# **3** SALINITY STRESS



## SALINITY

#### • What is it?

Salinity refers to the presence of high concentration of ions (usually Na<sup>+</sup> and Cl<sup>-</sup>), primarily in the soil environment.

## Inherently high salt areas

Areas that are enriched with sea water (saline plains and salt marshes).

Desert soils that accumulate salts because the rate of water evaporation are much higher than precipitation rate (judged from the Pr/PET index).

High irrigated agricultural lands in which salt accumulation develops due to high evapotranspiration and/or bad quality of irrigation water.

## SALINITY

- Inherently high salt areas
  - High salinity soils can be found in extended areas of the world which show high concentrations of salt for various reasons.
  - A percent of at least 20% of cultivated lands show high salinity.
  - A much higher extend of saline soils is found in irrigated cultivated lands.
  - These numbers are growing fast and this outcome appears to be inevitable.

Parameter	Salt water	Good irrigation water
Ion contentration (mM)		
Na <sup>+</sup>	457	<2.0
K+	9.7	<1.0
Ca <sup>2+</sup>	10	0.5-2.5
Mg <sup>2+</sup>	56	0.25-1.0
CI-	536	<2.0
SO <sub>4</sub> <sup>2-</sup>	28	0.25-2.5
HCO <sub>3</sub> -	2.3	<1.5
Osmotic potential (MPa)	-2.4	-0.039
<i>Total ion concentration</i> (mg L <sup>-1</sup> or ppm)	32 000	500
Electrical conductivity (dS m <sup>-1</sup> )	44-55	<2.0

Parameters of salt water compared to good quality irrigation water

## SALINITY

## Effects of salinity (the 'two-phase inhibition')

Soil characteristics become unsuitable, like porosity which affects water drainage and aeration

Reduction of soil water potential which results in **osmotic stress** of plants

High concentration of Na<sup>+</sup> and Cl<sup>-</sup> causes **phytotoxicity** due to inhibition of membrane selectivity and impairment of transport proteins and enzymes

Accumulation of Na<sup>+</sup> and Cl<sup>-</sup> in cells threats **cell ionic homeostasis** (the distribution of ions between apoplast, cytoplasm and vacuole which controls electrochemical polarity of plasma membranes).

Cultured plant	Drop of productivity (%) due to salinity increase by 1 dS m <sup>-1</sup>	Salinity threshold EC <sub>e</sub> (dS m <sup>-1</sup> )
apricot	23	1.6
bean	18.9	1.0
carrot	14.1	1.0
orange	15.9	1.7
trifolium	7.3	2.0
cucumber	13.0	2.5
tomato	9.9	2.5
beet	9.0	4.0
soybean	20.0	5.0
wheat	7.1	6.0
cotton	5.2	7.7
barley	5.0	8.0

Tolerance of cultivated species to salinity using two determinant parameters

Root substrate water potential (MPa)	Foliage surface (dm² per plant)	Photosynthetic rate (mg CO <sub>2</sub> dm <sup>-2</sup> day <sup>-1</sup> )	Respiration rate (mg CO <sub>2</sub> dm <sup>-2</sup> day <sup>-1</sup> )
-0.04	30	46	11
-0.64	24	29	16
-1.24	18	23	19

# Effects of salinity expressed as water potential in cotton productivity



Dependence of plant growth rate on salt concentration in growth medium for three plant groups

## SALINITY SIGNAL PERCEPTION AND TRANSDUCTION



#### • Escape

Plants that follow this strategy (**glycophytes**), appear extremely sensitive even in low concentration of salts in soil. They do not colonize saline environments because they are unable to complete their life cycle in the presence of salt.

#### • Avoidance

The plants that follow this strategy (**salinity regulators**), restrict the entry of ions into the sensitive cells. This strategy shows three variations:

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The plants that follow this strategy (**salinity regulators**), restrict the entry of ions into the sensitive cells. This strategy shows three variations:

Salinity regulation by **active exclusion** 

Salinity regulation by salt secretion by specialized cells (salt glands)

Salinity regulation by **salt distribution** 

## • Salinity regulation by active exclusion

Some plant species do not absorb salt, but they actively exclude it in the root medium (e.g. *Rhizophora mangle* in mangrove forests).



## • Salinity regulation by **salt secretion**

Some plant species allow salt entry but this is eventually secreted through specialized salt glands of leaves (e.g. *Tamarix* species)



## • Salinity regulation by **salt secretion**

Some plant species allow salt entry but this is eventually secreted through specialized salt glands of leaves (e.g. *Limonium* species)



• Salinity regulation by **active exclusion** and **distribution** 

In some species, Na<sup>+</sup> ions are subjected to recirculation between root and shoot. Hence, the dynamic control of salt distribution on a plant level is accomplished.



## SALINITY TOLERANCE OF DURUM WHEAT

## Salt control during lateral root transfer

Some cereals like wheat (*Triticum turgidum* spp. *durum*) allow salt entry, which is sequestered in the vacuoles and cell walls of specific root tissues



## SALINITY TOLERANCE OF DURUM WHEAT



## SALINITY TOLERANCE OF DURUM WHEAT



#### • Resistance

Metabolism of these plants (**salt accumulators**) is appropriately adapted to avoid perturbations due to high concentration of salt ions.

Ions accumulate in the vacuole, while concentrations in the cytoplasm remain low. The cytoplasmic water potential is osmotically equilibrated to that of the cytoplasm avoiding dehydration of the latter. Osmoregulation is achieved by the synthesis of compatible solutes.

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Ions accumula in the cytopla potential is os cytoplasm avo Osmoregulation compatible so



## PROTECTIVE FUNCTION OF COMPATIBLE SOLUTES



#### Hydration shell of a protein molecule

## PROTECTIVE FUNCTION OF COMPATIBLE SOLUTES



In presence of Na+ and Cl- ions, protein molecule may loose conformation due to disruption of its hydration shell

## PROTECTIVE FUNCTION OF COMPATIBLE SOLUTES



Compatible solute molecules stabilize hydration shell of protein and protect it from functional conformation loss

lon or molecule	Vacuolar conc (mM)	Cytoplasmic conc (mM)
Glycine betaine	<1	300
Organic acids	100	60
CI	<150	<50
Na+	200	<50
K+	150	120
Total	~600	~580
[Na <sup>+</sup> ] <sub>vac</sub> /[Na <sup>+</sup> ] <sub>cyt</sub> ratio	~4,0	
[Na <sup>+</sup> ] <sub>cyt</sub> /[K <sup>+</sup> ] <sub>cyt</sub> ratio	~0,4	
[Na <sup>+</sup> ] <sub>vac</sub> /[K <sup>+</sup> ] <sub>vac</sub> ratio	~1,3	

Subcellular distribution of molecules or ions in mesophyll cells of spinach under salinity in the growth medium

## PROTEOME MODULATIONS

Includes changes in proteome composition that are consisted of *de novo* synthesis of proteins that are necessary for acclimation, e.g. synthesis of compatible solutes

Osmotins, proteins with MW 24-50 kDa accumulate under salinity conditions. They belong to the wide family of pathogenesis proteins

Hydrophilic LEA proteins: The type of dehydrin proteins, work as escorting proteins stabilizing vesicles, proteins and membrane structures under salinity, osmotic stress and dehydration and frost

## **4** EXTREME TEMPERATURE STRESS



## EXTREME TEMPERATURES

## Temperature limits of biological activity

Beyond these limits a gradual and reversible decrease of biological activity occurs

## • Fatal temperature limits

Beyond these limits plants experience permanent physiological impairments which result in inability to complete the biological cycle

## EXTREME TEMPERATURES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN



Climate graph of a typical mediterranean climate area

## TEMPERATURE LIMITS



#### Frost is considered for temperatures below 0 °C

Cold is considered for temperatures between 0 and 15 °C



#### Fluctuations in temperature in different parts of a plant

## PLANT GROUPS DEPENDING ON TEMPERATURE LIMITS FOR OPTIMAL BIOLOGICAL ACTIVITY

## • Microtherms

Optimum growth is observed between 0 and 20 °C

#### Mesotherms

Optimum growth is observed between 10 and 30 °C

## Thermophytes

Optimum growth is observed between 30 and 65 °C

Organism/type	fatal temperature (°C)		
	hydrated	dehydrated	
bacteria spores	80-120	up to 160	
fungi spores	50-60	beyond 100	
temperate lichens	33-46	70-100	
polyhydric ferns	47-50	60-100	
Ramonda myconi	48	56	
Myrothamnus flabellifolius		80	

Fatal temperature limits for several polyhydric organisms

## EFFECTS OF LOW TEMPERATURES

• Effect of frost to mesophytes

Plant adapted to warm climates, including many cultivated plants, are considered as sensitive to low temperatures. Stress symptoms appear if exposed to temperatures below 10 °C

## EFFECTS OF LOW TEMPERATURES

- Membranes
  - Increased membrane rigidity
- Biochemical reactions
  - Increase of required activation energy of biochemical reactions
- Physicochemical changes in the protoplast
  - Change of the physical phase of cell sap affects vital cellular processes and increases the risk of irreversible cell damage
- Oxidative stress
  - Accumulation of ROS

## LEAF WILTING

• How can cold result in leaf wilting;

Leaf wilting, despite availability of water, is an early symptom of low temperatures and is caused by two factors:

I. Low water conductivity: Under low temperatures, water conductivity of root cell membranes is reduced and transport of water is restricted also due to higher viscosity.

II. **Stomatal movement is inhibited**: This biochemical/osmotic mechanism is inhibited by low temperatures, hence stomatal control is inefficient resulting in water losses.
# • Membrane composition is related to temperature stress

**Transition temperature** is the temperature point of sudden transition of a membrane from semi-fluid to semi-crystalline / gel phase

Semi-crystalline membranes lose their intactness and selectivity resulting in **loss of cellular compartmentation** and **dehydration** 

# • Membrane composition is related to temperature stress



• Membrane composition is related to temperature stress



Fatty acid	Carbon atoms C : double bonds	Structural formula	Freezing point (ºC)
Stearic	18:0	CH <sub>3</sub> (CH <sub>2</sub> ) <sub>16</sub> COOH	71
Lauric	12:0	CH <sub>3</sub> (CH <sub>2</sub> ) <sub>10</sub> COOH	44
Oleic	18:1	$CH_3(CH_2)_7CH=CH(CH_2)_7COOH$	16
Linoleic	18:2	$CH_3(CH_2)_4CH=CHCH_2CH=CH(CH_2)_7COOH$	-5
Linolenic	18:3	$CH_3CH_2CH=CHCH_2CH=CHCH_2CH=CH(CH_2)_7COOH$	-11

#### Freezing point of representative fatty acids

Plant species	plant organ	unsat/saturated ratio
cold sensitive		
Phaseolus vulgaris	shoot	2.8
Ipomoea batatas	tuber	1.7
Zea mays	shoot	2.1
Lycopersicon esculentum	fruit	2.8
cold tolerant		
Brassica oleracea	bud	3.2
Brassica campestris	root	3.9
Pisum sativum	shoot	3.8

The unsaturated/saturated fatty acid ration of the membrane phospholipids of isolated mitochondria of tolerant and sensitive plant species

• Frost results in severe mechanical and water stress in cells

Temperatures below 0 °C favor the formation of ice crystals in cells. In this case, cells ultimately die because of mechanical damage

On the other hand, dehydrated forms like seeds can survive temperatures approaching absolute zero (0 °K), without damage

Plant choose	Frost damaging temperature (°C)			
	shoot growth	inflorescence	fruit set	
Winter wheat genotypes	down to -37			
spring wheat genotypes	-9	-1	-2	
barley	-7	-1	-2	
lens	-7	-2	-2	
bean	-5	-2	-3	
sugar beet	-6	-2		
soybean	-3	-2	-2	
potato	-2	-1	-1	
cotton	-1	-1	-2	
rice	-0.5	-0.5	-0.5	

Frost tolerance of selected plant species in different stages of development

Plant species	leaves	buds	shoot meristem	root meristem
Ceratonia siliqua	-6	-8	-9	
Nerium oleander	-8	-12	-14	
Olea europaea	-12	-12	-16	-6
Quercus ilex	-15	-17	-28	-7

Frost tolerance of plant organs of evergreens from Mediterranean flora during the winter. Temperatures that result in 50% frost damage



Effects of a frost incidence in grapevine shoot under optical microscope / polarized light

• Thermal behavior of tissues is not uniform in all temperatures

Thermal analysis reveals the thermal behavior of tissues and explains the gradual accumulation of damage from freezing temperatures

Is based on the measurement of temperature of a plant tissue as the temperature drops and shows the **freezing events** through **exotherms** 

An exotherm is caused because water transition from liquid to solid state is an **exergonic** event



Typical thermal analysis curve. Thermal analysis exotherm shows temperature points that, despite the environmental temperature drop (dotted line), tissue temperature increases temporarily.





## CELL THERMAL BEHAVIOR

• Results of the thermal behavior of plant cells

Plant tissues can have temperatures far below zero without transition from liquid to solid. This phenomenon is called **supercooling** (hyper-freezing).

During the **first exotherm** ice is only formed in the **apoplast**. This freezing event is not damaging for the cells.

## CELL THERMAL BEHAVIOR

Results of the thermal behavior of plant cells

Due to water potential difference (caused by freezing of the apoplast) protoplasmic water moves (continuously) to the apoplast. This continues during the **second exotherm**. Results:

1. protoplast sap gradually becomes more concentrated. This causes the **depression of the freezing point**, so the protoplast stays liquid.

2. Continuous water movement results in cell dehydration (**freezing plasmolysis**). This results in a special case of **water stress**.

## CELL THERMAL BEHAVIOR

### • Results of the thermal behavior of plant cells

3. The **third exotherm** represents the eventual formation of ice crystals in the protoplast. This freezing incident is usually lethal for the cells.

## THREE DIFFERENT STRATEGIES

#### • Escape

This is followed by mesophytes and thermophytes that are not exposed during the low winter temperatures.

A variation of this strategy is followed by overwintering plants that have shed their leaves before winter.

## THREE DIFFERENT STRATEGIES

#### • Avoidance

Tissues avoid freezing by reducing thermal losses to the environment. Suitable anatomical and morphological traits favor this strategy.

Buds are covered with multiple scales (cataphylls), cryptophytes remain below litter or below soil surface to reduce exposure.

Appropriate leaf movements prevent heat loss or allow gain of heat from sunlight (heliotropic leaf movements).

## THREE DIFFERENT STRATEGIES

#### • Resistance

Cells or resistant plants take advantage of **supercooling**.

These cells do not contain many **freezing nuclei**, which are necessary to initiate ice crystal formation at higher temperatures. **Small cells** also help avoid formation of ice crystals at higher temperatures.

Woody tissues may freeze below -15°C. Shoot buds may supercool even at -40°C without formation of ice crystals.

# PERCEPTING TEMPERATURE EXTREMES





 Resistance to low temperatures is dramatically improved after proper acclimation to cold (cold hardiness)

Deciduous trees near the Arctic, birch (*Betula* sp.), poplar (*Populus* sp.) and willow (*Salix* sp.) survive at extremely low temperatures as they acclimate gradually, a process resulting in **cold hardiness**.

 Resistance to low temperatures is dramatically improved after proper acclimation to cold (cold hardiness)

Acclimation to low temperatures involves **two discrete stages**. The **first** takes place in autumn, before leaf fall and is induced by photoperiodic stimuli. The sensory mechanism is sensitive to short days (photoperiods) and is controlled by the phytochrome system.

 Resistance to low temperatures is dramatically improved after proper acclimation to cold (cold hardiness)

The **second** stage is induced by low temperatures. Takes place during the first freezing incident. During this stage, metabolic modulations which include changes in the profiles of phosphorylated metabolites, conversion of starch to oligosaccharides, accumulation of glycoproteins and an overall increase of protoplast freezing tolerance.

 Resistance to low temperatures is dramatically improved after proper acclimation to cold (cold hardiness)

Cold hardiness requires extensive changes in gene expression and a considerable metabolic cost. The hormone ABA is implicated in the process. Exogenous ABA application in young seedlings induces cold resistance.

• Cold acclimation of Arabidopsis

A number of gene expression regulation proteins, CBF (COR (COld Regulated) Binding Factors)/DREB (Dehydration Responsive Element Binding (proteins)) is involved. These transcription factors bind in specific targets, the regulatory elements DRE/CRT (C-RepeaT).

Gene expression patterns share common elements with other stressors, like osmotic or water stress, which are all related to dehydration.

## HIGH TEMPERATURES

• High temperature effects on mesophytes

Most plant species show a high temperature threshold located around 50-55 °C. This limit also depends on the hydration level of organs and tissues.

Plants in xerothermic environments are frequently exposed to extremely high temperatures. Concurrently, high temperatures are combined with water stress and high intensities of solar radiation.

## HIGH TEMPERATURES

• High temperature effects on mesophytes

High temperature stress is very frequent in greenhouses due to absence of air currents, high relative air humidity. These conditions do not favour the cooling mechanisms of plants such as passive cooling and transpiration.

## HIGH TEMPERATURES

### • High temperature effects on mesophytes

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#### • Resistance mechanisms of thermophytes

Desert plants may tolerate temperatures up to 60 °C, while they can be exposed for short time intervals to temperatures even higher than 70 °C.

#### • Membranes

Increase in membrane fluidity may affect selectivity and catalytic properties.

## Biochemical reactions

The possibility of conformational changes and irreversible denaturation of proteins is increased.

#### Photosynthesis

Functional integrity of PSII is quite sensitive to high temperatures. The oxygen evolving complex is deactivated under high temperatures resulting in inhibition of electron flow from PSII to PSI. Photophosphorylation is impaired. Energy excess in photosystems is increased.

# • The photosynthetic compensation point may appear under high temperatures

Photosynthesis is inhibited more severely than respiration under high temperatures. The  $CO_2$ assimilation rate (through photosynthesis) /  $CO_2$ emission (through respiration) balance is gradually reversed. At a certain temperature rates of assimilation and emission of  $CO_2$  equalize and the compensation point is recorded. Further increase in temperature results in an increase of  $CO_2$  emission.

• The photosynthetic compensation point may appear under high temperatures



Plant species	Tissue or organ	lethal temperature (°C)	Exposure (min)
	cultivated plant spe	cies	
Zea mays	leaves	49-51	10
Solanum tuberosum	leaves	42,5	60
Olea europaea	leaves	57	30
Hordeum vulgare	fruit	65	8
Lycopersicum esculentum	fruit	45	-
Malus domestica	fruit	49-52	-
Vitis vinifera	mature fruit	63	-
Medicago sativa	seeds	120	30
Triticum sp.	dehydrated seeds	90,8	8

Lethal temperatures for some organs of cultivated plant species

## HIGH TEMPERATURES AND MEMBRANE COMPOSITION

# • Membrane composition is related to temperature stress

Membranes of thermophytes show higher percent of phospholipids with saturated fatty acids allowing stronger hydrophobic interactions between aliphatic chains.

This results in reduced fluidity of the membrane which appears more stable under higher temperatures.
# THREE DIFFERENT STRATEGIES

#### • Escape

This is followed by microtherms which do not expand to warm climatic zones. A variation of this strategy refers to shedding of sensitive organs before the period of high temperatures or the existence of the organism in a lethargic form (like rhizomes, tubers, etc.).

# THREE DIFFERENT STRATEGIES

#### •Avoidance

Some plant traits that contribute to overheating avoidance:

1. Leaf curling

2. Vertical leaf lamina arrangement

3. Highly reflective / scattering leaf surface due to trichome layers or specific epicuticular layer arrangements resulting in glabrous leaves

4. Small leaf size that reduces the thickness of the boundary layer and increases heat

5. Seasonal leaf dimorphism which involves leaves that show increased tolerance for high temperatures.

## AVOIDANCE – LEAF OPTICAL PROPERTIES



## AVOIDANCE – LEAF OPTICAL PROPERTIES



# THREE DIFFERENT STRATEGIES

#### • Resistance

Resistant plants are exposed to high temperatures that could be lethal to other, non-resistant, species.

The *de novo* protein synthesis (primarily during the acclimation stage), offers protection to cell vital processes.

## RESISTANCE ACCLIMATION TO DIFFERENT THERMAL REGIMES



Acclimation of photosynthesis of leaves of *Nerium oleander* in different growth temperatures



Tidestromia oblongifolia colonizes hot desert areas, while Atriplex sabulosa cold coastal areas in the USA

### • The role of Heat Shock Proteins

Short exposure to high temperatures inhibits usual protein synthesis. However, the synthesis of low MW proteins known as **Heat Shock Proteins** (HSP) is induced.

Induction of **synthesis is rapid**, mRNAs appear within 3 to 5 min and respective HSPs **within 30 min** from initial exposure to high temperatures.

Sharing **many similarities between plans species**, HSPs play significant roles in plant survival under high temperatures.

• Groups of Heat Shock Proteins

**Distinguished based on MW**: HSP100 , HSP90, HSP70, HSP60 and very low MW HSPs between 17 and 28 kDa.

**HSP40,60,70 groups** act as **chaperons**. They contribute to protein protection, folding of newly synthesized proteins and refolding of proteins that have lost correct conformation due to stress.

**Ubiquitin** (8 kDa) also shares chaperone functionality and is inducible together with other HSPs to tag unneeded or denaturated proteins for decomposition through the proteasome.

HPS group	location	Possible function
HSP 110		unknown
HSP 90		Protein protection
HSP 70	Cytoplasm, mitochondria, chloroplasts	Protein unit assembly or disassembly of enzymes or multienzyme complexes.
HSP 60	Cytoplasm, mitochondria, chloroplasts	As HSP70
LMW HSP (17-28 kDa)	Aggregates in cytoplasm and chloroplasts	Unknown
Ubiquitin		Tags proteins for decomposition





## Other proteins

DREB2 transcription factors Expansins Oligosaccharide metabolism enzymes Antioxidative metabolism enzymes LEA family of proteins / dehydrins