficus hispida [31], *Malus domestica* [105], *Morus alba* [106], *Pyrus commune* [107], and *Ziziphus jujuba*
[108]. All single-copy genes conserved across those samples were used for gene and species tree
inference, after removing all orthologs of sex chromosome linked genes (found in any species)
since any of those may exhibit unique evolutionary histories in different lineages. Coalescent-
based, rather than concatenation, methods were used to analyze nuclear genes because
concatenation implicitly assumes an absence of recombination and ILS, or incomplete lineage
sorting (i.e., a single history is shared amongst all genes), and can result in statistical
inconsistencies in multi-locus datasets with high levels of gene tree discordance [109,110]; whereas
coalescent approaches assume free recombination between genes, accounting for gene tree–
species tree discordance due to ILS.
880   Along with our *Humulus* dataset, publicly available Illumina short reads were
downloaded from NCBI SRA for additional lineages spanning the Rosales (Table S12), to
produce gene assemblies for phylogenomic analysis. We employed HybPiper v2.1.6 [111] to i) map
reads to target nucleotide sequences with BWA-MEM, ii) assemble mapped reads into
contiguous sequences with SPAdes v3.15.2 [112], iii) extend gene assemblies into flanking intronic
regions, and iv) test for paralogs with default HybPiper parameters. The target sequence file used
for read mapping with HybPiper was manually curated with nucleotide coding sequences for 775
one-to-one orthologs from genome annotations for: 1) *H. lupulus* var. *neomexicanus*, 2) *M.*
domestica, 3) *C. sativa*, 4) *M. alba*, and 5) *Z. jujuba*.
889   Multiple sequence alignments for each target gene were produced using MAFFT v7.520
with the --*auto* option, which automatically selects the best alignment strategy based on the data
[101]. Poorly-aligned sequences were trimmed using trimAl v1.4.1 with the flag -*automated1* [113].
Gene tree inference was performed using maximum likelihood (ML) with IQ-TREE v1.6.2 [114],
1000 ultrafast bootstraps (BS) [115], and model selection based on Bayesian information criterion
with ModelFinder [116]. Prior to the ASTRAL analysis, gene tree branches with <10% BS support
were collapsed into polytomies to improve the accuracy of species tree inference [33]. The
resulting species tree was rooted with Rosaceae taxa (i.e., *P. communis*, *M. domestica*).
897
Plastome divergence time estimations
Whole (circularized) plastome assemblies were used to estimate relationships and divergence
times among the same, or similar, Rosales taxa included in the species tree analysis (Table S12).
To assemble chloroplast genomes, we used oatk v0.2 [117] when HiFi data was available. For all
others where we used Novoplasty v4.3.5 [118]. Limited taxon sampling was used to optimize time
calibrations across the Rosales tree, and obtain robust divergence time estimates for ingroup
branches (i.e., Cannabaceae and *Humulus*). Whole plastomes were aligned using MAFFT v7.520
with the --*auto* option and used as input for ML tree inference with IQ-TREE v1.6.2 (as
performed for individual nuclear gene trees) and bayesian divergence time estimation with
BEAST v2.7.7 [119]. BEAST was executed using a GTR+G+I substitution and site heterogeneity
model with four rate categories; a fossilized birth-death (FBD) tree prior to model speciation and
extinction [120,121]; and optimized relaxed clock model with a lognormal distribution [122]. The
plastome tree topology was constrained according to the ML tree from IQ-TREE and rooted with

Rosaceae taxa. Two independent BEAST runs, totalling 48,858,000 MCMC generations, were
combined to obtain >200 effective sample size (ESS) for all priors, with MCMC sampling every
1000 generations and 10% burn-in. ESS was assessed with Tracer v1.7.2 [123]. To calibrate the
plastome tree to time (i.e., million years ago=Ma) and estimate the tree root height, we estimated
the FBD origin under a normal distribution with a mean of 107 Ma and a liberal standard
deviation of 4.0. Those parameters virtually constrained the total tree height to approximately
100-114 Ma, which is in accordance with crown group age estimates for Rosales in previous
studies [28,124]. Under the FBD model, two fossil calibrations were applied to further calibrate the
plastome tree to time: the first applied a 66 Ma minimum age for the Cannabaceae stem group
[28,125,126] and the second applied a 33.9 Ma minimum age for the stem group of *Humulus* [28,127].
921
922   *Structural variant analyses*
923   To identify structural variants between the genome assemblies we first generated alignments
924   using minimap2 v2.24 [128] using --eqx. We called SVs using SyRI v1.7.0 [129], ignoring SNPs (--
925   nosnp) and setting --invgaplen 10000000.
926
Population genetic analyses
BWA-MEM v0.7.17 [130] was used to map reads to the *H. lupulus* var. *lupulus* reference, with
some modifications based on the analysis. We used bcftools v1.9 *mpileup* and *call* [131] functions
to call variants, where we applied the -G parameter for *call*. We filtered the vcf file using
'QUAL>20 & DP>5 & MQ>30', minor allele frequency of 0.05, and dropped sites with > 25%
missing data. To calculate π, for the genome reference, we used the autosomes for HAP1,
removed the Y chromosome, but included the X chromosome, and restricted the analysis to
females of the wild-collected hops. We used pixy v1.2.7.beta1 [132] using 100,000-bp windows
with a 10,000-bp jump. To estimate N_e, we used the relationship $\theta = 4N_e\mu$, where we used π as
our metric for θ, we and found $\theta \sim= 0.015$ for both the X and autosomes. To examine F_{st} for *H.*
scandens, we mapped previously existing samples (Table S10) to the *H. lupulus* var. *lupulus*
HAP1 reference that includes the Y, so we could compare with the Y-mer mapping. In pixy, we
calculated F_{st} for gene models only.
940
McDonald Kreitman Test
To estimate adaptive substitutions, or alpha (α) [56], for the faster-X test, we used the McDonald
Kreitman Test (MKT). We used the autosomes for HAP1, removed the Y chromosome, but
included the X chromosome for the *H. lupulus* var. *lupulus* reference, and restricted the analysis
to only female hops, including one *H. scandens* female as the outgroup species. We used the R
package iMKT v0.1.1 [133], where we applied a Fay, Wyckoff, and Wu correction [134] of 0.15.
Because the MKT can be underpowered when there are low counts in the 2-by-2 contingency
table, we only compared results for which the row and column totals were six or greater [135].
Because negative α values indicate that the assumptions of the MKT were likely not met, and
difficult to meaningfully interpret, we also excluded α values below zero. Thus we restrict our
analysis to testing for differences in the proportion of substitution driven by positive selection,
only for genes that meet the null hypothesis (α=0) or show evidence for adaptive evolution

(α>0). To test for selection on the bitter acid pathway genes, we followed the same approach
with some exceptions. We included male isolates in the analysis and mapped to the *H. lupulus*
var. *lupulus* HAP1 reference that includes the Y. After calculating the MKT, we used the Fisher
exact test to test for significance on each gene and applied a false discovery rate adjustment to
the p-values.
958

959 *Data availability*
960 The genome assemblies have been deposited on NCBI under BioProjects (TBD). Sequencing
961 libraries for the genome assembly and annotation are publicly available on NCBI under
962 BioProject (TBD) and the whole-genome sequencing of additional isolates are under (TBD).
963 Individual accession numbers are provided in Supplementary Tables S1 and S10.
964

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980

981 *Competing interests*
982 D.V. is a board member of the 501(C)3 non-profit Agricultural Genomics Foundation and the
983 sole owner of the company CGRI, LLC