

# A Survey of Plastid Crystals and Microtubules in Flowering Plants

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## 꽃피는식물 색소체 내 결정구조와 미세소관의 발달양상 조사 연구

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### ABSTRACT

The plastid inclusion has long been known to exist in leaves of numerous plant species, especially in those of flowering plants. Among the inclusions, crystalline bodies are the most frequently distinguished structures of the foliar plastids, however, microtubules and phytoferritins are also reported occasionally. The crystalline inclusions vary in shape, and are located either in the stroma or within intrathylakoidal spaces, whereas microtubules and phytoferritins are more uniform in shape and are formed in the stroma. In crystalline structures, the composing elements exhibit a lattice pattern and/or paralleled tubules that are either bounded by membranes or exist without membrane enclosing. Other types of inclusions have not been shown to be enclosed by any membranous structures. According to the current survey, the plastid inclusion, with the exception of phytoferritins, has been shown to exhibit a crystalline or tubular pattern, and has been reported in more than 56 species of various families. Their occurrence is not restricted to any photosynthetic pathway, but is found to be randomly distributed among C-3, C-4 and CAM species, without phylogenetic relationships.

The progress in plastid inclusion research reveals more information about the function and complexity, but the need for characterizing the 3-D structure of the crystalline inclusions also has been acknowledged in previous studies. A 3-D characterization would utilize tilting and tomography of serial sections with appropriate image processing that would provide valuable information on the sub-structures of the crystalline inclusions. In fact, recent studies performed on 3-D reconstruction of the plastid inclusions revealed important information about their comprising elements. In this article, the crystals and microtubules that have been reported in various types of plastids have been reviewed, with special consideration given to their possible sub-cellular function within the plastids.

**Keywords** : Crystals, Flowering plants, Microtubules, Plastid inclusions

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## INTRODUCTION

The common structural features of the plastid within two enveloping membranes are the stroma and internal membrane system. The stroma is the inner compartment of the aqueous matrix which not occupied by membranes where various soluble proteins and enzymes embedded (McDonald, 2003). Plastoglobuli, electron-dense spherical lipid bodies, are also common in most plastid stroma. The internal membrane system, well known as thylakoids in chloroplasts, are the flattened cisternae that contain enzymes and pigments required for photosynthesis, yet the membrane complexity may differ considerably by the plastid type. Five or six different types of plastid (Gunning & Steer, 1996), ranging from the simplest protoplast to well-organized chloroplasts, can be recognized by the tissue or by the developmental stage.

The proplastid is a precursor form having simple internal structure and has the capacity to develop into more complex types under certain developmental, physiological and/or environmental factors during growth (McDonald, 2003). Proplastids can develop into chloroplasts in photosynthetic tissues with illumination, while they turn to etioplasts without light in etiolated tissues. In the absence of photosynthesis, proplastids can acquire different functions. Because of the different roles that the plastid can have within the cell, this can dramatically change the internal structure of the plastids themselves. Examples of such transformed plastids include the chromoplast and amyloplast. The proplastid can be transformed into the chromoplast for pigmentation, and to the amyloplast for starch storage. Chromoplasts are frequently found in flower parts or fruits since they are responsible for colored pigmentation. Amyloplasts are usually found in grains, seeds or roots due to their storage function. Additionally, leucoplasts can be observed in non-green epidermal tissues with unknown function, although the frequency at which they are found is low.

The plastid inclusion has long been known in leaves of numerous plant species, especially of flowering plants. The plastid inclusions are diverse in morphology, although most of the inclusions reported are shown to be crystals that have crystalline or tubular nature. The crystalline structures, as typical crystals, are the most frequent and distinguished type of the foliar plastids, but microtubules and phytoferritins are also reported occasionally. The crystals are located either in the stroma or within intrathylakoidal spaces with various structures in morphology, whereas the latter two are relatively uniform and occur in the stroma. In crystalline

inclusions, the composing elements exhibit either a lattice and/or tubular pattern that are bounded by membranes or without membrane enclosing (Kim, 2006; Lee, 2007). Additionally, electron-opaque phytoferritin aggregates have been noted in row-like arrangements or paracrystalline clusters in the stroma. High amounts of the phytoferritin is present in the stroma of developing plastids, however, they were excluded from the current review because they play a role in forming iron reserves as an iron-binding protein complex during development or during senescence (Ryberg et al., 1993). The presence of crystals or tubular inclusions has drawn much attention in many species and their function within plastids or during photosynthesis has been speculated in numerous prior studies (see Kim, 2006; Lee, 2007). Therefore, the present study addresses only the aforementioned two types of plastid inclusions known to be involved either directly or indirectly with the thylakoid or photosynthesis. This article has mainly focused those of the flowering plants and discussed their possible sub-cellular function during photosynthesis.

## CRYSTALS AND MICROTUBULES AS PLASTID INCLUSIONS

The inclusion structures were generally found to develop within proplastids, etioplasts, chloroplasts, or chromoplasts, but rarely within leucoplasts and amyloplast. Among the type, chloroplasts are the one where the most inclusions are formed. According to the current survey, the plastid inclusion has been reported in more than 56 species of various families (Table 1). They are shown to be mostly crystals of crystalline structures, while microtubules are reported less frequently. Their occurrence is not restricted to any photosynthetic pathway, but is found to be randomly distributed among C-3, C-4 and CAM species without phylogenetic relationships. The stroma and the intrathylakoidal space of plastids are frequently known to contain crystalline or tubular inclusions. Since the first description of membrane bounded plastid inclusions in the hyperplastic or tumor tissues of the Solanaceae (Hohl, 1961), numerous studies reported the presence of plastid inclusions in the vegetative or reproductive tissues. They were also found in unhealthy tissues that had been infected by virus, while no differences were noted between virus-infected and healthy plants (Diaz-Ruiz, 1975; Esau, 1975). In other studies (Wrischer, 1970, 1973), causal relationship has been shown between the inclusion formation and stressful conditions of chilling or

**Table 1.** Plastid crystals and microtubules in various flowering plants

Family	Species	Location	Inclusion	Plastid	Reference
Acanthaceae	<i>Hypoestes sanguinolenta</i>	stroma	mt	chl	Vaughn & Wilson, 1981
Aizoaceae	<i>Carpobrotus edulis</i>	stroma	mt	chl	Salema & Brandao, 1978
	<i>Lithops</i> sp.	stroma	mt	chl	Santos & Salema, 1981
	<i>Mesembryanthemum crystallinum</i>	stroma	mt	chl	Salema & Brandao, 1978
Amaranthaceae	<i>Amaranthus patulus</i>	stroma	cr	chl	Suzuki, 1978
Amaryllidaceae	<i>Narcissus poeticus</i>	INT	cr	Chr	Kuhn, 1970
Araceae	<i>Orontium aquaticum</i>	stroma	cr	chl, chr	Casadoro et al., 1982
Arecaceae	<i>Chamaerops humilis</i>	stroma	cr	amy	Gailhofer & Thaler, 1974
	<i>Cocos nucifera</i>	stroma	cr	chl	Price et al., 1966
	<i>Phoenix dactylifera</i>	stroma	cr	amy, leu, pro	Gailhofer & Thaler, 1974
	<i>Washingtonia robusta</i>	stroma	cr	leu	Gailhofer & Thaler, 1974
Asteraceae	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	INT	cr	chl	Gailhofer et al., 1990
Balsaminaceae	<i>Impatiens noli-tangere</i>	stroma	mt	chr	Emter et al., 1990
Brassicaceae	<i>Brassica rapa</i>	stroma	cr	pro	Oross & Possingham, 1991
Cactaceae	<i>Echinomastus intertextus</i>	stroma	mt	pro	Rivera & Arnott, 1982
	<i>Opuntia ficus-indica</i>	stroma	mt	chl	Thomson & Journett, 1970
Chenopodiaceae	<i>Beta vulgaris</i>	stroma	cr	pro	Hoefler & Esau, 1975
	<i>Salicornia</i>	stroma	cr	chl	Oross & Possingham, 1991
	<i>Salsola</i> sp.	stroma	cr	chl	Unpublished
	<i>Spinacia oleracea</i>	INT	cr	chl	Kim et al., 2006
	<i>Suaeda maritima</i>	stroma	cr	pro	Esau, 1975
	<i>Suaeda maritima</i>	stroma	cr	chl	Miller et al., 1976
Crassulaceae	<i>Aeonium domesticum</i>	stroma	cr	chl, pro	Rascio et al., 1985
	<i>Kalanchoe</i> sp.	stroma	mt	chl	Shojima et al., 1987
	<i>Kalanchoe fedtschenkoi</i>	stroma	mt	chl	Oross & Possingham, 1991
	<i>Kalanchoe pinnata</i>	stroma	cr	eti, chl	Kim, unpublished
	<i>Orostachys malacophyllus</i>	stroma	cr	chl	Brandao & Salema, 1974
	<i>Sedum</i> sp.	stroma	mt	chl	Kim, 1997
	<i>Sedum rotundifolium</i>	stroma	cr	chl, eti, pro	Kim, 2006
	<i>Sedum spectabilis</i>	stroma	mt	chl	Kim et al., 2006
	<i>Sedum telephium</i>	stroma	mt	chl, pro	Santos & Salema, 1981
	<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>	stroma	mt	chl	Brandao & Salema, 1974
Cuscutaceae	<i>Cuscuta pentagona</i>	INT, stroma	mt	chl	Santos & Salema, 1981
	<i>Cuscuta japonica</i>	INT	cr	chl	Lee et al., 1999
	<i>Cuscuta pedicellata</i>	INT	cr	chl	Lee, 2007
Fabaceae	<i>Acasia cornigera</i>	stroma	mt	chl, chr, pro,	Lee, 2007a, b
	<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i>	stroma	cr	chl, leu, pro	Lyshede, 1989
	<i>Vicia faba</i>	stroma	cr	chl	Rickson, 1975
					Newcomb, 1967
					Wrischer, 1967
					Larsson, 1973
					Wrischer, 1973
					Larsson, 1973
					Shumway et al., 1967

Table 1. Continued.

Family	Species	Location	Inclusion	Plastid	Reference
Geraniaceae	<i>Pelargonium zonale</i>	stroma	cr	chl	Diaz-Ruiz, 1975
Gesneriaceae	<i>Saintpaulia ionantha</i>	INT	cr	pro	Finer & Smith, 1983
Lamiaceae	<i>Coleus</i> sp.	stroma	cr	pro	Varkey & Nadakavukaren, 1982
Liliaceae	<i>Asphodelus microcarpus</i>	stroma	cr	chl, leu	Gailhofer & Thaler, 1978
Magnoliaceae	<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	stroma	mt	chl	Ljubesic, 1979
Poaceae	<i>Carex siderosticta</i>	stroma	cr	chl	Kim et al., 1992
	<i>Echinochloa crus-galli</i>	stroma	cr	pro	Vanderzee & Kennedy, 1982
	<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	stroma	cr	chl, eti	Sprey, 1975
	<i>Zea mays</i>	stroma	cr	chl	Williams, 1974 Galatis & Apostolakis, 1991
Portulacaceae	<i>Portulaca pilosa</i>	stroma	mt	chl	Kim & Fisher, 1990
	<i>P. oleraceae</i>				
	<i>P. sclerodarpa</i>				
Ranunculaceae	<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>	stroma	cr	chl	Gailhofer, 1983
Salicaceae	<i>Salix</i> sp.	stroma	cr	chl	Vapaavuori et al., 1984
Saxifragaceae	<i>Chrysosplenium</i>	INT, stroma	mt	chl	Sitte, 1974
	<i>Capsicum annuum</i>	stroma	mt	chl	Spurr & Harris, 1968
Solanaceae	<i>Nicotiana</i> sp.	stroma	cr	chl	Ames, 1972
	<i>Nicotiana tabacum</i>	stroma	cr	chl	Ames & Pivorun, 1974 Willison & Davey, 1976
Tropaeolaceae	<i>Tropaeolum majus</i>	stroma	mt	chr	Emter et al., 1990

Abbreviation: cr, crystal; INT, intrathylakoidal space; mt, microtubule; amy, amyloplast; chl, chloroplast; chr, chromoplast; eti, etioplast; leu, leucoplast; pro, proplastid

water deficit. Further, the presence of inclusions has been reported even in detached leaves (Wrischer, 1978) as well as in isolated protoplasts (Takebe et al., 1973). Surprisingly, leaves of parasitic species are also known to develop such inclusions (Lee, 2007). However, cases of the inclusion formation are recorded most frequently with environmental factors and developmental stages of the plants. Such cases known from various species are discussed in the followings.

Contrary results of the inclusion formation are recorded with water deficit in *Spinacia* (Esau, 1975) and with well-watered leaves in *Salix* (Vapaavuori et al., 1984). In *Salix*, the number of inclusions decreased with water stress and further resulted in complete absence in severely stressed plants. Another factor that probably affects the inclusion formation during growth is the developmental stages of the plastid. In matured chloroplasts of *Spinacia* (Miller et al., 1976; Shojima, 1987) and *Salix* (Vapaavuori et al., 1982), intrathylakoidal crystalline inclusions that are bounded by membranes have been well-documented, while they are found in still developing plastids of other species. In fully differentiated chloroplasts of *Coleus*, *Saintpaulia* and *Spinacia*, they are usually not found or observed rarely (Varkey & Nadakavukaren, 1982; Finer & Smith, 1983; Racio

et al., 1983). In CAM-performing *Sedum*, non membrane-bounded inclusions have been well demonstrated in proplastids, etioplasts and developing chloroplasts, but complete disappearance was noted within mature chloroplasts (Kim, 2006; Kim et al., 2006). Development of the crystalline inclusions occurred not only in autotrophic plants, as stated above, seedlings of the parasitic *Cuscuta* species has also shown to accumulate in the plastids (Lee, 2007a, b). Membrane bound amorphous proteinaceous inclusions are found in many plastids and are suggested to contain precursors for thylakoid membrane growth (Ames & Pivorun, 1974) as suggested for those in parasitic seedlings (Lee, 2007).

The inclusions are usually bounded by membranes when they are formed in the epidermal cells, but both cases of membrane bounded or non-membrane bounded inclusions have been found in the mesophyll cells. Epidermal plastids are usually small, but the inclusions occupy relatively a large volume of the plastid compared to those occur in other cell types (Kim, unpublished). Crystalline inclusions in epidermal plastids occur either in the stroma or in the thylakoid lumen (Hoefert & Esau, 1975; Platt-Aloia & Thomson, 1979; Mikulska et al., 1981; Lyshede, 1989; Lee, 1997).

Fully differentiated leucoplasts can be found with chloroplasts in the same epidermal cells of the shoot, but inclusions, when formed, occur almost entirely within chloroplasts. In the root, however, leucoplasts are known to develop inclusion bodies within stroma (Gailhofer & Thaler, 1978). For these epidermal plastid inclusions, a storage function has been suggested (Hoefert & Esau, 1975).

In the past, a collection of plastid crystalline structures have been once called stromacenter, since they may contain different proteins in the form of fibrous or whorl-like clusters in the stroma (Lee & Thompson, 1973; Gailhofer & Thaler, 1978; Thompson et al., 1977; Ryberg et al., 1993). As in the epidermal plastid inclusion, similar enzyme storage function for the CAM pathway has been hypothesized, since it was discovered in CAM-performing *Kalanchoe* species (Lee & Thompson, 1973; Thompson et al., 1977). The same type of inclusions might have comprised of proteins (Hoefert & Esau, 1975). was revealed in another CAM-performing *Sedum*, where accumulation and disappearance noticed diurnally (Santos & Salema, 1983). It has been believed that their formation is not the result of water deficit stress, since they appeared regardless of the plant water conditions in CAM-performing plants (Santos & Salema, 1984; Kim, 2006). In CAM species, the most accepted view for the presence of such inclusion in developing stages is the storage of enzymes that are necessary for the operation of CAM in mature leaves. Unlike the storage role of the inclusions in CAM plants, quite different role has been proposed for certain C-3 species. In C-3 *Avena* leaf plastids, the crystal is shown to be an enzyme that activates the vacuole components when the cells are damaged (Nisius, 1988). In a study of *Aeonium* plastids, Knoth (1982) concluded that the crystals consist of protein, since the incubation of deosmicated ultrathin sections with pepsin results in a digestion of the crystalline structures.

The plastid tubular structures, except peripheral reticulum, that are similar to the cytoplasmic microtubules frequently observed in the stroma (Vaughn & Wilson, 1981; Rivera & Arnott, 1982; Kim & Fisher, 1990; Kim, unpublished). They have been found in developing and/or transforming plastids of flowering plants (Lawence & Possingham, 1984). As in cytoplasmic microtubules, the plastid microtubules have a cylindrical shape and their length varies from a few nanometers to up to one millimeter (Dustin, 1984; Dey & Harborne, 1997). However, ca. 10 ~ 13 nm in diameter, a rather smaller dimension relative to the cytoplasmic microtubules has been assessed for the plastid microtubules (Artus et al., 1990; Kim, unpublished). When they formed within stroma,

they often occur as an aggregates consisting of several to dozens of microtubules around the periphery of prolamellar bodies in etioplasts (Artus et al., 1990) or in chloroplasts (Salema & Brandao, 1978; Santos & Salema, 1982; Kim & Fisher, 1990). In C-4 *Portulaca* species, the plastid microtubules appear close to developing or matured thylakoids (Kim & Fisher, 1990). In another C-4 *Salsola* leaves, several isolated microtubules are rarely detected along with the crystal in the stroma (Kim, unpublished). When they occur, the microtubules form in the peripheral area, while the crystal develops within thylakoidal boundary.

The microtubules found within plastid stroma do not fit the commonly known functional types of the cytoplasmic ones. The cytoplasmic microtubules are known to be involved in controlling of cell expansion and division, and control of cell wall structure (Dey & Harborne, 1997). The microtubules, however, rather appear close to the role in response to environmental factors that probably correlated to the control of the biotic stress response or the control of the low temperature response as suggested (Nick, 2000). Another role in the reorganization of membrane components in developing plastids has been postulated, although their composition and function are still not known (Ryberg et al., 1993). In a study of microtubule structures in wheat plastids, Artus et al. (1990) reported that they are probably not composed of tubulin as in the cytoplasmic microtubules, since the structures are insensitive to microtubule inhibitors. Since succulent species more likely form microtubules within plastids as seen in Table 1, there might be a positive link between the plastid microtubule formation and the C-4 or CAM photosynthesis. Extensive ultrastructural and biochemical studies are needed for a better understanding of the microtubules formed in the plastids.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

The progress in plastid inclusion research at the ultrastructural level and immunocytochemistry has given us important information about their function and complexity during photosynthesis. Genetic and molecular work with the improved techniques will definitely make us move forward when looking for correlations between plastid ultrastructure and the presence and function of inclusions during plastid development and differentiation (Ryberg et al., 1993). Among the inclusions, microtubules have been investigated the least due to difficulties of detecting them within stroma. With this and other reasons, the nature of plastid microtu-

bules has yet to be examined either at molecular or cytochemical level. The need for developing experimental techniques for purification and identification of their sub-structures has been noted recently and until then the plastid microtubules remains to be resolved.

Another field that gives more information in depth would be the 3-D reconstruction of the plastid inclusions. The need for characterizing the 3-D structure of crystalline bodies from the serial sections is apparent and has been pointed out in previous studies. In addition to transmission electron microscopy (TEM), applications of high voltage electron microscopy (HVEM), accompanied by appropriate image processing techniques, have made possible great improvements in the analysis of 3-D subcellular structures or cellular phenomena, since up to several micron thick sections can be examined by HVEM. Recent studies of *Sedum* leaves investigated three dimensional crystalline structures through the use of HVEM accompanied by tilting and tomography of serial sections, diffraction analysis, and image processing (Kim, 2006; Kim et al., 2006; Kim, 2008). From these studies, the periodicity of tubular elements, having ca. 10~12 nm in the epidermal plastids and ca. 16~18 nm in the mesophyll plastids, were assessed. Furthermore, development pattern of those inclusions has been examined from the thick serial sections and peculiar mode of formation pattern has been revealed in *Sedum* species (Kim, unpublished). Therefore, applications of TEM or HVEM following with appropriate techniques would allow for total 3-D reconstruction, which is necessary for enhanced resolution of the internal sub-structures. Such enhancements in resolution would further provide for a more in-depth analysis of the plastid inclusions. With this in mind, the author should include more studies dealt with plastid inclusions of other flowering plants before drawing any immature conclusions.

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### < 국문초록 >

다양한 색소체 내에 형성되는 결정체와 미세소관의 분포 및 발달양상을 식물이 수행하는 광합성 양식과 연계하여 꽃피는식물 종들에서 밝혀진 결과에 의하면, 색소체 결정체는 대개 격자 구조를 이루며 기질 또는 티라코이드 내에 형성되나, 미세소관은 비교적 규칙적인 형태로 기질에만 발달한다고 알려져 있다. 격자구조는 막으로 둘러싸이거나 막과는 무관하게 발달하며, 계통학적인 유연관계를 형성하지 않고 C-3 또는 C-4 또는 CAM 광합성을 수행하는 26개의 식물과, 약 56종에서 독립적으로 나타난다는 사실이 조사되었다. 색소체 결정체 및 미세소관 형성에 대한 지속적인 연구는 이들의 구조와 기능에 대하여 새로운 정보를 제공하나, 결정체에 대한 3차원적 입체구조 연구와 미세소관에 대한 분자생물학적인 실험법들이 요구되고 있는 실정이다. 특히, HVEM 고압전자현미경 및 tomography에 의한 연속절편 연구는 결정체의 3-D 입체구조 구현이 가능하여 심도 있는 구조정보를 제공하는 것으로 알려져 있다. 극히 일부의 식물에서만 보고되어 있는 색소체 내 미세소관에 대한 연구에 관해서는 먼저 색소체 기질에서 이들의 형성 시점을 알아내어 기질에서의 식별 및 분리 연구 등이 가능하게 해야 함이 강조되고 있다. 본 논문에서는 꽃피는식물 종들의 여러 색소체 유형에서 보고된 결정체와 미세소관을 조사하여 색소체 내에서 이들의 기능을 광합성과 연계하여 종합적으로 논의하였다.