

# Genes, Genetics and Transgenics for Virus Resistance in Plants

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Edited by

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# Foreword

In 1986, the first report on the use of genetic engineering to control *Tobacco mosaic virus* in tobacco plants was published and it opened the gate to a flood of publications for the possible control of many viruses in many hosts. At that time, this concept of engineering virus resistance was a breakthrough. Controlling plant viruses has always been a big challenge to breeders, and suddenly it was possible to control almost any virus in any crop through genetic engineering! Evidently, over the years many natural sources of resistance for numerous plant viruses had been identified; however, combining these resistance sources with other traits was always a challenge to breeders. Therefore, genetic engineering appeared as *the* solution to control plant viruses!

But three decades later, we have to acknowledge that we have not seen the expected revolution in farmers' fields. On the contrary, we have seen the emergence and outbreak of many new and known plant viral diseases, threatening food security. Even though some plants have been engineered with multiple virus resistance, they have never been commercialized. The engineered papaya with immunity to *Papaya ringspot virus* remains the most successful example of commercialization of virus-resistant transgenics.

The failure to commercialize virus-resistant transgenics is the result not of technical or scientific problems or any sort of biological barrier, but mostly of political pressures from so-called ecological groups. In the meantime, improved technologies were developed and transferred to new crops and novel viruses, and in some instances made real scientific breakthroughs. However, the vested interests of these groups of fanatics, with a false claim of saving the earth's ecology, raised biosafety standards to the point where only large

multinationals could afford them, which de facto prevented the application of these technologies to many important food crops in the world.

In the beginning of the twenty-first century, the genomic revolution brought new hopes to control plant viruses by harnessing natural genes of resistance. Whole-genome sequencing of many plants, along with scores of novel DNA technologies, facilitated the use of modern tools in gene discovery for virus resistance. However, the introgression of these resistant loci was restricted due to their multigenic or recessive nature, making it difficult to transfer them to a suitable genetic background without using genetic engineering technologies.

Recently, the discovery and use of gene-editing technologies such as CRISPR/Cas9 and TALENs may now allow plant virologists, genomics experts and breeders to work together for a breakthrough in controlling plant viruses. This can be a reality only if these technologies are not considered to be GM- technologies by policy makers.

This book, *Genes, Genetics and Transgenics for Virus Resistance in Plants*, provides a very nice update on the status of current knowledge on the use of genetic engineering and other biotechnological strategies for the control of plant viruses. It is hoped that this information will be used in conjunction with the latest gene technologies to achieve the urgently needed scientific breakthroughs for the successful control of plant viruses, ultimately for the benefit of humankind.

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# Current Books of Interest

<i>Lactobacillus</i> Genomics and Metabolic Engineering	2019
Cyanobacteria: Signaling and Regulation Systems	2018
Viruses of Microorganisms	2018
Protozoan Parasitism: From Omics to Prevention and Control	2018
DNA Tumour Viruses: Virology, Pathogenesis and Vaccines	2018
Pathogenic <i>Escherichia coli</i> : Evolution, Omics, Detection and Control	2018
Postgraduate Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide for PhD and Master's Students and their Supervisors	2018
Enteroviruses: Omics, Molecular Biology, and Control	2018
Molecular Biology of Kinetoplastid Parasites	2018
Bacterial Evasion of the Host Immune System	2017
Illustrated Dictionary of Parasitology in the Post-genomic Era	2017
Next-generation Sequencing and Bioinformatics for Plant Science	2017
The CRISPR/Cas System: Emerging Technology and Application	2017
Brewing Microbiology: Current Research, Omics and Microbial Ecology	2017
Metagenomics: Current Advances and Emerging Concepts	2017
<i>Bacillus</i> : Cellular and Molecular Biology (Third Edition)	2017
Cyanobacteria: Omics and Manipulation	2017
Foot-and-Mouth Disease Virus: Current Research and Emerging Trends	2017
Brain-eating Amoebae: Biology and Pathogenesis of <i>Naegleria fowleri</i>	2016
<i>Staphylococcus</i> : Genetics and Physiology	2016
Chloroplasts: Current Research and Future Trends	2016
Microbial Biodegradation: From Omics to Function and Application	2016
Influenza: Current Research	2016
MALDI-TOF Mass Spectrometry in Microbiology	2016
<i>Aspergillus</i> and <i>Penicillium</i> in the Post-genomic Era	2016
The Bacteriocins: Current Knowledge and Future Prospects	2016
Omics in Plant Disease Resistance	2016
Acidophiles: Life in Extremely Acidic Environments	2016
Climate Change and Microbial Ecology: Current Research and Future Trends	2016
Biofilms in Bioremediation: Current Research and Emerging Technologies	2016
Microalgae: Current Research and Applications	2016
Gas Plasma Sterilization in Microbiology: Theory, Applications, Pitfalls and New Perspectives	2016
Virus Evolution: Current Research and Future Directions	2016
Arboviruses: Molecular Biology, Evolution and Control	2016

# Preface

Viral diseases of crop plants cause significant yield losses, which is a major threat to global food security. Unlike other pests and pathogens, the only remedy available for control of plant viral diseases is through introgression of resistance trait, either through conventional breeding or through genetic engineering. Availability of few natural sources of virus resistance has hampered development of virus-resistant crop plants through conventional crop improvement methods. Thus genetic engineering for virus resistance is the sole option available for effective management of viral diseases. Since the first report on transgenic virus resistance in tobacco in 1986, huge progress has been made in our understanding of the molecular basis of virus resistance, complimented by the significant improvement in the tools and techniques used for genetic engineering. Despite major advancements in plant genomics and transgenics, there has been no commercialization of virus-resistant transgenic crops, except transgenic papaya. Thus, to provide an up-to-date reference book on genes, genetics and transgenics for virus resistance in plants for students, faculties and researchers, here we have compiled 15 diverse chapters. In the first chapter the

current knowledge on mechanisms of virus resistance in plants is discussed, followed by a chapter on the role of host transcription factors in modulating defence response during plant-virus interaction, and a chapter on the role of epigenetics in host-virus interactions. There is a chapter on how molecular markers could be employed as tools for identification and introgression of virus-resistant genes. This book also thoroughly discusses the principles and methods involved in the genetic engineering for virus resistance in plants. The book also elaborates on topical application of double-stranded RNA for control of plant viral diseases, without having to develop transgenic plants. Further, the book deals with individual crops such as papaya, cassava, rice, tomato, and banana, for which virus resistance has been accomplished by employing different transgenic technologies. The management of whitefly-transmitted begomoviruses and advances in the control of their vectors is also covered as an independent chapter. Virus-induced gene silencing (VIGS), another frontier area of research in which virus-derived silencing vectors are extensively used in gene function studies and functional genomics, is also discussed elaborately.