A chromosome-scale assembly for 'd'Anjou' pear

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Abstract

Cultivated pear consists of several *Pyrus* species with *P. communis* (European pear) representing a large fraction of worldwide production. As a relatively recently domesticated crop and perennial tree, pear can benefit from genome-assisted breeding. Additionally, comparative genomics within Rosaceae promises greater understanding of evolution within this economically important family. Here, we generate a fully-phased chromosome-scale genome assembly of *P. communis* 'd'Anjou'. Using PacBio HiFi and Dovetail Omni-C reads, the genome is resolved into the expected 17 chromosomes, with each haplotype totalling nearly 540 Megabases and a contig N50 of nearly 14 Mb. Both haplotypes are highly syntenic to each other, and to the *Malus domestica* 'Honeycrisp' apple genome. Nearly 45,000 genes were annotated in each haplotype, over 90% of which have direct RNA-seq expression evidence. We detect signatures of the known whole-genome duplication shared between apple and pear, and we estimate 57% of d'Anjou genes are retained in duplicate derived from this event. This genome highlights the value of generating phased diploid assemblies for recovering the full allelic complement in highly heterozygous crop species.

Introduction

Pyrus L. is a genus in the family Rosaceae (subfamily Maloideae) comprising cultivated and wild pears. *Pyrus* is divided into two broad categories, the European and Asian pears, with their divergence estimated around 3-6 million years ago (Wu et al. 2018). At least 26 species of *Pyrus* and 10 naturally occurring interspecific crosses are now found in Western and Eastern Asia, Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East (Bell and Itai 2011). In 2021, the pear's value of utilized production in the United States reached $353 million (United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service 2023). This makes pear one of the most cultivated pome fruits worldwide. One of the most important North American varieties of pear, the Anjou, also known as the Beurre d'Anjou or simply Anjou (*Pyrus communis* 'd'Anjou'), is thought to have originated in Belgium, named for the Anjou region of France.

Over the last decade, several pear genomes have been sequenced and assembled using a variety of technologies. The first *Pyrus* genome sequenced in 2012 was the most commercially important Asian pear *P. bretschneideri* Rehd. 'Dangshansuli', using a combination of BAC-by-BAC sequencing and mate-pair Illumina sequencing (Wu et al. 2013). Following that, European pear (*P. communis* 'Bartlett') was sequenced using Roche 454 (Chagné et al. 2014). In 2019, the *P. communis* genome was updated by sequencing the doubled-haploid 'Bartlett' cultivar using PacBio long reads and high-throughput chromosome conformation capture (Hi-C) technology (Linsmith et al. 2019). This assembly helped uncover duplicated gene models in previous assemblies that over-assembled heterozygous regions. However, being a doubled-haploid, it still lacked an entire parental complement. A draft assembly and annotation for *P. communis* 'd'Anjou' was generated recently (H. Zhang et al. 2022), which was carefully annotated and revealed systematic differences in gene annotations across Rosaceae genomes. However, this assembly was also not phased, lacking information on allelic variants. Genomes are currently available for five of twenty-six *Pyrus* species in the Genome Database for Rosaceae (GDR; https://www.rosaceae.org/organism/26137), and for only a few of the thousands of recognized cultivars (J. Li et al. 2022).

Here, we sequenced and assembled a chromosome-scale reference genome for *Pyrus communis* 'd'Anjou' using PacBio HiFi and Dovetail Omni-C sequencing. This genome was assembled as

part of a semester-long undergraduate and graduate genomics course under the American Campus Tree Genomes (ACTG) initiative, where undergraduate and graduate students assemble, annotate, and publish culturally and economically valuable tree species. Here we present a haplotype-resolved, chromosome-scale assembly and annotation of Anjou pear, place it in a phylogenetic context with other Rosaceae species, and show evidence of an ancient whole-genome duplication (WGD) event shared by cultivated apple and pear.

Methods

Genome sequencing

Tissue was acquired from Van Wells Nursery as described in Zhang, et al (Zhang et al. 2022). The source material was labeled as the cultivar 'd'Anjou'. It should be noted we consider 'Anjou' and 'Beurré d'Anjou' as synonymous cultivar names. DNA was isolated from young leaf tissue using a standard CTAB approach (Doyle and Doyle 1987). Illumina TruSeq DNA PCR-free libraries were constructed from 1 µg of input DNA and sequenced on an Illumina NovaSeq6000 at HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology. These short-reads were generated for plastid genome assembly as well as genome size estimation and post-assembly assessment. Raw reads were assessed for quality using FASTQC v0.11.9 (Andrews et al. 2010). Then, low quality reads were filtered out of the raw data by using *fastp* v0.12.4, allowing the generation of a statistical report with MultiQC 1.13.dev0 (Ewels et al. 2016). Nuclear genome size and ploidy were estimated using jellyfish v2.2.10 ((Ranallo-Benavidez, Jaron, and Schatz 2020; Marçais and Kingsford 2011)) to count *k*-mers, and visualized in GenomeScope2.0 (Ranallo-Benavidez, Jaron, and Schatz 2020; Marçais and Kingsford 2011). For PacBio HiFi sequencing, approximately 20 grams of young leaf tissue from a 'd'Anjou' pear clone were collected and flash-frozen in liquid nitrogen. High molecular weight DNA was isolated from the young leaf tissue using a Circulomics Nanobind Plant Nuclei Big DNA kit (Baltimore, MD), with 4 g of input tissue and a 2 hour lysis. DNA was tested for purity via spectrophotometry, quantified by Qubit dsDNA Broad Range, and size selected on an Agilent Femto Pulse. DNA was sheared with a Diagenode Megaruptor and size-selected to roughly 25 kb on a BluePippin. A PacBio sequencing library was produced using the SMRTbell Express Template Prep Kit 2.0, and CCS (HiFi) reads were produced on two 8M flow cells. Pacbio HiFi read quality was assessed for read quality versus read distribution (Figure S1) using software *Pauvre* v0.2.3 (Schultz, Ebbert, and De Coster 2019).

Plastid genome assembly and annotation

The plastid genomes from five *Pyrus* individuals (Table S3) were assembled using *NOVOPlasty* v4.3.1 (Dierckxsens, Mardulyn, and Smits 2016), setting the expected plastid genome size to 130-170 kb and using the seed file provided (https://github.com/ndierckx/NOVOPlasty). The assembled plastid genomes were annotated using *Ge-Seq* v2.0.3 (Tillich et al. 2017) and visualized using *OGDRAW* v1.3.1 (Greiner, Lehwark, and Bock 2019).

Genome assembly and scaffolding

Raw HiFi reads were assembled into contigs using *hifiasm* v0.16.0 (H. Cheng et al. 2021). To scaffold the "d'Anjou" genome, 1g of young leaf tissue was used as input for a Dovetail Omni-C library per manufacturer instructions (Dovetail Genomics, Inc.). The Omni-C library was sequenced on an Illumina NovaSeq6000 using paired-end 150 base-pair reads. To map the Omni-C data to our preliminary genome assembly, the Arima genomics pipeline was followed (https://github.com/ArimaGenomics/mapping_pipeline). Scaffolding was then performed using yet another Hi-C scaffolding tool (YaHS) with default parameters (Zhou, McCarthy, and Durbin 2023). Omni-C contact maps were visualized using Juicebox version 1.11.08 (Durand et al. 2016). Several examples of likely misassembled regions were manually rearranged in Juicebox and documented in Supplementary Methods. Genome completeness was assessed using compleasm v0.2.2 with the lineage "embryophyta_odb10" (Huang and Li 2023).

Annotating repeats and Transposable Elements

Transposable elements (TEs) were predicted and annotated from the pear genome assembly using the Extensive de-novo TE Annotator (EDTA) pipeline (v1.9.3) (Ou et al. 2019; Ellinghaus, Kurtz, and Willhoeft 2008; Xu and Wang 2007; Ou and Jiang 2019, 2018; Su, Gu, and Peterson 2019; Shi and Liang 2019; Xiong et al. 2014). EDTA parameters were set to the following: "--species others --step all --sensitive 1 --anno 1 --evaluate 1 --threads 4". The coverage of genes and repeats in 1 Mb windows with a 100 Kb step was calculated using bedtools version 2.30.0 (Quinlan and Hall 2010) and plotted onto the chromosomes using karyoploteR version 1.18.0 (Gel and Serra 2017).

Structural variant analysis

First, assemblies were aligned using MUMmer (Marçais et al. 2018). Next, tructural variants were characterized between genome assemblies using Assemblytics (Nattestad and Schatz 2016). More details are provided in the Supplementary Methods.

Gene annotation

Protein-coding genes were annotated using MAKER2 (Holt and Yandell 2011). Arabidopsis Araport 11 proteins and seven *P. communis* 'd'Anjou' RNA-seq libraries were used as evidence (C.-Y. Cheng et al. 2017). RNA-seq libraries are available on the NCBI SRA under accession PRJNA791346. One round of evidence-based annotation was performed and used to iteratively train ab-initio prediction models through both SNAP and Augustus. More details are provided in Supplementary Methods.

RNA-seq analyses

RNA-seq reads were retrieved from the NCBI SRA under accession PRJNA791346. Reads were adapter trimmed using the BBMap `bbduk.sh` script (https://sourceforge.net/projects/bbmap/). Gene expression was quantified using Kallisto (Bray et

al. 2016). Clustering was performed using the `heatmap()` function in R (Team 2022). More details are provided in the Supplementary Methods.

Comparative genomic analyses

Putative synteny constrained orthologs between *Pyrus communis* 'd'Anjou', *Malus domestica* 'Honeycrisp', and *Prunus cerasus* 'Montmorency' were identified using the JCVI utilities library compara catalog ortholog function (Tang et al. 2015). Synonymous substitution rates were calculated using a custom Ka/Ks pipeline (https://github.com/Aeyocca/ka_ks_pipe). Briefly, orthologs were aligned using MUSCLEv3.8.31 (Edgar 2004), and PAL2NAL v14 was used to convert the peptide alignment to a nucleotide alignment and Ks values were computed between gene pairs using codeml from PAML v4.9 with parameters specified in the control file found in the GitHub repository listed above (Suyama, Torrents, and Bork 2006; Yang 1997).

Results

Nuclear Genome assembly

We generated several types of sequencing data to assemble and annotate the Anjou genome (Fig 1). Given an estimated genome size of ~550Mb (Niu et al. 2020), we generated 113X coverage of Illumina shotgun data, 66X coverage of Pacbio HiFi data and 190X of Omni-C data per haplotype. Genomescope estimated a *k*-mer based genome size of ~495Mb, 46.79% of repeated sequences, and 1.79% heterozygosity (Fig S1). We assessed the quality of our HiFi reads using Pauvre indicating high quality libraries and a read length distribution centered around 15kb (Fig S2). Our mean and median read lengths were 15,555bp and 14,758bp while the longest read was 49,417bp long.

The final assembly is haplotype-resolved with 17 chromosomes per haplotype. Chromosomes were oriented according to the *Malus domestica* "Honeycrisp" assembly (Khan et al. 2022). The final assembly consisted of nearly 540Mb per haplotype with >93% of the raw contig assemblies contained in the 17 chromosomes (Fig S3). The contig N50s for haplotype 1 and 2 respectively were 14.7Mb and 13.4Mb while the scaffold N50s were 29.6Mb. We found >99% complete BUSCOs in each haplotype with over 30% of them present in duplicate, reflecting the whole-genome duplication (WGD) experienced by the Maleae lineage ~45 million years ago (Xiang et al. 2017). Over 99% of our Illumina reads were properly mapped back to our assembly. *k*-mer based completeness between Illumina reads and the final assembly demonstrated high quality values (36.16) and low error rates (0.0002423) for both haplotypes.

Chloroplast assembly

We also assembled the chloroplast of *P. communis* 'd'Anjou' along with four other *Pyrus* species or accessions (Table S3; Fig S4; Fig2). The chloroplast genomes were similar in size, ranging from 159kb to 161kb, and consisted of a large single-copy region, small single-copy region, and two inverted repeats for each species. *Pyrus* as a genus consists of two major genetic

groups: European and Asian (Zheng et al. 2014). *Pyrus hopeiensis*, *P. pyrifolia*, and *P. bretscheirderi* are all considered Asian species. We estimated phylogenetic relationships between our chloroplast assemblies and found both representatives of *Pyrus communis* sister to each other consistent with expectations.

Transposable Elements (TEs) are important components of plant genomes, contributing to genome size variation, gene family evolution, and transcriptional novelty (Lu et al. 2019; Quadrana 2020). Repetitive elements were annotated using the Extensive *de novo* Transposable Element Annotator (EDTA; (Ou et al. 2019)) (Table 1). A total of 39-42% of each haplotype consisted of repetitive elements. The majority of these elements by length were long terminal repeat (LTR) retrotransposons accounting for ~32% of each haplotype. These elements are most abundant around the putative centromeres, but are also ubiquitous in gene rich regions (Fig 3). Terminal inverted repeats (TIRs) were also abundant and dominated by Mutator elements (~3.4% of each haplotype).

Each haplotype was independently annotated with expression evidence, Arabidopsis protein evidence, and *ab initio* gene prediction using the MAKER pipeline (Supplementary Methods; Table S4). We annotated a total of 44,839 genes in haplotype A and 44,561 genes in haplotype B, which is similar to the number of genes annotated in *Malus domestica* 'Honeycrisp' (50,105). Gene density was highest on chromosome arms and was inversely related to the density of transposable elements (Fig 3).

There were several structural variants between our two haplotypes (Table 2). We characterized 13,421 variants within 50-10,000 base-pairs between the haplotypes, totaling almost 32Mb of sequence. Repeat expansion and contractions were the largest classes of structural variant. Insertions and deletions also affected nearly 6Mb of sequence between haplotypes. Between *P. communis* 'd'Anjou' and *P. communis* 'Bartlett', 14,946 variants affected 26Mb of sequence. The total amount of sequence affected is lower than that observed between 'd'Anjou' haplotypes. This may simply be due to a more complete assembly for both Anjou haplotypes relative to the 'Bartlett' assembly.

Comparative genomics and polyploidy

Rosaceae as a plant family contains several important crops such as pear, apple, peach, cherry, and blackberry. Comparative genomics between these crops may allow functional genomics in one species to be translated to others. Therefore, we compared the genomes of three of these important crops: *P. communis* 'd'Anjou' (pear), *Malus domestica* 'Honeycrisp' (apple (Khan et al. 2022)), and *Prunus cerasus* 'Montmorency' (cherry; (Goeckeritz et al. 2023)). Both our assembled haplotypes were highly collinear with each other and with apple. We identified 40,567 orthologs between pear haplotypes, 30,340 orthologs between pear haplotype 1 and apple, and 20,526 orthologs to *P. cerasus* 'Montmorency' consistent with pear's divergence with apple postdating that to cherry.

Apple and pear share a WGD occurring after their divergence with cherry (Xiang et al. 2017). Our results show they both demonstrate a high percentage (>⅓) of duplicated BUSCO genes as

well as 17 chromosomes, almost double the Amygdaloideae base chromosome count of 9 (Hodel et al. 2021). Therefore, we infer apple and pear retain much of their genome in duplicate. Across all genes within *P. communis* 'd'Anjou', approximately 57% are classified as having a syntenic paralog retained from this WGD event (Table S5).

'Montmorency' is a tetraploid formed from a hybridization between different *Prunus* species after their divergence with the common ancestor of apple and pear. Therefore, we only compared the "A" subgenome to our assemblies. As expected, each cherry "A" subgenome scaffold was syntenic with ~2 pear and apple scaffolds (Fig 4A). Additionally there were blocks in pear syntenic with 2 regions of apple that are likely regions retained from the last WGD event. There were likely further karyotype changes since the divergence of Malineae and cherry as the syntenic blocks are not entirely retained nor perfectly paired in 1:2 ratios. However, there remains high collinearity with these genomes suggesting future translation of functional genomics across species.

The distribution of synonymous substitution rates (Ks) across gene pairs indicates the divergence between them as gene pairs will accumulate synonymous substitutions over time (Yang and Nielsen 2000; Senchina et al. 2003). We see orthologs between haplotype 1 and 2 in our assembly have a Ks distribution centered near zero as expected for allelic copies of genes that are still segregating within the species. Comparing haplotype 1 to itself identifies gene pairs that are retained from the most recent WGD event. We see this distribution is higher than that of gene pairs between *Pyrus* and *Malus* suggesting this WGD event occurred before the divergence of these species. Additionally, comparing *M. domestica* to itself shows a distribution similar to that of the *Pyrus* self comparison as expected reflecting a shared WGD event or at the very least, a different WGD event occurring around the same time (Fig 4B; green star). This distribution is lower than that compared to *Prunus cerasus* as this WGD event post-dates the divergence of the cherry and apple/pear lineages.

Gene expression

We quantified gene expression across seven tissues (Table 3). We found expression evidence for ~33-35,000 gene models per tissue. Most gene models were expressed in Fruitlet Stage 1, and the least were expressed in Fruitlet Stage 2 suggesting dynamic gene expression across fruit development. There was evidence of gene expression in at least a single tissue for 40,734 gene models, while 2,152 genes were expressed in only a single tissue (average of 307 genes per tissue). Our expression data were generated to assist genome annotation and are only single replicates. We therefore cannot perform differential expression analyses. We instead performed hierarchical clustering of gene expression (Fig 5). We see stable clustering across haplotypes and find similar tissues cluster together. For example, our two fruit libraries clustered with each other. We generated an UpSet plot showing the fifteen largest intersects of genes expressed >1 transcript per million (TPM; Fig 5). The largest intersect was genes expressed >1 TPM in every tissue queried. The top fifteen intersects, however, included each of the seven tissue-specific

categories. Open Buds had the most tissue-specific genes (445) while Budding Leaves specific genes had the least (171).

Conclusion

We assembled a chromosome-scale phased genome assembly for cultivated European pear. PacBio HiFi reads coupled with Dovetail Omni-C resulted in a high quality assembly, displaying high *k*-mer completeness, quality scores, synteny with available assemblies, and recovery of universal single-copy orthologs. This assembly revealed thousands of structural variants between haplotypes which are of great importance to future pear breeding efforts as structural variants disrupt recombination. Comparative analyses between other members of the Rosaceae family demonstrated deeply conserved synteny and recovered evidence for a 45 million year old whole genome duplication event. Gene expression across several tissue types was largely conserved, but thousands of genes also constrained themselves to a single tissue. Further characterization of pear germplasm will accelerate breeding gains not only within pear but potentially across multiple Rosaceous crops. Lastly, we highlight the utility of generating such genomes as part of semester courses, and the training opportunities that it provides.

Data Availability

Data used to generate this assembly are deposited in the NCBI SRA under BioProject PRJNA992953. Gene expression data are available separately under BioProject PRJNA791346. Custom scripts used throughout are available on github https://github.com/Aeyocca/dAnjou_genome_MS. Genome assembly and annotation files are available on Genome Database for Rosaceae (GDR) https://www.rosaceae.org/Analysis/17650423 and on the NCBI SRA under accession numbers PRJNA1047602 and PRJNA1047603.

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Repeat Type	Hap	Count	bp Masked	% Masked	Repeat Type	Hap	Count	bp Masked	% Masked
LTR Ty1	1	31417	29651485	5.6	LTR Ty1	2	30811	29080309	5.73
LTR Ty3	1	52870	65248004	12.32	LTR Ty3	2	51619	65330713	12.88
LTR Unknown	1	52617	44783539	8.46	LTR Unknown	2	60287	50732038	10
TIR CACTA	1	20714	7389362	1.4	TIR CACTA	2	19593	7081084	1.4
TIR Mutator	1	75530	18368328	3.47	TIR Mutator	2	71859	17304544	3.41
TIR PIF Harbinger	1	26889	9561615	1.81	TIR PIF Harbinger	2	25649	9164523	1.81
TIR Tc1 Mariner	1	1950	713551	0.13	TIR Tc1 Mariner	2	1857	567099	0.11
TIR hAT	1	14789	4479323	0.85	TIR hAT	2	13724	4267786	0.84
LINE	1	1494	720397	0.14	LINE	2	1409	710461	0.14
nonLTR Unknown	1	242	304682	0.06	nonLTR Unknown	2	215	279820	0.06
helitron	1	25911	8267980	1.56	helitron	2	29480	9716313	1.92
Other repeat region	1	83566	21068202	3.98	Other repeat region	2	87157	21406735	4.22
Total	1	387989	210556468	39.78	Total	2	393660	215641425	42.52

Table 1: Summary of repeat elements annotated by EDTA. Abbreviations are as follows. LTR; Long-Terminal Repeat. TIR; Terminal Inverted Repeat. PIF; P instability Factor. LINE; Long interspersed nuclear element. Hap; Haplotype. bp; base pairs

Reference	Query	Variant type	# Variants	# bases affected
'd'Anjou' Hap1	'd'Anjou' Hap2	Indel	4,297	6,000,228
'd'Anjou' Hap1	'd'Anjou' Hap2	Repeat	8,711	24,943,411
'd'Anjou' Hap1	'Bartlett'	Indel	5,739	4,439,368
'd'Anjou' Hap1	'Bartlett'	Repeat	8,910	11,571,098

Table 2: Structural variants between 50-10,000bp identified by Assemblytics. Indel is short for "Insertion / deletion".

Tissue	Hap	Genes expressed	Median TPM	Tissue	Hap	Genes expressed	Median TPM
Budding Leaves	**1**	**33594**	**84.97**	**Budding Leaves**	**2**	**33470**	**88.00**
Expanding Leaves	**1**	**34469**	**119.7**	**Expanding Leaves**	**2**	**34380**	**122.0**
Flower Buds	**1**	**34138**	**71.34**	**Flower Buds**	**2**	**34082**	**73.3**
Fruitlet Stage 1	**1**	**34923**	**193**	**Fruitlet Stage 1**	**2**	**34797**	**200**
Fruitlet Stage 2	**1**	**33227**	**96.4**	**Fruitlet Stage 2**	**2**	**33107**	**100.0**
Open Buds	**1**	**34463**	**72.0**	**Open Buds**	**2**	**34372**	**74.02**
¼" buds	**1**	**34718**	**108.3**	**¼" buds**	**2**	**34513**	**111.00**

Table 3: Expression characteristics of *Pyrus communis* 'd'Anjou'. Abbreviations are as follows: Hap; Haplotype. TPM; transcripts per million reads

Figure Legends

Figure 1: Pear fruit photographs. Photographs of Green Anjou fruit (A) and Red Anjou fruit (B). Photos were provided by USA Pears.

Figure 2: Chloroplast assemblies and phylogeny. Chloroplast genomes of assorted pear cultivars - assemblies and annotations. Plastid assemblies were carried out using *NOVOPlasty* v4.4.1 and annotated using *Ge-Seq* v2.0.3. Phylogenetic relationships were estimated using maximum likelihood under the generalized time reversible model.

Figure 3: distributions of genomic elements. Density of genomic elements across our assembly. Feature densities are calculated in 1Mb windows with a 100kb step size. Features on haplotype 1 are listed in panel A, and those on haplotype 2 are listed in panel B. Genes are colored orange, Ty3 transposable elements are colored light blue, Copia transposable elements are colored dark blue, and other repeat elements annotated by EDTA are colored yellow. Numbers along the x-axis correspond to position along the chromosome (Mb).

Figure 4: Ribbon plot and Ks distributions. (A) A phylogenetic tree with known relationships between four assemblies. To the right is a ribbon plot based on gene synteny created with GENESPACE (Lovell et al. 2022). (B) A density plot showing the distribution of synonymous substitution rates (Ks) between genome-wide gene pairs. The shared WGD event is denoted by a green star. All comparisons are to *Pyrus communis* 'd'Anjou' haplotype 1 except for the "*Malus domestica* self" comparison. Abbreviations are as follows: "*Pyrus* Hap1" - "*Pyrus communis* 'd'Anjou' haplotype 1", "*Pyrus* Hap2" - "*Pyrus communis* 'd'Anjou' haplotype 2".

Figure 5: Gene expression characterization. Heatmaps and UpSet plot of gene expression. Cladograms represent the relationships between libraries through hierarchical clustering. 1000 genes are displayed that show expression in each tissue and have the highest expression variance. A) represents haplotype 1 and B) represents haplotype 2. C) UpSet plot of expression across tissues for haplotype 1. Genes were considered expressed if they had a TPM value above 1. Note the break in the y-axis.

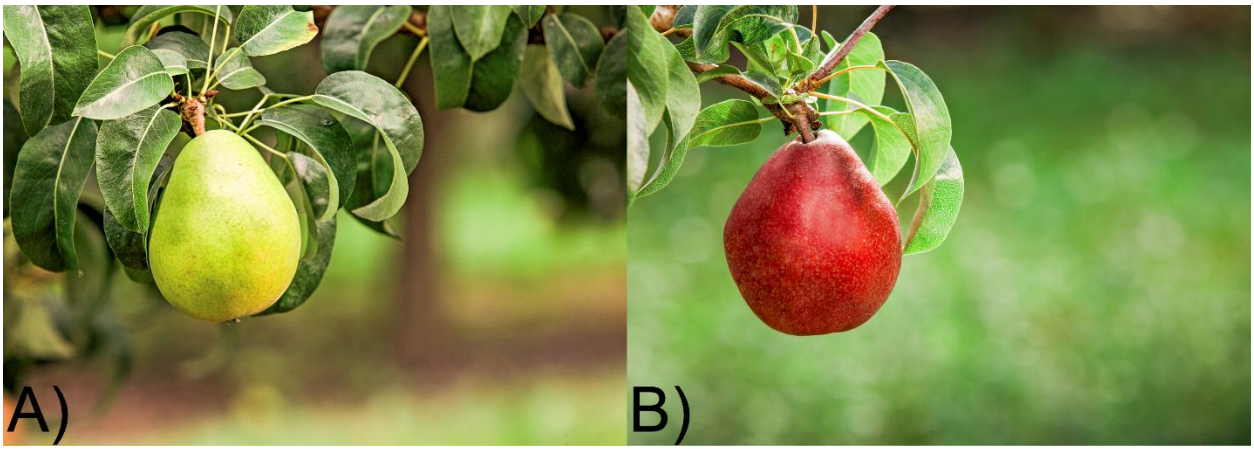

Figure 1
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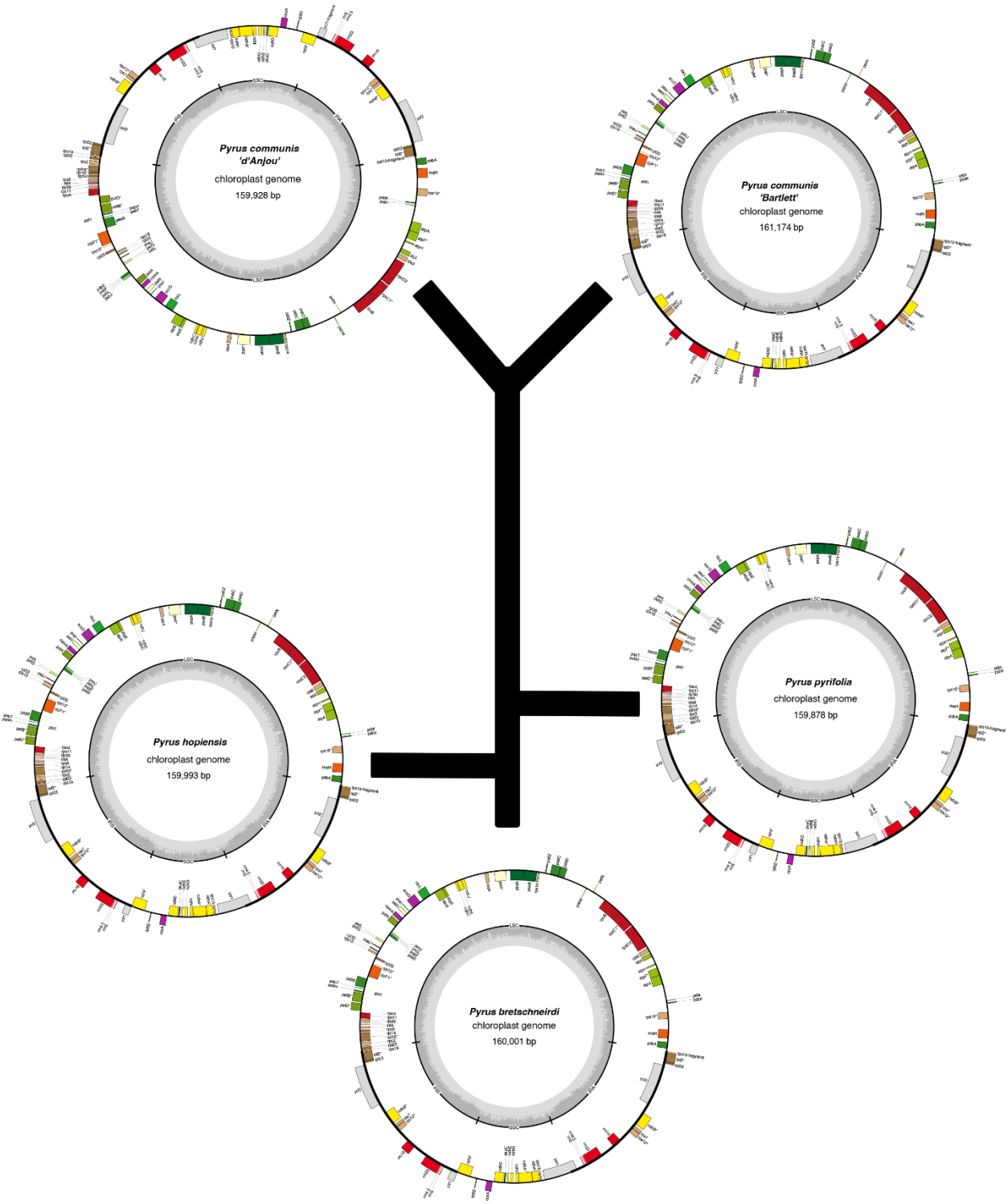

Figure 2
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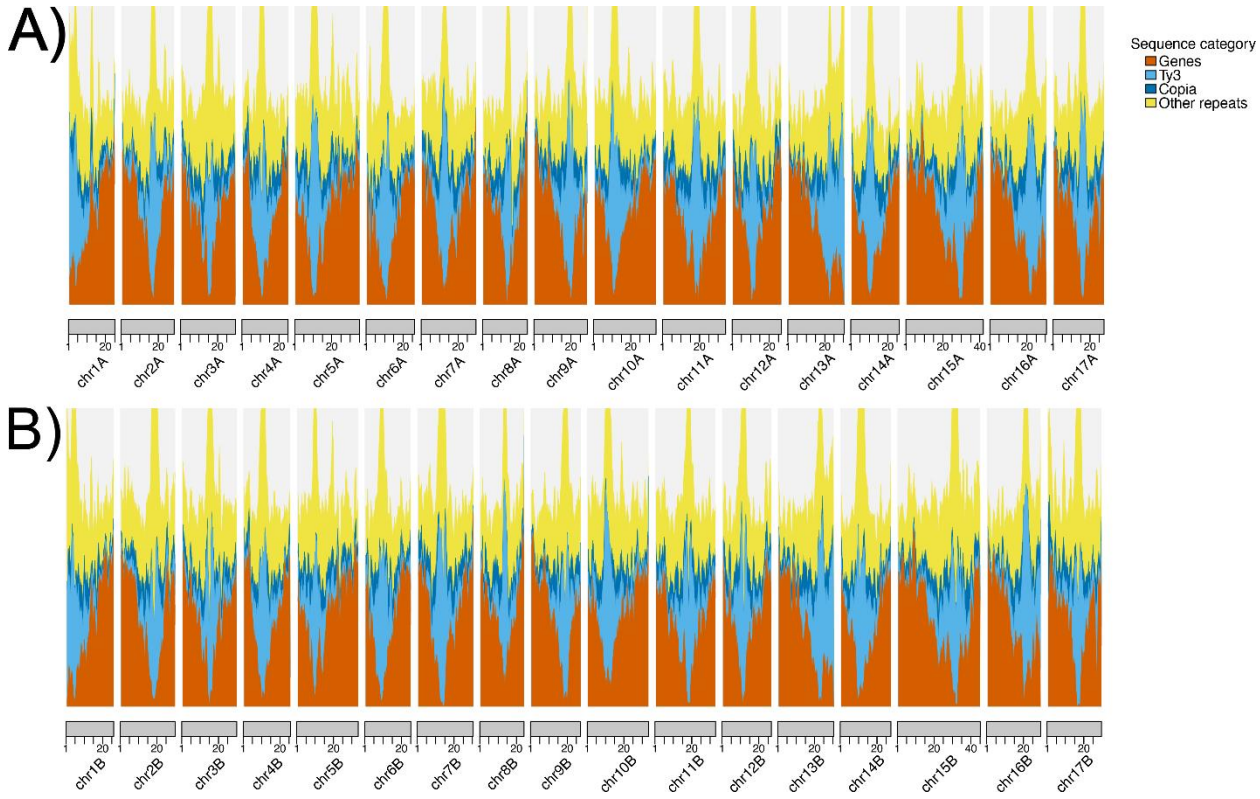

Figure 3
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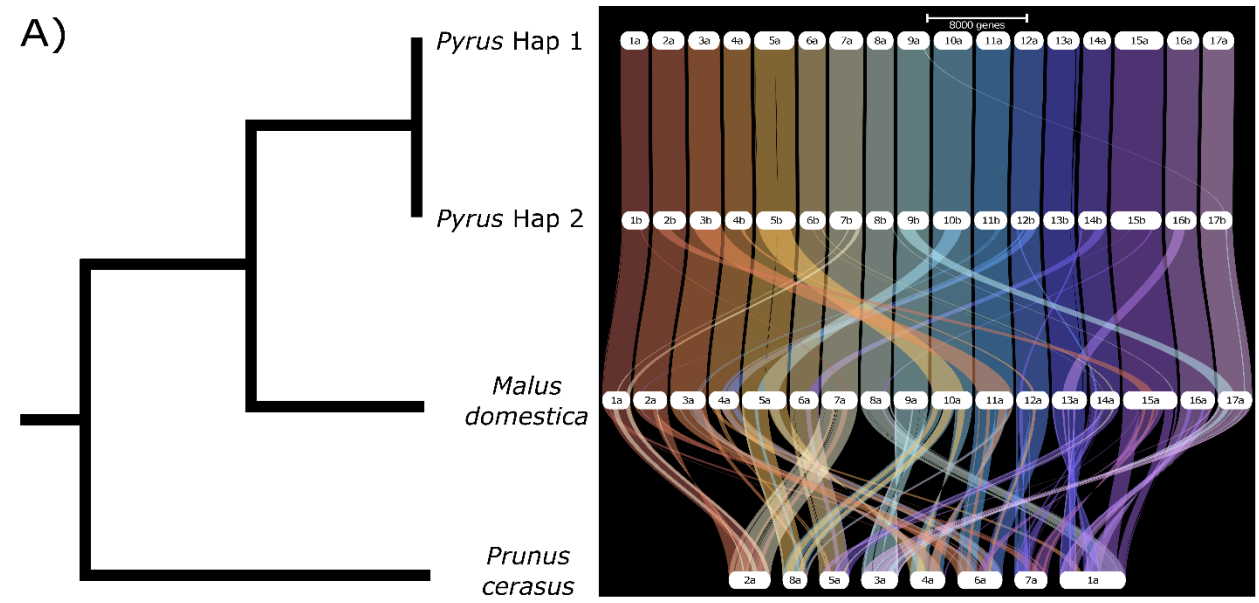

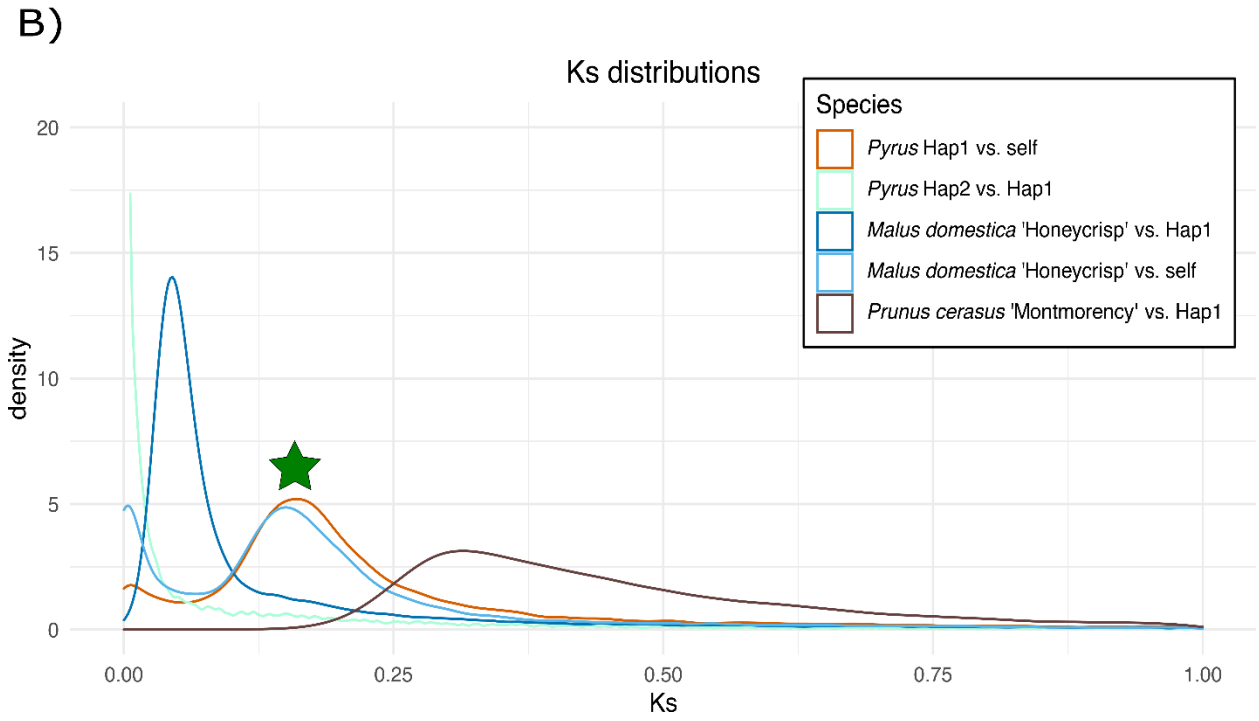

Figure 4
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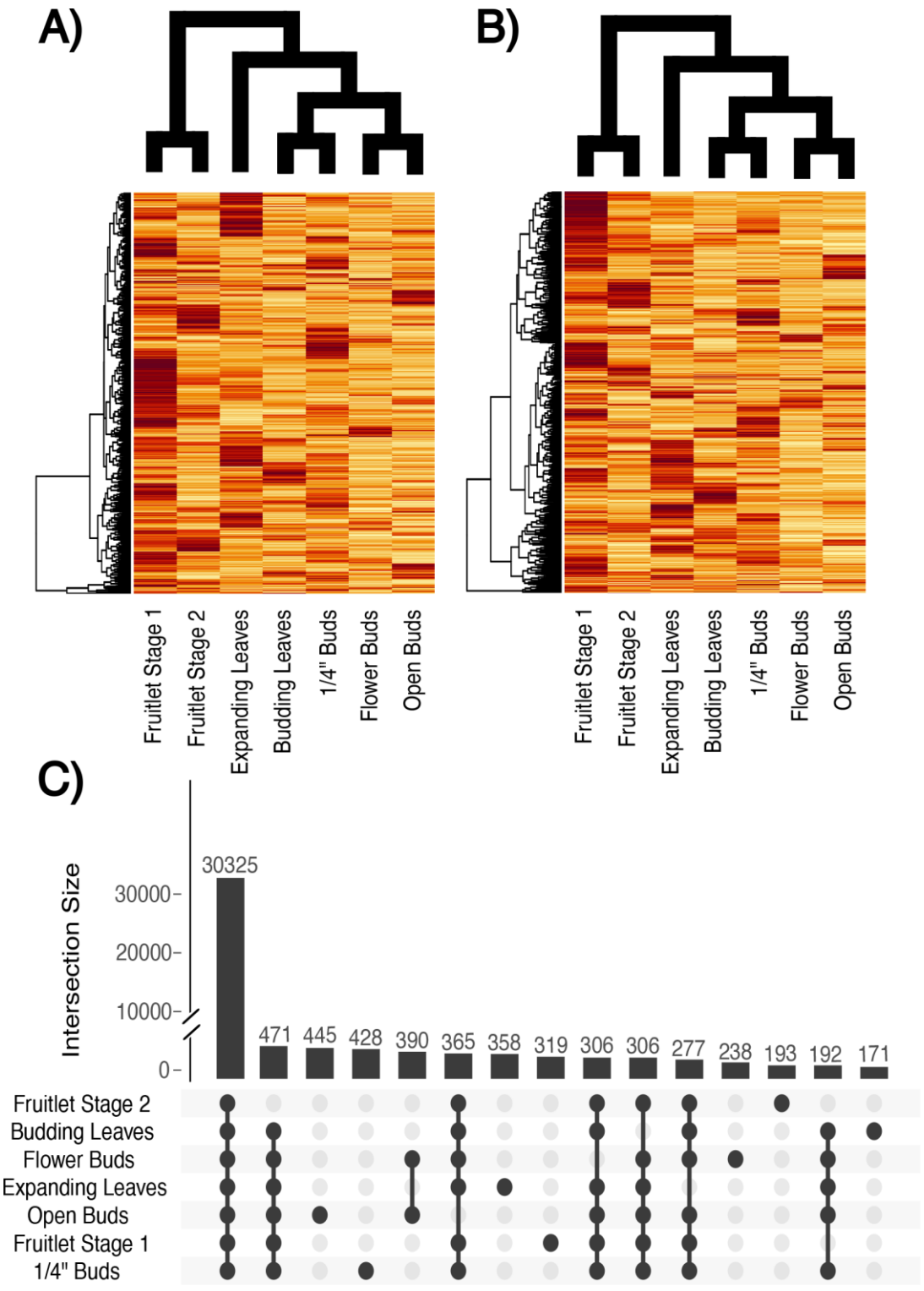

Figure 5
144x200 mm (x DPI)