

## Isolation endophytic bacteria from elephant grass (*Pennisetum purpureum* Schumach) and their potential application

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### ABSTRACT

In this study, 25 endophytic bacteria were isolated and purified from the rhizome, stem and leaf of the elephant grass, which were tested for their biological control properties. The number of living and dead brown planthoppers was recorded and the mortality rate was analyzed by using Abbott's formula. The results indicated that three endophytic bacteria including VBL1, VBT1 and VBT5 showed the highest biological control of *Nilaparvata lugens* at the mortality rate 46.95%, 55.02% and 55.02%, respectively after 8 days of screening and the significant difference compared to other isolates ( $P < 0.05$ ). Additionally, insecticidal activity of three bacterial isolates was conducted at different concentrations ( $10^6$ ,  $10^7$ ,  $10^8$  CFU/ mL) and we found that the highest mortality rate of brown planthopper was significantly observed at  $10^8$  CFU/ mL for VBL1, VBT1 and VBT5 isolates after 10 days trial ( $P < 0.05$ ). Three different isolates VBL1, VBT1 and VBT5 were similar to *Bacillus pumilus* (VBT1 and VBT5), *Bacillus thuringensis* (VBL1). This result plays an important role in understanding endophytic bacteria from elephant grass for biological control of brown planthopper in the future.

### 1. Introduction

Endophytes, often a bacterium or fungus, live within a plant for the least part of its life cycle, especially endophytic bacteria and fungi almost have not caused any disease symptoms (Azevedo, Maccheroni, Pereira, & de Araújo, 2000). Endophytes may enhance host growth by auxin synthesis (IAA) (Barbieri, Zanelli, Galli, & Zanetti, 1986), pollutant elimination out of host (Rosenblueth & Martinez-Romero, 2006), nutrient acquisition and may improve the plant's ability to tolerate abiotic stress, enhance resistance to insects (Fahey, Dimock, Tomasino, Taylor, & Carlson, 1991). Endophytic bacteria can promote plant growth by various mechanisms (Li et al., 2016). Recently, diverse endophytic bacteria are now being used worldwide as bio-inoculants to promote plant growth and development under normal and various stresses like heavy metals, herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, and salinity (Ahemad & Kibret, 2014). Endophytic bacteria enhance the host to withstand pest attack by induced

systemic resistance (ISR).

Many studies indicated the role of fungal endophytes in grasses nearly a century ago. The Poaceae family is one of the most important families in plants and distributed around the world. Grass of Poaceae family is elephant grass *Pennisetum purpureum* Schumach (Poaceae), stylo grass (*Brachiaria mutica*), etc. Four selected endophytic bacterial strains were reported successfully isolated from elephant grass significantly reduced the harmful effects of salt stress, promoted plant growth and biomass yield on hybrid *Pennisetum* in vitro, which were classified into four bacterial genera such as *Sphingomonas*, *Bacillus*, *Pantoea*, and *Enterobacter*. Each of the bacterial strains tested showed at least two or more PGP (plant growth-promoting) properties, the ability of IAA production, siderophore production, nitrogen fixation, ammonia production, inorganic phosphate solubilization, or ACC (1-aminocyclopropane-1-carboxylic acid) deaminase activity (Li et al., 2016). In addition, under greenhouse conditions, the endophytic bacteria strains EPCO 102, EPCO 16 and Pf1, which were isolated from cotton plants with chitin treated plants, showed higher growth promotion and reduced pest population. Endophyte-treated plants were greatly promoted plant growth and reduced the *Helicoverpa armigera* population compared to endosulfan treatment (Rajendran, Samiyappan, Raguchander, & Saravanakumar, 2007). Endophytes increased tolerance for abiotic and biotic stresses, produce toxins and deterrents that reduce insect herbivory on their host grasses (Takuya & Koya, 2010). Therefore, the objective of this study was to isolate endophytic bacteria from elephant grass and to determine the susceptibility of brown planthopper to the endophytic bacteria. The investigation would potentially offer an opportunity to exploit some valuable endophytic bacteria as biological control agents.

## **2. Materials and methods**

### **2.1. Plant material**

Rhizome, stem, leaf from elephant grass was collected from Cu Chi and Binh Duong province.

### **2.2. Isolation of endophytic bacteria**

Rhizome, stem, leaf was washed thoroughly under tap water for 10 min to remove any adhering soil, dipped in 10 % of commercial bleach (5.25% available chlorine) for 3 min, then transferred to a 3% hydrogen peroxide solution for 3 min, and finally rinsed three times with sterilized water. To ascertain that the surface disinfection process was successful, an aliquot of 100  $\mu$ L final wash was inoculated in LB medium for sterility check. Then, tissues were macerated using a mortar and pestle in a small volume of sterile phosphate buffered saline (PBS, pH 7.4). This suspension was plated on LB medium and incubated at 28°C for 48-72h.

### **2.3. Brown plant hopper biological control ability**

Rice seed Nang Hoa 9 sensitive to brown planthoppers and brown planthopper adults were collected from Long An province. Five adults of *Nilaparvata lugens* were released into 20 days-old rice seedlings, covered by a plastic tube and a muslin cloth. The isolated bacteria strains were cultured in nutrient broth ( $10^8$  CFU/mL concentration) and 10ml bacteria broth was sprayed to the experiment continuously every 24h for 3 days. A number of dead brown planthoppers were recorded after 4, 6, 8 days. Each endophytic bacteria isolate was tested with a total of 20 adults of *Nilaparvata lugens* at  $10^8$  CFU/mL concentration and distilled water was

used as a control treatment.

### 2.3.1. Investigation the optimal concentration of endophytic bacteria

We selected some bacteria that have the highest biological control, we examined endophytic bacteria at 3 different concentrations ( $10^6$ ,  $10^7$ ,  $10^8$  CFU/mL). Data were recorded after 4, 6, 8, and 10 days. The number of living and dead brown planthoppers were recorded and the mortality rate was analyzed by using Abbott's formula:

$$E(\%) = \frac{(C-T)}{c} \times 100 \quad (1)$$

E (%): Efficiency percentage; C: Number of living BPH in the control treatment; T: Number of living BPH in the endophytic treatments.

### 2.3.2. Bacterial identification using 16S rRNA sequences

**DNA extraction and PCR amplification of 16S rRNA:** The DNA extraction protocol was followed Phuong, Nguyen, and Le (2015). The amount and purity of DNA were determined by absorbance at 260 nm and 280 nm using UV-spectrophotometer. The bacterial strains were characterized by 16S rRNA gene (rDNA) sequencing analysis. PCR was performed from overnight grown cells using universal primers (63F 5'-CAGGCCTAACACATGCAAGTC-3' and 1489R 5'-TACCTTGTTAFAACTTCA-3') (Julian et al., 1998; Weisburg, Barns, Pelletier, & Lane, 1991). The amplification was performed in a thermocycler programmed as follows: 95°C for 3 min; 34 cycles of 95°C for 30 s, 52°C for 30 s, 72°C for 2 min; 72°C for 5 min; 4°C for storage. The PCR amplicon was purified and sequenced by the VNDAT company (<http://vndat.com.vn/vn/>). Partial 16S rDNA sequences obtained were analyzed using the BLAST tool on the NCBI website.

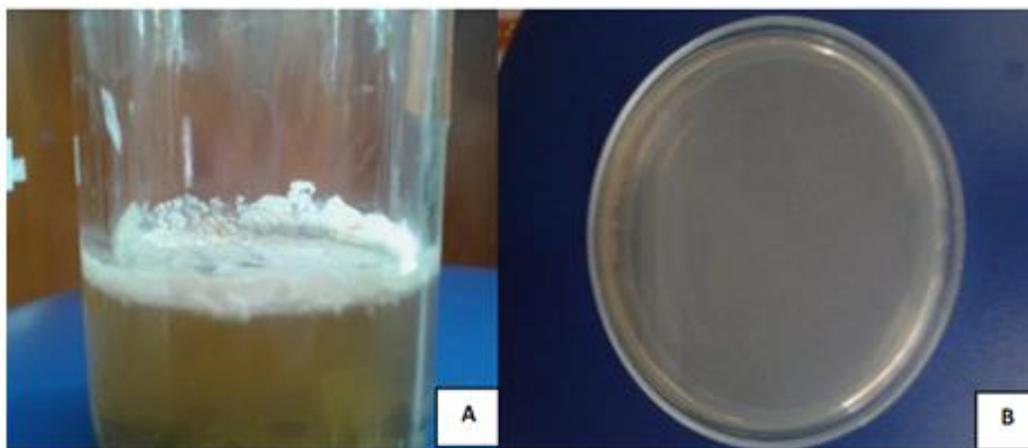
## 2.4. Statistical analysis

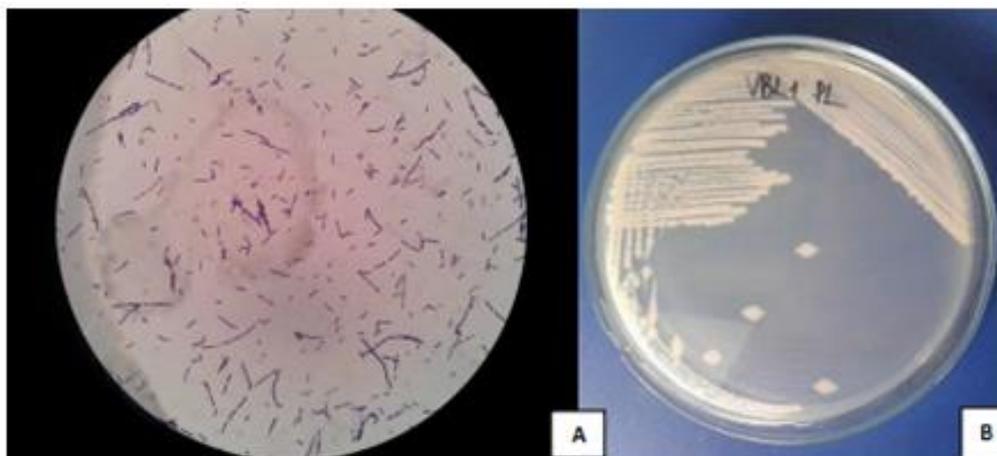
Data were subjected to analysis of variance (ANOVA) followed by Duncan, Statgraphics plus 3.0 software.

## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1. Endophytic bacteria isolation

25 endophytic bacteria strains were isolated and purified (Figure.1 and Figure.2). The isolated bacterial strains were tested by Gram staining and spore staining (Table 1).



**Figure 1.** Soaking in TSB (A) and TSA control (B)**Figure 2.** VBL1**Table 1**

Staining results of the endophytic bacteria isolates

Collection place	No.	Strains	Gram staining	Spore stain
	1	VCT1	Gram (+)	+
	2	VCT2	Gram (-)	-
	3	VCT3	Gram (+)	+
	4	VCT4	Gram (+)	+
	5	VCT5	Gram (+)	+
Cu Chi-HCM	6	VCT6	Gram (-)	-
	7	VCL1	Gram (-)	-
	8	VCL2	Gram (+)	+
	9	VCR1	Gram (-)	-
	10	VCR2	Gram (-)	-
	11	VCR3	Gram (-)	-
	12	VCR4	Gram (-)	-

<b>Collection place</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Strains</b>	<b>Gram staining</b>	<b>Spore stain</b>
	13	VBT1	Gram (-)	-
	14	VBT2	Gram (+)	+
	15	VBT3	Gram (+)	+
	16	VBT4	Gram (+)	+
	17	VBT5	Gram (+)	+
Binh Duong province	18	VBT6	Gram (+)	+
	19	VBT7	Gram (+)	+
	20	VBL1	Gram (+)	+
	21	VBL2	Gram (+)	+
	22	VBL3	Gram (+)	+
	23	VBL4	Gram (+)	+
	24	VBR1	Gram (-)	+
	25	VBR2	Gram (+)	+

Note: Note: Positive results: + Negative results: -

Source: Data analysis result of the research

### ***3.2. The optimal concentration of endophytic inoculants to control brown planthopper***

Table 2 indicated that the 3 isolated strains, including VBL1, VBT1 and VBT5, showed the highest biological control brown planthopper at the mortality rate 46,95%; 55,02% and 55,02%, respectively after 8 days trial and have significant difference compare to other treatments ( $P < 0.05$ ).

**Table 2**

Biological control brown planthoppers of endophytic bacteria isolates

Isolates	Days after treatments		
	4 days	6 days	8 days
VBT5	17,74 a	43,10 a	55,02 a
VBL1	8,89 a	26,58 ab	46,95 ab
VBL2	0,05 a	26,58 ab	43,10 abc
VBR2	8,89 a	26,58 ab	30,80 bcd
VBT1	8,89 a	26,58 ab	55,02 a
VCR1	8,89 a	17,74 bc	30,80 bcd
VBT3	8,89 a	17,74 bc	26,56 bcde
VCT5	0,05 a	17,74 bc	26,18 cde
VCT6	8,89 a	17,74 bc	17,74 def
VCL1	8,89 a	17,74 bc	26,58 bcde
VBL4	0,05 a	8,89 bc	8,89 ef
VBT2	0,05 a	8,89 bc	8,89 ef
VCR3	0,05 a	8,89 bc	8,89 ef
VCT1	8,89 a	8,89 bc	8,89 ef
VCT2	0,05 a	8,89 bc	17,74 def
VBR1	0,05 a	8,89 bc	26,56 bcde
VCL2	0,05 a	8,89 bc	8,89 ef
VBL3	0,05 a	0,05 c	26,56 bcde
VBT4	8,89 a	0,05 c	0,05 f
VCR2	0,05 a	0,05 c	0,05 f
VCR4	0,05 a	0,05 c	8,89 ef
VCT3	0,05 a	0,05 c	0,05 f
VBT6	0,05 a	0,05 c	0,05 f
VCT4	0,05 a	0,05 c	0,05 f
VBT7	0,05 a	0,05 c	8,89 ef

Note: Data were analyzed using one- way analysis of variance (ANOVA) followed by Duncan. Different letters indicate statistically significant differences among groups ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: The researcher's data analysis

**Table 3**

Investigation of the optimal concentration of three endophytic bacteria isolates

Isolates	CFU/ml concentration	Days after treatments			
		4 days	6 days	8 days	10 days
VBT5	$10^8$	29,24 a	36,23 a	47,97 a	60,14 a
	$10^7$	4,62 b	27,86 a	39,18 b	49,35 b

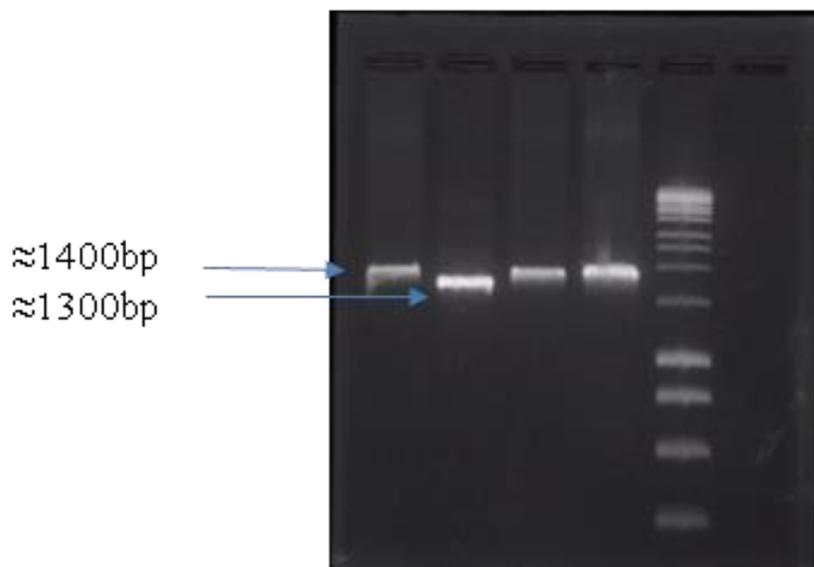
Isolates	CFU/ml concentration	Days after treatments			
		4 days	6 days	8 days	10 days
	10 <sup>6</sup>	0,02 b	11,26 b	29,90 c	40,69 c
VBT1	10 <sup>8</sup>	24,54 a	37,74 a	50,85 a	63,83 a
	10 <sup>7</sup>	13,83 ab	26,57 b	37,68 b	49,35 b
	10 <sup>6</sup>	4, 62 b	9,23 c	28,24 c	40,69 c
VBL1	10 <sup>8</sup>	24,54 a	39,10 a	50,74 a	61,80 a
	10 <sup>7</sup>	13,83 b	26,57 b	42,13 b	52,30 b
	10 <sup>6</sup>	0,02 c	19,44 c	31,56 c	42,13 c

Note: Data were analyzed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) followed by Duncan. Different letters indicate statistically significant differences among groups ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: The researcher's data analysis

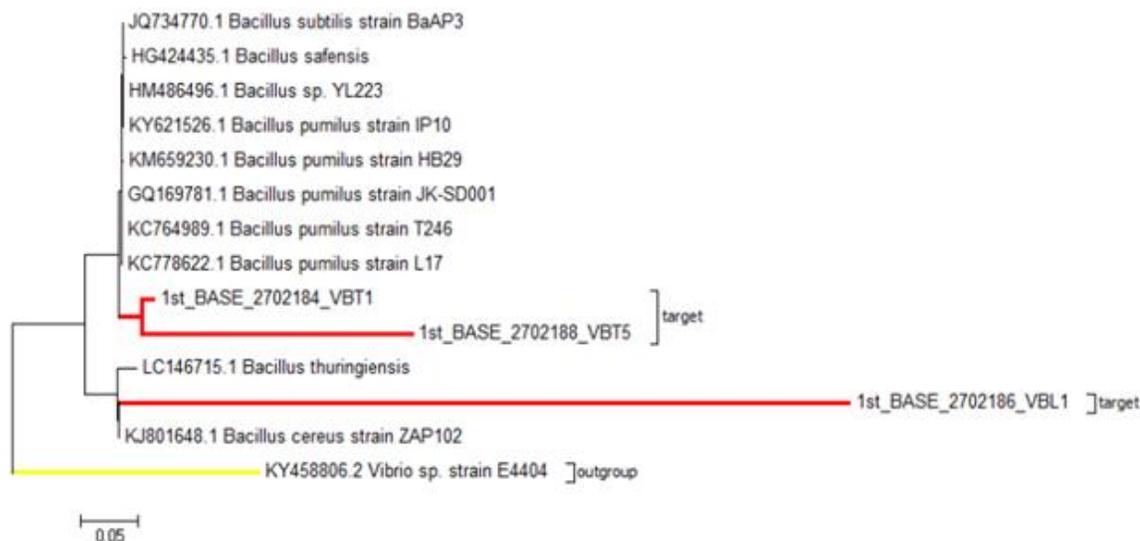
The result of the investigation of the optimal concentration of three endophytic bacteria isolates (VBL1, VBT1 and VBT5) showed the highest biological control *Nilaparvata lugens* after 10 days of treatments at 10<sup>8</sup> CFU/ml concentration (Table 3). Endophytic bacteria offers an effective strategy for the biological control of the pest. Several endophytic bacterial strains have been reported to induce systemic resistance such as ISR (induced systemic resistance), bioagents promote plant growth and reduce pest in several crops. More than 30 species of insect have been found to be combined with endophyte infected *Lolium perenne* and *Lolium arundinaceum*, or by bioassaying the compounds produced by the endophyte in those plants; however, insect species will respond differently to endophyte-infected grass (Takuya & Koya, 2010). Although we have not examined in detail the biological role of 3 endophytic bacteria isolates in this study but the result showed the capacity of the three endophytic bacteria isolates (VBL1, VBT1 and VBT5) to control the brown planthoppers.

### 3.3. Molecular identification of effective bacterial endophytes



**Figure 3.** PCR amplification of single 1.5 kb of 16 S rDNA amplicon 16S rDNA gene on an agarose gel (1%). Lane 1: VBT1 isolate- 1.4kb DNA; Lane 2: VBL5 isolate-1.3kb DNA; Lane 3, 4: VBL1-1.4 lb; Lane 5: DNA marker (1kb ladder)

The 16 S rDNA primers amplified a fragment size of 1.4kb and 1.3kb. We compared the sequence of each strain VBL1, VBT1 and VBT5 on NCBI genebank and the variable sites analyses from the alignment of the dataset were performed in MEGA 6.06. Maximum Likelihood (ML) method was used to reconstruct phylogenetic trees with value Bootstrap 1000 repeat times. The result of identification was similar to *Bacillus pumilus* (VBT1, VBT5) and *Bacillus thuringensis* (VBL1) (Figure 4). A study by Li et al. (2016) revealed the four endophytic bacteria from elephant grass which were classified into four bacterial genera: *Sphingomonas*, *Pantoea*, *Bacillus*, and *Enterobacter* significantly promoted plant growth and biomass yield, alleviated the harmful effects of salt stress on Hybrid Pennisetum. Another study on the control of insect-pests by endophytic fungi showing protection of the perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne* L. against the sod webworm (Funk et al., 1983, Kanda, Hirai, Koga, & Hasegawa, 1994). Also, Gaynor and Hunt (1983) observed in several ryegrasses that high fungi infection is correlated with a decrease in the attack frequency of the Argentine stem weevil *Listronotus bonariensis*.



**Figure 4.** Maximum Likelihood tree of bacteria endophytes on 16S rRNA gene sequences

#### 4. Conclusion

In this study, we isolated 25 endophytic bacteria strains and selected three endophytic bacteria strains (VBL1, VBT1 and VBT5) which showed the highest biological control to brown planthopper. Additionally, the concentration of  $10^8$  CFU/mL is the optimal concentration in pesticide activity of these strains. Therefore, this result contributed important data for the collection of endophytic bacteria and provided the potential to control brown planthopper in the future.

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