

Heritability of drought resistance in *Solanum aethiopicum* Shum group and combining ability of genotypes for drought tolerance and recovery

Godfrey Sseremba, Pangirayi Tongoona, John Eleblu, Eric Yirenkyi Danquah, Elizabeth Balyejusa Kizito

Abstract

Drought tolerance is a complex trait whose inheritance had not been investigated in *Solanum aethiopicum* L. Shum group. This is partly because of perceived cross incompatibilities in the crop. This study relied on 24 successful crosses from an incomplete 9×4 North Carolina II mating design, evaluated under five watering conditions based on plant growth stage and watering level in order to determine the heritability of drought resistance and combining ability. Subsequent data analyses were based on restricted maximum likelihood. Overall, specific combining ability (SCA) effects were significant across and within watering environments for all study traits. The most highly heritable traits (in the narrow-sense) were identified as leaves per plant, chlorophyll content (CHL), leaf fresh yield and leaf dry yield while leaf area (LA), leaf relative water content (LRWC) and leaf mass area (LMA) were least heritable. However, the broad sense heritability (H^2) was over 0.80 for seven of the traits, indicating that dominance gene action surpass additive gene effects for drought resistance in *S. aethiopicum* Shum. Further analysis showed that LA is suited for selection of best combiners under well-watered and drought-stress (DS) treatments. The LRWC served best in separating the SCA effects of crosses under DS. The CHL produced clear separations of SCA effects under both DS and drought recovery while LMA served best under the latter.

Keywords: Specific combining ability, Optimum watering, Drought tolerance mechanisms, Breeding traits, Hybridization, African eggplant

Received 19 March 2018, Revised 26 May 2018, Accepted 11 June 2018, Available online 15 June 2018.

Abbreviations

CHL	chlorophyll content
DR	drought recovery
DS	drought stress
GCA	general combining ability
H^2	broad sense heritability
h^2	narrow sense heritability
LA	leaf area
LMA	leaf mass area
LPP	number of green leaves per plant
LRWC	leaf relative water content
LWS	leaf wilting score
LYD	leaf dry yield
LYF	leaf fresh yield
NCII	North Carolina II mating design
RE	re-watering treatment
SCA	specific combining ability

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scienta.2018.06.028>