Evidence for Early Evolution of Sulfated Peptide Signaling in Plant Development

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Abstract

In plants, the cell wall fixes the position of each cell; therefore, during development, plants rely on cellular proliferation and expansion for tissue patterning and organ formation. How plant cells communicate with neighboring cells to coordinate expansion for properly patterned tissues and organs is not well understood. In seed plants, organ growth is known to be modulated by sulfotyrosyl peptide signaling. Here, we report that the activity of TYROSYL PROTEIN SULFOTRANSFERASE (TPST), which is responsible for the post-translational modification of sulfotyrosyl peptides, is essential for expansion during development in the non-vascular plant, *Physcomitrium patens*. Plants that harbor a null mutation in the gene encoding TPST (*Δtpst*) were smaller, and while they formed gametophore initials, the gametophores did not fully expand. Mutational analysis of *P. patens* TPST identified the residue Histidine 124, a candidate catalytic residue, as essential for TPST function. Notably, addition of the sulfated signaling peptide, PSY1 from either *P. patens* or *Arabidopsis thaliana*, rescued all *Δtpst* developmental deficits. Taken together, these data suggest that TPST functions to sulfate PSY, and this activity is necessary for plant growth and development. Furthermore, since addition of AtPSY fully rescues *Δtpst* and PpPSY promotes root elongation in Arabidopsis and rice, these findings suggest that PSY signaling is evolutionarily conserved.

Introduction

In multicellular organisms, development involves cell proliferation, expansion, and differentiation. Unlike animal cells, plant cells are unable to undergo cell migration due to their encasement in a semi-rigid cell wall. Thus, the ultimate body shape depends on patterns of cell division and cell expansion (Cosgrove, 2005). How plant cells coordinate expansion with neighboring cells to shape tissue development and organ formation is not known.

Tyrosine-sulfated peptide signaling regulates plant growth, development, and immune response (Kaufmann and Sauter, 2019). A member of the PLANT PEPTIDE-

CONTAINING SULFATED TYROSINE (PSY) family, mature PSY1 is an 18-amino acid tyrosine-

sulfated peptide. Exogenous PSY1 at nanomolar concentrations enhances cellular

expansion and proliferation in Arabidopsis (Amano *et al.*, 2007) and overexpression or

exogenous application of PSY1 promotes root elongation in Arabidopsis and rice (Amano *et*

al., 2007; Pruitt *et al.*, 2017; Ercoli *et al.*, 2024; Shi *et al.*, 2024). Other characterized

sulfopeptide hormones include PHYTOSULFOKINE (PSK), a 5-amino acid tyrosine-sulfated

peptide that functions with the plant hormones auxin and cytokinin to mediate cell cycle

reentry (Matsubayashi and Sakagami, 1996; Matsubayashi *et al.*, 1999), ROOT MERISTEM

GROWTH FACTORS (RGFs), and CASPARIAN STRIP INTEGRITY FACTORS (CIFs) (Matsuzaki

et al., 2010; Doblas *et al.*, 2017; Nakayama *et al.*, 2017). However, the molecular

mechanisms that link tyrosine-sulfated peptides to cell expansion are not well understood.

Sulfated signaling peptides are processed and post-translationally modified from

precursor peptides. The prepropeptide amino-terminal signal peptide is cleaved during

secretion in the endoplasmic reticulum, and then it moves to the Golgi for tyrosine

sulfation and other modifications as appropriate. Propeptides are then transported, likely

to the apoplast, and become mature sulfated signaling peptides when they are cleaved at

the amino- and carboxyl-termini by largely unknown proteases (Kaufmann and Sauter,

2019).

Sulfotyrosine (sTyr) residues are formed by TYROSYL PROTEIN SULFOTRANSFERASE

(TPST) in the Golgi and are critical for certain protein-protein interactions in animals and

plants (Stewart and Ronald, 2022). TPST catalyzes sulfate transfer from adenosine 3'-

phosphate 5'-phosphosulfate (PAPS) to the hydroxyl group of specific tyrosyl residues

(Stewart and Ronald, 2022). Both TPST and soluble sulfotransferase sequences contain a

residue (Glu or His) whose side-chain provides the catalytic base, as well as PAPS-binding

residues in two conserved motifs, the 5' phospho-sulfate binding (5'-PSB) and the 3'

phosphate binding (3'-PB) elements (Stewart and Ronald, 2022). Although these conserved

elements were not initially identified in the plant TPST sequence (Komori *et al.*, 2009),

recent analysis detected putative PAPS-binding motifs (Stewart and Ronald, 2022). AtTPST

is a type I transmembrane protein, with a single membrane spanning segment and the

carboxyl-terminus exposed to the cytosol. In contrast, animal TPST is a type II

transmembrane protein, with the amino-terminus exposed to the cytosol. These different

topologies and apparent absence of sequence similarity suggested that plant and animal

TPSTs evolved independently via convergent evolution (Komori *et al.*, 2009).

In Arabidopsis, TPST is expressed throughout the plant but most highly at the root

apical meristem (Komori *et al.*, 2009). An Arabidopsis *tpst* null mutant displays various

developmental and growth phenotypes, including dwarfism and early senescence (Komori

et al., 2009). TPST-mediated sulfation of tyrosine residues in PSYs, PSKs, RGFs, and CIFs is

critical for high-affinity binding to their cognate receptors (Kaufmann and Sauter, 2019;

Stewart and Ronald, 2022). The plant *TPST* gene is conserved from angiosperms to mosses

(Zhao *et al.*, 2019).

The spreading earth moss *Physcomitrium patens* is a tractable model for

understanding early events in plant evolution (Rensing *et al.*, 2020). Unlike angiosperms,

whose genomes encode four classes of sTyr peptides (PSK, PSY, RGF, and CIF), which have

multiple paralogs in each class, thus far the *P. patens* genome has been found to only

encode one copy of *PSY* and one copy of *PSK* (Furumizu *et al.*, 2021). Although two

immune-responsive PSY-like peptides in *P. patens* were recently identified (Lyapina *et al.*,

2025). In addition to the ease of genome editing, *P. patens* is predominantly haploid and

undergoes expansion in two main ways: in juvenile stages, protonemal filaments expand

via tip growth, and in adult tissues, gametophores form, in which the phyllids, or the leaf-

like structure, expand using diffuse growth (Schumaker and Dietrich, 1998). By analyzing

TPST function in *P. patens*, we can not only understand the role of sulfation in a system with

fewer predicted sulfo-peptides, but also investigate both diffuse and tip growth. Thus, *P.*

patens provides a platform from which to study plant TPST, such as identifying catalytic

residues and defining substrate specificity determinants. Here we report that tyrosine-

sulfated peptides are required for development, that the catalytic residue found in animal

sulfotransferases is conserved in *P. patens*, and that PSY signaling-induced expansion is

evolutionarily conserved.

Results

Sulfated peptides are required for development

To investigate the role of *TPST* (Pp3c16_24250) in cellular proliferation and
development, we generated a null mutant using CRISPR/Cas9-mediated genome editing.
TPST in *P. patens* has several predicted gene models, leading to two main predicted
transcripts (Fig. S1A). The annotation in Phytozome suggests that both transcripts encode a
single-pass type I transmembrane protein similar to Arabidopsis TPST (Komori *et al.*, 2009;
Goodstein *et al.*, 2012; The UniProt Consortium, 2025). Additionally, both transcripts
encode the same predicted signal peptide sequence. The only major difference between
the two predicted proteins is the number of amino acids between the PAPs-binding
catalytic region and the transmembrane domain (Fig. S1C). Both the short and long
transcripts were detected using RT-PCR (Fig. S1B). Sequencing confirmed that the long
transcript matches the predicted gene model V3.5, and the short transcript matches the
predicted gene model V3.1. Therefore, we targeted a region of the locus corresponding to
the amino-terminal coding region to create a *tpst* null mutant regardless of transcript
length.

Two independent *tpst* null mutant lines were recovered, each resulting from a
frameshift near the protospacer cut site (Fig. S1A). Both null mutants were smaller than
wild-type plants (Fig. S1D and S1E). *Δtpst-6* was selected for future study and is
subsequently referred to as *Δtpst*.

We found that *Δtpst* plants had very short protonemata, had a dark center,
appeared denser than wild type, and were very round (Fig. 1A). 14-day-old *Δtpst* plants
regenerated from protoplasts were 48% smaller than wild type (p < 0.0001) (Fig. 1B). In
more mature plants, *Δtpst* was unable to form expanded gametophores and instead
appeared to abort growth once a bud was formed (Fig. 1C). As the plant continued to
develop, *Δtpst* turned brown before wild type, an indication of early senescence (Fig. 1D).

These data demonstrate that *TPST* function is critical for multiple aspects of *P. patens*

development, including protonemal growth, gametophore expansion, and senescence.

Catalytic residues are conserved in PpTPST

Candidate 5'-PSB, 3'-PB, and catalytic base residues were identified in plant TPST

sequences (Stewart and Ronald, 2022) (Fig. 2A). We therefore used CRISPR/Cas9 and

homology-directed repair to generate Ala substitutions at three residues: Arg-81 in the

putative 5'-PSB element, Arg-144 in the putative 3'-PB element, and His-124, the putative

catalytic base (Fig. S2). Quantitative growth assays revealed that all three mutants (*tpst-*

R81A, tpst-H124A and *tpst-R144A*) were significantly smaller than the wild type ($p < 0.001$)

but were not significantly different from the *Δtpst* mutant or each other (Fig. 2C). This

indicates that all three mutants had compromised TPST activity. However, there were

differences in protonemal morphology amongst the mutants. The *tpst-H124A* mutant was

dense, round, and had short protonemata, similar to the *Δtpst* mutant (Fig. 2B). In contrast,

the *tpst-R81A* and tpst-*R144A* mutants were less dense and exhibited long protonemal

extensions.

To quantify these differences in plant morphology, we measured the circularity of

each plant. Circularity is proportional to the ratio of the area to the square of the perimeter.

The more the protonemata extend from the center of the plant, the lower the ratio. Wild-

type plants had an average circularity of 0.0182. *Δtpst* and *tpst-H124A* plants had

significantly higher circularity values of 0.0344 and 0.0333, respectively, whereas *tpst-*

R81A (0.0210) and *tpst-R144A* (0.229) displayed intermediate values (Fig. 2D). These

results demonstrate that the *tpst-H124A* alteration phenocopied the protonemal defect of

the *Δtpst* null allele, whereas the *tpst-R81A* and *tpst-R144A* alterations conferred an

intermediate phenotype.

To assess whether these alterations affect gametophore development or

senescence, we continued to monitor the growth and development of the mutants. After 8

weeks, the *Δtpst* and *tpst-H124A* mutants exhibited early senescence in comparison to the

wild type, the *tpst-R81A* and *tpst-R144A* mutants (Fig. 2E). Additionally, the *tpst-H124A*

mutant, like the *Δtpst* mutant, did not form expanded gametophores. In contrast, some

tpst-R81A and *tpst-R144A* mutant plants formed fully expanded gametophores throughout

the entirety of the plant, whereas other *tpst-R81A* and *tpst-R144A* mutant plants only

formed gametophores in part of the plant (Fig. 2E). Together, these results suggest that the

R81A and R144A alterations have lost some TPST function. In contrast, the H124A and

Δtpst alterations are indistinguishable, indicating that residue His-124 is essential for TPST

function.

PSY is evolutionarily conserved

Because *Δtpst* plants cannot produce sulfated peptides, we investigated whether

exogenous application of *P. patens* PSY1 (PpPSY1), *A. thaliana* PSY1 (AtPSY1), and *A.*

thaliana PSK1(AtPSK1) synthetic peptides could alter the *Δtpst* phenotype. Initially, we

exposed 8-day-old tissue regenerated from protoplasts to peptides for 12 days and

screened for gametophore formation. The *Δtpst* mutant formed fully expanded

gametophores after exposure to 200 nM of AtPSY1 or 1 µM of PpPSY1, but not to 200 nM of

AtPSK1 (Fig. 3). To observe fully expanded gametophores in *Δtpst*, we used a higher

concentration of PpPSY1 compared to AtPSY1.

To quantify the peptide-mediated rescue of protonemal growth in *Δtpst*, we moved

7-day-old plants regenerated from protoplasts to media supplemented with AtPSY1 or

PpPSY1. After five days of peptide treatment, *Δtpst* plants closely resembled wild type (Fig.

4A). Interestingly, wild-type plants grown on either peptide were significantly larger than

wild-type plants in the absence of peptide (Fig. 4B). There was no significant difference

between the *Δtpst* and wild-type plants grown on AtPSY1 ($p > 0.05$). When grown on

PpPSY1, *Δtpst* plants were the same size as the wild-type controls. However, in comparison

to all other peptide conditions, *Δtpst* grown on PpPSY1 were the smallest. These

observations support that the PpPSY1 peptide is less effective at rescuing *Δtpst* than

AtPSY1.

169   We continued to transfer the protoplast-regenerated plants on cellophane to fresh

170 peptide media every week and confirmed our previous results that in the presence of either

171 peptide, *Δtpst* exhibits normal gametophore development. As the protoplast-regenerated

172 plants continued to age, we found that *Δtpst* turned brown around 7 weeks after

173 protoplasting (tissue that is grown on cellophane behaves differently than tissue that is

174 moved directly onto media). However, *Δtpst* grown on peptide media remained green,

175 similar to wild type, suggesting that in the presence of the peptide, *Δtpst* did not age as

176 quickly as *Δtpst* under control conditions (Fig. 4C). *Δtpst* grown on either PpPSY1 or AtPSY1

177 did not senesce at the same time as *Δtpst* under control conditions. Therefore,

178 supplementing media with exogenous PSY1 can rescue all developmental aspects of the

179 *Δtpst* phenotype, restoring normal protonemal growth, gametophore development, and

180 timing of senescence, although a higher concentration of PpPSY1 was required. Notably,

181 the ability of AtPSY1 to rescue *Δtpst* in *P. patens* suggests that the PSY signaling pathway is

182 evolutionarily conserved.

183   Given that Arabidopsis PSY1 peptide influences *P. patens* development, we tested

184 whether PSY from *P. patens* affects other plant species. Previous work demonstrated that

185 exogenous application of PSY peptides promotes root growth in Arabidopsis and rice (Pruitt

186 *et al.*, 2017; Ercoli *et al.*, 2024; Shi *et al.*, 2024), so we conducted root assays in these

187 species using the synthetic PpPSY1 peptide. In Arabidopsis, we were able to confirm that

188 both wild-type and *tpst-1* plants showed a root elongation phenotype in response to

189 PpPSY1 treatment, similar to that of AtPSY1, when compared to mock-treated plants (Fig. 5

190 A,B). Additionally, exogenous application of PpPSY1 peptide promoted root elongation in

191 wild-type Kitaake seedlings (Fig. 5C, D). These results further support that PSY signaling is

192 evolutionarily conserved.

194 **Discussion**

195   Here, we report that sulfotyrosyl peptides are critical for cellular expansion, as

196 Pp*tpst* null mutants (*Δtpst*), which are deficient in producing sulfated peptides, have

defects in cell expansion in the juvenile (protonemata) and adult (gametophores) phases of

moss growth, and age earlier than wild-type plants. All the *Δtpst* developmental

phenotypes in *P. patens* were rescued by exogenous application of AtPSY1. Reciprocally,

exogenous addition of PpPSY1 to both Arabidopsis and rice elicited root elongation. These

results indicate that PSY peptides act as functional orthologs in plant development and

further suggest that peptide recognition may function through an evolutionarily conserved

signaling pathway. While PSY receptors have been identified and characterized in

Arabidopsis (Ogawa-Ohnishi *et al.*, 2022), future work will aim to elucidate the receptors in

P. patens and their downstream signaling modules. The comparison of peptide function in

different plant species and the binding of orthologous receptors will shed light on the

conserved biological functions mediated by PSY-signaling.

Overall, our findings indicate that PSY signaling is conserved in *P. patens* and is

critical for development. Null mutants of *TPST* in both Arabidopsis and *P. patens* have a

similar phenotype, generally characterized by smaller plant size, which indicates functional

conservation of TPST. The lower efficacy of PpPSY1 in rescuing *Δtpst* might be attributed to

the PpPSY1 peptide sequence containing two cysteine residues, giving the synthesized

peptide the potential to be easily oxidized over time, and therefore, it might not be active

long-term in the media. The inability of AtPSK1 to rescue *Δtpst* might be explained by the

possibility that PSK1 is not sulfated in *P. patens*. The putative PSK1 sequence from *P.*

patens (Furumizu *et al.*, 2021) lacks the highly conserved aspartic acid residue that

precedes the PSK1 peptide sequence. All known sulfated peptides, with the exception of

GLV9, contain a DY motif (Kaufmann and Sauter, 2019), which is absent from the PSK1

sequence in *P. patens*. The aspartic acid residue that precedes the sulfated tyrosine

residue is one of the most important factors for directing tyrosine sulfation in PSK1

(Matsubayashi and Sakagami, 1996). Given the absence of this motif from PpPSK1, which

instead has an FY motif, it is possible that the mature peptide lacks a sulfated tyrosine,

suggesting that PSK signaling in *P. patens* does not require tyrosine sulfation.

Recently, two immune-responsive small secreted peptides were identified in *P.*

patens as sharing similarities with the PSY peptide motif, creating a new category of

sulfated peptides, PSY-like (PSYL) (Lyapina *et al.*, 2025). Quantification of protonemal cell

elongation of wild-type plants on media containing varying concentrations of both the

sulfated and non-sulfated versions of PSY, PSYL1, and PSYL2 showed that the sulfation of

the tyrosine residue is necessary for activity of the PSY and PSYL peptides in *P. patens*. This

result is consistent with our finding that TPST function and, therefore, its post-translational

modification of sTyr peptides, were critical for proper development. The addition of

sulfated PSY, PSYL1, or PSYL2 to the media increases cell length, which is in line with our

findings that the addition of exogenous PSY increased plant growth. Both PSYL1 and PSYL2

peptide sequences contain a motif that resembles the PSY peptide motif

(DY*(D)(P)**N**H*P), but the conserved His and Pro residues are in different positions

than in PSY (Lyapina *et al.*, 2025). Given the resemblance to PSY, it is possible that the

addition of exogenous PSYL1 and PSYL2 could rescue some of the developmental deficits

of *Δtpst*, including protonemal plant size, gametophore expansion, and senescence.

Moss mutants carrying an alanine substitution of the candidate catalytic base, His-

124 in PpTPST, resembled the moss *Δtpst* mutant phenotype. This indicates that His-124 is

essential for protein function and thus necessary for proper plant development. These

observations agree with prior findings that the histidine in the active site of *M. musculus*

EST and *F. chlorifolia* F3ST is required for enzymatic activity (Marsolais and Varin, 1997;

Kakuta *et al.*, 1998). Thus, the conserved histidine found in the active site of other studied

sulfotransferases, which is required for catalytic activity, is conserved in plant TPSTs.

Based on this finding and the identification of putative PAPs-binding motifs in plant TPSTs

(Stewart and Ronald, 2022), it is possible that plant and animal TPSTs did not evolve via

convergent evolution as first suggested (Komori *et al.*, 2009).

Although *tpst-H124A* most closely resembled *Δtpst*, the other point mutants, *tpst-*

R81A, and *tpst-R144A*, are the same size as *Δtpst*, but with a lower circularity, which could

potentially be attributed to the point mutants retaining some weak PAPS binding. Prior

studies have found that some missense substitutions in the 5'-PSB and 3'-PSB motifs of

other sulfotransferases retain some wild-type enzymatic activity (Bick *et al.*, 2010; Liu and

Pedersen, 2022). Therefore, this residual activity could help explain the small protonemal

phenotype of *tpst-R81A* and *tpst-R144A,* as well as the variability in gametophore formation

between plants. This finding suggests that plant TPSTs use the same catalytic mechanism

as animal sulfotransferases.

Materials and Methods

Tissue propagation

P. patens lines were propagated weekly by moderate homogenization in water and

then plated onto PpNH4 (1.03 mM MgSO4, 1.86 mM KH_2PO_4, 3.3 mM $Ca(NO_3)_2$, 2.7 mM

$(NH_4)_2$-tartrate, 45 µM $FeSO_4$, 9.93 µM H_3BO_3, 220 nM $CuSO_4$, 1.966 µM $MnCl_2$, 231 nM

$CoCl_2$, 191 nM $ZnSO_4$, 169 nM KI, and 103 nM Na_2MoO_4, containing 0.7% agar) plates

covered with cellophane (Wu and Bezanilla, 2014). Tissue was grown in Percival growth

chambers at room temperature under 85 $\mu mol_{photons}/m^2s$ light with long-day (16/8)

conditions. Peptide media was created by pouring 25 mL PpNH4 plates supplemented with

either 200 nm AtPSY1, 200nM AtPSK1, or 1 µM PpPSY1.

RT-PCR

We isolated total RNA from 8-day old wild-type plants regenerated from protoplasts

using an RNeasy Plant mini prep kit (Qiagen). cDNA was prepared from 1µg of total RNA

using a SuperScript III reverse transcriptase kit, following the manufacturer's

recommendation (Invitrogen). We amplified the TPST transcripts using the primers listed in

Supplementary Table 2 using 1 µL of cDNA.

Generation of knockout and point mutation lines

Approximately one-week-old tissue was used for transformations. Transformations

into *P. patens* protoplasts were done using the PEG-mediated transformation protocol

described in (Wu, Ryken and Bezanilla, 2023). To generate knockouts (*Δtpst-6)*, 15 µg of the

CRISPR plasmid (pMH-Cas9-sgRNA plasmid backbone) was used. For HDR

transformations using annealed oligonucleotides (*Δtpst-7, tpst-R81A, tpst-H124A, tpst-*

R144A), 15 µg of the CRISPR plasmid and 10 µL of annealed oligonucleotides were used.

The sequences of each oligonucleotide and protospacer used are located in

Supplementary Table 2.

After transformation, protoplasts were plated onto PRMB media covered in

cellophane and left to recover for 4 days. The cellophane from the PRMB media (PpNH4

medium supplemented with 8.5% mannitol and 10 mM $CaCl_2$), which contains the

protoplasts, was moved to selection (PpNH4 media containing 15 µg ml^{-1} hygromycin) for 1

week. Surviving protoplasts have taken up the CRISPR plasmid. After 1 week of selection,

the cellophane was moved to PpNH4 media. After 1-2 weeks, protoplast-regenerated

plants were individually picked to fresh PpNH4 plates without cellophane, before being

genotyped around 2 weeks later.

Genotyping

Genomic DNA was extracted from *P. patens* tissue (Wu, Ryken and Bezanilla, 2023).

Competition PCR was used to genotype plants. All genotyping primers are listed in

Supplementary Table 2. Competition PCR uses two primers, one forward and one reverse,

that are around 500 base pairs upstream and downstream of the protospacer region. In

addition, a third internal primer was used, which was designed to anneal to the CRISPR cut

site. Therefore, in edited plants, the internal primer does not bind, and only the larger PCR

product is obtained. If the plant is not edited, the shorter PCR product, using the internal

primer, is preferentially produced. Any plants that had a larger PCR product were used to

PCR amplify the targeted region a second time, using only the external primers. The PCR

product was sequenced using Sanger sequencing.

To identify point mutations, a second competition PCR was conducted using the

same external primers and one primer that annealed to the desired point mutation and

silent mutations. Therefore, in plants with the correct point mutation, the internal primer

binds, forming the smaller PCR product. Any plants without the correct point mutation had

a larger PCR product, as the internal primer could not bind. DNA from plants producing the

smaller product was then amplified again with the only external primers, and those

products were sequenced using Sanger sequencing.

Imaging and morphometric analysis of growth assays

Protoplast preparation for growth assays was performed using a standard protocol

(Wu, Ryken and Bezanilla, 2023). Approximately one week old ground tissue was

protoplasted and plated onto PRMB media for 4 days. Afterwards, the protoplasts on

cellophane were moved to PpNH4 media. All growth assays were performed using 2-week-

old plants except for the data presented in Fig. 4.

Brightfield and chlorophyll autofluorescence images were collected using a

stereomicroscope (Nikon SMZ25) equipped with a CCD color camera (Nikon digital DS-Fi2)

with a 1X objective. Acquisition settings were held at the same settings for each image.

Chlorophyll autofluorescence was captured using a 480/40 excitation filter with a 510 long

pass emission filter. The red channel of the fluorescence image corresponds to chloroplast

autofluorescence.

To ensure image acquisition occurred with the sample identity blinded to the

observer, the genotype of each line was hidden at the time of imaging. Each line was

imaged on the same day, and 30 images of individual plants were taken from each line.

Both brightfield and fluorescence images were collected. To quantify plant area, the red

channel was separated from each RGB fluorescence image. Images from the red channel

were then analyzed using a macro in ImageJ (Galotto, Bibeau and Vidali, 2019). The

threshold was set at max entropy and was manually set for each plant. The total area of

each plant was calculated using the largest thresholded object in a cropped window.

For growth assays pertaining to plants grown on peptide, 1-week-old protoplasts on

cellophane were transferred to peptide media or a fresh plate of PpNH4 as the control.

After 5 days on peptide, 12-day-old protoplast-regenerated plants were imaged for growth

assays. Growth assays were analyzed as described above. The cellophanes containing the

protoplast-regenerated plants were moved to freshly poured peptide media or PpNH4 for

the control on a weekly basis. Plants were moved to fresh media each week until

senescence occurred.

Senescence

To check whether mutant plants have a senescence phenotype, individual plants

from protoplast-regenerated tissue were placed on the same plate of PpNH4 and left in the

growth chamber for several weeks until at least one line turned brown (senescence).

Senescence images were taken using a cellphone.

Peptide Synthesis

The peptides used in this study include PpPSY1 (DY^{S}EKPCANKKHDPSVCKNG),

AtPSY1 (DY^{S}GDPSANPKHDPGVPPSA) and AtPSK1 (Y^{S}IY^{S}TQ). All peptides are tyrosine-

sulfated as indicated (Y^S). The synthetic AtPSY1 peptide used in these experiments lacks

the hydroxy- and L-Ara3- modifications at the C-terminus. All peptides were obtained from

Pacific Immunology (Ramona, CA, USA) and resuspended in double distilled water.

Root Growth Assays

Arabidopsis thaliana ecotype Columbia (Col-0, wild type) and *tpst-1* (SALK_009847)

seeds were surface sterilized with 70% ethanol for 10 minutes, rinsed three times with

100% ethanol, and then stratified in 0.1% agarose for 2-4 days at 4°C before germination.

Seedlings were sown on standard 1X MS media plates (Murashige Skoog salt mixture with

vitamins, MSP09-Caisson Laboratories), 1% sucrose, and 0.3% gellan gum (G024-Caisson-

Gelzan), adjusted to pH 5.8 with KOH. MS plates were supplemented with various

concentrations of synthetic PpPSY1, AtPSY1, or water (mock control). For each experiment,

MS media was freshly prepared and cooled in a 55-60°C water bath after autoclaving

before adding chemicals. Seeds were placed on the plates (15-20 seeds per plate) and the

lids were secured with Micropore surgical tape (1530-0). For root assays, plants were grown

in vertically positioned plates in a chamber under long day conditions (16 hours light:8

hours dark) at 21°C. Germination for each seedling was marked, and primary root length

was marked every day until the end of the experiment (6-or 8-days post germination, dpg).

Arabidopsis root plates were scanned and primary root growth was measured using Fiji Is

Just ImageJ (Version 2.16) (Schindelin *et al.*, 2012).

Oryza sativa ssp. *Japonica* cultivar Kitaake (wild type) seeds were dehusked,

surface-sterilized in 20% bleach for 30 minutes, and thoroughly washed with autoclaved

water. The seeds were grown on 1X MS media (MSP09-Caisson Laboratories) with 1%

sucrose (pH 5.8), either as solid media plates containing 0.3% gellan gum or

hydroponically in flasks with 100 mL of 1X MS without gellan gum. For solid medium

conditions, seeds were sown on plates (15 per plate), sealed with Micropore tape, and

placed vertically for 7 days. For hydroponic conditions, flasks containing 1X MS were

cooled before adding peptides and sterilized seeds (15 per flask), and then placed in the

rice incubator for 6 days. The incubators used for rice germination and growth were set

with a 14-h-light/10-h-dark photoperiod at 28°C/24°C. MS plates or flasks were

supplemented with synthetic PpPSY1 or water (mock control), the concentration of the

peptide treatment is specified in the figure legends. For rice seedlings grown on plates, the

germination was marked and the root length was marked every day until the end of the

experiment (6 dpg). Rice seedlings grown hydroponically or on solid media were imaged

and root length measurements were done in Fiji Is Just ImageJ (Version 2.16) (Schindelin *et*

al., 2012).

Statistical Analyses

A non-parametric approach was taken to analyze differences between different

experimental groups. Statistical significance was determined using a Kruskal-Wallis test

followed by a post-hoc Dunn's test when a significant difference was found. A Bonferroni

correction was applied to the p-values resulting from Dunn's test to control for multiple

comparisons. Pairwise adjusted p-values at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ were used to

identify groups that were statistically different from each other. The compact letter display

(CLD) approach was used to categorize each group into statistically distinguishable

subsets. Letters were assigned to indicate significance between groups. Groups with the

same letter were not statistically different. Groups with non-overlapping letters are not

statistically different. Analyses were performed using R version 4.4.1 (Team, R. C., 2024).

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A

	5'-PSB motif	Catalytic base	3'-PB motif	
EST	47.. PS**K**AGT**T**WI	53 **H** 17	IYLC**R**NAKDVAV**S**YYY	..141
HS3OST-1	63.. PS**K**GGTRAL	15 **E** 55	LLIL**R**DPSERVL**S**DYT	..158
HS2OST	82.. PS**K**TA**ST**SF	50 **H** 17	INVI**R**DPIE**R**LV**S**YY	..175
HS6OST-3	103.. QS**K**TGGTTF	47 **H** 28	ITML**R**DPVSRYL**S**EWK	..202
Animal TPST	78.. PS**R**SGTTLM	14 **E** 79	LLMV**R**DGRASVH**S**MIS	..195
Bacterial TPST	10.. PS**R**AGSSLL	8 **H** 77	ICCV**R**DVGWIVD**S**FER	..121
A. thaliana TPST	66.. PS**R**TGGRTY	36 **H** 16	MTIV**R**DPIARVL**S**TYE	..142
P. patens TPST	80.. PS**R**TGGRTY	36 **H** 15	VTNL**R**NPVNRVL**S**TYE	..155
	81	124	144	

B Wild type | Δ*tpst* | *tpst-R81A* | *tpst-H124A* | *tpst-R144A*

C Normalized Plant Area
Wild type · Δ*tpst* · *R81A* · *H124A* · *R144A*

D Circularity
Wild type · Δ*tpst* · *R81A* · *H124A* · *R144A*

E Wild type · Δ*tpst* · *tpst-R81A* · *tpst-H124A* · *tpst-R144A*

Figure 2. Histidine 124 is catalytically important for TPST function. A) Sequence motifs of different sulfotransferases across organisms showing the 5'-PSB, candidate catalytic base, and 3'-PB. Adapted from Stewart and Ronald, 2022 to include *P. patens* TPST. Numbers on the left and right of the motifs indicate the starting and ending position. The numbers between motifs indicate the number of residues in between the selected sequences. Substitutions of residues in red decrease enzymatic activity. Numbers underneath the black boxes indicate the position in *P. patens* TPST. Enzymes are EST, estrogen 17-β sulfotransferase (*Mus musculus*; Protein Data Bank [PDB] code: 1AQU); HS3OST-1, heparan sulfate (3-O) sulfotransferase (*M. musculus*; PDB code: 1S6T); HS2OST, heparan sulfate (2-O) sulfotransferase (*Homo sapiens*; PDB code: 3F5F); HS6OST-3, heparan sulfate (6-O) sulfotransferase (*Danio rerio*; PDB code: 5T03); animal TPST (*H. sapiens*; PDB code: 5WRI); bacterial TPST (*Xanthomonas spp.*; GenBank accession number: WP_027703307); *A. thaliana* TPST (*Arabidopsis thaliana*; BAI22702); *P. patens* TPST (NCBI Reference Sequence: XM_ 024542583.2). B) Representative brightfield images of 2-week-old plants regenerated from protoplasts. Scale represents 500 μm. C and D) Quantification of plant area and circularity using images of 2-week-old regenerated protoplasts. Plant area is quantified and normalized to wild type. Significance was calculated using a Kruskal-Wallis Test with a significance level of α=0.05. Experiments repeated three independent times. E) 8-week-old whole plants from protoplast-regenerated tissue. Scale represents 0.5 cm.

Figure 3. Addition of exogenous PSY1 induces gametophore expansion in Δ*tpst*. 20-day-old protoplast-regenerated plants after 12 days on PpNH4 media supplemented with either 1 µm PpPSY1, 200 nM AtPSY1, or 200 nM AtPSK1. Arrows denote an example of a fully expanded gametophore. Arrowheads denote an example of a gametophore bud. The 18 amino acid sequence of PSY1 in *P. patens* (moss) and *A. thaliana,* and the 5 amino acid sequence of PSK1 in *A. thaliana* are shown above the corresponding image. Black boxes represent the sulfated tyrosine residues. Scale bar represents 0.1 cm.

Figure 4. Exogenous PSY1 enhances growth. A) Representative brightfield images of wild type and Δ*tpst* from 12-day-old regenerated protoplasts. Scale represents 500 µm. B) Quantification of plant area using images of 12-day-old regenerated protoplasts. Plant area is quantified and normalized to the wild-type control. Letters indicate groups that are significantly different as determined by a Kruskal-Wallis test (α = 0.05) with a Dunn's post hoc test and Bonferroni correction. Experiments repeated three independent times. C) 7-week-old whole plants from protoplast-regenerated tissue. Scale represents 0.5 cm.

Figure 5: Synthetic PpPSY1 peptide promotes root elongation in Arabidopsis & Rice seedlings. (A) Representative images of primary root growth of Col-0 (wild type, left) or *tpst-1* (right) seedlings 6-days-post germination (dpg) grown on 1X MS vertical plates with or without synthetic peptide treatment (250nM AtPSY1 or PpPSY1). Enhanced root elongation of peptide treated samples indicated by the white serrated line, with the arrows indicating the primary root tip. Scale represents 5mm. (B) Quantification of primary root elongation for Col-0 (left) or *tpst-1* (right) seedlings (n= 13-20) grown on 1X MS vertical plates with or without synthetic peptide PpPSY1 or AtPSY1 treatment (100nM or 250nM). 6-dpg for Col-0 and 8-dpg for *tpst-1*. Different letters indicate significant differences, as determined by a Kruskal-Wallis test ($\alpha = 0.05$) with a Dunn's post hoc test and Bonferroni correction. Experiments repeated three independent times. (C) Representative image of primary root growth of Kitaake (wild type) seedlings grown hydroponically in 1X MS with or without synthetic PpPSY1 treatment (500nM), 6-days-post treatment. Enhanced root elongation of peptide treated samples indicated by the black serrated line, with the arrows indicating the primary root tip. Scale bar represents 1cm. (D) Quantification of root elongation of Kitaake seedlings (n= 14-15), 6-dpg, grown on 1X MS plates with or without synthetic 500nM PpPSY1 treatment. Different letters indicate significant differences, as determined by a Kruskal-Wallis test ($\alpha = 0.05$). Experiments repeated three independent times.

A

PpTPST

V3.5   894 bp

V3.1   1153 bp

Protospacer 1   71   CTGTTCTTTTTGCATATTCCTCGAACCGGCGGCCGGACTTAT   87
                       L   F   F   L   H   I   P   R   T   G   G   R   T   Y

Δ*tpst-6*   CTGTTCTTTTTGCATATTCCTCGAACCGG-----­---ACTTAT (Stop aa 90)
                       L   F   F   L   H   I   P   R   T   G   G   R   T   Y

Δ*tpst-7*   CTGTTCTTTTTGCATATTCCTCGAATAGCTGATTAAACTTAT (Stop aa 85)
                       L   F   F   L   H   I   P   R   I   A   D   *

B

C

V3.5   486 aa

V3.1   377 aa

D

Wild type   Δ*tpst-6*   Δ*tpst-7*

E

Supplementary Figure 1. CRISPR-Cas9-mediated editing of *TPST*. A) Diagram of two predicted gene models of the *TPST* locus. Coding exons are represented by green (V3.5) or magenta (V3.1) boxes. Green lines represent the 5' and 3' UTR. Location of the protospacer targeted to create a *tpst* null mutant is denoted by PS1. The sequences below show the sequence around PS1, with the PS1 sequence in red. The PAM is underlined. All mutants have the indicated mutations, resulting in early translational stops. Deletions are indicated by dashes, and insertions are indicated in green text. Small arrows above each model indicate primers used for RT-PCR. Numbers on the right of each model indicate product size using cDNA. B) PCR products obtained with the indicated primers using either genomic DNA or cDNA isolated from protonemal tissue were separated on an agarose gel. Green arrow indicates the V3.5 transcript, and magenta arrow indicates the V3.1 transcript. C) TPST predicted primary structure encoded by the V3.5 or V3.1 transcript, drawn approximately to scale. SP denotes the signal peptide sequence. PAPs binding denotes the region between the first residue of the 5'-PSB motif and the last residue of the 3'-PB motif. Black lines indicate the approximate position of the 5'-PSB and 3'-PB elements, and the catalytic base. TM denotes the predicted transmembrane domain. The number of amino acids between the last residue of the 3'-PB and the first residue of the transmembrane domain is indicated below the dashed lines. D) Representative brightfield and chloroplast autofluorescence images of wild type, Δ*tpst-6*, and Δ*tpst-7* from 2-week-old plants that were regenerated from protoplasts. Scale, 500 µm. E) Plant area was quantified and normalized to wild type. Significant differences determined by a Kruskal-Wallis test ($\alpha = 0.05$) with a Dunn's post hoc test and Bonferroni correction are indicated by different letters.

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 TPST (*H. sapiens*; PDB code: 5WRI); bacterial TPST (*Xanthomonas spp.*; GenBank

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elongation of peptide treated samples indicated by the black serrated line, with the arrows

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Supplementary figure legends

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changes to incorporate silent mutations or alanine substitutions. Blue capital letters

represent the point mutation.

Supplementary tables

Table S1. Mutant lines used and created

Name	Background	Genetic alteration	Translation
Δ*tpst-6* (Δ*tpst*)	Wild type	7 bp deletion	Stop at AA90, aa 81-89 are irrelevant
Δ*tpst-7*	Wild type	Stop oligo insertion	Stop at AA85, aa 82-84 are irrelevant
tpst-R81A	Wild type	CGA→ GCT (241-243, AA change), C246T (silent), C249A (silent), C252A (silent)	R81A
tpst-H124A	Wild type	C348T (silent), C351T (silent), C354T (silent), T361C (silent), G363T (silent), T366A (silent), A369T (silent), CAC→ GCT (370-372, AA change)	H124A

tpst-R144A	Wild type	CGC→ GCT (430-432, AA change), C435T (silent), A438T (silent), G441T (silent), T444C (silent), T447A (silent)	R144A

603 **Table S2**. Table of primers, oligos, and protospacer sequences

Name	Sequence (5' to 3')	Purpose
TPST-F	AGCACACTTACTATCTGGCC	RT-PCR
TPST-R	gcccttgctcaccatcgatcctccgccaccCAGCTTTTCATGAACTTGCAAC	RT-PCR
TPST stop oligo F	ggaaaattctggaacttctgttcttttgcatattcctcgaaTAGCTGATTAAacttatcaccagtggtatggatttact	Stop oligo for TPST
TPST stop oligo R	agtaaatccataccactggtgataagtTTAATCAGCTAttcgaggaatatgcaaaaagaacagaagttccagaattttcc	Stop oligo for TPST
TPST protospacer 1	ATAGGAAGGTGGAGGACTTACAACCCATatattcctcgaaccggcggcGTTTTAGAGCTATGCTGAAAAG	TPST protospacer
TPST-comp-F	ttctctcttgtctctgttgatcacc	TPST genotyping
TPST-cutsiteF	atattcctcgaaccggcgg	TPST genotyping, anneals to protospacer 1
TPST-compR	gcgcaacagtctacgtgc	TPST genotyping
tpst-H124A oligo F	ggttagggcttgagggtgcagacagCCTAGTTGTaagcttCTTTCATCTGCTgatgacatgagcattttgagcaagatac	TPST H124A oligo
tpst-H124A oligo R	gtatcttgctcaaaatgctcatgtcatcAGCAGATGAAAGaagcttACAACTAGGctgtctgcaccctcaagccctaacc	TPST H124A oligo
tpst-R81A oligo F	ggaaaattctggaacttctgttcttttgcatattcctGCTACTGGAGGACGAacttatcaccagtggtatggatttact	TPST R81A oligo
tpst-R81A oligo R	agtaaatccataccactggtgataagtTCGTCCTCCAGTAGCaggaatatgcaaaaagaacagaagttccagaattttcc	TPST R81A oligo
tpst-R144A oligo F	gcatctgttgtaacgaatttgGCTAATCCTGTTAACCGAgtgttgagcacctatgagtttcagtggaagttgctgctcg	TPST R144A oligo

tpst-R144A oligo R	cgagcagcaacttccactgaaaactcataggtgctcaacacTCGGTTAACAGGATTAGCcaaattcgttacaacagatgc	TPST R144A oligo
tpst-S152A oligo F	agcatctgttgtaacgaatttgcgcaacCCTGTTAACcgtgtgttgGCTacctatgagttttcagtggaagttgctgctc	TPST S152A oligo
tpst-S152A oligo R	gagcagcaacttccactgaaaactcataggtAGCcaacacacgGTTAACAGGgttgcgcaaattcgttacaacagatgct	TPST S152A oligo
TPST protospacer 2	ATAGGAAGGTGGAGGACTTACAACCCATtgctcaacacacgattcactgtttagagctatgctgaaaag	Protospacer for *tpst-R144A*
TPST protospacer 3	ATAGGAAGGTGGAGGACTTACAACCCATgaagacaaaagcttgcagctgttttagagctatgctgaaaag	Protospacer for *tpst-H124A*
TPST-gt-F1	caaagtatcagcagcaccacc	Genotyping for *tpst-R81A*
TPST-gt-R1	gtgagatccttcgcttcccaata	Genotyping for *tpst-R81A*
TPST-gt-F2	cgtgcaggtacagctctagg	Genotyping for *tpst-H124A* and *tpst-R144A*
TPST-gt-R4	gtaagcaaaggagaacatgccc	Genotyping for *tpst-H124A* and *tpst-R144A*
TPST-gt-R2	tgaagacaaaagcttgcagctg	Genotyping, anneals to protospacer 2
TPST-gt-R3	tgctcaacacacgattcactgg	Genotyping, anneals to protospacer 3
TPST-R81A-R	ccactggtgataagtTCGTCC	Genotyping, anneals to *tpst-R81A*
TPST-H124A-R	caaaatgctcatgtcatcAGCAGATG	Genotyping, anneals to *tpst-H124A*
TPST-R144A-F	gttgtaacgaatttgGCTAATCCTGT	Genotyping, anneals to *tpst-R144A*