

Connecting the molecular structure of cutin to ultrastructure and physical properties of the cuticle in petals of Arabidopsis.

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The plant cuticle is laid down at the cell wall surface of epidermal cells in a wide variety of structures, but the functional significance of this architectural diversity is not yet understood. Here, the structure-function relationship of the petal cuticle of *Arabidopsis thaliana* was investigated. Applying FTIR microspectroscopy, the cutin mutants *lacs2*, *pec1*, *cyp77a6*, *gpat6* and *dcr* were grouped in three separate classes based on quantitative differences in the $\nu(\text{C}=\text{O})$ and $\nu(\text{C}-\text{H})$ band vibrations. These were associated mainly with the quantity of 10, 16 dihydroxy hexadecanoic acid, a monomer of the cuticle polyester, cutin. These spectral features were linked to three different types of cuticle organization: a normal cuticle with nanoridges (*lacs2* and *pec1* mutants); a broad translucent cuticle (*cyp77a6* and *dcr* mutants); and an electron-opaque multi-layered cuticle (*gpat6* mutant). The latter two types did not have typical nanoridges. Transmission electron microscopy revealed considerable variations in cuticle thickness in the *dcr* mutant. Different double mutant combinations showed that a strong reduction of C16 monomers in cutin leads to the appearance of an electron-translucent layer adjacent to the cuticle proper, which is independent of DCR action. We concluded that DCR is not only essential for incorporating 10, 16 dihydroxy C16:0 into cutin, but also plays a crucial role in the organization of the cuticle, independent of cutin composition. Further characterization of the mutant petals suggested that nanoridge formation and conical cell shape may contribute to the reduction of physical adhesion forces between petals and other floral organs during floral development.

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