Identification of Peroxisome-Targeted Proteins Implicated in Plant Innate Immunity in *Arabidopsis thaliana*

By

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Abstract

Peroxisomes are subcellular organelles, traditionally known to be involved in processes like photorespiration, fatty acid β-oxidation, and detoxification of reactive oxygen species. Proteome analysis of plant peroxisomes and targeting signal prediction methods are important tools to identify novel peroxisomal proteins. In the present study the accuracy of newly developed methods to predict peroxisome targeting signals type 1 (PTS1) in plant proteins was investigated by *in vivo* subcellular targeting analyses. Upon application of these prediction methods to the *Arabidopsis thaliana* genome, 392 gene models were predicted to possess functional PTS1 domains, several proteins of which were validated as peroxisomal and numerous novel PTS1 tripeptides were identified. Furthermore, several detoxification-related enzymes and defense-related *Arabidopsis* proteins were detected by proteome analyses and PTS1 prediction methods that were potentially targeted to peroxisomes.

Two enzymes of the ascorbate-glutathione (ASC-GSH) cycle, glutathione reductase 1 (GR1) and dehydroascorbate reductase 1 (DHAR1), and five glutathione-S transferases (GSTs) had been detected by proteome analysis in leaf peroxisomes. *In vivo* subcellular localization targeting analyses of the present study verified peroxisomal targeting for GR1 and the protein was found to carry a functional novel PTS1 (TNL>). By contrast, the four GSTs remained cytosolic in the chosen orientation in the back of the reporter protein.

New fragmented evidence has been emerging in the literature for an important role of plant peroxisomes in innate immunity. In the present study sixteen defense-related *Arabidopsis* proteins were experimentally investigated for protein targeting to peroxisomes by *in vivo* subcellular localization. The proteins of interest included several yet unknown homologs of *Arabidopsis* NDR1 and tobacco HIN1, the so-called NDR1/HIN1 like (NHL) proteins. *In vivo* subcellular localization was primarily investigated for three NHL family members (NHL4, NHL6 and NHL25). Peroxisome targeting was verified for NHL4 with strong indications also for NHL6 and NHL25 in being located in peroxisomes. AtIAN12 is a homolog of AIG1/AtIAN8 and had been identified by *Arabidopsis* leaf peroxisome proteomics. *In vivo* subcellular localization experiments demonstrated that AtIAN12 protein is targeted

to peroxisomes and indicated that the targeting pathway involves post-translational protein modification by isoprenylation. Taken together, the data indicate for the first time that one NDR1/HIN1 homolog (NHL4) and AtIAN homolog (AtIAN12) are peroxisome associated.

Preliminary gene expression analyses indicated that three *NHL* genes and three *AtIAN* genes are induced by a bacterial pathogen (*Pst* DC3000), while *NHL6*, *NHL25*, and *AtIAN8* are induced by an avirulent *Pst* DC3000 strain (carrying the effector avrRpt2). Out of the six *NHL* and *AtIAN* genes, only *NHL6* appeared to be induced in wt Col-0 plants by the bacterial elicitor (flg22), but remained unaffected in *Arabidopsis* plants carrying a mutation in the flagellin receptor gene *FLS2*. The data suggested that NHL6 is involved in basal PAMP triggered immunity (PTI). Furthermore, *NHL6* transcripts accumulated similarily in both wt plants and *npr1* mutant plants after flg22 treatment, which indicates that *NHL6* induction is NPR1-independent. Functional studies were initiated through the isolation of homozygous mutants, amiRNA lines and overexpresser lines for selected *NHL* and *AtIAN* genes. In homozygous mutants (three *nhl* mutants and *ian11*), differences in bacterial proliferation were observed compared to wt plants upon infection with the avirulent bacterium *Pst* DC3000 (avrRpt2). Overall, the identification of several defense-related proteins in peroxisomes together with preliminary functional data on NHL proteins opens new perspectives to important, multi-layered peroxisome functions in plant innate immunity.

List of publications

1- LINGNER, T., KATAYA, A.R., ANTONICELLI, G.E., BENICHOU, A., NILSSEN, K., CHEN, X.Y., SIEMSEN, T., MORGENSTERN, B., MEINICKE, P. & REUMANN, S. (2011) Identification of Novel Plant Peroxisomal Targeting Signals by a Combination of Machine Learning Methods and *in Vivo* Subcellular Targeting Analyses. *Plant Cell*, **23,** 1556-1572.

2- KATAYA, A.R.A. & REUMANN, S. (2010) Arabidopsis Glutathione Reductase 1 Is Dually Targeted to Peroxisomes and the Cytosol. *Plant Signal Behav*, **5:2,** 171-175.

List of abbreviations

AIG	avrRpt2-induced gene
APS	Ammonium persulfate
APX	Ascorbate peroxidase
ASC-GSH	Ascorbate-glutathione
AtSurE	*Arabidopsis* acid phosphatase survival protein SurE
avr	Avirulence
CAD7	Cinnamyl-alchol dehydrogenase7
CaMV	*Cauliflower mosaic virus*
CaMV 35S promoter	*Cauliflower mosaic virus* 35s promoter
CC	Coiled coil
CDR1	Constitutive disease resistance 1
CFP	Cyan fluorescence protein
CFU	Colony forming units
CoA	Coenzyme A
coxIV	Cytochrome c oxidase IV subunit
DAPI	4', 6-diamidino-2-phenylindole
DHAR	Dehydroascorbate reductase
DMSO	Dimethyl sulfoxide
DRP	Disease resistance protein-related
EDS1	Enhanced disease susceptibility 1
EDTA	Ethylene diaminetetra acetic acid
EFR	Elongation factor-Tu receptor
ER	Endoplasmic reticulum
EST	Expressed sequence tag
ETI	Effector-triggered immunity
EYFP	Enhanced yellow fluorescent protein
FLS2	Flagellin sensing 2
GFP	Green fluorescent protein
GIMAP	GTPase of immunity-associated proteins
gMDH	Glyoxysomal malate dehydrogenase
GR	Glutathione reductase
GST	Glutathione S-transferase
GTPases	GTP-binding proteins
H_2O_2	Hydrogen peroxide
HIN1	Harpin-induced gene1
His	Histidine
HR	Hypersensitive response
IAA	Indole acetic acid
IAN	Immune-associated nucleotide-binding proteins
IBA	Indole-3-butyric acid
IPTG	Isopropyl-beta-D-thiogalactopyranoside
JA	Jasmonic acid
LB	Lysogeny broth

LIMDP	LIM domain-containing protein
LM	Low salt medium
LPS	Lipopolysaccharides
LRR	Leucine rich repeat
LS	Linsmaier & Skoog
MAPK	Mitogen-activated protein kinase
MBP	Maltose binding protein
MDAR	Monodehydroascorbate reductase
MIF	Macrophage migration inhibitor factor
MS	Murashige and Skoog
NBS	Nucleotide binding site
NDR1	Non-race specific disease resistance 1
NHL	NDR1/HIN1 like proteins
NPR1	Nonexpressor of PR genes 1
OFP	Orange fluorescent protein
OZI1	Ozone-induced protein 1
PAMP	Pathogen-associated molecular pattern
PEG	Polyethylene glycol
PEN	Penetration
PEX	Peroxin
PM	Plasma membrane
PMP	Peroxisomal membrane protein
PMSF	Phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride
PPT	Phosphinotricin
PR	Pathogenesis-related
PRR	Pattern recognition receptor
Ps	*Pseudomonas syringae*
Pst DC3000	*Pseudomonas syringae* pv. tomato DC3000
PTD	Peroxisomal targeting domain
PTI	PAMP-triggered immunity
PTS	Peroxisome targeting signal
pv.	Pathover
R	Resistance
RFP	Red fluorescent protein
RIN4	RPM1-interacting protein 4
ROS	Reactive oxygen species
RPM	Resistance to *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. maculicola
RPS	Resistance to *Pseudomonas syringae*
RuBisCO	Ribulose bisphosphate carboxylase/oxygenase
SA	Salicylic acid
SAR	Systemic acquired resistance
TEMED	N'-tetramethylethane-1,2-diamine
TIR	Toll interleukin receptor
TTSS	Type III secretion system
X-Gal	5-bromo-4-chloro-3-indolyl-β-d-galactopyranoside

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1. Introduction

1.1 Peroxisomes

Peroxisomes are single membrane bound subcellular organelles, present in all major groups of eukaryotes (Gabaldon, 2010). They are usually spherical microbodies in the range of 0.1 to 1 µm in diameter. Peroxisomes were first discovered as compartments containing hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2) generating oxidases together with catalase that degrades H_2O_2 into molecular oxygen and water (De Duve and Baudhuin, 1966; van den Bosch et al., 1992; Kaur et al., 2009). Fatty acid β-oxidation and H_2O_2 detoxification are two well conserved functions of peroxisomes, but specialized functions were also identified, for example plant glyoxysomes are specialized peroxisomes in germinating seeds that harboring the glyoxylate cycle (Escher and Widmer, 1997; Graham, 2008). Plant leaf peroxisomes take part in photorespiratory glycolate metabolism, and the biosynthesis of hormones [indole acetic acid (IAA), Salicylic acid (SA), and jasmonic acid (JA)] (Nyathi and Baker, 2006). Glycosomes are found in trypanosomes where they contain the enzymes for glycolysis (Michels, 1988). Yeast peroxisomes are equipped with enzymes for methanol and amine oxidation (Veenhuis et al., 1983). Mammalian peroxisomes carry the enzymes involved in lipid and cholesterol synthesis (Wanders and Waterham, 2006; Wierzbicki, 2007).

1.1.1 Plant peroxisome functions

1.1.1.1 Metabolic functions

In peroxisomes, the β-oxidation pathway is responsible for fatty acid degradation. First, fatty acids are imported into peroxisomes and activated to coenzyme A (CoA) esters that are processed by sequential cleavage through β-oxidation. There are several physiological roles of β-oxidation in plants, for example embryo and flower development and production of signaling molecules [JA, SA and IAA, (Poirier et al., 2006; Kaur et al., 2009)].

During germination, long-chain fatty acids (which form triacylglycerol reserves in oil bodies in *Arabidopsis* and other oilseed plants) are used to provide energy. The degradation of triacylglycerols is carried out by glyoxysomes. Initially, triacylglycerols are activated by CoA and further degraded in successive steps and converted to acetyl-CoA. Acetyl-CoA is then converted to succinate, which is transported to the mitochondria where it fuels the tricarboxylic acid cycle (Figure 1.2) and to produce sucrose (Gerhardt, 1992; Olsen, 1998).

Almost five decades back, photorespiration was discovered in isolated spinach leaf peroxisomes after the detection of glycolate oxidase through the production of glycine from [^{14}C] glycolate, as glycolate is converted to glyoxylate with the production of H_2O_2. Glyoxylate is then transaminated and converted to glycine (Kisaki and Tolbert, 1969; Tolbert et al., 1969). Photorespiration is initiated by the oxygenase reaction of ribulose bisphosphate carboxylase/oxygenase (RubisCO) which is functioning according to O_2 concentration and light intensity. Photorespiration is coordinated across chloroplasts, peroxisomes, and mitochondria. Briefly, photorespiration is initiated when RuBisCO is activated in chloroplasts and produces two moles of phosphoglycolate (byproducts of the oxygenase reaction) which are converted to one mole of phosphoglycerate (intermediate of the Calvin–Benson cycle), and one CO_2 by the photorespiratory glycolate pathway (Hayashi and Nishimura, 2006).

Leaf peroxisomes convert glycolate to glycine and serine to glycerate by the enzymes glycolate oxidase, hydroxypyruvate reductase and two aminotransferases. The glycine produced is subsequently converted to serine in mitochondria by decarboxylation by glycine decarboxylase and serine hydroxymethyl transferase with the production of ammonia as a byproduct. Serine then re-enters the peroxisome to be transaminated by serine-glyoxylate aminotransferase to yield hydroxypyruvate, which is reduced by NADH (provided by peroxisomal malate dehydrogenase) to glycerate in a reaction catalyzed by hydroxypyruvate reductase. Finally, glycerate is phosphorylated in the chloroplast by a stromal glycerate kinase to produce 3-phosphoglycerate, which feeds into the Calvin cycle [Figure 1.1, (Hayashi and Nishimura, 2006; Reumann and Weber, 2006; Kaur et al., 2009)].

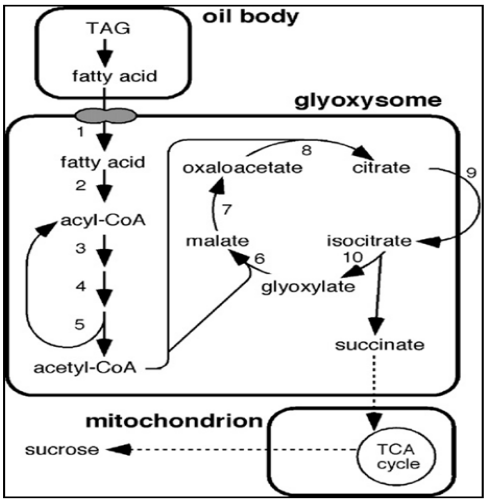

Figure 1.2: Gluconeogenesis from seed fatty acids
The conversion of fatty acids to succinate takes place in glyoxysomes via fatty acid β-oxidation (1–5) and the glyoxylate cycle (6–10). The enzymes involved in these pathways are: 1, full size ABC transporter; 2, acyl-CoA synthetase; 3, long-, medium- and short chain acyl-CoA oxidases; 4, the multifunctional protein possessing enoyl-CoA hydratase and 3-hydroxyacyl-CoA dehydrogenase activities; 5, 3-ketoacyl-CoA thiolase; 6, malate synthase; 7, malate dehydrogenase; 8, citrate synthase; 9, aconitase; 10, isocitrate lyase. Figure taken from (Hayashi and Nishimura, 2006).

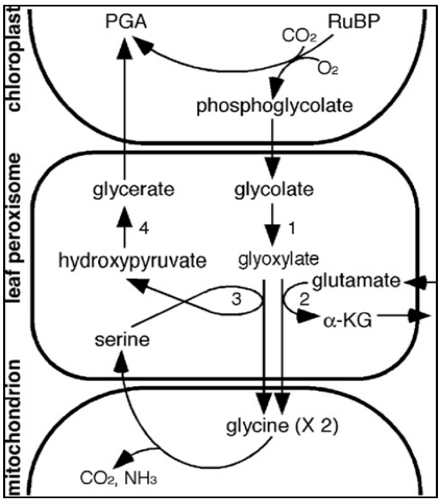

Figure 1.1: Photorespiratory glycolate metabolism
Photorespiration in photosynthetic tissue of C3 plants. Within the entire photorespiratory glycolate pathway, the leaf peroxisome converts glycolate to glycine and serine to glycerate. The enzymes involved in this metabolism are: 1, glycolate oxidase; 2, glutamate-glyoxylate aminotransferase; 3, serine-glyoxylate aminotransferase; 4, hydroxypyruvate reductase. Figure taken from (Hayashi and Nishimura, 2006).

1.1.1.2 Detoxification functions

Peroxisomes are also involved in the production of ROS [e.g. H_2O_2 and superoxide radicals (O2•−)], and reactive nitrogen species. These molecules are implicated in intra- and inter-cellular signaling. Under normal conditions equilibrium exists between the rate of synthesis and degradation of these molecules, while different biotic and abiotic stresses are disturbing this balance, which may initiate a signaling cascade or cause cellular damage, see 1.1.1.3, (Corpas et al., 2001; Nyathi and Baker, 2006).

The H_2O_2 produced in peroxisomes is degraded by antioxidant enzymes: catalase and ascorbate-glutathione (ASC-GSH) cycle

enzymes. The inactivation of peroxisomal antioxidant enzymes could create toxic conditions in the plant cell, leading to oxidative damage and cell death. For example catalase is reported to be inactivated by high light, peroxynitrite and different stress conditions (Corpas et al., 2001; Reumann and Corpas, 2010). When catalase is inactivated in peroxisomes, the ASC-GSH cycle is another alternative for H_2O_2 degradation. The ASC-GSH cycle had been described only biochemically in pea peroxisomes (Jimenez et al., 1997). While ascorbate peroxidase (APX) 3 and monodehydroascorbate reductase (MDAR) 1 and 4 had been cloned and validated to be peroxisomal proteins (Leterrier et al., 2005; Lisenbee et al., 2005; Narendra et al., 2006). Glutathione reductase (GR) and dehydroascorbate reductase (DHAR) had not been cloned from any plant species but only been biochemically characterized and found in peroxisomal proteome studies (Jimenez et al., 1997; Reumann et al., 2007; Reumann et al., 2009). According to the proposed model of ASC-GSH cycle, the membrane-bound APX in collaboration with MDAR, degrades H_2O_2 that can diffuse out of peroxisomes, as well as H_2O_2 being formed by $O2•−$ dismutation at the cytosolic side of the peroxisomal membrane. DHAR and GR, located in the peroxisomal matrix, accomplish detoxification of H_2O_2 produced in the matrix in sequential ascorbate- and glutathione-dependent reactions. The ASC-GSH cycle also provides NAD^+ for peroxisomal metabolism and GSH protects the flavin-containing oxidases against photo-inactivation (Jimenez et al., 1997; Reumann and Corpas, 2010).

Other important key factors in detoxification reactions are glutathione S-transferases [GSTs; 48 members classified into phi, tau, theta, zeta and lambda classes, (Edwards and Dixon, 2005)]. GSTs have several glutathione (GSH) dependent functions including the conjugation and resulting detoxification of herbicides, the reduction of organic hydroperoxides formed during oxidative stress and others, e.g. soluble GSTs act as glutathione peroxidases (Edwards and Dixon, 2005). Three members of the GST subfamily theta (T) have been shown to be peroxisome-targeted (Reumann et al., 2007; Dixon and Edwards, 2009). Additionally, four GSTs of the U and F subfamilies (GSTU19, GSTU20, GSTF7 and GSTF10) have been identified in isolated *Arabidopsis* leaf peroxisomes by proteome analyses (Reumann et al., 2009).

1.1.1.3 Stress-related functions

Essential roles of peroxisomes in stress and plant defense responses against pathogens were recently reported. For example, peroxisomes proliferate much more under different stress conditions produced by xenobiotics, ozone, heavy metals, wounding, salt and pathogen attack (Mitsuya et al.; Corpas et al., 2001). Additionally, two *Arabidopsis* small heat-shock proteins were identified in peroxisomes and one of them was reported to be induced by heat and oxidative stress, which supports the proposed roles of peroxisomes in stress responses (Ma et al., 2006; Kaur et al., 2009). Peroxisome biogenesis genes (PEX, see 1.1.2) were also reported to be induced by physiological elevated H_2O_2 which is produced during stress conditions in response to wounding and to infection with avirulent bacteria (Lopez-Huertas et al., 2000). Moreover, by monitoring antioxidant enzyme activities in isolated leaf peroxisomes that were isolated from tomato leaf cells (infected by the necrotrophic fungus, *Botrytis cinerea*), the peroxisomal antioxidant system as a hole was found to be significantly affected. During early stages, the activities of peroxisomal enzymes such as superoxide dismutase, glutathione peroxidase and catalase increased, while they decreased at later stages (Kuzniak and Sklodowska, 2005). In the same study, the peroxisomal ASC-GSH cycle enzyme activities were reported to be decreased by infection without any activity increase at earlier stages. These data indicate that the collapse of the antioxidant system might be important for pathogen-induced cell death (Kuzniak and Sklodowska, 2004, 2005).

With last decade discoveries, the function of peroxisomes in plant defense responses against pathogens (see 1.2) started to be reported. For example, one wild melon line gained resistance to an oomycete pathogen (*Pseudoperonospora cubensis*; causing foliar disease of cucurbit) due to the overexpression of a peroxisomal photorespiratory aminotransferase (Taler et al., 2004). Moreover, peroxisomes were detected to migrate and accumulate at pathogen infection sites in two different studies (Koh et al., 2005; Lipka et al., 2005), which might provide a mechanism for the activation and release of toxic molecules at a high concentration. During powdery mildew (*Erysiphe cichoracearum*) infection of *Arabidopsis* epidermal cells, organelles including peroxisomes moved towards and accumulated at fungi penetration sites, Figure 1.3, A, (Koh et al., 2005). During research studies on penetration 2 (PEN2) protein, PEN2-labeled peroxisomes

were reported to accumulate at fungal (*Blumeria graminis* f. sp. Hordei) entry sites (Figure 1.3, B). Furthermore, mechanical wounding by fine needle penetration led to the accumulation of peroxisomes at the penetration site. These data indicate that mechanical wounding simulates pathogen penetration and induces preinvasion defense mechanism (Figure 1.3, C1-3) (Hardham et al., 2008).

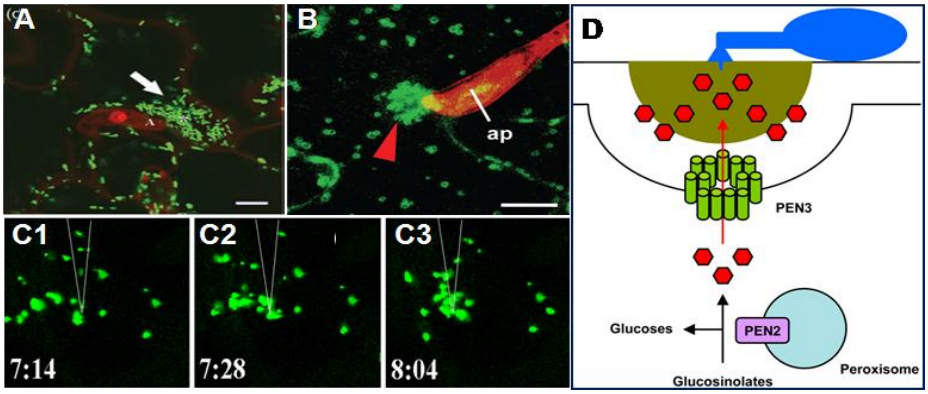

Figure 1.3: Peroxisome role in plant innate immunity
A: Aggregation of GFP-labeled peroxisomes at *Erysiphe cichoracearum* infection sites: image taken from (Koh et al., 2005). B: PEN2-GFP-labeled peroxisomes at condidiospore entry site: image taken from (Lipka et al., 2005). C: GFP-labeled peroxisomes at micro-needle penetration site: images taken from (Hardham et al., 2008). D: Pathogen-triggered and ABC transporter-driven efflux of small molecules into the apoplast in response to infection. In *Arabidopsis*, PEN3 is required for pre-invasive resistance to a broad range of fungal parasites: images taken from (Kwon et al., 2008).

PEN2 is a peroxisomal glycosyl hydrolase that is essential in inducible pre-invasion resistance mechanism, and its loss in *pen2* plants led to increased susceptibility to *Blumeria graminis* f. sp. Hordei (Lipka et al., 2005). PEN2 possesses myrosinase activity to initiate pathogen-triggered metabolism of indole glucosinolates cleaving glucose from thioglucosides (Grubb and Abel, 2006; Bednarek et al., 2009). Moreover, PEN2 and pathogenesis-related (PR) proteins were induced together with callose after the treatment by bacterial derived elicitors e.g. flg22, see 1.2.1.1 (Gomez-Gomez et al., 1999). PEN2 was also found to be a crucial component for callose deposition, as *pen2* mutants failed to display flg22-induced callose deposition (Clay et al., 2009; Kaur et al., 2009). Callose is an amorphous, high-molecular-weight β-1,3-glucan and is deposited in cell wall appositions (papillae) that form beneath infection sites. Callose is thought to provide a physical barrier

to pathogen penetration (Gomez-Gomez et al., 1999; Luna et al., 2011). These data suggest that PEN2 might function as a signalling molecule or co-activator in flg22-induced callose deposition (Clay et al., 2009; Kaur et al., 2009). In contrary, callose deposition increased dramatically (Luna et al., 2011) in the *cat2-1* mutant which accumulates high levels of H_2O_2 (Bueso et al., 2007). The role of elevated H_2O_2 production in peroxisomes is suggested to be responsible for conferring resistance against pathogen infection (Heath, 2000; Taler et al., 2004; Kaur et al., 2009).

It was studied that PEN3 (an ATP-binding cassette-type (ABC) transporter), similarly to PEN1, accumulates and associates beneath plasma membrane (PM) sites infected by a fungus (Figure 1.3, D). PEN1 is a syntaxin that belongs to the superfamily of soluble N-ethylmaleimide sensitive factor attachment protein receptor (SNARE) domain-containing proteins (Assaad et al., 2004; Stein et al., 2006). PM-associated PEN3 was suggested to translocate PEN2-generated molecules into the apoplastic space (Figure 1.3, D). These proteins (PEN 2 and 3), most likely together, constitute a dedicated secretory immune response pathway for small molecules with broad-spectrum antimicrobial activity (Lipka et al., 2005; Kwon et al., 2008; Bednarek et al., 2009; Bednarek and Schulze-Lefert, 2009; Bednarek et al., 2010).

1.1.2 Peroxisome biogenesis

Peroxisomal proteins are nuclear-encoded, synthesized on cytosolic ribosomes, and the proteins are transported into peroxisomes with the help of peroxins, PEX (encoded by *PEX* genes). Peroxins function in different processes of peroxisome biogenesis such as peroxisome *de novo* biogenesis, import of proteins and peroxisome proliferation (Orth et al., 2007). For a long time, peroxisomes were viewed as semiautonomous organelles that exist outside the secretory and endocytic pathways of vesicular flow. Recently, it has become clear that peroxisomes are derived from the endoplasmic reticulum (ER) although they also multiply by proliferation (Hoepfner et al., 2005). Two groups of peroxisomal membrane proteins (PMPs, Figure 1.4) were suggested (I and II) based on their import pathways. Group I PMPs are inserted post-translationally into the ER membrane after being synthesized in the cytosol, and then transported to peroxisomes via specific ER vesicles. Group II PMPs are sorted to peroxisomes

directly from the cytosol. Peroxisome membrane import depends on membrane PTSs (mPTSs) that have been identified in group I and II PMPs (Hoepfner et al., 2005; Kragt et al., 2005; Mullen and Trelease, 2006). Peroxisome proliferation by division was also reported and divided into three steps including elongation (by PEX11), membrane constriction and final fission steps by fission and dynamin-related proteins (Orth et al., 2007; Lingard et al., 2008; Kaur et al., 2009).

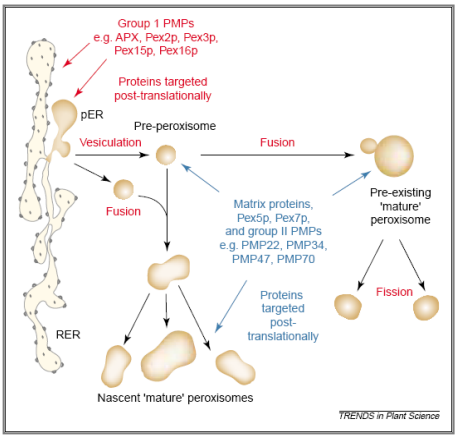

Figure 1.4: Proposed role of the ER in peroxisome biogenesis
Group I PMPs, including APX and various peroxins, are sorted to the rough ER (RER) and/or peroxisomal ER (pER). Pre-peroxisomes might sort to and fuse with a pre-existing mature peroxisome, or they might fuse with other pre-peroxisomes to form nascent mature peroxisomes. All the post-ER peroxisomal compartments are capable of post-translational uptake of matrix proteins and certain (group II) PMPs: Figure taken from (Mullen et al., 2001).

1.1.3 Matrix protein import into peroxisomes

Peroxisomal matrix proteins are encoded in the nucleus and translated in the cytosol before being transported to peroxisomes. Matrix proteins are targeted to their destination by a peroxisome targeting signal (PTS). A major breakthrough in the elucidation of the mechanism of protein import into peroxisomes was the identification of the PTS type 1 (PTS1; conserved tripeptide, SKL>) at the C-terminus of luciferase of the firefly *Photinus pyralis* (Gould et al., 1987; Gould et al., 1989). The majority of the identified peroxisomal matrix proteins has a PTS1, while some proteins have an N-terminal PTS type 2 (PTS2) which is a nonapeptide with RLx$_5$HL as the prototype sequence (Kaur et al., 2009). The PTS1- or PTS2-containing matrix proteins are recognized by soluble receptors, PTS1 by PEX5 (Figure 1.5, A), and PTS2 by PEX7 (Figure 1.5, B) in the cytosol, that guide them to a docking site at the peroxisomal membrane (Kaur et al., 2009; Lingard et al., 2009). *Arabidopsis* PEX5 and PEX7 interact with each other, and silencing experiments of PEX5 and PEX7 transcripts show that PEX7 is required for PTS2 protein import, whereas reducing PEX5 affects both PTS1

and PTS2 protein import (Nito et al., 2002; Baker and Sparkes, 2005; Khan and Zolman, 2010).

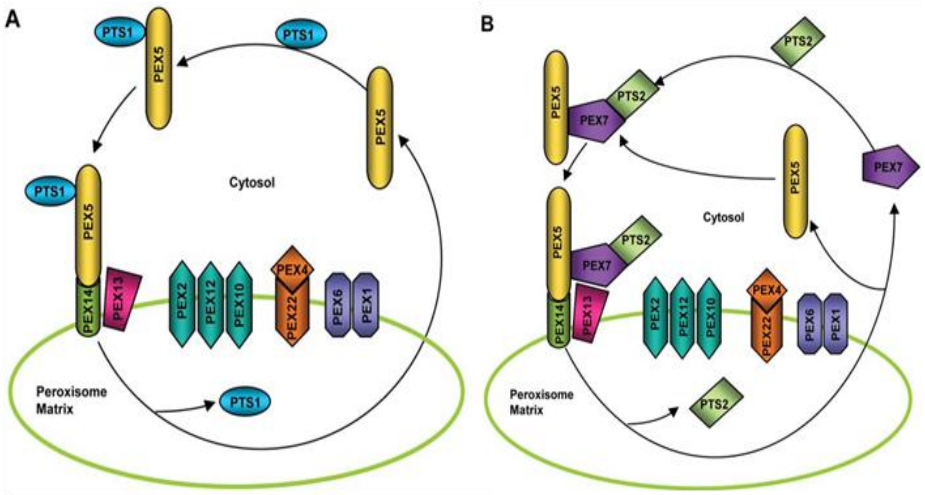

Figure 1.5: Representative model for matrix protein import
(A) PTS1 protein import. PEX5 recognizes and binds PTS1-containing proteins in the cytosol. (B) PTS2 import. PEX7 recognizes and binds PTS2-containing proteins in the cytosol: Figures taken from (Kaur et al., 2009).

1.1.4 Tools for identification of the peroxisome proteome

The identification of new PTS1 and PTS2 peptides of peroxisomal proteins was enlarged in the past two decades. Firstly, PTS1 sequence characteristics were experimentally revealed as a small uncharged-basic-nonpolar>, [SAC][KRH]L> (Gould et al., 1989; Swinkels et al., 1992). PTS1-specific variations were studied by comparing the peroxisome targeting efficiency of β-glucuronidase constructs which had several different C-terminus tripeptides and identified the first plant-specific PTS1 consensus sequence (referred here to as the Hayashi motif; [CASP][KR][ILM]>) (Hayashi et al., 1996; Hayashi et al., 1997). In another study, a more permissive consensus motif ([ACGST][HKLNR][ILMY]>) was reported, during experimental verifications by the reporter protein chloramphenicol acetyltransferase and transient expression in BY-2 suspension-cultured cells of *Nicotiana tabacum* (Mullen et al., 1997). Moreover, based on the interaction of PTS1 tripeptides with tobacco PEX5 in yeast two-hybrid system, a proline residue was identified in the pos. -3 and the motif became even

more permissive ([ACGPST][HKLNR][ILMY]>, (Kragler et al., 1998)). Recently, by combination of peroxisomal protein identification by proteome analysis (see 1.1.4.2) and *in vivo* subcellular localization studies, several PTS1s were established (SSL>, SSI>, ASL>, SLM>, and SKV>) which was inferring a new non-basic residue (S) at pos. -2 (Reumann et al., 2007; Reumann et al., 2009). Additionally, many novel *Arabidopsis* PTS1 containing proteins were identified (Ma et al., 2006; Reumann et al., 2007; Eubel et al., 2008; Moschou et al., 2008; Kaur et al., 2009; Reumann et al., 2009; Babujee et al., 2010; Quan et al., 2010).

Many physiological functions of plant peroxisomes are difficult to study because of their fragile nature to handle *in vitro*. Moreover, as explained in section 1.1.1.3, peroxisomes are reported to have many low-abundance and stress-related proteins that are targeted to peroxisomes under special conditions. To identify new functions of plant peroxisomes, the determination of the peroxisome proteome is crucial. Three major methodologies have been applied to such studies: 1) bioinformatics-based prediction of PTS, 2) experimental peroxisome proteome analyses, and 3) experimental verification of putative peroxisomal proteins by *in vivo* subcellular localization. Indeed, *in vivo* subcellular localization studies were mostly applied to validate putative peroxisomal proteins that were detected from methodologies 1 and 2. The complete genome sequence of *Arabidopsis* (Arabidopsis genome initiative, 2000) facilitated screening of conserved PTS, and characterization of the peroxisomal identified proteins from experimental peroxisome proteome (Kaur et al., 2009).

1.1.4.1 Prediction of targeting signals

Bioinformatics-based predictions generally use mathematical models to predict targeting signals from genome sequences. Bioinformatics approaches were largely improved in identification of peroxisomal proteins based on known PTS1s (see 1.1.4). However, the predictions are facing some challenges (Kaur et al., 2009), for example the PTS1 and PTS2 might be undetectable, presence of alternative targeting signals, or targeting by "piggy-backing" on other proteins bearing PTSs (Purdue and Lazarow, 2001). Previous attempts to predict peroxisomal localization include PSORT, a knowledge-based predictor using a decision tree to sort proteins among several different compartments. In PSORT, the PTS1 motif [AS]-[HKR]-L is used as a marker for

peroxisomal location along with amino acid composition over the entire protein (Nakai and Kanehisa, 1992). Support vector machine (SVM) was also applied to predict protein localization to several organelles including peroxisomes based on amino acid composition and sequence (Cai et al., 2002). A pattern-based method including PTS1 and PTS2 motifs was also used to scan *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* ORFs for peroxisomal proteins. The authors were able to identify 18 putative peroxisomal proteins, where 10 of them were validated by subcellular localization studies (Geraghty et al., 1999). Another way to predict PTS1 proteins is to use the PROSITE pattern [ACGNST]-[HKR]-[AFILMVY] (Falquet et al., 2002). Other attempts were applied by combining prediction of PTS1s with domain-based cross-species comparisons. This combination significantly inferred higher specificity; PEROXIP [www.bioinfo.se/PeroxiP, (Emanuelsson et al., 2003)]. Other PTS1 predictors are also in use: PTS1 PREDICTOR [mendel.imp.ac.at/mendeljsp/sat/pts1/PTS1predictor.jsp, (Neuberger et al., 2003)], and PProwler [pprowler.itee.uq.edu.au, (Hawkins et al., 2007)]. Although several predictions are now available, plant-specific predictions still need much improvement because of the small and non-representative datasets (Reumann, 2004; Kaur et al., 2009).

Reumann (2004) assembled a true positive examples training dataset from PTS1-containing proteins. The assembled dataset was subjected to homology-based searches for the orthologs of peroxisomal proteins from the public protein sequence and expressed sequence tag (EST) databases. A 5-fold extension of the dataset of plant PTS1 proteins was gained after the usage of EST databases on *Arabidopsis* and identified novel non-canonical PTS1 tripeptides. According to this study, nine PTS1 tripeptides ([SA][RK][LM] without AKM> plus SRI> and PRL>) were identified in at least 10 sequences and three different groups were defined as major PTS1s. Moreover, eleven PTS1 tripeptides, including some unknown plant PTS1 tripeptides, were defined as minor PTS1s. A plant PTS1 tripeptide is predicted to be functional if it carries at least two of the six most abundant position-specific amino acid residues (i.e., S, A, R, K, L, M) in the form of [SA][RK]x>, [SA]y[LM]>, or z[RK][LM]> (Kaur et al., 2009).

Furthermore, seven to nine amino acid residues upstream of the tripeptide are important in enhancing or reducing the efficiency of targeting. Therefore, PTS1 protein prediction depends on both the probability for the C-terminal tripeptide to represent a functional PTS1

and the degree at which the upstream region (pos. -4 to -10 or -12) matches consensus PTS1 domains (Kaur et al., 2009). On average, minor PTS1 domains are enriched in basic residues, and/or hydrophobic residues [e.g., A, L, V, I, (Reumann, 2004; Kaur et al., 2009)]. Finally, PTS2 nonapeptides with RLx_5HL as the prototype were identified as restrictive PTS2s such as $R[ILQx_5HL]$ (Kato et al., 1996; Kato et al., 1998) or permissive PTS2s such as $[RK]x_6[HQ][ALF]$ (Flynn et al., 1998). Twelve functional PTS2s were characterized from the plant-specific EST training dataset of PTS2 proteins (Reumann, 2004).

1.1.4.2 Peroxisome proteomics

Experimental peroxisome proteome analyses were largely developed recently, after the improvement of peroxisome isolation methods (Kaur et al., 2009). Computational approaches helped in analyzing the data generated by mass spectrometry (ms) experiments, and to make predictions regarding the potential nature of the proteome. Several plant peroxisome studies were accomplished and helped to identify novel proteins from *Arabidopsis* (Kaur et al., 2009). Two proteome studies from *Arabidopsis* greening and etiolated cotyledons identified several known enzymes involved in ROS metabolism, photorespiration and fatty acid β-oxidation, where 33 out of 47 identified proteins from both studies were described as putative proteins of peroxisomes (Fukao et al., 2002; Fukao et al., 2003). In another two studies, new isolation protocols to purify leaf peroxisomes from *Arabidopsis* were developed, from which proteins were separated either by 1- or 2D gel electrophoresis. Peroxisomes were isolated from mature *Arabidopsis* leaves by Percoll density gradient followed by sucrose density gradient centrifugation followed by ms, and 42 out of 78 identified proteins were considered to be putative peroxisomal proteins. Seventeen proteins carried PTSs and eleven of them were validated as peroxisomal proteins by *in vivo* subcellular localization studies (Reumann et al., 2007). Peroxisomal protein identification was even doubled (150 proteins) after peroxisome enrichment through post-preparative immunoblotting analysis and by application of a 1DE shotgun ms approach. Fifty-five proteins were considered to be novel and 19 of them were validated by subcellular localization studies. SLM>, SKV> and RVx_5HF were also established as a new functional PTSs (Reumann et al., 2009). Other methods were applied to *Arabidopsis* suspension-cultured cells. Peroxisomes were purified by

free-flow electrophoresis and peroxisomal proteins were identified by two methodologies afterwards: (i) differential in-gel electrophoresis (DIGE) of enriched peroxisomes and mitochondria, and (ii) normalized spectral count analysis of shotgun proteome data from peroxisome fractions differing in their degree of purity. The identification of membrane proteins was optimized by sodium carbonate treatment of peroxisomes. Twenty of 89 identified proteins were considered to be novel (Eubel et al., 2008).

1.2 Plant defense responses

Plants are constantly subjected to attack by large numbers of bacteria, fungi, oomycetes, viruses and nematodes. It has been estimated that ~14% of crops produced worldwide are lost by plant diseases, accounting for more than £100 billion worldwide (Agrios, 2005). For example, late blight of potato caused by the oomycete *Phytophthora infestans*, resulted in a devastating epidemic in Northern Europe in the 1840s (Agrios, 2005). In addition, pathogen infections can affect negatively the quality of the crops by producing sometimes toxic compounds. For instance, the fungus *Claviceps purpurea* causes disease in cereals and grasses by producing toxic secondary metabolites in seeds that can be harmful for the consumer [e.g., ergot alkaloids, which are leading to ergotism in humans and animals (Keller et al., 2005)]. Recently, most of the research in plant disease resistance aims at finding broad-spectrum protection against infections. For this, understanding plant-pathogen interactions and the plant's defense mechanisms (which are referred to as plant innate immunity, see 1.2.1), might allow to improve or achieve engineered plant protection. Plant innate immunity is defined as the ability to recognize and respond to pathogens, and provides immediate defense against infection (Jones and Dangl, 2006).

Plant pathogens enter the apoplast (intercellular space) through different means. In general, bacteria use wounds or natural openings such as stomata whereas fungi and oomycetes simply penetrate the cuticle (leaf surfaces). The pathogens (e.g. fungi) then face a second barrier (the cell wall), which they degrade by secreting enzymes such as cutinases, pectinases, cellulases and polygalacturonases (Agrios, 2005). Finally, the virulence (pathogenicity degree) strategy of the pathogen depends on how it utilizes the plant cell nutrients. Biotrophs

(e.g. *Pseudomonas syringae*, *Ps*) obtain nutrients from living tissues while necrotrophs (e.g. *Botrytis cinerea*) feed on dead or dying cells. Some pathogens, referred to as hemi-biotrophs (e.g. *Phytophthora infestans*), can act both as biotrophs and necrotrophs, depending on the stage of their life cycle or the surrounding conditions (Glazebrook, 2005; Jones and Dangl, 2006).

1.2.1 Plant innate immunity

Plants, unlike mammals, do not have an adaptive immune system and defender cells that migrate to the source of infection and halt the danger. Instead they rely on the innate immunity of each cell and on systemic signals produced from infection sites (Dangl and Jones, 2001; Jones and Dangl, 2006). In general, plants show two types of responses upon invasion by a pathogen. They develop either disease (i.e., compatible interaction with the pathogen) or resistance, halting pathogen growth, also referred to as incompatible interaction (Katagiri et al., 2002). Innate immunity is the resistance to pathogens by triggering defense responses to terminate or restrict pathogen growth (Jones and Dangl, 2006). Innate immunity in plants can be developed through two approaches. First, through the recognition of pathogen-associated molecular patterns (PAMP) that limits pathogen infections and is referred to as PAMP-triggered immunity (PTI, 1.2.1.1). Second, the plant is able to induce defense responses after recognition of the so-called pathogen effectors, which is referred to as effector-triggered immunity [ETI, 1.2.1.2, (Jones and Dangl, 2006)].

1.2.1.1 PAMP-triggered immunity

Structural physical defenses, such as wax, cuticle on the leaf surfaces, and cell walls are the first obstacles to invading pathogens. Plants also have preformed chemical defenses that include antimicrobial compounds and secondary metabolites that can either be toxic to the pathogen or that can inactivate the enzymes secreted by the pathogen (Agrios, 2005). The recognition of PAMPs by plant pattern recognition receptors (PRRs) induces PTI, also referred to as basal resistance, and is considered as the primary plant immune response (Jones and Dangl, 2006). PAMPs generally contribute to a function that is critical to the organism life and thus, are indispensable and are generally well conserved across a wide range of microbes (Nürnberger and Kemmerling, 2009).

A major breakthrough in understanding PTI came when plants were found to recognize one specific PAMP, bacterial flagellin, the proteinaceous subunit that is the main component of the bacterial flagellum (Felix et al., 1999). Recognition of flagellin or a 22-amino acid peptide (flg22), derived from a well-conserved domain of flagellin, was found to inhibit growth of *Arabidopsis* seedlings, elicit callose deposition, trigger ROS and PR protein production, and trigger resistance to virulent bacteria in wild-type (wt) plants (Gomez-Gomez et al., 1999; Gomez-Gomez and Boller, 2000; Zipfel et al., 2004). The PRR that recognizes flg22 is the receptor-like kinase (FLS2, Figure 1.6) that initiates a signaling cascade through a mitogen-activated protein kinase (MAPK) and leads to the rapid transcriptional induction of a number of genes including WRKY transcription factors [Figure 1.6, (Asai et al., 2002)]. *fls2* plants, which have a non-functional FLS2, are not able to recognize flg22 (Zipfel et al., 2004; Heese et al., 2007). *fls2* plants are more susceptible to *Ps* when sprayed on the leaf surface than wt plants (Zipfel et al., 2004). In addition to flagellin, *Arabidopsis* has subsequently been shown to recognize several other bacterial PAMPs including bacterial elongation factor-Tu, the cell wall components peptidoglycan and lipopolysaccharides (LPS). The receptor mediating perception of elongation factor-Tu has been identified and is known as elongation factor-Tu receptor [EFR, Figure 1.6, (Nürnberger and Kemmerling, 2009)]. Fungal and oomycete PAMPs are mainly cell wall components such as chitin and β- glucan or lectin, respectively.

In general, PAMP recognition is followed by several physiological and molecular changes, for example Ca^{2+} fluxes are observed across the plasma membrane, and MAPK cascades are activated. Protein phosphorylation, callose deposition, cell wall thickening, stomatal closure and oxidative burst are also examples of PAMP-triggered responses (Nürnberger and Kemmerling, 2009). Indeed, the transcriptional response induced by different PAMPs not only shares many similarities, but also overlaps with ETI-mediated transcriptional changes (explained in 1.2.1.2) during incompatible interactions, indicating that PTI provides a broad-spectrum defense mechanism (Schwessinger and Zipfel, 2008; Nürnberger and Kemmerling, 2009).

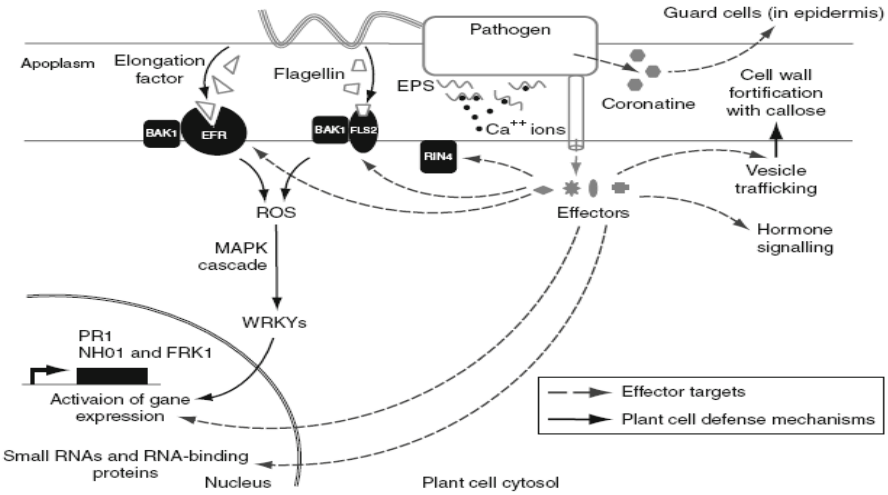

Figure 1.6: Effector targets to suppress immunity
The pathogen effectors and their targets are represented by filled gray symbols and connected by dotted lines. Mechanisms for PTI suppression include calcium chelation by extracellular polysaccharides, opening of stomata by coronatine, hormone signaling, blockage of vesicle trafficking. Plant defense mechanisms, PTI and ETI, are in black symbols and lines: Figure taken from (Metraux et al., 2009).

1.2.1.2 Effector-triggered immunity

Suppression of PTI is a major strategy of virulent pathogens to facilitate infection of susceptible host plants. The pathogen secrets effector proteins that inhibit plant major defense responses [Figure 1.6, (Metraux et al., 2009)]. Thereby, effector-triggered susceptibility is developed in the plant and might lead to disease, i.e., compatible interaction (Jones and Dangl, 2006). In addition to PAMPs, plants have evolved the ability to detect pathogen effectors, such as type III secretion system (TTSS) effectors directly secreted into the host cell by *Ps*, leading to ETI as a secondary line of resistance (Jones and Dangl, 2006; Heath, 2009). ETI is developed after recognition of specific type of effectors by host resistance (R) proteins (Figure 1.8), most of which belong to leucine-rich repeat (LRR) and nucleotide-binding site (NBS) domain containing proteins. When the effector protein is recognized by R protein, is called avirulence (avr) pathogenic determinant. In general, ETI induces signal transduction cascades that will lead to hypersensitive response (HR, explained in 1.2.2.2). HR involves death of the affected cell and is thought to be a form of programmed cell death (Heath, 2000; Heath, 2009). If either of avr or R genes is missing,

disease develops. This ETI phenomenon was firstly described as gene-for-gene resistance. It has been observed in a broad variety of pathogen infections, including bacteria, fungi, and viruses (Glazebrook et al., 1997; Jones and Dangl, 2006; Heath, 2009).

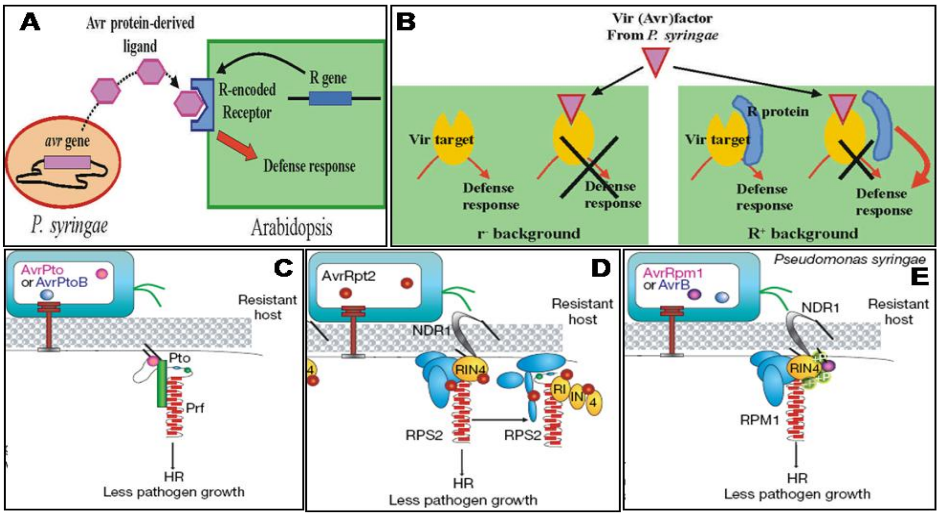

Figure 1.7: Molecular mechanisms of ETI initiation.
A: The ligand-receptor model of R and avr interaction. B: The guard model of R and avr interaction. When a plant does not have an appropriate R gene (left), an avirulence factor derived from *Ps* interacts with the virulence target. When a plant has the appropriate R gene (right), the virulence target is guarded by the R protein. C: Receptor-ligand model example. D and E: Guard model examples: Figures taken from (Katagiri et al., 2002; Jones and Dangl, 2006).

To explain the interaction of avr with R proteins, two different models have been proposed, the so-called ligand-receptor model and the guard model (Katagiri et al., 2002; Jones and Dangl, 2006). In fact, only few cases of ligand-receptor (Figure 1.7, A) explain direct interactions between avr and R proteins upon infection [e.g., the avrPto from *Ps* with tomato R protein Pto kinase (Figure 1.7, C)] (Tang et al., 1996). Instead, the guard model (Figure 1.7, B) proposes that R proteins guard the host targets of avr proteins. According to this model, any alteration of the host target by the effect of avr proteins will lead to an activation of R proteins that activate ETI, thus indirectly detecting the virulence effectors. The best characterized example of a guard model is the recognition of the host target, *Arabidopsis* RPM1-interacting protein 4 (RIN4). The *Ps* effectors avrB and avrRpm1 inactivate RIN4 by phosphorylation (Mackey et al., 2002). The phosphorylation of RIN4

leads to the activation of two *Arabidopsis* R proteins, resistance to *Ps* 2 (RPS2) and resistance to *Ps* pathover (pv.) maculicola 1 (RPM, Figure 1.7, E). Another example, the R protein RPS2 is activated by the absence of RIN4 caused by its proteolytic degradation (Mackey et al., 2003) by the *Ps* effector avrRpt2 (Figure 1.7, D) (Katagiri et al., 2002; Jones and Dangl, 2006).

R proteins share similar structures (Figure 1.8), suggesting common mechanisms in pathogen response, and are divided into five classes based on their structural motifs. One class are the NBS-LRR proteins that contain N-terminal NBS and C-terminal LRRs. The *Arabidopsis* genome contains 149 NBS-LRR-encoding genes from which two distinct groups of sequences were identified: those that encode an N-terminal domain with Toll/Interleukin-1 receptor homology (TIR-NBS-LRR), for example, *Arabidopsis* RPS4, and those that encode an N-terminal coiled-coil motif (CC-NBS-LRR), for example, RPS2 and RPM1 (Meyers et al., 2003). Based on studies in *Arabidopsis*, the two NBS-LRR subgroups employ different signalling pathways: TIR-NBS-LRR-mediated resistance is achieved through enhanced disease susceptibility 1 [EDS1, (Parker et al., 1996)], while CC-NBS-LRRs signal through non-race specific disease resistance1 [NDR1, see 1.2.3.1, (Century et al., 1997)].

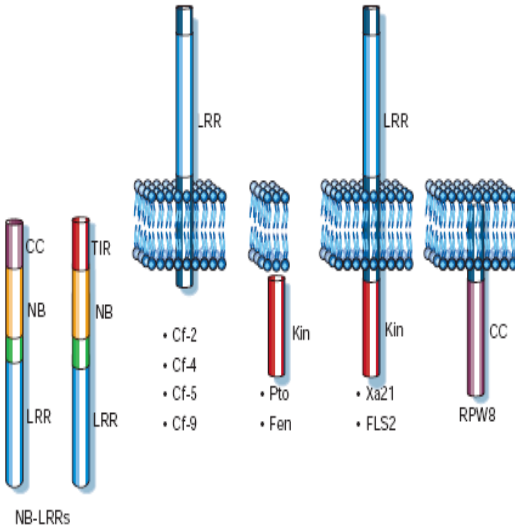

Figure 1.8: R protein representation
Location and structure representation for the five main classes of R proteins are presented. Xa21 and Cf-X proteins carry transmembrane domains and extracellular LRRs. RPW8 protein carries a putative signal anchor at the N terminus. The *Pto* gene encodes a cytoplasmic Ser/Thr kinase, but may be membrane associated through its N-terminal myristoylation site. The largest class of R proteins, the NB-LRR class, are presumably cytoplasmic (although they could be membrane associated) and carry distinct N-terminal domains: Figure taken from (Dangl and Jones, 2001).

1.2.2 Immune responses

1.2.2.1 Plant hormones

Plant hormones are implicated in diverse stress responses as well as developmental processes. Of these hormones, SA and JA, play major roles in modulating plant defense responses against various pathogens (Bari and Jones, 2009). In general, SA signaling mediates resistance to biotrophic and hemi-biotrophic pathogens, while the JA signaling pathway mediates resistance to necrotrophs and insects (Glazebrook, 2005). SA was reported to be important in systemic acquired resistance [SAR, explained in 1.2.2.3, (Gaffney et al., 1993; Delaney et al., 1994)]. Also, SA activates non-expressor of PR1 (NPR1) and triggers its translocation into the nucleus where it interacts with transcription factors that induce the expression of several defense-related genes including *PR*s (Shah, 2003). JA and its derivatives play important roles in plant development and physiology such as seed germination, fruit ripening, stomatal opening and root growth. They were first shown to play important roles in regulating wound- and insect-induced pathways (Creelman and Mullet, 1997; Thaler et al., 2002). JA also plays a role in mediating plant resistance against certain fungal and bacterial pathogens. For instance, exogenous application of JA induces the production of phenolics, nicotine and numerous other secondary compounds as well as defense-related compounds such as thionin in *Arabidopsis* (Creelman and Mullet, 1997).

Ethylene influences several developmental processes such as germination, fruit ripening and senescence, but is also involved in modulating defense responses. In fact, ethylene levels increase during early plant responses to pathogens, and exogenous application of ethylene enhances the expression of defense related genes (Dong, 1998). Recent studies indicate that other hormones such as abscisic acid (ABA), gibberellic acid, cytokinin and brassinosteroids are also implicated in plant defense signaling pathways but their role in plant defense is less well studied (Bari and Jones, 2009).

1.2.2.2 Hypersensitive response

As mentioned above (1.2.1.2), HR is a phenomenon associated with ETI. Several lines of evidence indicate that this cell death response is genetically programmed and not caused by pathogen-secreted toxins (Greenberg, 1997; Greenberg and Yao, 2004). HR is generally thought

to contribute to defense against biotrophic and hemi-biotrohphic pathogens. Not only does it play a role in directly limiting pathogen growth, but HR also is associated with the activation of SAR (1.2.2.3), which results in increased resistance to subsequent infections. The importance of HR in disease resistance therefore depends on the host-pathogen interaction [ETI, 1.2.1.2, (Greenberg, 1997; Greenberg and Yao, 2004)].

1.2.2.3 Systemic acquired resistance

SAR is a protective systemic broad spectrum defense and is induced following infections by necrotizing pathogens (i.e., pathogens that cause necrotic lesions due to disease symptoms or HR). Four stages were suggested for SAR induction, 1) SAR long-distance signals are produced [methyl-SA (MeSA), JA, lipids and constitutive-disease tesistance 1 (CDR1)] and may bind defective in induced resistance 1 protein (DIR1), a putative signal chaperone in the induced leaf, 2) The signals move from the induced leaf to distant tissues via the phloem, cell-to-cell, and/or by the volatile MeSA, 3), and are perceived by signal receptors that might include NPR1 and unknown receptors (Glazebrook et al., 1997; Xia et al., 2004; Vlot et al., 2008; Champigny and Cameron, 2009). In *npr1.1* plants that carry a single recessive mutation in *NPR1*, the SAR-responsive expression of other *PR* genes is abolished (Cao et al., 1994), 4) subsequent pathogen infection allows the distant leaves to respond in a resistant manner (Glazebrook et al., 1997; Vlot et al., 2008; Champigny and Cameron, 2009). An important role of SA in SAR was supported by the fact that exogenous application of SA or SA analogs [2,6- dichloroisonicotinic acid (INA) and benzothiodiazole] induces resistance against pathogens. Moreover, SAR collapsed and pathogen susceptibility increased during expression of salicylate hydroxylase (nahG) from *Pseudomonas putida* that converts SA to catechol (Gaffney et al., 1993; Delaney et al., 1994).

1.2.3 Defense-related proteins

1.2.3.1 NDR1/HIN1 like proteins (NHLs)

The defense-associated gene, harpin-induced gene 1 (HIN1) was isolated from tobacco and shown to be induced by flg22 and *Ps* that induce HR (Gopalan et al., 1996). One *Arabidopsis* homolog of tobacco HIN1 is NDR1 that is involved in gene-for-gene mediated resistance

mechanisms in response to attack by both bacterial (e.g., *Ps*) and fungal pathogens (Century et al., 1997). The glycosylphosphatidylinositol (GPI)-anchored NDR1 is PM associated and is an essential protein for the activation of two R proteins, RPS2 and RPM1 (Coppinger et al., 2004; Jones and Dangl, 2006). It has been demonstrated that NDR1, RPM1 and RPS2 are capable of interacting with RIN4 protein, and that the activation of disease resistance develops once RIN4 protein is altered by the action of the bacterial effectors [see 1.2.1.2 and Figure 1.7, D and E, (Mackey et al., 2002; Day et al., 2006)]. The interaction with RIN4 was suggested to regulate activation of disease resistance signaling following recognition of *Ps* in *Arabidospsis* (Day et al., 2006). However, the mode of action of NDR1 remains elusive, but its overexpression in *Arabidopsis* resulted in enhanced bacterial disease resistance (Coppinger et al., 2004; Day et al., 2006). A fast-neutron mutant in *Arabidopsis* (*ndr1-1*) was more susceptible to the avirulent *Ps* strains expressing the effectors avrB, avrRpt2, avrRpm1, or avrPphB (Century et al., 1995; Century et al., 1997).

Arabidopsis carries a large number (i.e., 45) of NDR1/HIN1-like (NHL) proteins. Most of the NHLs share three conserved unique motifs of unknown function (Zheng et al., 2004). Recently, many defense roles of NHL proteins in plant resistance responses were reported. For instance, *NHL2* overexpression in transgenic *Arabidopsis* plants resulted in elevated levels of *PR-1* expression and light-dependent "speck disease-like" symptoms in the leaves (Dormann et al., 2000). Similarly to NDR1, NHL3 (post-translationally modified by glycosylation) is PM associated, and its overexpression results in bacterial disease resistance in *Arabidopsis* to virulent *Ps* (Varet et al., 2003). Based on expression analysis, *NHL25* was proposed to be used as a marker for incompatible interactions (ETI, 1.2.1.2) with pathogens and possibly for HR development, where it was induced in-parallel or upstream of the pathway that is mediated by NDR1 or EDS1 [see 1.2.1.2, (Varet et al., 2002)]. On the other hand, *NHL3* can be induced by biotic and abiotic stresses and is altered by avirulent pathogens in ETI (Varet et al., 2002). *NHL3* and *NHL25* induction were reported also to be SA independent and dependent, respectively, which indicates that *NHL*s are induced by different pathways of defense mechanisms (Varet et al., 2002). The expression level of *NHL*s was also reported to be upregulated by pathogens including viruses [e.g., *NHL1*, *NHL2*, and *NHL10*, (Zheng et al., 2004)].

1.2.3.2 Immune-associated nucleotide-binding proteins (IANs)

Guanosine triphosphate (GTP)-binding proteins (GTPases) catalyze GTP hydrolysis, which is the key process in intracellular signal transduction (Scheffzek et al., 1998; Leipe et al., 2002). Recently, a new family of GTPases has been reported (in both vertebrate immune cells and plant cells) to be induced during antipathogen responses. This family was first discovered in plants after the isolation of a gene in *Arabidopsis* after infection with *Ps* pv. maculicola carrying a specific effector protein (avrRpt2), and designated as avrRpt2-induced gene (*AIG1*). *AIG1* expression was found to be induced by both virulent *Ps* and specifically by avirulent *Ps* that are inducing HR [see 1.2.1.2 and 1.2.2.2, (Reuber and Ausubel, 1996)]. Liu et al., (2008) suggested that AIG1 may mediate plant disease resistance through RPS2-dependent resistance signaling pathway in *Arabidopsis* (see 1.2.1.2). However, no further studies were reported for *AIG* genes.

This protein family has largely been studied in humans and has important functions in development of the immune system and the regulation of immune responses [e.g., T-cell homeostasis, (Cambot et al., 2002; Krucken et al., 2004; Schnell et al., 2006)]. The family members are now referred to as immune-associated nucleotide-binding proteins (IAN), also known as GTPase of immunity-associated proteins (GIMAP) (Wang and Li, 2009). Most of the *IAN* genes are clustered in both plant and vertebrate genomes, for instance, 12 *Arabidopsis IAN* (*AtIAN*) family members are located on chromosome 1 (Liu et al., 2008). All IAN proteins have specific, conserved domains: an AIG1 domain that consists of five motifs (G1–G5) for GTP-binding and a conserved hydrophobic box between G3 and G4 unique to AIG1-like proteins, and a coiled-coil motif (Krucken et al., 2004; Liu et al., 2008). Human IAN proteins are localized in diverse subcellular compartments such as the cytoplasm, ER, Golgi complex or mitochondria, which implies function modes of IAN mediating signaling pathways (Wang and Li, 2009). For AtIANs, no localization studies were reported.

1.3 Thesis goals

The physiological functions of plant peroxisomes are numerous (see 1.1.1) and some of these functions (e.g., stress-related functions, 1.1.1.3) are not adequately covered because of an incomplete knowledge of the complete peroxisomal proteome. To be able to investigate peroxisome functions in detail, one long-term goal is to discover the entire peroxisomal proteome. Based on the *Arabidopsis* full genome sequence (Arabidopsis genome initiative, 2000), a bioinformatics-based definition of peroxisome targeting signals, and analysis of experimental proteomics approaches were able to detect several putative peroxisomal proteins (see 1.1.4).

Many putative peroxisomal proteins were identified by PTS1 prediction models, and experimental *Arabidopsis* leaf peroxisome proteomics. The aim of this study was to experimentally validate several putative peroxisomal proteins and targeting signals. Furthermore, to investigate peroxisome functions in plant innate immunity (see 1.1.1.3 and 1.2) by screening *Arabidopsis* proteins for PTS1 proteins with a potential role in defense-related functions. Several defense-related proteins were investigated using experimental validation combined with expression analysis, and followed by initiation of functional studies for selected proteins. The thesis goals were divided into five main sub-points that were studied in the course of this study:

1- Experimental validation of machine learning approaches (see 1.1.4.1) including two prediction models that were recently developed and identified several putative PTS1 tripeptides and *Arabidopsis* PTS1 proteins. The validation of the predicted PTS1s and PTS1 proteins to be investigated using the *in vivo* subcellular targeting studies.

2- Experimental validation of peroxisome targeting for novel candidate proteins with a predicted role in detoxification (e.g., GR1, DHAR1, and GSTs, 1.1.1.2). Furthermore, to initiate functional analyses for the peroxisomal ASC-GSH cycle enzymes (GR1 and DHAR1) and the peroxisomal GSTT1 by producing heterologus protein expressions and knockout mutants.

3- Investigation of the peroxisome defense machinery. The function of peroxisomes in defense responses is poorly studied (see 1.1.1.3) because of the difficulties to identify low abundance and stress-inducible peroxisomal proteins (see 1.1.1.3). In this study, several predicted defense-related proteins shall be experimentally validated by *in vivo* subcellular targeting studies.

4- NHL protein family (see 1.2.3.1) investigations. By screening *Arabidopsis* proteins for PTS1 proteins, several family members were identified by PTS1 prediction models. *In vivo* subcellular targeting analyses to be applied for the predicted NHLs. Furthermore, to study selected proteins expression analyses, followed by initiation of their functional analyses.

5- AtIAN protein family (see 1.2.3.2) investigations. AtIAN12 was detected in the proteome of *Arabidopsis* leaf peroxisomes (Reumann, unpub. data). Experimental validation of this protein together with other two homologs from the same family shall be carried out. Additionally, to study their expression analyses, followed by initiation of functional analyses for the selected proteins.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Materials

2.1.1 Enzymes and commercial kits

Commercial kit	**Source**
Wizard® Plus SV Minipreps	Promega, USA
Illustra GFX PCR DNA and Gel Band Purification Kit	GE Healthcare, England
pGEM®-T Easy Vector System	Promega, USA
Quick-change Site-Directed Mutagenesis Kit	Stratagene, USA
Expand high fidelity PCR system	Roche, Germany
Real-Time PCR Master Mix with ROX	Primerdesign, England
First Strand cDNA Synthesis kit	Fermentas, Germany
High Capacity cDNA Reverse Transcription Kit	Applied Biosystems, USA
Invisorb Spin-Plant DNA mini Kit	Invitek, Germany
RNeasy® Plant Mini Kit	Qiagen, Germany
Phire® Plant Direct PCR Kit	Finnzymes, Finland

2.1.2 Bacterial strains

2.1.2.1 *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*)

JM109 (Sigma-Aldrich, USA): JM109 is a K strain bacterium that carries the *rec*A1 and *end*A1 mutations. The *rec*A1 aids in plasmid stability while *end*A1 provides high quality plasmid preparation. JM109 cells also contain an F' episome carrying Δ(*lac*Z)M15 for blue-white screening via α-complementation with the amino terminus of β-galactosidase. The strain was kindly provided by Dr. Ioannis Livieratos, MAICh, Greece. The strain was largely used for cloning and subcloning purposes (see 2.2.2.4).

BL21 (New England Biolabs, England): BL21 is an *E. coli* B F- *dcm ompT hsdS* (r_B- m_B-) *gal*. The strain was used for heterologous expression of proteins.

SG13009 [pREP4] (Qiagen, Germany): SG13009 strain is derived from K12 strain and is useful for the production of proteins that are expressed with pQE vectors (see 2.1.3).

2.1.2.2 *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*

Agrobacterium tumefaciens is a soil-dwelling bacterium that transforms normal plant cells into tumor-forming cells by inserting a piece of bacterial DNA (the transfer, or 'T' DNA) into the plant cell genome. The T-DNA, is flanked by left and right border sequences, and presents on a tumor inducing (Ti) plasmid.

GV3101 (pMP90): GV3101 carries a disarmed Ti plasmid that possesses the virulence genes needed for T-DNA transfer, but has no functional T-DNA region of its own. GV3101 grows at 28-30°C and is resistant to rifampicin, while the Ti plasmid is resistant to gentamicin. The strain was used in subcellular localization-mediated transformations (see 2.2.3.2), and kindly provided by Prof. Jianping Hu, MSU, USA.

ABI-1: ABI-1 is a derivative of GV3101 (pMP90RK) which possesses the RK2 replicase and the trf gene required for plasmid replication. ABI-1 is resistant to rifampicin, while the Ti plasmid is resistant to kanamycin. The strain was used in stable transgenic lines-dependent transformations (see 2.2.1.4), and kindly provided by Prof. Simon G Møller, CORE, Norway.

2.1.2.3 *Pseudomonas syringae (Ps)*

Ps is a rod shaped gram-negative bacterium with polar flagella. The bacterium is a plant pathogen that can infect a wide range of plant species and exists as over 50 different pv. *Ps* enters the host tissues and in a susceptible plant it multiplies to high population levels in intercellular spaces. Infected leaves show water-soaked patches, which become necrotic which may be surrounded by diffuse chlorosis. In resistant plants, *Ps* triggers HR (see 1.2.2.2) and in return fails to multiply to high population levels and causes no disease symptoms. The susceptible interaction between *Arabidopsis thaliana* and the *Ps* is used as a model for host-pathogen interaction [see ET 1.2.1.2, (Anzai et al., 2000)]. The *Ps* strains used in this study were kindly provided by Prof. Sheng Yang He, MSU, USA.

***Ps* pv. tomato (*Pst* DC3000):** *Pst* DC3000 is a virulent strain of *Pst* that obtained resistance to rifampicin by spontaneous mutant generation. The *Pst* DC3000 complete genome was sequenced by The Institute for Genome Research (TIGR).

***Pst* DC3000 (avrRpt2):** *Pst* DC3000 (avrRpt2) is an avirulent strain of *Pst* DC3000 expressing the effector protein (avrRpt2), which is naturally secreted by *Ps* TTSS. In this strain, the avrRpt2 gene has been introduced by the pDSK600 plasmid (spectinomycin resistant) after transformation of the virulent *Pst* DC3000 (Mudgett and Staskawicz, 1999). The avrRpt2 gene expression causes the virulent strains of *Pst* DC3000 to be avirulent on *Arabidopsis thaliana* ecotype Columbia-0 (Col-0) and other ecotypes (e.g., Niederzenz-0, Nd-0) which contain RPS2 resistance gene [see 1.2.1.2, (Innes et al., 1993)].

2.1.3 Vectors

pCAT: pCAT is a pUC based vector harbouring the *Cauliflower mosaic virus* (CaMV) 35S promotor with a duplicated enhancer region and a 35S polyadenylation site. 35S promoter is a very strong constitutive promoter, causing high levels of gene expression and is one of the most widely used promoters. pCAT was used as a backbone for generating pCAT-YFP vector (Figure 1.9) which is expressing enhanced yellow fluorescent protein (EYFP), and the pCAT-CFP vector which is expressing enhanced cyan fluorescent protein (ECFP). pCAT-CFP vector has been used to generate marker vectors for peroxisomes and mitochondria. Peroxisomal marker vector (gMDH-CFP) was generated by subcloning of a fragment containing the PTS2 sequence of glyoxysomal malate dehydrogenase (gMDH) from cucumber (Kim and Smith, 1994). Mitochondrial marker vector (coxIV-CFP) was also generated by subcloning a fragment containing the transit sequence of the cytochrome C oxidase IV subunit [coxIV, (Hurt et al., 1985)], a mitochondrial marker protein from yeast (Fulda et al., 2002). The vectors pCAT-YFP, gMDH-CFP, and coxIV-CFP vectors were kindly provided by Prof. Martin Fulda, Germany (Fulda et al., 2002).

Furthermore, pCAT-YFP vector was modified to obtain 2 other restriction sites downstream NotI (i.e., SacI and SacII) to allow possible subcloning combinations instead of XbaI. This modification led to formation of pCAT-YFP-M, which was used mostly in this study for subcloning of the genes of interest (Ma et al., 2006; Ma and Reumann,

2008). Finally, one additional vector (AK1-CFP) was created to obtain pCAT-CFP with presence of the restriction sites similar to pCAT-YFP-M. pCAT-YFP-M and AK1-CFP are used for generating N-terminal fusions for proteins of interest with the EYFP and ECFP, respectively. It's important to know that EYFP is lacking the stop codon in both vectors. In contrast, another vector (NS-EYFP) was also used where stop codon was normally available, and is used for N-terminal fusions of EYFP by NcoI.

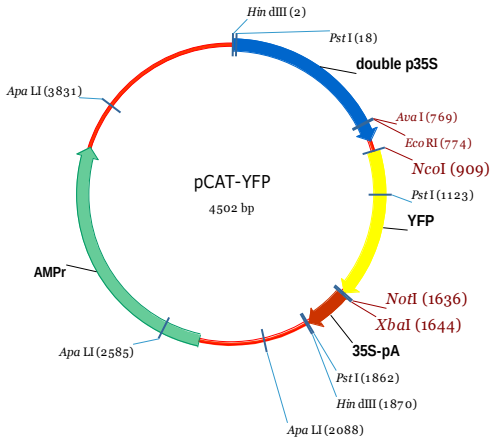

Figure 1.9: pCAT-EYFP vector map
pCAT-EYFP plasmid containing EYFP for transient expression in onion epidermal cells, and tobacco isolated protoplasts. The plasmid has a 35S promoter with a duplicated enhancer region and a 35S polyadenylation site, 35S-PA. The vector has been used in subcloning for the genes of interest in the back of EYFP.

Organelle markers: Several vectors expressing reporter fused proteins were obtained and used in this study. PWEN99 is a vector encoding red fluorescence protein-SKL (RFP-SKL) to label peroxisomes (Matre et al., 2009), kindly provided by Prof. Cathrine Lilo, CORE, Norway. A binary vector encoding CFP-SKL was also used to label peroxisomes (Zhang and Hu, 2008), kindly provided by Prof. Jianping Hu, MSU, USA. Moreover, a vector encoding orange fluorescence protein (OFP) fused with ER targeting signal, OFP-ER (Frank et al., 2008), kindly provided by Prof. Antje von Schaewen and Dr. Tanja Meyer, Germany. Finally, a set of binary vectors encoding CFP fused with targeting signals of ER, golgi, PM was also used (Nelson et al., 2007), kindly provided by Prof. Jianping Hu, MSU, USA.

pRS300: Vector used as a template for amiRNA (artificial microRNAs) construction (see 2.2.2.1). It contains the miR319a precursor in pBSK (cloned via SmaI site). To be able to generate amiRNAs, the amiRNA designer (WMD) delivers four oligonucleotide

sequences (I to IV) that were amplified from pRS300 and used to engineer amiRNA into the endogenous miR319a precursor by site-directed mutagenesis (Schwab et al., 2006). The vector was kindly provided by Prof. Cathrine Lilo, CORE, Norway.

pBA002: Binary vector contains CaMV 35S promoter, and confers resistance to spectinomycin and the herbicide glufosinate ammonium (alternative names: Basta, Phosphinotricin and Finale) in bacteria and plants, respectively. The genes which are responsible for resistanse against kanamycin and Basta are neomycin phosphotransferase and bialophos resistance gene (BAR) encoding phosphinotricin acetyl transferase enzyme, respectively. The vector was used in transient overexpression and in generation of transgenic stable lines (sees 2.2.1.4). The vector was kindly provided by Prof. Simon G Møller, CORE, Norway.

pER10.corReal: Binary vector contains Estradiol enhanced promoter, and confers resistance to spectinomycin and kanamycin in bacteria and plants, respectively. The vector was used in generation of transgenic stable lines (see 2.2.1.4). The vector was kindly provided by Prof. Simon G Møller, CORE, Norway.

pMAL-c2x: Vector designed to produce maltose-binding protein (MBP) fusions in *E. coli*, where the protein of interest can be cleaved from MBP with the specific protease factor Xa (New England Biolabs, England). The vector was kindly provided by Dr. Ioannis Livieratos, MAICh, Greece.

pQE31: Vector used to produce His_6-tagged proteins to be expressed in *E.coli*, and is based on the T5 promoter transcription-translation system (Qiagen, Germany).

2.1.4 Imaging facilities

2.1.4.1 Epifluorescence (Nikon)

Fluorescence image acquisition was performed on a Nikon *TE-2000U* inverted fluorescence microscope equipped with an Exfo X-cite 120 fluorescence illumination system (Exfo) and filters for YFP (exciter HQ500/20, emitter S535/30), CFP (exciter D436/20, emitter D480/40), a dual YFP/CFP filter with single-band exciters (Chroma Technologies), Texas red filter set for RFP: 31004, and chlorophyll autofluorescence (exciter HQ630/30, emitter HQ680/40, Chroma

Technologies, Rockingham, VT, USA). All images were captured using a Hamamatsu Orca ER 1394 cooled CCD camera. Volocity II software (Improvision, Coventry, UK) was used to capture 0.5 µm *Z*-sections to generate extended focus images.

2.1.4.2 Epifluorescence (Zeiss)

Epifluorescence microscopy was performed with an *Axio Imager M1* microscope (Carl Zeiss) for visualization of YFP labeled proteins (excitation 500 ± 12 nm; emission 542 ± 13.5 nm) and callose depositions using the 4,6-diamidino-2-phenylindole (DAPI) excitation filter (excitation 400/418 nm; emission 478/495 nm). Axiovision Rel.4.8 program was used to capture images. This facility was used at MSU/USA during the two months visit.

2.1.4.3 Confocal (Nikon)

A confocal laser-scanning microscope from Nikon *A1R* was used to obtain images of fluorophore labeled proteins. Laser beams used for fluorophore excitation were: CFP, 457 nm; YFP, 514 nm; and chlorophyll, 638 nm. For emission, the following filters were used: 475/500 nm band pass for CFP, 520/555 band pass for YFP, and 650 nm long pass for chlorophyll.

2.1.4.4 Confocal (Olympus)

A confocal laser-scanning microscope from Olympus "*Fluoview FV1000*" was used to obtain images of fluorophore labeled proteins transformed in tobacco leave cells. Laser beams used for fluorophore excitation were: CFP, 458 nm; YFP, 514 nm; MitoTracker red, 543 nm; and chlorophyll, 633 nm. For emission, the following filters were used: 475/500 nm band pass for CFP, 520/555 band pass for YFP, 560/614 band pass for Mito-Tracker, and 650 nm long pass for chlorophyll. All images were acquired from single optical sections. This facility was used at MSU/USA during the two months visit.

2.2. Methods

2.2.1 Plant material and growth conditions

2.2.1.1 *Arabidopsis* seed sterilization

Arabidopsis seed surface sterilization was carried out in a sterile flow cabinet. The seeds were soaked in 1 ml solution [70% (v/v) ethanol and 0.05% (v/v) Triton X-100] for 10 min with occasional shaking. The seeds were then washed twice in 100% ethanol for a total of 10 min and dried on a sterile filter paper. The seeds were next spread on the surface of 0.8% (w/v) agar plates containing 1% (w/v) sucrose and 1/2 Murashige and Skoog (MS) containing vitamins. The sown seeds were subsequently stratified at 4ºC in the dark for a period of 2 days before being transferred to standard growth conditions (see 2.2.1.2).

2.2.1.2 Standard growth conditions

For plants grown on soil, *Arabidopsis* seeds were sown on a mixture of commercial soil (P-jard, LOG/ Oslo, Norway) and Perlite (3:1) and grown at ~22°C with a light intensity of 100~150 μmol m^{-2} s^{-1} in a 16/8 h cycle (long-day). The soil was treated once weekly with Hoagland nutrient solution, if required (Hoagland and Arnon, 1950). After sowing the seeds, they were covered with a plastic dome for the first week to maintain humidity until germination.

2.2.1.3 Growth conditions for immune assays

Arabidopsis seeds were sown in soil and covered with a plastic dome to maintain high humidity for efficient germination. The growth chamber conditions are 22°C and 70-80% relative humidity with 12 h of fluorescent light (intensity of approximately 100~150 μmol m^{-2} s^{-1}). After a week, the plastic domes were removed. Plants 4 to 6 weeks old were used for bacteria inoculation [at this point they usually have numerous large leaves but have not started to flower, (Katagiri et al., 2002)].

2.2.1.4 Plant transformation

Transgenic *Arabidopsis thaliana* was generated using *Agrobacterium*-mediated transformation based on the floral dip method (Clough and Bent, 1998). *Arabidopsis* plants were grown in 10 cm^2 pots under standard growth conditions (see 2.2.1.2). The primary inflorescences were clipped to promote the generation of secondary inflorescences.

The plants were used for transformation when the secondary inflorescences had reached no more than 10 cm in height and had a few open flowers.

Luria-Bertani (LB) culture media (200 ml) of *Agrobacterium* containing the desired construct (see 2.2.2.1) supplemented with selectable markers, was grown at 28°C overnight until the cells reached early stationary phase. The cells were spun down and resuspended in about 200 ml of dipping solution (0.5% (w/v) sucrose and 10 mM $MgCl_2$) and 0.05% Silwet L-77 (Lehle Seeds, USA) added immediately prior to dipping. The inflorescences of *Arabidopsis* plants were then dipped into the *Agrobacterium* suspension for 10-20 min. Excess liquid was then gently shaken from the plants, and the plants were laid down and loosely covered with plastic cover to maintain a humid environment. 24 hr after dipping, the cover was removed and the plants then grown under standard conditions until the siliques were dry and the seeds were ready for harvesting. The seed bulk was harvested and the first generation was screened for transformants. Screening for T1 seeds was performed on MS agar plates containing 10 $\mu g.ml^{-1}$ Phosphinotricin (PPT) for plants transformed by pBA002 derived constructs (see 2.1.3) or 50 $\mu g.ml^{-1}$ kanamycin for plants transformed by pER10 derived constructs [see 2.1.3, (Weigel and Brook, 2002)]. Marker resistant seedlings were selected 10-14 days after germination and transferred to fresh plates before being transplanted to soil. T1 plants were screened to validate successful transformation by genotyping of genomic DNA of the primary transformants by primers upstream (forward) and downstream (reverse) of the cDNA insertion sites in the transformed vector.

2.2.1.5 Characterization of T-DNA insertion mutants

T-DNA insertion seeds (Table 2.1) were first grown on MS agar plates (see 2.2.1.1) and then transferred to soil after germination. Homozygous mutants were identified by PCR analysis of genomic DNA isolated by Phire plant PCR kit (see 2.1.1) using gene-specific forward (LP), T-DNA left border primers and a gene-specific reverse primer (RP). The LP and RP primers (Appendix, Table 2.4) were designed by T-DNA Primer Design tool; http://signal.salk.edu/tdnaprimers.2.html (Yan and Robert, 2008). Five mutant were kindly also obtained from Prof. Sheng Yang He and Prof. Jianping Hu, MSU (*fls2.17*, *npr1.1*, *ndr1.1*, *pen2-1* and *pen2.2*).

Table 2.1: T-DNA insertion lines
The lines were obtained from the *Arabidopsis* Biological resource center (ABRC, Ohio, USA). Successful number of homozygous mutants are indicated, and the location of the T-DNA in the gene.

AGI code	Gene	T-DNA lines	Hom. No.	Insertion location
At3g24170	*GR1*	SALK_105794C	4	Intron
At1g19570	*DHAR1*	SALK_005382.46.25.x	2	Exon
At5g41210	*GSTT1*	SALK_014245.39.15.x	--	Exon
At3g51660	*AtMIF1*	SAIL_892_D10	--	Intron
AT4G14930	*AtSurE*	SALK_037615	4	Intron
AT5G17890.1	*AtLIMDP*	SALK_024264	2	Exon
At1g54540	*NHL4*	SAIL_681_E12	3	300-UTR
At1g65690	*NHL6*	SALK_148523	6	Exon
At5g36970	*NHL25*	SALK_113216	4	Exon
At3g54200	*NHL39*	SAIL_204_E02	3	Exon
AT5G21130	*NHL13H1*	SALK_080000	2	Exon
At3g05975	*NHL39H1*	SAIL_1213_B03	--	Exon
At4g09930	*AtIAN11*	SAIL_404_H08	2	300-UTR

2.2.1.6 Tobacco (growth conditions)

Nicotiana tabacum cv. Petit Havana (used for protoplast isolation, 2.2.3.3) seeds were surface-disinfected with 70% (v/v) alcohol for 1 min, and subsequently by 25% (v/v) bleach for 15 min, followed by four rinses with autoclaved deionized water. For each washing step, seeds were centrifuged at 14,000 rpm, and the liquid was decanted. Seeds were placed into plates containing a medium consisting of 3% sucrose, 1 MS and solidified with 0.8% (w/v) plant agar that had been adjusted to pH 5.8. Germinating seeds were placed in the culture chamber under 12/12 h light cycle at 22°C. After 2-3 weeks, germinating seedlings were transferred to Magenta boxes containing the same media and placed under the same light and temperature conditions to allow further growth. *Nicotiana tabaccum* plants (used for *Agrobacterium*-dependent transient transformation) were planted on soil and incubated at long day (18h day "23^{o}C"/6h dark "18^{o}C") at 60-70 µEinsteins light. The low light incubation conditions were used in order to optimize the leaves for subcellular localization experiments (see 2.2.3.2). Available *Nicotiana tabaccum* plants were picked from the green house facility, PRL, MSU, USA.

2.2.2 Molecular biology methods

2.2.2.1 PCR

To study the subcellular targeting of *Arabidopsis thaliana* full length-cDNAs with predicted PTS1s, fusion proteins with N-terminally located EYFP were generated. *Arabidopsis* cDNAs were ordered from ABRC center (Ohio, USA) and the BioResource Center (RIKEN, Ibaraki, Japan, Appendix: Table 2.4) or amplified by RT-PCR from the plant isolated RNA (see 2.2.2.2). Moreover, single exon gene (*NHL13H1*) was amplified by PCR from isolated genomic DNA. The proofreading High Fidelity Expand Polymerase (see 2.1.1) was used to amplify DNA fragments with conditions suggested by the manufacturer. Primers containing appropriate restriction endonucleases (Appendix: Table 2.4) were used for the amplification and further subclonings into the plant expression vectors (see 2.1.3). For EYFP-fused peroxisomal terminal domain (PTD), the C-terminal 10 residues of plant full-length proteins were fused to the C-terminus of EYFP by PCR using extended reverse primers and subsequently subcloned into empty pCAT vector (see 2.1.3).

To generate overexpresser lines, gene specific primers (Appendix: Table 2.4) were used to amplify full length *Arabidopsis* cDNAs of *NHL4*, *NHL6*, *NHL25*, *AtIAN12*, *AtIAN11*, and *AtIAN8*. Additional N-terminally fused proteins (NHL4, NHL6, AtIAN12, AtIAN11) with EYFP were generated, after constructing an intermediate vector (pGEMT-EYFP) where the selected genes were subcloned in the back of EYFP. Subsequently, the available EYFP-fused and non-fused fragments were excised and subcloned into the binary vectors pBA002 and pER10 (see 2.1.3). The resulting constructs were transformed (see 2.2.1.4) into *A. tumefaciens* strain ABI-1 (see 2.1.2.2) via the freeze-thaw method (Holsters et al., 1978). The resulting constructs were transformed to the wt *Arabidopsis* Col-0 plants by the floral dip method (see 2.2.1.4).

To produce tagged (His_6 and MBP) recombinant proteins in *E.coli*, cDNAs of *GR1*, *DHAR1* and *GSTT1* were amplified using gene-specific flanking primers and subcloned into pQE31 and pMAL.c2X (see 2.1.3).

To generate loss-of-function lines for (NHL4, NHL6, NHL25, AtIAN12, AtIAN11, and AtIAN8) the Web MicroRNA Designer

platform (WMD) was used to design amiRNA sequences (21mers) based on their annotations. Two different 21mers (amiRNAs) were selected per target or two targets at once (AtIAN11+AtIAN12, Appendix: Table 2.4). Each primary amiRNA construct was engineered from pRS300 (see 2.1.3) by modified PCRs, in a similar way, as described earlier (Schwab et al., 2006). The plasmid information for pRS300 has been integrated into the online WMD2 platform, and all appropriate primer sequences, needed for customization of pRS300, can be retrieved using the primer design function of WMD2. For each amiRNA construct, three overlapping fragments including the multiple cloning sites (MCS) were PCR amplified from the template (pRS300) using a total of six primers (4 are amiRNA-specific, and 2 are vector-specific). The three resulting fragments were gel purified and then fused in a single PCR with the two vector-specific flanking primers (Appendix: Table 2.4). The final fusion product of 554 bp was again gel purified, cloned into pGEM®-T Easy Vector (Promega, USA). The obtained constructs were sequence verified, excised with XhoI/SpeI and transferred into the MCS of the binary vectors pBA002 and/or pER10 (see 2.1.3).

2.2.2.2 RT-PCR

Total RNA was extracted using Triazol (Invitrogen, USA), according to the manufacturer's protocol. First-strand cDNA synthesis was performed using Superscript III reverse transcriptase (Invitrogen, USA) in a 20-µl standard reaction containing gene-specific primers. *NHL25* and *NHL6* cDNAs were amplified by reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) from SA-treated leaves as shown previously (Varet et al., 2002), and senescent leaves, respectively.

2.2.2.3 Agarose gel electrophoresis

Confirmation of PCR products or restriction digests was regularly processed by agarose gel electrophoresis. DNA samples were mixed with 5x loading buffer (Fermentas, Germany) and loaded into agarose gels mostly consisting of 1% (w/v) agarose melted in 1x TAE (40 mM Trisacetate and 1 mM EDTA, pH 8.0) and 1:10000 diluted SYBR® Safe (Invitrogen, USA) or ethidium bromide. A 1 kb ladder (Fermentas, Germany) was loaded next to the samples as a DNA size marker. Samples were separated by electrophoresis in 1x TAE buffer at 100 V and visualized under UV light.

2.2.2.4 Transformation of competent *E.coli* cells

Competent *E.coli* (JM109, 2.1.2.1) cells which were prepared as shown previously (Chung et al., 1989) were placed on ice to thaw. The target vectors are added to the cells and incubated for 20 min. The cells were then given a heat-shock at 42ºC for 50 s and returned to ice for 2 min before adding 500 µl of LB medium. The cells were then incubated at 37ºC for 1-2 h with constant shaking (200 rpm) to allow plasmid replication and expression of the antibiotic resistance gene. 200-400 µl of the competent cells were spread on LB agar plates containing the appropriate antibiotics, and left to dry before incubation at 37ºC overnight.

2.2.2.5 Colony PCR

Direct colony PCR was used to screen for successful plasmid transformation into *E. coli* or *A. tumefaciens* colonies. Even though blue/white screening was used sometimes to determine if inserts are present, but also this technique facilitates determination of insert size and/or orientation in the vector. The homemade thermostable DNA polymerase from *Thermus aquaticus* ("Taq DNA polymerase") was used together with 10X PCR buffer (500 mM KCl, 100 mM Tris-HCl (pH 9.0), 1.0% Triton X100) and 25 mM $MgCl_2$ to set up the PCR reaction. For *E.coli*, a small amount of a colony were added and mixed well with the PCR reaction, while 150 µl from a grown culture of *A. tumefaciens* were centrifuged and the pellet was resuspended in 20 µl of water, which were boiled for 10 min, centrifuged and 3-5 µl from the supernatant were added to the PCR reaction.

2.2.2.6 Sequencing

The new recombinant constructs were isolated from transformed bacteria using Wizard® Plus SV Minipreps (see 2.1.1). Sequencing was done by Seqlab (Goettingen, Germany) using their facility of Extended Hotshots reactions which were applied for all of the new recombinant constructs. The general promoter T7 and SP6 primers were used for sequencing of the cloned inserts in pGEM-T Easy plasmid. For pCAT cloned inserts, vector backbone primers were used for sequencing (Appendix: Table 2.4). Sequence analysis was done using Vector NTI (Invitrogen, USA) in combination with web based programs for reversing DNA (http://www.bioinformatics.org/SMS/rev_comp.html) and protein translation (http://us.expasy.org/tools/dna.html).

2.2.2.7 Site-directed mutagenesis (SDM)

SDM was carried out using the QuickChange® Site-Directed Mutagenesis Kit (see 2.1.1). Primers containing the desired mutations, Appendix: Table 2.4) were designed according to the manufacturer recommendations. The plasmid DNA template was amplified by PCR using the *PfuTurbo*® DNA polymerase. Next, the methylated template plasmid DNA was removed by digestion with DpnI (10 U, Fermentas, Germany) for 1 h at 37ºC. Following the incubation, the nicked vector DNA containing the desired mutations was then transformed into *E.coli* (XL1-Blue) super competent cells supplied by the manufacturer. The clones obtained were then sequenced to confirm the presence of the desired mutation. AtLIMDP and DHAR1 (domain) constructs were mutated using this method.

2.2.2.8 Real-time PCR

Plants were grown and treated either by elicitor or pathogen (see 2.2.4). The treated leaves were frozen in liquid nitrogen and stored at -80°C before being ground into powder using liquid nitrogen. Total RNA was isolated using RNeasy® Plant Mini Kit (see 2.1.1). RNA was quantified by NanoDrop 2000 (Thermo Fisher, USA) and the concentration was adjusted to 100 ng/µl. The High Capacity cDNA Archive Kit (see 2.1.1) was used, according to the manufacturer's recommendations, to synthesize cDNA (50 ng/µl) using 1 µg RNA, which was further diluted to 10 ng/µl. Real-time PCR reactions were assayed using an ABI 7300 Fast Real-Time PCR System (Applied Biosystems, USA) with Sybr-Green for detection. The standard reaction volume was 20 µl containing 10 µl qPCR Master Mix (PrimerDesign, England), 300 nM primer (each of forward and reverse, Table 2.2) and 10 ng cDNA. Standard cycling conditions (2 min at 50°C, 10 min at 95°C and 40 cycles altering between 15 s at 95°C and 1 min at 60°C) were used for product formation. Comparative C_T method was used for relative quantitation of gene expression. Gene expression for each sample was calculated on three analytical replicates normalized using the average of the reference gene *Actin2*, using water treated tissues as calibrator. Thus, relative quantity of any gene is given as fold change relative to the calibrator.

Primers optimization and testing of the genes in this study were carried out by Chimuka Mwaanga's master thesis (Mwaanga, 2011). It was concluded from his study that *NHL6, NHL25* and *PR2* are equal to

Actin2 in regards of the amplification efficiency, hence their primers could be used for relative quantitation of gene expression. In contrast, *NHL4*, *AtIAN8*, *AtIAN11*, and *AtIAN12* amplification efficiencies were different from *Actin2* and refers that they need further optimization or replacement of the primers used, and could affect negatively on relative quantitation of gene expression. Neverthless, because the time limitations all the genes tested were used in this study as a preliminary step of analyses, bearing in mind the possible changes in relative quantitation for NHL4 and AtIANs.

Table 2.2: Real-time PCR primers
Forward and reverse primers were designed by QuantPrime (http://www.quantprime.de). The primer optimization and testing were carried out by Chimuka Mwaanga's master thesis (Mwaanga, 2011).

AGI code	Gene	Forward primer 5'-3'	Reverse primer 5'-3'
At3g18780	ACT2	TGCCAATCTACGAGGGTTTC	CAGTAAGGTCACGTCCAGCA
At1g54540	NHL4	TGCAGCAGCAACAACAAACAGG	TTCCGAGTTTGATGGCGACAGG
At1g65690	NHL6	TGGGAGCAAGATTACCGTGTGG	TTTGGCAACGACCCATTGCTTAG
At5g36970	NHL25	CCAGAATCAGTAATGGGTCGTTGC	CCTGTTAACCGTTGTTGCTCTTGC
At4g09940	IAN12	AGAGTTCAACGCTACCCAATGGC	TGGCGACAGACTAAACAGACCAG
At4g09930	IAN11	TGGCCAAGAAGGTAGAGAAGGTG	TCTTCGCTGGATTCTTCGTGGAG
At1g33960	IAN8	TCAATGTGATTGACACTCCTGGTC	ACTAAGAGCACAGCGTGTAGCC
At3g57260	PR2	AGCTTCCTTCTTCAACCACACAGC	TGGCAAGGTATCGCCTAGCATC

2.2.3 *In vivo* subcellular localization analysis

2.2.3.1 Transient expression in onion epidermal cells

Five micrograms of recombinant genes (see 2.2.2.1) were precipitated on 1.0 mm gold particles. Onions were cut into pieces and placed on a wet tissue in Petri dishes. These whole pieces were bombarded using a Biolistic Particle Delivery System (BioRad, USA) with 1100 psi rupture discs (briefly rinsed by ethanol) under a vacuum of 0.1 bars. After bombardment the samples were placed on a benchtop for 20 h in the dark. Onion epidermal cell layers were peeled and transferred to glass slides for microscopy (Fulda et al., 2002). The onion epidermal cell layer could be further incubated at 4^{o}C up to 8 days while keeping the sample humid. The longer incubation at cold temperature, allowed detection of weakly targeting proteins (Lingner et al., 2011).

2.2.3.2 Transient expression in tobacco leaves by *Agrobacteria*

Four to six weeks-old *Nicotiana tabacum* plants (see 2.2.1.6) were used for the *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*-mediated transient expression assays. *A. tumefaciens* strain GV3101(pMP90) (see 2.1.2.2) containing the recombinant genes was allowed to grow at 28^{o}C overnight, washed, and resuspended in water to an optical density at 600 nm of 0.5. Cells transformed with plasmids harboring either the EYFP fusion or organelles markers (see 2.1.3) were mixed and infiltrated into tobacco leaves using 1 ml needleless syringes. Leaves of infiltrated plants were analyzed after 2 days (Reumann et al., 2009).

2.2.3.3 Transient expression in isolated protoplasts

Tobacco protoplasts were transfected by a method described previously with minor modifications. Solutions used for the isolation and transformation are described at Table 2.3. Briefly, 3-4 leaves of 4-6 week-old *Nicotiana tabacum* cv. Petit Havana, grown in magenta boxes (see 2.2.1.6), were cut into small stripes with a sharp-razor blade and incubated with 12 ml enzyme solution at 28^{o}C for 16 h. After incubation, the protoplast suspension was filtered through two mesh sizes (125 µm and 63 µm) and protoplasts were collected by centrifugation at 60 g for 5 min. The pelleted protoplasts were resuspended in 10 ml W5 solution, incubated for 1 h on ice, and centrifuged. At this step, Haemacytometer slide was used to count the total number of protoplasts obtained.

To transform DNA into protoplasts, protoplasts were pelleted again and resuspended in MaMg solution, bearing in mind that the final protoplast number should be adjusted to 0.5 million/300 µl MaMg solution. Plasmid DNA (5–30 µg) was added to 300 µl MaMg solution containing protoplasts followed by 500 µl PEG solution. The mixture was incubated for 30 min at RT. After incubation, the mixture was centrifuged and the protoplasts were recovered in 3 ml B5 solution and incubated at RT in the dark. The expression of proteins was examined at various time points after transformation, potentially after 24 h and 48 h (Meyer et al., 2011).

Table 2.3: Solutions for protoplast preparation

Solution	Contents concentrations	Volume	Weights	Sterilization
Enzyme	0.5 M Mannitol for tobacco 10 mM CaCl2x2H2O 1% Cellulase (Onozuka R-10, Japan) 0.25% Macerozyme (Onozuka R-10)	100 ml	9.109g 0.147g 1g 0.25g	Sterile filter Freeze (12 ml-aliquots) at -20°C.
Mannitol	(0.5 M for tobacco)	500 ml	45.542g	Autoclave
CaCl2	0.2 M CaCl2x2H2O	250 ml	7.35g	Autoclave
W5	145 mM NaCl 125 mM CaCl2x2H2O 5 mM KCl 5 mM Glucose Check pH (5-6), or adjust	500 ml	4.237g 9.188g 0.186g 0.450g	Autoclave
MaMg	0.5 M Mannitol 15 mM MgCl2 x6H2O 0.1% MES Adjust pH (5.7) with 0.1 N KOH	50 ml	4.555g 0.152g 0.1g	Sterile filter
PEG	0.4 M Mannitol 0.1 M Ca(NO3)2 x4H2O 0.1% MES Adjust pH (8) or (7-9) with NaOH Poly ethylene glycol (PEG) 6000	100 ml	7.3g 2.362g 0.1g 40 g	Sterile filter Freeze at -20°C
B5	3.17 g/l Gamborg (Duchefa, Netherland) 0.5 M Glucose Adjust pH (5.7) with 0.1 N KOH	500 ml	1.585g 45.04g	Sterile filter Freeze at -20°C)

2.2.4 Immunity assays

2.2.4.1 Bacterial proliferation

Measuring bacterial multiplication within the host tissue is a method used to examine the plant innate immunity (see 1.2.1). A standard enumeration procedure involves pathogen inoculation followed by assaying bacterial populations present within host tissues at regular intervals. Bacteria used in this study were *Pst* DC3000 and *Pst* DC3000 (avrRpt2) (see 2.1.2.3). Bacteria were grown in low salt medium; LM (10 g l^{-1} Bacto tryptone, 6 g l^{-1} yeast extract, 1.5 g l^{-1} K_2HPO4, 0.6 g l^{-1} NaCl, and 0.4 g l^{-1} MgSO4.7H2O) with appropriate antibiotics (2.1.2.3). Virulent and avirulent *Pst* DC3000 bacteria were grown to the mid-logarithmic phase, centrifuged at 3000x g, and resuspended in a sterile water to the specified inoculums density. Syringe injections with relatively low inoculum densities ($1x10^6$ colony-forming units (CFU)/ml) were used. Four to six weeks-old *Arabidopsis* leaves (see 2.2.1.3) were infiltrated by pressuring bacterial suspensions into the

apoplast using a needless syringe. As a wounding control, distilled water was infiltrated into plant leaves. After inoculation, plants were left uncovered until leaves were no longer water soaked, then covered with humidity domes until completion of experiments (Gopalan et al., 1996; Katagiri et al., 2002). Leaves were harvested and leaf disks (0.38 cm^2) were excised from leaves with a cork borer number 5. The leaf disk for a single sample was placed in a 1.5 ml tube with 10 µl sterile distilled water, and ground with a plastic pestle by a small hand-held electric homogenizer. The pestle was then rinsed with 90 µl of water, with the rinse being collected in the original sample tube (total volume= 100 µl). A 10 µl sample was removed and diluted in 90 µl sterile distilled water. A serial 1:10 dilution series (up to 10^{-6}) was created for each sample. The diluted samples were placed on LM plates containing antibiotics, by spotting triple 10 µl aliquots of each of the serial dilutions and allowed to dry onto the surface. The plates were placed at 28°C for approximately 2 days; afterwards the CFU for each dilution of each sample are counted.

For the 10 µl spotting technique, a single spot was used for estimating the bacterial population only if it has >7 or < ~70 colonies. Plotting log (bacterial number/cm^2 leaf tissue) against time (in days), after pathogen inoculation produced the growth curve. Generally, this is a standard means of evaluating how well a bacterial pathogen multiplies in plant tissues (Gopalan et al., 1996; Katagiri et al., 2002). More than three bacterial number/cm^2 leaf tissues were averaged for determination of the CFU for each type of plants. Subsequently, standard deviation (SD) was calculated based on the difference of average numbers between bioliogical replicates, which in this case are two replicates (n=2).

2.2.4.2 Callose deposition

Callose (see 1.2.1.1), an amorphous, high-molecular-weight β-1,3-glucan is deposited in cell wall appositions (papillae) that form beneath infection sites and are thought to provide a physical barrier to pathogen penetration (Gomez-Gomez et al., 1999; Nishimura et al., 2003; Luna et al., 2011). By screening different ecotypes of *Arabidopsis* only wassilewskija (WS-0) was completely insensitive to the flagellin peptides (Gomez-Gomez et al., 1999).

Seeds of *Arabidopsis thaliana (*approximately 15 seeds per well) were planted in a sterile 12-well plate, each containing 1 ml filter-sterilized basal MS medium without Gamborg vitamins (Invitrogen, USA) with

0.5% (w/v) sucrose. Plates were kept in the dark at 4°C for 1–2 days for stratification before transferring them to the controlled growth cabinets. Seedlings were cultivated under standard growth conditions (see 2.2.1.2) but continuous light. After 8 days of growth, MS medium was replaced with fresh medium. At day 9, seedlings were treated with 1 μM flg22. This optimal flg22 concentration was based on previously reported dose-response experiments (Gomez-Gomez et al., 1999).

After another 24 h, seedlings were cleared and dehydrated with 100% ethanol. Seedlings were fixed in an acetic acid: ethanol (1:3) solution for 2 h and sequentially incubated for 15 min in 75% ethanol, next in 50% ethanol, and finally in 150 mM phosphate buffer, pH 8.0. Then they were stained for 1 h at 25^{o}C in 150 mM phosphate buffer, pH 8.0, containing 0.01% (w/v) aniline blue. After staining, seedlings were mounted in 50% glycerol. About eight leaves, from at least five independent seedlings were examined by UV epifluorescence microscope (see 2.1.4.2). Callose quantification was performed by using ImageJ software (Galletti et al., 2008). Five images representing 5 leaves from 5 independent plants were used for counting callose depositions, and their numbers were averaged, subsequently, SD was calculated based on the difference of average numbers between bioliogical replicates, which in this case are two replicates (n=2) containing 3 experiments.

2.2.5 Metabolic peroxisome function assays

2.2.5.1 Sucrose dependence

Arabidopsis and other oilseed plants β-oxidize long chain fatty acids in peroxisomes to provide energy during germination (see 1.1.1.1). Some mutants seeds germinate normally, but plants do not develop beyond germination unless provided with exogenous sucrose; a phenotype which suggests severe peroxisomal defects, because peroxisomal β-oxidation mutants cannot catabolize stored fatty acids for energy before photosynthesis begin (Hayashi et al., 1998). To determine whether disruption of a gene in a specific mutant will lead to impaired seedling establishment, hypocotyls lengths of dark-grown seedlings germinated in the presence or absence of sucrose should be tested (Zhang et al., 2010).

Seeds of wt *Arabidopsis thaliana* and mutants were sown on ½ Linsmaier & Skoog with vitamins (LS; caissonlabs, USA) agar growth

medium with or without 1% (w/v) sucrose, and stratified in the dark at 4°C for 2–4 days. Afterwards, seeds were allowed to germinate and grow in normal growth conditions (see 2.2.1.2) but in the dark for 5 days. Five-day-old etiolated seedlings were scanned using an EPSON scanner (http://www.epson.com). Hypocotyl length was then measured using IamgJ (http://rsb.info.nih.gov/ij/). More than 50 seedlings of each genotype were used for hypocotyl length measurements in three biological replicates (Zhang and Hu, 2009). Ten to 15 seedling hypocotyl lengths were measured and averaged, subsequently, SD was calculated based on the difference of average numbers between bioliogical replicates, which in this case are three replicates (n=3).

2.2.5.2 Auxin response

Indole-3-acetic acid (IAA) is a predominant auxin can be controlled in plants by altering rates of synthesis and degradation. Indole-3-butyric acid (IBA) is a second endogenous auxin; genetic evidence indicates that IBA is converted to IAA in peroxisomes. Because the conversion shortens the IBA side chain by two carbons, this process has been proposed to occur similarly to fatty acid β-oxidation. A collection of *Arabidopsis* mutants that are resistant to the inhibitory effects of IBA on root elongation but that respond normally to IAA were described and are mostly distinguished by developmental defects in the absence of exogenous sucrose, suggesting defects in peroxisomal β-oxidation (Zolman et al., 2001; Woodward and Bartel, 2005).

To study the response to IBA (final concentration 0, 10, 20, and 30 mM) was added to ½ LS agar growth medium with 0.5% (w/v) sucrose. Seeds from wt *Arabidopsis thaliana* and mutants were sown, followed by 2 days of cold treatment. To measure root elongations, seedlings were grown for 8 d under standard growth conditions (see 2.2.1.2) and the length of the primary roots was scanned using an EPSON scanner and measured using ImageJ (Zolman et al., 2001; Zhang and Hu, 2010). Ten to 15 seedling root lengths were measured and averaged, subsequently, SD was calculated based on the difference of average numbers between bioliogical replicates, which in this case are two replicates (n=2).

2.2.5.3 Photorespiration

During photorespiration process, peroxisomes are involved (see 1.1.1.1). In peroxisome defective mutants, the photorespiration could

be affected. Seeds of wt *Arabidopsis thaliana* and mutants were sown on ½ LS agar growth medium with or without 1% (w/v) sucrose, following 2 days of cold treatment. They were allowed to grow under standard growth conditions (see 2.2.1.2). When they are 2 weeks-old, plants were transferred to a freshly made soil and were allowed to grow for 18 days in a growth chamber under standard growth conditions (see 2.2.1.2) or low CO_2 (80 ppm).

2.2.6 Protein chemistry (SDS-PAGE)

SDS-PAGE (sodium dodecyl sulfate-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis) was used to detect the overexpressed proteins. The recombinant vectors (see 2.2.2.1) were transformed to *E.coli* (see 2.1.2.1). The tagged proteins were expressed in *E.coli* by IPTG induction. The protein samples were mixed with 1x SDS loading buffer [60 mM Tris-HCl pH 6.8, 10% (v/v) glycerol, 2% (w/v) SDS, 5% (v/v) β-mercaptoethanol, 0.025% bromophenol blue] were boiled at 100ºC for 5 min and separated according to their size. Unstained protein marker (Fermentas, Germany) was run alongside the samples and used as a size reference. SDS-PAGE gels consist of an upper stacking gel and lower separating gel. The stacking gel [125 mM Tris-HCl pH 6.8, 4% (w/v) acrylamide, 0.1% (w/v) SDS, 0.05% (w/v) APS, 0.15% (v/v) TEMED] was used for loading and concentrating the protein samples. A 10% SDS-PAGE separating gel [0.38 M Tris-HCl pH 8.8, 10% (w/v) acrylamide 0.1% (w/v) SDS, 0.05% (w/v) APS, 0.07% TEMED] fractionates proteins according to their molecular weight. The gels were fitted in a Mini-PROTEAN II cassette (BioRad) filled with SDS running buffer [250 mM Tris-HCl, 192 mM glycine and 0.1% (w/v) SDS]. Proteins were first electrophoresed at 80 V until they reached the end of the stacking gel, after which the voltage was increased to 150 V.

2.2.7 Leaf peroxisomes isolations

Four to six weeks-old *Arabidopsis* plant leaves (see 2.2.1.2) were harvested and leaf peroxisomes (n=5) were isolated as described previously (Reumann et al., 2007). These preparations will be used to study the ASC-GSH cycle (see 1.1.1.2) enzymes.

3. Results

3. 1. Validation of prediction models

3.1.1 *In vivo* validation of PTS1 tripeptides

Proteins are imported into peroxisomes mostly by a PTS1 or PTS2 [see 1.1.3, (Purdue and Lazarow, 2001)]. More than 100 new candidate proteins from plant peroxisomes had been identified, including low-abundance proteins, by both prediction models and proteome analyses ((Reumann, 2011) see 1.1.4). To better investigate the biological functions of peroxisomes, it is essential to identify the entire peroxisomal proteome. The prediction of plant peroxisomal proteins from genome sequences is an essential approach to identify additional yet unknown peroxisomal proteins (Reumann, 2011). A large data set (manuscript 1, Figure 1) of more than 2500 homologous plant sequences was generated from EST databases and 60 known *Arabidopsis* PTS1 proteins. Two prediction methods were applied to plant PTS1 proteins predictions: position-specific weight matrices (PWM) and residue interdependence (RI) models. Experimental verification supported the accuracy of both prediction methods (PWM and RI) on example sequences and identified several novel PTS1 tripeptides even including novel residues (manuscript 1, Table 1). Furthermore, several *Arabidopsis* proteins were predicted by PWM and RI models (see manuscript 1, Figure 4, and Supplemental data set 2).

The proposed PTD of the translated ESTs or proteins were N-terminally fused with EYFP (see 2.2.2.1), and their cDNAs were transiently expressed from the CaMV 35S promoter in onion epidermal cells that had been biolistically transformed (Fulda et al., 2002). Some plant sequences terminating with minor PTS1 tripeptides had already been predicted from 2004 dataset [SRV>, SML>, SNM>, etc., manuscript 1, Table 1, (Reumann, 2004)]. From this dataset, SRV> of the acyl-CoA oxidase 4 homolog of *Zinnia elegans* was validated as a functional PTS1, by detecting its EYFP-PTD in peroxisomes. However, organelle targeting of this construct could not be resolved under standard conditions (18 to 24 h at room temperature) but required extended expression times up to 1 week at reduced temperature (~ 10 ^{o}C). Indeed, the combination of cold incubation with the extension of expression time (from 24 h to 1 week) improved the detection

sensitivity for several weak targeting signals. The specificity of PTS1 protein import into peroxisomes was verified by EYFP alone and a few non-peroxisomal constructs (e.g., LCR> and LNL>), all of which remained in the cytosol under the same conditions (see manuscript 1). To further confirm SRV> as a plant peroxisomal PTS1, peroxisome targeting was validated for two additional PTDs of AGT homologs (SRV>). Both of their EYFP-PTDs were detected in peroxisomes. The targeting efficiency of both reporter fusions was different: SRV> (*Populus trichocarpa* x *Populus deltoides*) was weaker than the one from *Pinus taeda* (for more details see manuscript 1).

In the same study, the large data set was separated into three subsets (manuscript 1, Figure 1) based on the number of sequences that shared the same C-terminal tripeptide (1^{st}: most reliable data [≥3 sequences]; 2^{nd} [=2 sequences] and [3^{rd} =1 sequence]: uncertain data). From the 1^{st} data set, sixteen (e.g., CKI> and STI>) out of 42 identified C-terminal tripeptides had not been proposed to function as targeting signals by previous studies. Experimentally, CKI> and STI> were validated as novel functional PTS1 tripeptides (for more details see manuscript 1). To test the new algorithms for their ability to predict new PTS1 tripeptides, they were applied on the 2^{nd} and 3^{rd} uncertain data sets (manuscript 1, Figure 1). Several example sequences were selected for experimental verification based on their PWM and RI model-based prediction scores. Out of 12 example sequences chosen for experimental validation as part of the present dissertation, peroxisome and organelle targeting was validated for STI>, SPL>, PKI>, TRL>, and LKL> although with different efficiencies. Thus, these analyses identified five additional novel PTS1 tripeptides (STI>, SPL>, PKI>, TRL>, and LKL>). These results also added novel residues, namely Thr and Leu (position -3) and Pro, Phe, and Gln (position -2) to the plant PTS1 tripeptide motif ([TL][PFQ]z>). On the other hand, two other constructs (SGI> and SEM>) remained cytosolic. These results supported the assumption that these two uncertain data subsets are less reliable (for more details see manuscript 1).

The PWM and RI models were applied to the *Arabidopsis* genome using the gene model predictions of TAIR10. Out of the list of *Arabidopsis* genes which was provided based on their peroxisome targeting probabilities, 392 proteins (1.1% of the genome) were predicted to contain a PTS1. Approximately 271 gene models out of them had not yet been associated with peroxisomes. Experimentally,

EYFP-PTD of 1-aminocyclopropane-1-carboxylate synthase like pseudogene (ACS3, SPL>) was targeted to peroxisomes. Finally, several *Arabidopsis* full-length proteins (manuscript 1, Supplemental Table 5) were fused with EYFP (by the bachelor thesis, (Nilssen, 2009)) to investigate peroxisome targeting. The full-length Cys protease (SKL>) was targeted to peroxisomes, a Ser carboxypeptidase S28 family protein (S28FP, SSM>) directed EYFP to unknown subcellular vesicle-like structures, Nudix hydrolase homolog 19 (NUDT19, SSL>) was targeted to peroxisomes with lower effienency, and PfkB-type carbohydrate kinase family protein (pxPfkB, SML>) was also verified as a peroxisomal protein. Only a single full-length protein tested remained cytosolic (CUT1, VKL>, for more details see manuscript 1).

3.1.2 *In vivo* validation of PTS1 proteins

Investigation of peroxisomal targeting of predicted proteins was also investigated by extension of EYFP C-terminally by four additional predicted PTDs of constitutive triple response 1 (At5g03730.1/2, CTR1, SDL>), a self-incompatibility protein S1 family homolog (At2g23142, SPL>), an invertase/pectin methylesterase inhibitor superfamily homolog (At5g51500, K17N15.5, SEL>) and an FBD-like domain family protein (At5g53592, VKM>). All fusion proteins remained in the cytosol, except for SDL> which was verified to be in peroxisomes after extended incubation in cold (1 week) upon transient expression in onion epidermal cells (data not shown).

In order to improve efficient identification of putatively orthologous sequences, three *Arabidopsis* proteins that carried atypical PTS1 tripeptides, and preferentially represented low-abundance proteins were selected for experimental validation. These *Arabidopsis* proteins were fused in the back of EYFP [small thioesterase (sT4, SNL>, At1g04290), and two unknown proteins (At1g73970, UP10, ARL>; At4g33925, UP11, SKI>), and were validated in peroxisomes upon transient expression in onion epidermal cells (data not shown).

3. 2. Detoxification-related proteins

3.2.1 *In vivo* subcellular localization of detoxification proteins

Plant peroxisomes play essential roles in the detoxification of H_2O_2 through catalase and the ASC-GSH cycle (see 1.1.1.2). Peroxisomal GR and DHAR isoforms were identified by proteome analyses of *Arabidopsis* leaf peroxisomes, i.e., GR1 (At3g24170) and DHAR1 (At1g19570) (Reumann et al., 2007; Reumann et al., 2009). In the present study, it was found that *Arabidopsis* GR1 carries a novel PTS1-like tripeptide, TNL>, which had not been described as a plant PTS1 before. The residue T was also identified at pos. -3 in the PTS1 motif (see 1.1.4.1), which was not previously shown. Peroxisomal targeting for the EYFP-PTD (TNL>) was validated in both onion epidermal cells and tobacco protoplasts (see manuscript 2). The full-length GR1 was fused N-terminally with EYFP, and the fusion protein was detected in peroxisomes upon transient expression in onion epidermal cells, but not in tobacco protoplasts (see manuscript2).

DHAR1 was reported to be targeted to peroxisomes, when the full-length protein was fused C-terminally with EYFP and transiently expressed in intact tobacco leaves (Reumann et al., 2009). To investigate the PTS of DHAR1, the full-length DHAR1 was fused N-terminally with EYFP. The fusion protein remained in the cytosol upon transient expression in onion epidermal cells and tobacco protoplasts (Figure 3.1, A and J, 18-48 h expression time), indicating that the protein contains a PTS2 or an internal PTS rather than a PTS1. Interestingly, DHAR1 was found to contain a conserved PTS2-like domain ($RAx_{13}HL$) in the N-terminal domain (position 25 to 41, Figure 3.2). This peptide resembles PTS2 nonapeptides (e.g., $R[TMAV]x_5HL$) with the difference that the four conserved residues are spaces by 13 rather than five residues (Reumann, 2004). To investigate its subcellular targeting activity, the N-terminal domain of DHAR1 (46 aa) including the possible PTS2 domain was fused C-terminally with EYFP. Upon transient expression in onion epidermal cells, the fusion protein was indeed targeted to organelle-like structures (Figure 3.1, B). To investigate further whether the predicted atypical PTS2-like peptide directed the fusion protein (Nt_{46}-EYFP) to peroxisomes, SDM was applied to change the invariable residue, arginine, of the possible PTS2-peptide [($\underline{R}Ax_{13}HL$) to ($\underline{L}Ax_{13}HL$)]. In onion epidermal cells, the

point mutation did not abolish organelle targeting (Figure 3.1, C), indicating that this peptide did not act as a PTS2.

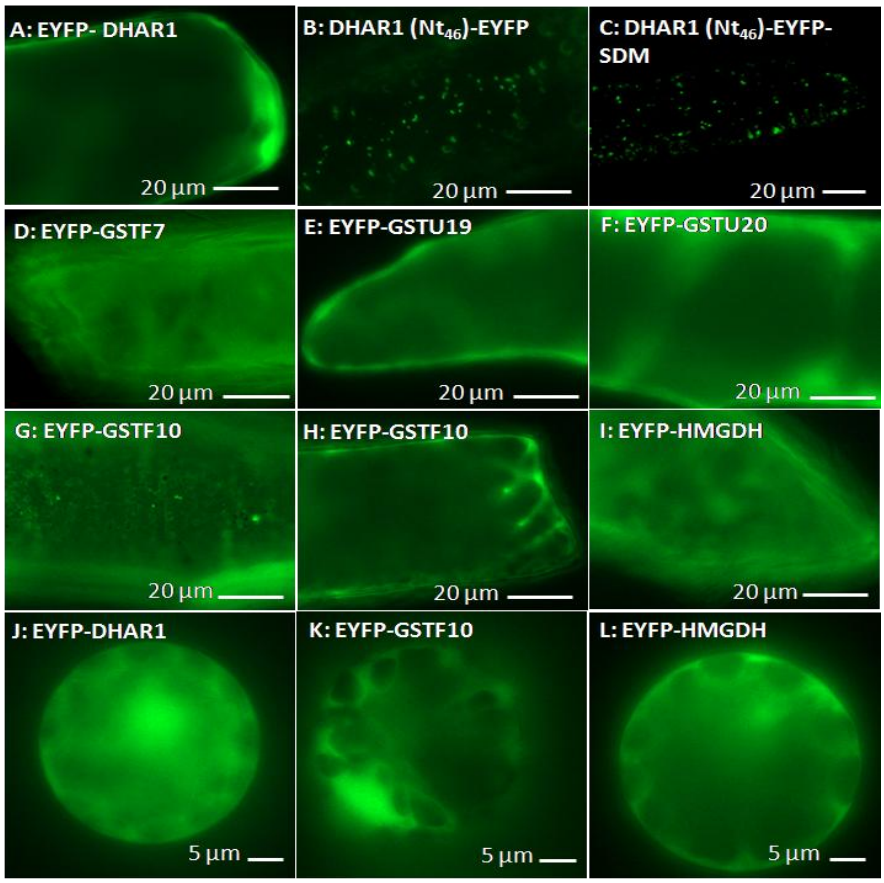

Figure 3.1: *In vivo* subcellular localization of DHAR1 and GSTs
A and D-L: The full-length proteins (DHAR1, GSTF7, GSTU19, GSTU20, and HMGDH) were fused N-terminally with EYFP and transiently expressed in onion epidermal cells or tobacco protoplasts. Apart from GSTF10, all fusion proteins remained cytosolic. GSTF10 mostly remained in the cytosol (H), but sometimes was targeted weakly to unidentified organelle-like structures (G). B and C are C-terminally fused DHAR1 (N-terminal 46 aa) with EYFP, and the SDM (R to L) of the domain construct containing (RAx13HL), respectively. Both of the EYFP-DHAR1 domains localized to organelle-like structures. J-L are images representing cytosolic targeting of DHAR1, GSTF10, and HMGDH fusion proteins in tobacco protoplasts. For fluorescence image acquisition details, see 2.1.4.1. Representative images of reproducible results obtained ≥3 are shown, except for J and C (n=2) and K and L (n=1). Expression times (18-48 h).

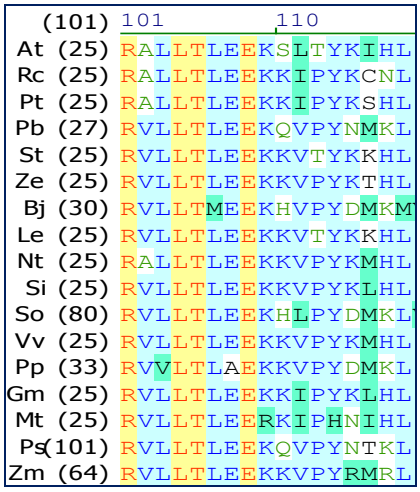

Figure 3.2: Conservation of the N-terminal domain ($RAx_{13}HL$) of DHAR1
Sequences of plant DHAR1 protein homologs, identified by BLAST and aligned using AlignX (Vector NTI, Invitrogen, color background: yellow, identical aa; blue, conservative aa; white, weakly similar aa; green, block of similar aa. The species abbreviations are as follows: At, *Arabidopsis thaliana*; Bj, *Brassica juncea*; Gm: *Glycine max*; Le, *Lycopersicon esculentum*; Mt, *Medicago truncatula*; Nt, *Nicotiana tabacum*; Pp, *Physcomitrella patens* subsp. patens; Pb, *Pinus bungeana*; Ps, *Pisum sativum*; Pt, *Populus trichocarpa*; Rc, *Ricinus communis*; Si, *Sesamum indicum*; So, *Solanum lycopersicum*; St, *Solanum tuberosum*; Tp, Vc, *Volvox carteri* f. nagariensis; Vv, *Vitis vinifera*; Ze, *Zinnia elegans*; Zm, *Zea*

Several GSTs (GSTU19, GSTU20, GSTF7 and GSTF10) were identified in *Arabidopsis* leaf peroxisomes by proteome analyses [see 1.1.1.2, (Reumann et al., 2009)]. However, the four GSTs lacked any predictable PTSs. To validate peroxisome targeting of GSTs, the full-length proteins (GSTU19, At1g78380; GSTU20, At1g78370; GSTF7, At1g02920; GSTF10, At2g30870) were fused N-terminally with EYFP. All reporter-fused proteins remained in the cytosol upon transient expression in onion epidermal cells (Figure 3.1, D-H, 18-48 h expression time). GSTF10 was detected also in organelle-like structures in a few cells (Figure 3.1, G, 18-48 h expression time). However, the identity of these subcellular structures could not be investigated because of the low efficiency of organelle targeting. To better investigate GSTF10, EYFP-GSTF10 was transiently expressed in tobacco protoplasts and appeared to remain in the cytosol (Figure 3.1, K, 24-48 h).

Finally, another detoxification enzyme [S-hydroxymethyl glutathione dehydrogenase/S-nitrosoglutathione reductase (HMGDH/GSNOR, At5g43940)] was also detected in *Arabidopsis* leaf peroxisomes by proteome analyses (Reumann et al., 2007). HMGDH is important in controlling S-nitrosoglutathione turnover, and was reported to afford pathogen resistance in *Arabidopsis* (Rusterucci et al., 2007). The full-length HMGDH was fused N-terminally with EYFP and remained in the cytosol upon transient expression in onion epidermal cells and tobacco protoplast (Figure 3.1, I and L, 18-48 h).

3.2.2 Isolation of homozygous *gr1* and *dhar1* mutants

To initiate physiological functional studies for peroxisomal proteins (GR1 and DHAR1, see 1.1.1.2), homozygous mutants were isolated from *Arabidopsis* T-DNA insertion lines for GR1 and DHAR1 (see 2.2.1.5). T-DNA insertion mutants (see 2.2.1.5) were screened and identified using T-DNA Express (http://signal.salk.edu/cgi-bin/tdnaexpress). T-DNA insertions were generated in the wt Col-0 background. The T-DNA was located at the 3rd of 15 introns in *gr1* and 3rd of 3 exons in *dhar1*. In order to obtain homozygous plants of the mentioned T-DNA insertion lines, a number of genomic PCRs were carried out using genotyping primers which were designed using T-DNA Primer Design tool (http://signal.salk.edu/tdnaprimers.2.html). Genomic DNA was subjected to PCR using the two gene-specific primers (LP and RP) together with the T-DNA specific primer (LBa1: SALK). Several homozygous mutant plants were identified for *gr1* and *dhar1* (Figure 3.3, A).

3.2.3 Analysis of metabolic peroxisome functions in *gr1* and *dhar1* mutants

Photorespiration is accomplished by chloroplasts, peroxisomes, and mitochondria (see 1.1.1.1). Mutants that have a stronger growth defect phenotype in normal air (360 ppm CO_2) are usually characterized as photorespiration mutant if the phenotype is less obvious in high CO_2 conditions, e.g., 670 ppm [e.g. *pex14* null mutant (Orth et al., 2007; Zhang and Hu, 2009)], because photorespiration is not required under high CO_2 conditions (Reumann and Weber, 2006; Kaur et al., 2009). Because *gr1* and *dhar1* showed no growth defect phenotype in normal air, they were investigated for their photorespiration activity by incubating different plants (wt Col-0, *gr1*, and *dhar1* plants) in both low CO_2 concentration (80 ppm) and ambient air (see 2.2.5.3). *gr1*, and *dhar1* plants grew similar to the wt Col-0 under both conditions (Figure 3.3, B). These data however experimentally done once, but indicate that GR1 and DHAR1 don't have any indirect impact on photorespiration.

To determine whether the disruption of *GR1* and *DHAR1* negatively affected seedling establishment, hypocotyls lengths of dark-grown seedlings (wt Col-0, *gr1*, and *dhar1*) were measured upon seed

germination in the presence or absence of sucrose (see 2.2.5.1). The *pex14* null mutant, which is defective in PEX14 (see 1.1.2) which is involved in peroxisomal matrix protein import (see Figure 1.5), has a sugar-dependent phenotype (Orth et al., 2007), was used as a control. On sucrose-free medium, hypocotyl elongation was slightly inhibited in wt Col-0, *gr1* and *dhar1* mutants as compared to sucrose-containing media (Figure 3.3, C). In contrast, hypocotyl elongation was largely inhibited for *pex14* seedling (Figure 3.3, C). These data indicate that both GR1 and DHAR1 are not involved in lipid β-oxidation (see 1.1.1.1).

Next, *gr1* and *dhar1* seedlings were treated by IBA (see 2.2.5.2) to further dissect any possible defect in β-oxidation. IBA is a protoauxin that can be metabolized to the bioactive auxin IAA through peroxisomal β-oxidation in wt Col-0. Mutants deficient in β-oxidation are resistant to the inhibitory effect of IAA on primary root elongation (Hayashi et al., 1998; Zolman et al., 2001). High levels of IBA inhibited root elongation in *gr1* and *dhar1* seedlings, and showed no significant resistance to the auxin, compared with the wt Col-0 plants (Figure 3.3, D). The *pex14* mutant, which was used as a positive control, was resistant to the inhibition of root elongation by IBA (Figure 3.3, D) over a range of concentrations (5-10 µM), consistent with previous reports (Orth et al., 2007; Zhang and Hu, 2010). These data indicate that both GR1 and DHAR1 are not involved in IBA-to-IAA metabolism.

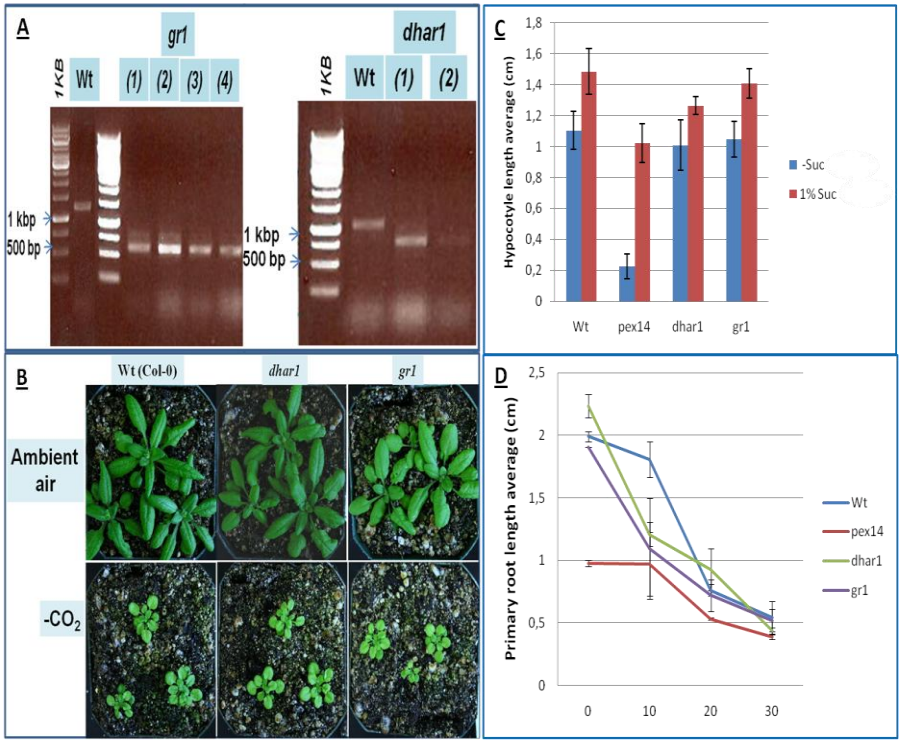

Figure 3.3: Metabolic assays applied to *gr1* and *dhar1* mutants

A: Identification and characterization of homozygous mutants for *gr1* and *dhar1* by genomic PCR. Specific primers were used for genotyping (LP+LBa1+RP). In the lanes of *gr1* (1-4) the T-DNA-specific band size of ~600 bp was present, and the wt band of the size 1200 bp was absent. In the lanes of *dhar1* (1-2) the T-DNA-specific band size of ~700 bp was present, and the wt band of the size 1100 bp was absent. B: Photorespiration assay (n=1) where wt (Col-0) and mutants were planted on MS agar plates, and after 2 weeks were transferred to soil in duplicates (one to grow in ambient air, and the second to grow in low CO_2, 80 ppm). C: Sucrose dependence assay (n=3). Seedlings were grown on half-strength LS with vitamins (with or without 1% (w/v) sucrose) for 6 d in the dark, then the length of 10-15 hypocotyls was measured using the ImageJ program (see 2.2.5.1). Average values of hypocotyl lengthes were calculated for each mutant and are shown. D: Effect of IBA on primary root elongation (n=2). Plants were grown for 7 d in the light on half-strength LS media supplemented with 0, 10, 20 and 30 µM IBA (X-axis). The length of 10-15 primary roots was measured using imageJ program and averaged (see 2.2.5.2). B was done once, while C and D were repeated 3 and 2 times with similar results, respectively. Bars represent SD, for calculations see 2.2.5, for each assay.

3.2.4 Production of recombinant proteins for GR1 and DHAR1

To be able to study the physiological function and the kinetic parameters of *Arabidopsis* GR1, DHAR1 and GSTT1, the tagged recombinant proteins [MBP and His_6] were produced for affinity purification. To this end, the full-length cDNAs of GR1, DHAR1 and GSTT1 were subcloned in two different vectors, pMALc2X and pQE31 (see 2.1.3), to generate N-terminally tagged fusion proteins, with MBP or His_6 tags, respectively. The constructs in pMALc2X were transformed and expressed in *E. coli* BL21 (see 2.1.2) cells (30-37^{o}C mid-log grown cultures). The recombinant proteins were detected from the IPTG induced cultures using 12% SDS-PAGE. The theoretical recombinant protein sizes were calculated (MBP-GR1, 96.97 kDa; MBP-DHAR1, 66.4 kDa; MBP-GSTT1, 70.75 kDa), and all recombinant proteins were successfully detected based on their sizes (Figure 3.4, A and C). The pQE31-based constructs were transformed and expressed in SG13009 *E. coli* cells (30-37^{o}C mid-log grown cultures, (see 2.1.2)). The recombinant proteins for DHAR1 and GSTT1 were successfully expressed and produced His_6-DHAR1 (24.4 kDa) and His_6-GSTT1 (28.75 kDa) proteins (Figure 3.4, B and C), while His_6-GR1 (54.97 kDa) was not detected (Figure 3.4, B).

To determine the solubility of the recombinant tagged proteins, a single colony of the *E. coli* cells carrying each of the recombinant plasmids was grown in LB medium and induced. After sonication, the bacterial lysates were centrifuged to subfractionate the cells into an insoluble and a soluble fraction. After resuspension of the pellets, both fractions were subjected to the same treatment and the recombinant proteins were run on 12% SDS-PAGE (Figure 3.4, C). Five recombinant proteins (i.e., 5) were found to be partially soluble. The availability of GR1 and DHAR1 recombinant proteins with two different tags will allow further studies in order to identify their physiological roles *in vitro*. The next step is to purify the recombinant proteins, and possibly cleave the MBP tag by factor protease Xa (see 2.1.3) and to investigate the kinetic characteristic for the selected proteins. Additionally, the entire ASC-GSH cycle activity shall be investigated in *Arabidopsis* leaf peroxisomes that were isolated in the course of this study (see 2.2.7).

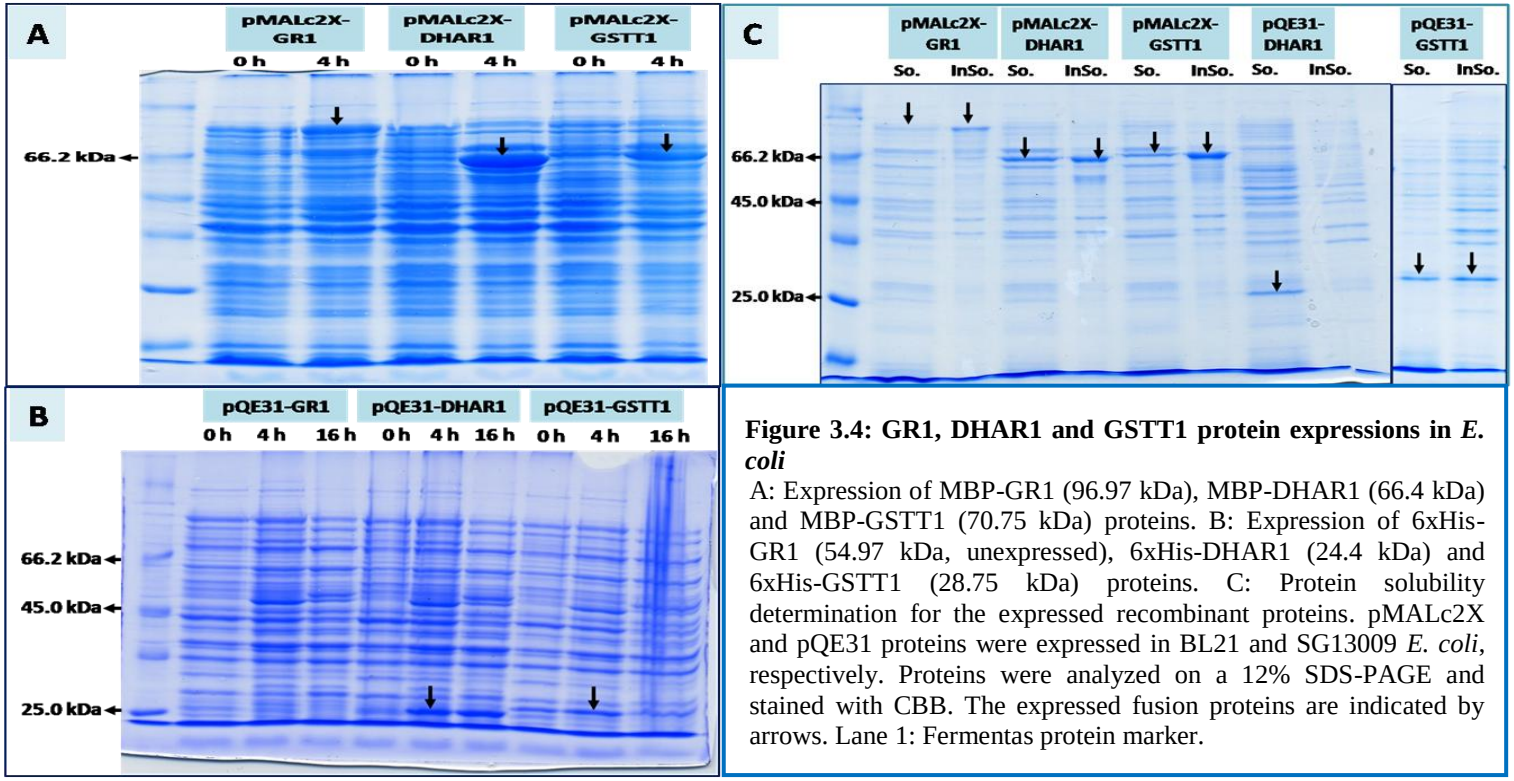

Figure 3.4: GR1, DHAR1 and GSTT1 protein expressions in *E. coli*

A: Expression of MBP-GR1 (96.97 kDa), MBP-DHAR1 (66.4 kDa) and MBP-GSTT1 (70.75 kDa) proteins. B: Expression of 6xHis-GR1 (54.97 kDa, unexpressed), 6xHis-DHAR1 (24.4 kDa) and 6xHis-GSTT1 (28.75 kDa) proteins. C: Protein solubility determination for the expressed recombinant proteins. pMALc2X and pQE31 proteins were expressed in BL21 and SG13009 *E. coli*, respectively. Proteins were analyzed on a 12% SDS-PAGE and stained with CBB. The expressed fusion proteins are indicated by arrows. Lane 1: Fermentas protein marker.

3. 3. Identification of defense-related peroxisomal proteins

Recently, peroxsiomes were reported to have roles in innate immunity and plant resistance against pathogens (see 1.1.1.3). To be able to address the mode of action of peroxisomes in plant defense mechanisms, it is important to characterize additional possible peroxisomal defense-related proteins. Interestingly, several defense-related proteins were predicted to contain putative PTS1s after the application of PWM and RI models to the *Arabidopsis* genes [(Lingner et al., 2011), see Table 3.2]. The proteins of interest were selected based on their annotation as defense-related in plants, human, and bacteria (Table 3.2) and on their probability of carrying predicted PTS1s.

3.3.1 Validation of AtMIF1 targeting to peroxisomes

Macrophage migration inhibitory factor (MIF) is an immune-regulatory protein, and is implicated in several inflammatory diseases in human (Golubkov et al., 2006). Importantly, MIF counter-regulates the immunosuppressive effects of steroids and hence is critical in human immune system both locally and systemically (Golubkov et al., 2006). One of three *Arabidopsis* MIF homologs, in this study referred to as AtMIF1 (SKL>; At3g51660), was identified in *Arabidopsis* leaf peroxisomes by proteome analyses (Reumann et al., 2007), and also was predicted by the PTS1 prediction algorithms (Lingner et al., 2011). Based on the available results of microarray experiments, which are provided by Genevestigator and the eFP browser (www.genevestigator.com; http://bar.utoronto.ca/efp/cgi-bin/efpWeb.cgi), the expression pattern of *AtMIF1* was investigated. Anatomically, *AtMIF1* transcripts appeared to be restricted to adult and senescent leaves. Developmentally, *AtMIF1* transcripts were restricted to developed rosette and flowers (Figure 3.7, A and B). Several biotic stresses induced *AtMIF1*, for instance, bacteria (virulent and avirulent *Ps*), fungi (necrotrophic: *Botrytis cinerea*), and viruses. Moreover, *AtMIF1* was also induced upon treatment by hormones (e.g., SA, JA, and ABA), and bacterial elicitors (e.g., flg22, LPS, and HrpZ). Based on eFB browser microarray experiments, *AtMIF1* appeared to be induced by an oomycete derived elicitor (GST-NPP), but not by the oomycete (*Phytophthora infestans*) itself, which might indicate that the

pathogen evolved a mechanism to suppress *AtMIF1* induction (Table 3.1). Finally, *AtMIF1* also appeared to be expressed by abiotic stresses (cold, drought, osmosis, and wounding, Figure 3.7, C). The microarray-based expression analyses support the prediction of AtMIF1 as an important protein in *Arabidopsis* defense responses.

In order to verify the presence of AtMIF1 in peroxisomes, full-length AtMIF1 was fused N-terminally with EYFP. Upon transient expressions in both onion epidermal cells and tobacco protoplasts, the fusion protein was targeted to peroxisomes (Figure 3.5, A and B). Additionally, two *Arabidopsis* homologs of AtMIF1 were identified by Blast search for AtMIF1 paralogs (AtMIF2: ATL>, At5g01650.1 and AtMIF3: STF>, At5g57170). Both AtMIF1 homologs were detected in chloroplasts by proteome analysis (Zybailov et al., 2008). In contrast to *AtMIF1*, both *AtMIF2* and *AtMIF3* appeared to be more constitutivly expressed, and were very slightly induced by light stress and biotic stresses (Genevestigator, data not shown). AtMIF2 has a PTS1-like tripeptide (ATL>); PWM score 0.48 [updated according to (Lingner et al., 2011)] which is close to the PTS1 prediction threshold (0.412). To be able to address if AtMIF2 is also targeted to peroxisomes, the full-length cDNA was subcloned in the back of EYFP. However, EYFP-MIF2 remained in the cytosol upon transient expression in onion epidermal cells (data not shown).

3.3.2 Validation of AtSurE targeting to peroxisomes

The stationary phase survival protein (SurE) has activities as nucleotidase and exopolyphosphatase and is thought to be involved in stress responses in *E.coli* (Proudfoot et al., 2004). One *Arabidopsis* SurE homolog, here referred to as AtSurE (SSL>; At4g14930) was predicted by the PTS1 prediction algorithms (Lingner et al., 2011). Investigation of *Arabidopsis* microarray experiments (by eFP and Genevestigator) showing expressions of *AtSurE*, indicated that *AtSurE* is constitutively expressed, and is highly induced in response to biotic (bacteria: e.g., *Pst* DC3000 and viruses) and abiotic stresses (drought, heat, osmosis and salinity, Figure 3.7 and Table 3.1). Thus, AtSurE could be related to *Arabidopsis* stress responses.

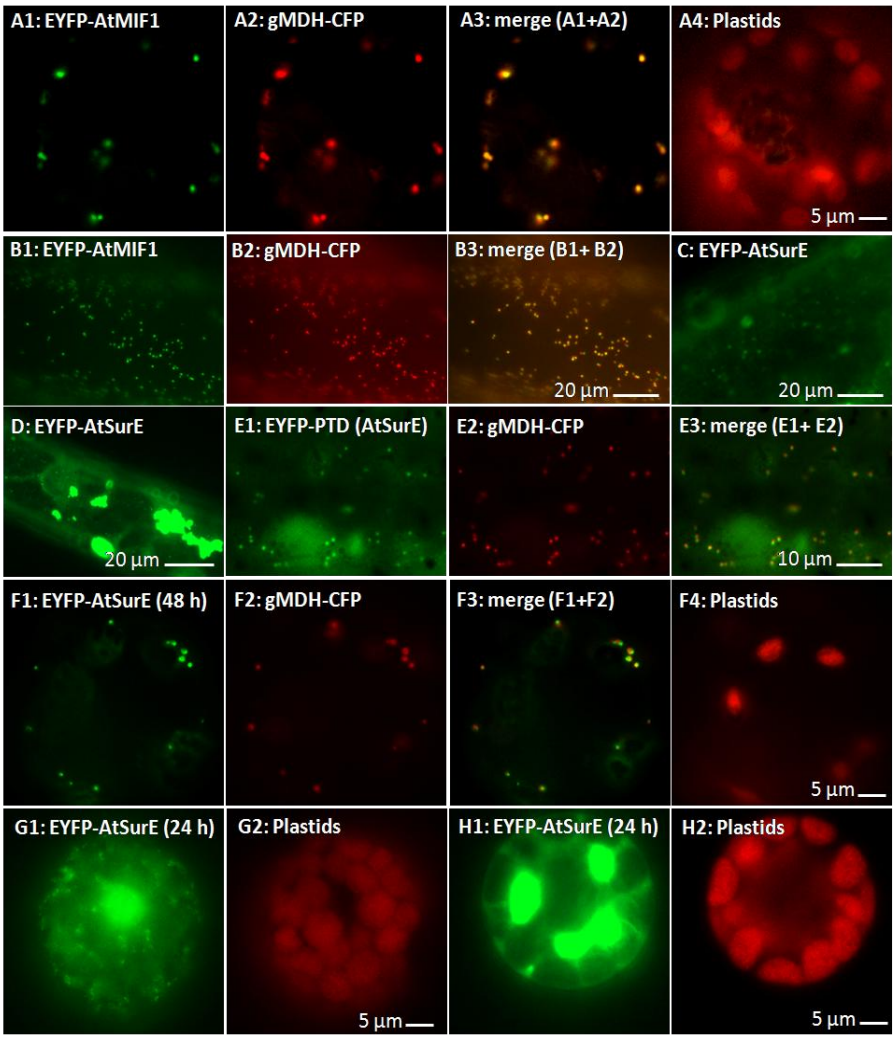

Figure 3.5: *In vivo* subcellular localization of AtMIF1 and AtSurE
The full-length proteins of AtMIF1 and AtSurE were fused N-terminally with EYFP. The fusion genes were then transiently expressed in onion epidermal cells and tobacco protoplasts. AtMIF1 was detected in peroxisomes in both expression systems (A and B). AtSurE was detected in peroxisomes 48 h P.T. in protoplasts (F), while the fusion protein was detected in unknown organelle-like structures after 24 h and in onions (C and G) and in aggregates (D and H). EYFP-PTD of AtSurE was also detected in peroxisomes in onions (E). Peroxisomes were labeled with gMDH-CFP (Fulda et al., 2002). The cyan fluorescence was converted to red. For fluorescence image acquisition details, see 2.1.4.1. Representative images of reproducible results obtained ≥3 are shown, except for A (n=2). Expression times (18-48 h).

The full-length AtSurE cDNA was fused in the back of EYFP, and the fusion protein was targeted weakly (mostly at the detection limit) to organelle-like structures upon transient expression in onion epidermal cells (Figure 3.5, C, 18-48 h expression time). Sometimes, the yellow fluorescent organelles were found aggregated in distinct locations within the cells, which remained alive (Figure 3.5, D, 18-48 h expression time). Often, the aggregates were very large with a diameter of 20-40 µM, indicating that a large number of small punctate structures must have aggregated together, or that the fusion protein accumulated somehow intensively in these structures and failed to be exported. The identity of these aggregate-like structures remains elusive, because of the absence of convincing coincidence with CFP-labeled peroxisomes.

Upon transient expression in tobacco protoplasts the same fusion protein was found to change its subcellular localization in a time-dependent manner. Twenty-four h post transformation (P.T.) and similar to onions, the fusion protein was detected in organelle-like structures of smaller size as compared to standard leaf peroxisomes in tobacco protoplasts. Some large yellow fluorescent clusters were observed of a size of ca. 20-40 µM (Figure 3.5, G and H). The coincidence of EYFP-labeled structures with the CFP-labeled peroxisomes could not be approved at 24 h P.T. in protoplasts (Figure 3.5, G). However, the yellow fluorescent organelles of tobacco protoplasts reproducibly coincided with CFP-labeled peroxisomes in a low but significant number of cells 48 h P.T. (Figure 3.5, F). Taken together, the data indicate that AtSurE was targeted first and primarily to unknown structures and subsequently to peroxiomes by an unknown mechanism. These data prompted us to address if AtSurE is indeed targeted to peroxisomes by the predicted PTS1 by constructing EYFP-PTD (SSL>). As predicted, the domain construct was targeted to organelle-like structures upon transient expression in onion epidermal cells, nearly all of which coincided with CFP-labeled peroxisomes (Figure 3.5, E). However, a significant cytosolic background staining of EYFP was noticed.

3.3.3 Validation of additional defense-related proteins

Another five *Arabidopsis* defense-related candidate proteins (Table 3.2) were predicted by PTS1 protein prediction models (Lingner et al., 2011). Two identified candidates belong to NBS-LRR R proteins (see 1.2.1.2 and Figure 1.8). One protein is the *Arabidopsis* LIM domain-containing protein (here referred to as: AtLIMDP, variant 1) is encoding 1613 aa and was named recently as chiling sensitive 3 (CHS3)/DA1-related protein 4 (CHS3/DAR4) and contains a TIR-NBS-LRR domain at the N terminus, and two LIM domains at the C-terminus (Yang et al., 2010). The second protein, which has a CC-NBS-LRR domain, is the *Arabidopsis* disease resistance protein (referred to as AtDRP, variant 2). AtDRP had not yet been investigated and was annotated to be involved in defense response based on its domain structure similarities to R proteins (Meyers et al., 2003). *Arabidopsis* Cinnamyl-alcohol dehydrogenase 7 (here referred to as AtCAD7, varaiant 2), was also called Elicitor-activated gene 3-1 (ELI3-1) protein that was originally identified as part of the defense response in parsley after treatment by fungal elicitor (Somssich et al., 1989). In another study, ELI3-1 was also expressed and isolated from *Arabidopsis* treated by fungal elicitor (Trezzini et al., 1993). AtCDR1 was reported to be functional as a highly specific aspartic proteinase (Simöes et al., 2007). Moreover, AtCDR1 is involved in signaling of disease resistance (see SAR, 1.2.2.3, (Xia et al., 2004)). In addition to these defense candidates identified by PTS1 prediction, *Arabidopsis* ozone induced protein 1 (AtOZI1) was identified in *Arabidopsis* leaf peroxisomes by proteome analyses (Reumann et al., 2007) and is lacking any predictable targeting signals. Overall, microarray experiments of the identified five defense candidates indicated that all of them were constitutivly expressed except for *AtCDR1*, but also all appeared to be induced upon different biotic and abiotic stresses (Figure 3.7 and Table 3.1).

The full-length cDNAs of AtCAD7, AtDRP, and AtCDR1 were fused in the back of EYFP. Regarding the long protein AtLIMDP, its C-terminal domain comprising amino acid 1141 to 1613 (472 aa) was fused in the back of EYFP to facilitate the subcloning. To this end, this region was amplified from the full-length RIKEN cDNA (see 2.2.2.1) by PCR. The cDNA, however, contained an additional (T) nucleotide at

position 4561 and introduced a frame shift in the final reporter gene construct.

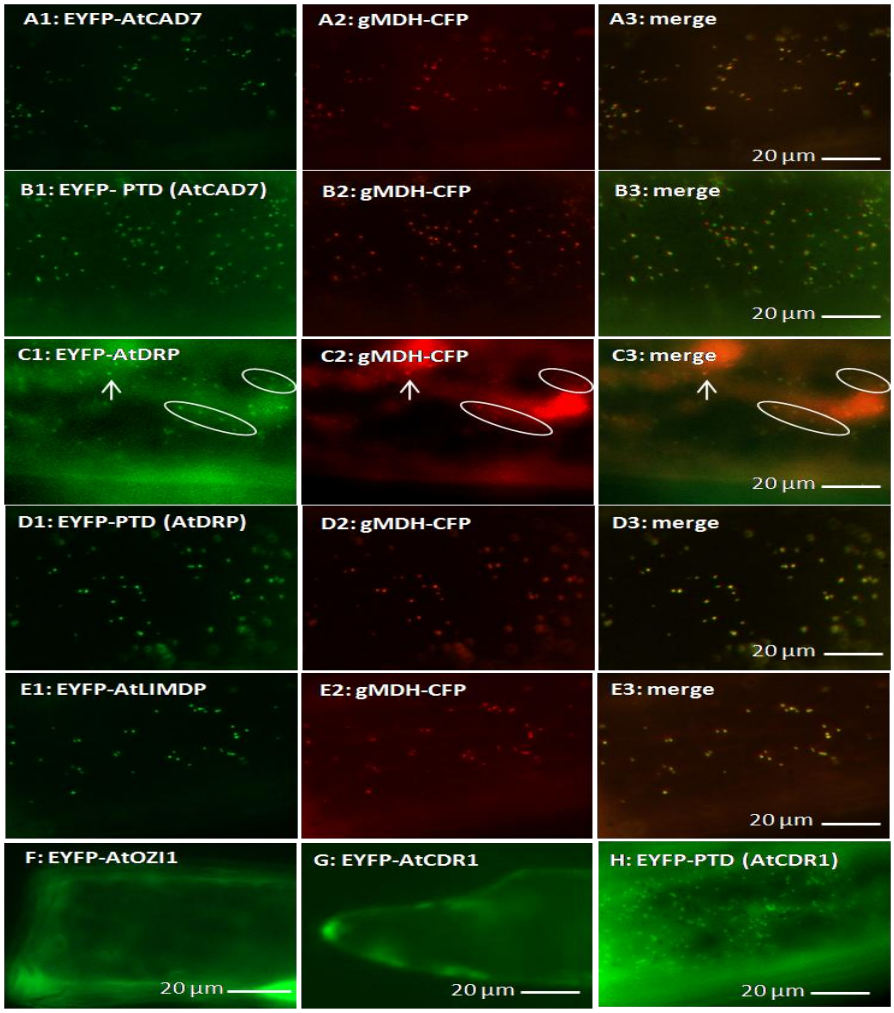

Figure 3.6: *In vivo* subcellular targeting of putative defense proteins
The full-length proteins (AtCAD7, AtDRP, AtLIMDP, AtOZI1, and AtCDR1) were fused N-terminally with EYFP. The fusion proteins were transiently expressed in onion epidermal cells. AtCAD7, AtDRP and AtLIMDP were detected in peroxisomes (A, C, and E), while AtOZI1 and AtCDR1 remained in the cytosol (F and G). Moreover, the EYFP-PTDs of AtCAD7, AtDRP and AtCDR1 were detected in peroxisomes upon expression in onions (for AtCDR1, only single labeling data are available, H). Peroxisomes were labeled with gMDH-CFP (Fulda et al., 2002). The cyan fluorescence was converted to red. For fluorescence image acquisition details, see 2.1.4.1. Representative images of reproducible results obtained ≥3 are shown, except for C (n=2). Expression times are 18 h for A; B; D; E, and 1 week for C; G-H.

The additional nucleotide was removed from the *EYFP-LIMDP* by SDM of the full vector (see 2.2.2.7). Moreover, AtOZI1 full-length cDNA subcloning in the back of EYFP and preliminary fluorescence microscopy was done by a bachelor student (Amundsen, 2009). Three reporter fusions (AtCAD7, AtDRP, and AtLIMDP) were targeted to organelle-like structures upon transient expression in onion epidermal cells, and the organelles coincided with CFP-labeled peroxisomes (Figure 3.6, A, C and E, respectively). By contrast, the AtOZI1 and AtCDR1 fusion proteins remained in the cytosol (Figure 3.6, F and G, 18 h-1 week expression time). In addition to the full-length protein targeting, confirmation of the predicted PTS1 tripeptides was accomplished by constructing three EYFP-PTD fusions (AtCAD7, SHL>; AtDRP, CRL> and AtCDR1, AKM>). As predicted all three domain constructs were targeted to organelle-like structures that coincided with CFP-labeled peroxisomes (Figure 3.6, B, D and H), demonstrating that all three proteins carry functional PTS1 domains. Efficient peroxisome targeting of the EYFP-PTD of AtDRP in particular supported peroxisome targeting of the expressed full-length fusion protein in onion epidermal cells.

Table 3.1: Gene expression analyses for defense-related genes
The expression data derive from microarray experiments and were retrieved using the eFP browser (http://bar.utoronto.ca/efp/cgi-bin/efpWeb.cgi, BAR, Toronto). Expression symbols represent the expression pattern for the genes of interest upon biotic stress treatments (0 for uninduced and (+, ++) for induced). The symbols were based on the "electronic-fluorescent pictographic" representations of gene expression patterns (Schmid et al., 2005).

Treatment/ Gene	*AtMIF1*	*AtSurE*	*AtCDR1*	*AtLIMDP*	*AtDRP*	*AtCAD7*	*AtOZI1*
Botrytis cinerea	+	0	0	0	++	0	++
Phytophthora infestans	0	0	+	+	0	0	++
Erysiphe orontii	0	0	0	0	0	0	++
PST DC3000	++	++	0	0	0	++	+
PST DC3000 (avrRpm1)	++	+	0	0	0	+	+
PST DC3000 (hrcC-)	+	0	0	++	0	0	+
Ps Phaseolicola	++	0	0	++	0	0	+
flg22	++	0	+	0	0	0	+
HrpZ	++	0	0	+	+	0	+
LPS	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
GST-NPP1	++	0	0	++	++	0	++
SA	+	0	0	+	+	+	0
ABA	++	++	0	0	+	+	0
MJ	++	0	+	0	0	0	0

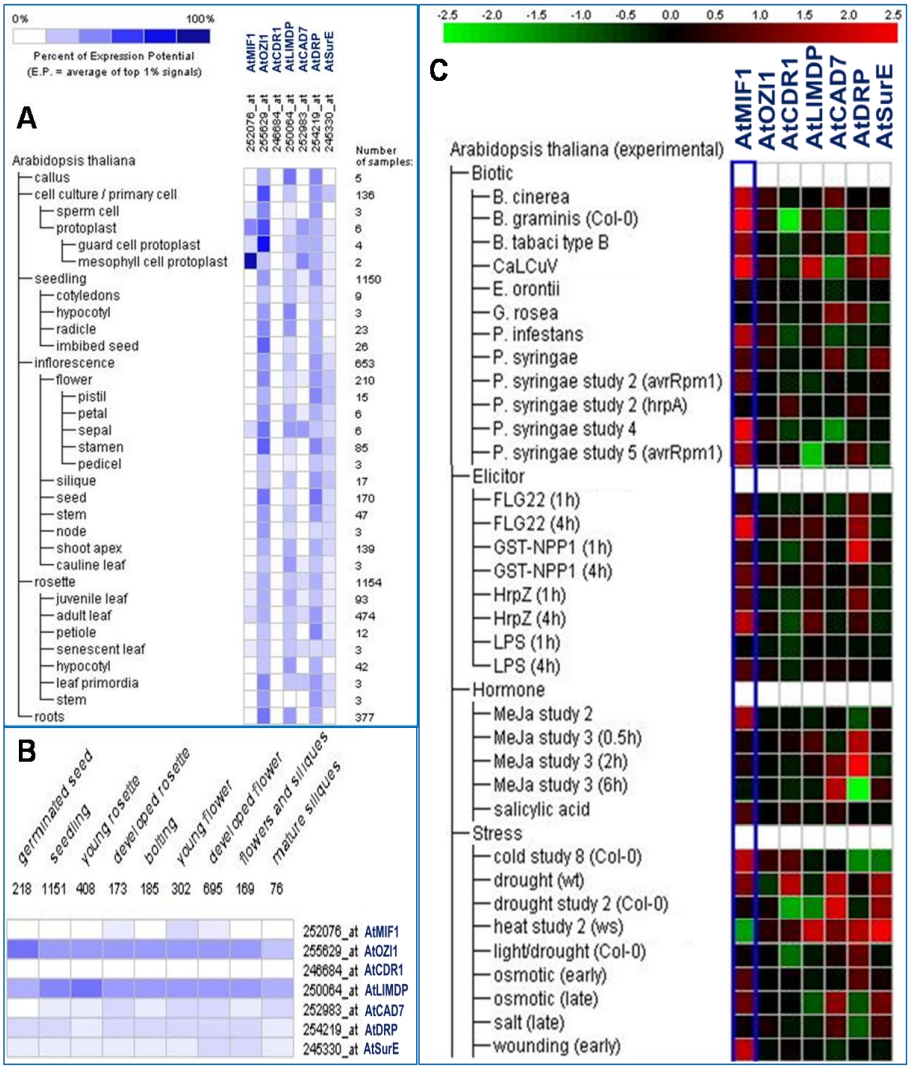

Figure 3.7: Gene expression analyses of defense-related genes
Gene expression analyses of the seven *Arabidopsis* defense-related genes, which were investigated in the present study. A, B and C are images representing anatomy, development, and stress-related expressions, respectively. The expression data derived from microarray experiments and were retrieved using Genevestigator (www.genevestigator.com; (Zimmermann et al., 2004)). High and low expression levels are reflected semi-quantitatively by *dark* and *light* coloring, respectively.

Table 3.2: Summary of subcellular localization data for defense proteins

AGI code	Acronym	Subcellular localization		Annotation	Data source	PTS1
		Onions	**Tobacco protoplasts**			
At3g51660	AtMIF1	Peroxisomes	Peroxisomes	Macrophage migration inhibitor factor homolog	Reumann et al. (2007)	SKL>
At4g14930	AtSurE	Unknown organelles	Peroxisomes	Acid phosphatase survival protein SurE	PTS1 prediction	SSL>
At4g14930	PTD (AtSurE)	Peroxisomes	n.d.			
At5g33340	AtCDR1	Cytosol	n.d.	Consititutive disease resistance 1; aspartic-type endopeptidase/pepsinA	PTS1 prediction	AKM>
At5g33340	PTD (AtCDR1)	Peroxisomes	n.d.			
At5g17890.1	AtLIMDP	Peroxisomes	n.d.	LIM domain-containing protein / chiling sensetive 3 (CH3)/DA1-related protein 4 (DAR4)	PTS1 prediction	SKL>
AT1G58807.2	AtDRP	Peroxisomes	n.d.	Disease resistance protein-related	PTS1 prediction	CRL>
At1g58807.2	PTD (AtDRP)	Peroxisomes	n.d.			
At4g37980.2	AtCAD7	Peroxisomes	n.d.	Cinnamyl-alchol dehydrogenase7/Elicitor-activated gene (ELI3-1)	PTS1 prediction	SHL>
At4g37980.2	PTD (AtCAD7)	Peroxisomes	n.d.			
At4g00860	AtOZI1	Cytosol	n.d.	Ozone-induced protein	Reumann et al. (2007)	??

3. 4. NHL protein family investigations

Initially, 28 *Arabidopsis* NHL members (see 1.2.3.1) were identified (Dormann et al., 2000). Upon the completion of the *Arabidopsis* genome sequencing (Arabidopsis genome initiative, 2000), NHL family members were found to be 45 genes including *NDR1* (Zheng et al., 2004). Three proteins, NHL4, NHL6 and NHL25 were found to carry predicted PTS1 tripeptides (Table 3.3) according to the newly developed PWM and RIM prediction methods [see 3.1.1, (Lingner et al., 2011)]. The three NHL homologs are located in one phylogenetic clade (Figure 3.8, (Dormann et al., 2000; Zheng et al., 2004)). Four additional NHL family members (here referred to as NHL39, NHL39H1, NHL13H1, and NHLx) were identified by bioinformatics domain analysis and noticed to carry possible PTS1 tripeptides, predicted by lower prediction scores (Reumann, unpubl. data, Table 3.3).

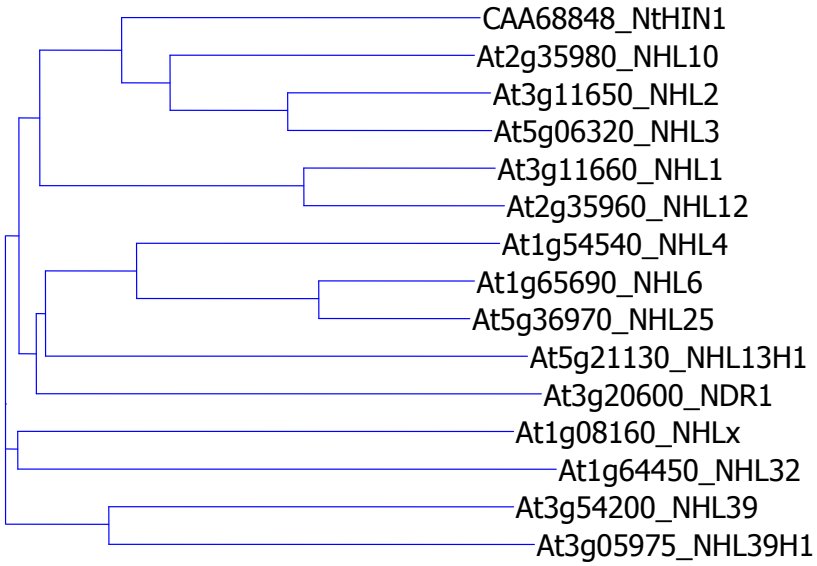

Figure 3.8: Phylogenetic relationship of selected NHL proteins.
To investigate phylogenetic relationship (Dormann et al., 2000; Zheng et al., 2004) among NHL proteins carrying predicted PTS1 domains, *Nicotiana tabacum* HIN1 and *Arabidopsis thaliana* NHL homologs were aligned with the predicted NHL proteins. The phylogram was generated by the AlignX program (Vector NTI, Invitrogen) using the Neighbor Joining method (NJ) (Saitou and Nei, 1987). The NJ method works on a matrix of distances between all pairs of sequence to be analyzed. These distances are related to the degree of divergence between the sequences.

Table 3.3: PTS1 predictions for NHL homologs.
The threshold of the prediction scores for predicted peroxisome targeting are for PWM=0.412 and for RIM= 0.219 (Lingner et al., 2011).

AGI code	Acronym	C-terminal tripeptide	PWM score	RIM score
At1g54540	NHL4	AKL>	2.67	0.61
At1g65690	NHL6	LRL>	1.91	0.17
At5g36970	NHL25	FRL>	1.99	0.37
At5g21130	NHL13H1	SLL>	1.63	-0.24
At3g54200	NHL39	TKL>	1.48	-0.02
At3g05975	NHL39H1	TKL>	1.76	0.001
At1g08160	NHLx	TRL>	1.51	-0.17

To this end, the deduced protein sequences of the proposed PTS1 NHL proteins (Table 3.3) were aligned with representative NHL members from the different clustered groups which were reported previously (Dormann et al., 2000; Zheng et al., 2004), and the characterized pathogen-related proteins: NHL2, NHL3 and NHL10 (Century et al., 1995; Gopalan et al., 1996; Dormann et al., 2000; Varet et al., 2002), in order to investigate protein characteristics for NHL4, NHL6 and NHL25 proteins. Obviously, the three motifs (see 1.2.3.1 and Figure 3.9) conserved among *Arabidopsis* NHL proteins were also found in NHL4, NHL6, and NHL25 proteins (Figure 3.9). The Water stress and Hypersensitive response (Why) domain, which was previously identified in HIN1 (Ciccarelli and Bork, 2005), was also found to be conserved in NHL4, NHL6 and NHL25 (Figure 3.9). The WHy domain is comprised of ~100 aa with an alteration of hydrophilic and hydrophobic residues and an almost invariable NPN motif at its N-terminus (Ciccarelli and Bork, 2005). In summary, NHL4, NHL6 and NHL25 share the same protein characteristics and are strongly indicated to have similar functions in plant defense responses.

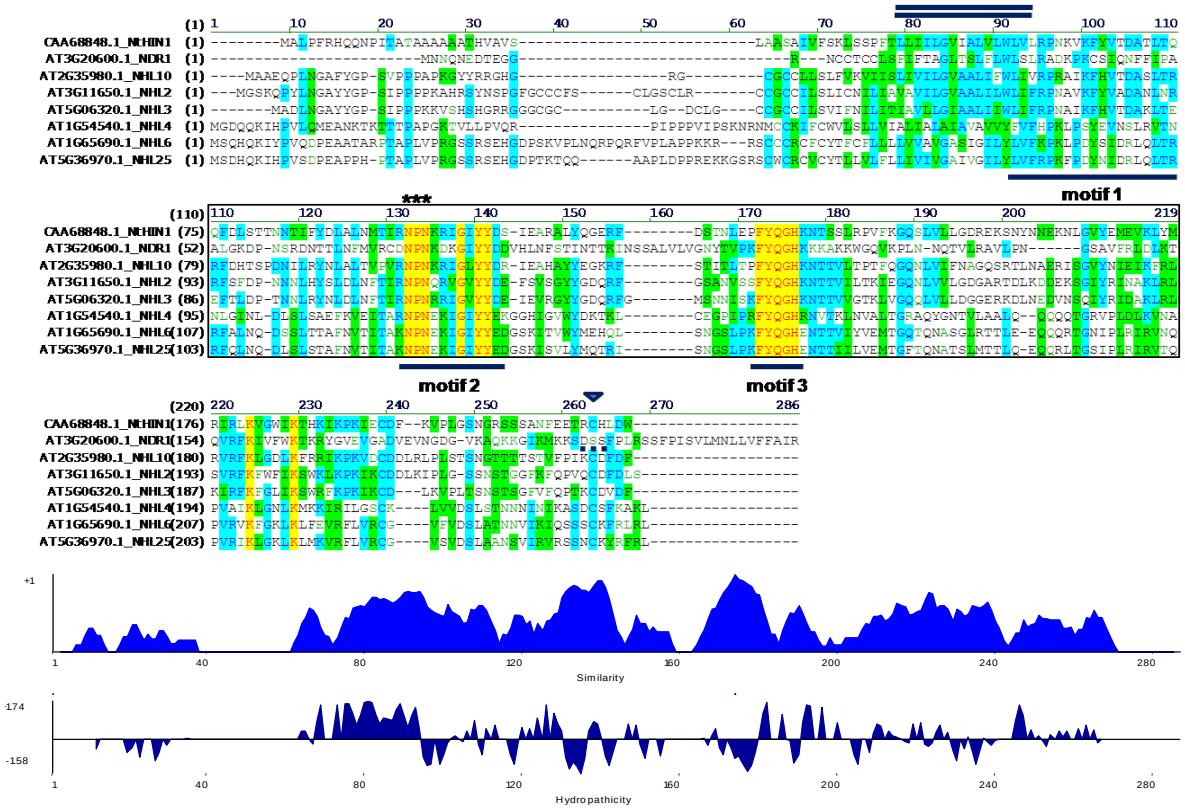

Figure 3.9: Sequence alignment of NHL homologs.
Top panel: Sequence alignment of tobacco HIN1 and selected *Arabidopsis* NHL proteins. The WHy domain (Ciccarelli and Bork, 2005) are boxed and an invariable NPN motif is marked by asterisks. The three conserved sequence motifs among NHL proteins are indicated by bold lines. The hydrophobic anchor sequence is indicated by double lines. An arrowhead refers to the unique GPI anchor of NDR1. Lower panel: the first graph displays the alignment quality profile (similarity). The default values are 1, 0.5 and 0.2 for identical, similar and weakly similar residues, respectively. The second graph displays the hydropathy calculations (Kyte and Doolittle, 1982). Positive numbers indicate hydrophobicity and negative numbers hydrophilicity. The sequence alignment was generated using the AlignX program (Vector NTI, Invitrogen).

3.4.1 *In vivo* subcellular localization of NHL proteins

Based on the PTS1 protein predictions for NHL4, NHL6 and NHL25 proteins (3. 4 and Table 3.3), they were subjected to *in vivo* subcellular localization targeting analyses. The full-length proteins were fused N-terminally with EYFP. *NHL4* was PCR amplified from an available cDNA (ABRC, see 2.2.2.1), while *NHL25* and *NHL6* were amplified by RT-PCR (see 2.2.2.2) from SA-treated *Arabidopsis* leaves and senescent leaves (Figure 3.18), respectively (see 2.2.2.2). The fusion proteins were transiently expressed in onion epidermal cells. Indeed, the three fusion proteins were identified in organelle-like structures. The morphological pattern of these organelles was variable according to their appearance in different transformed cells. The fusion proteins sometimes were very weakly targeted to organelle-like structures, aggregate-like structures, or to both simultaneously (Figure 3.10). However, the detected structures did not coincide with the CFP-labeled peroxisomes (Figure 3.10, A-C, 18 h to 1 week expression times). Moreover, preliminary results confirmed that the organelle-like structures also did not coincide with the CFP-labeled mitochondria in onion epidermal cells, as investigated for NHL4 and NHL25 (data not shown).

Due to its high PTS1 protein prediction score (Table 3.3) and possession of a well-known PTS1 AKL> (Reumann, 2004; Lingner et al., 2011), subcellular targeting of EYFP-NHL4 was also investigated in an alternative expression system, i.e. tobacco leaf protoplasts. The fusion protein was detected in unidentified organelle-like suructures 24 h P.T., but also these organelles mostly did not coincide with CFP-labeled peroxisomes (Figure 3.11, A). But, the fusion protein was clearly identified and coincided with CFP-labeled peroxisomes 48 h P.T. (Figure 3.11, D and E). Astonishingly, different patterns of coincidence of both EYFP-labeled structures with CFP-labeled peroxisomes were detected in different transformed protoplasts: (1) small EYFP-structures appeared to be attached to the surface of CFP-labeled peroxisomes (Figure 3.11, B, C, F, and G), (2) the EYFP fluorescence was detected in small structures that were attached to the surface of CFP-labeled peroxisomes, and faintly in the same CFP-labeled peroxisomes (Figure 3.11, D and H), and (3) EYFP was only

detected in organelles that completely coincided with CFP-labeled peroxisomes (Figure 3.11, E and I).

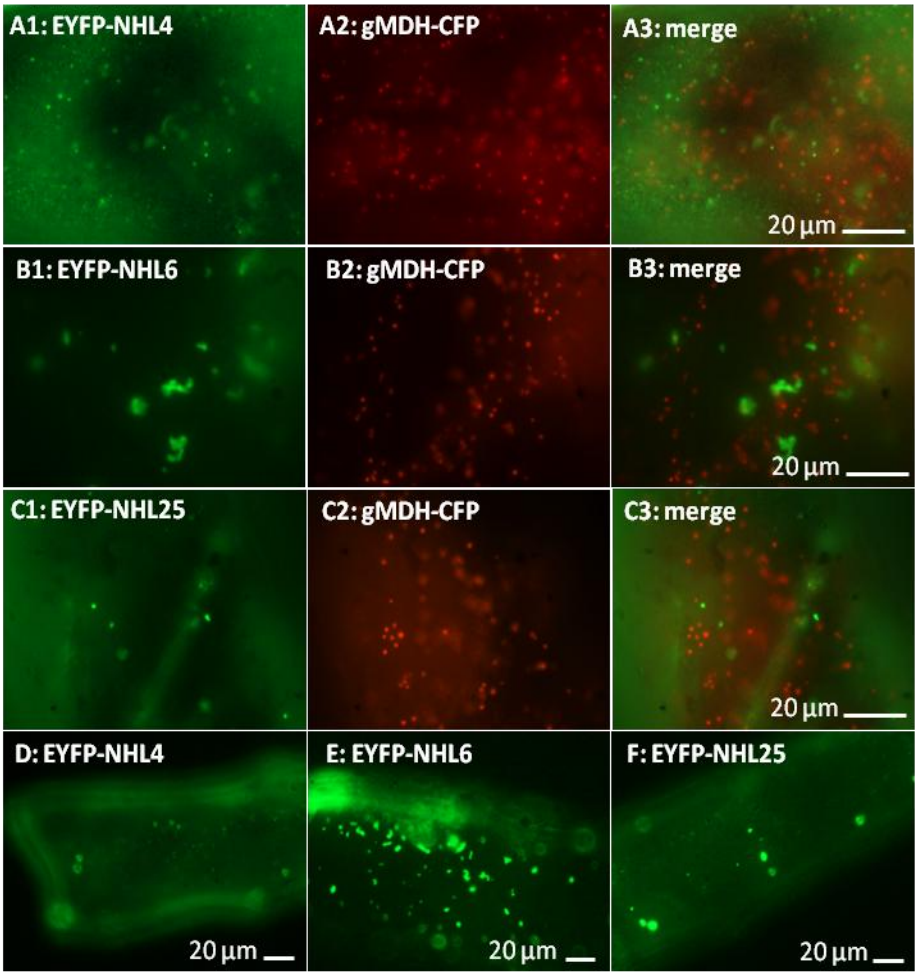

Figure 3.10: *In vivo* subcellular localization of NHL proteins
The full-length proteins of NHL4, NHL6 and NHL25 were fused N-terminally with EYFP. The fusion proteins were targeted to non-peroxisomal unidentified organelle-like structures upon transient expression in onion epidermal cells. In double transformants (A-C), NHL4, NHL6 and NHL25 did not coincide with CFP-labeled peroxisomes. D-F pictures shows formation of aggregate-like structures for NHL4, NHL6 and NHL25. Peroxisomes were labeled with gMDH-CFP (Fulda et al., 2002). The cyan fluorescence was converted to red. For fluorescence image acquisition details, see 2.1.4.1. Representative images of reproducible results obtained ≥3 are shown, except for B (n=1). Expression times are 18 h for A and 1 week for B-F.

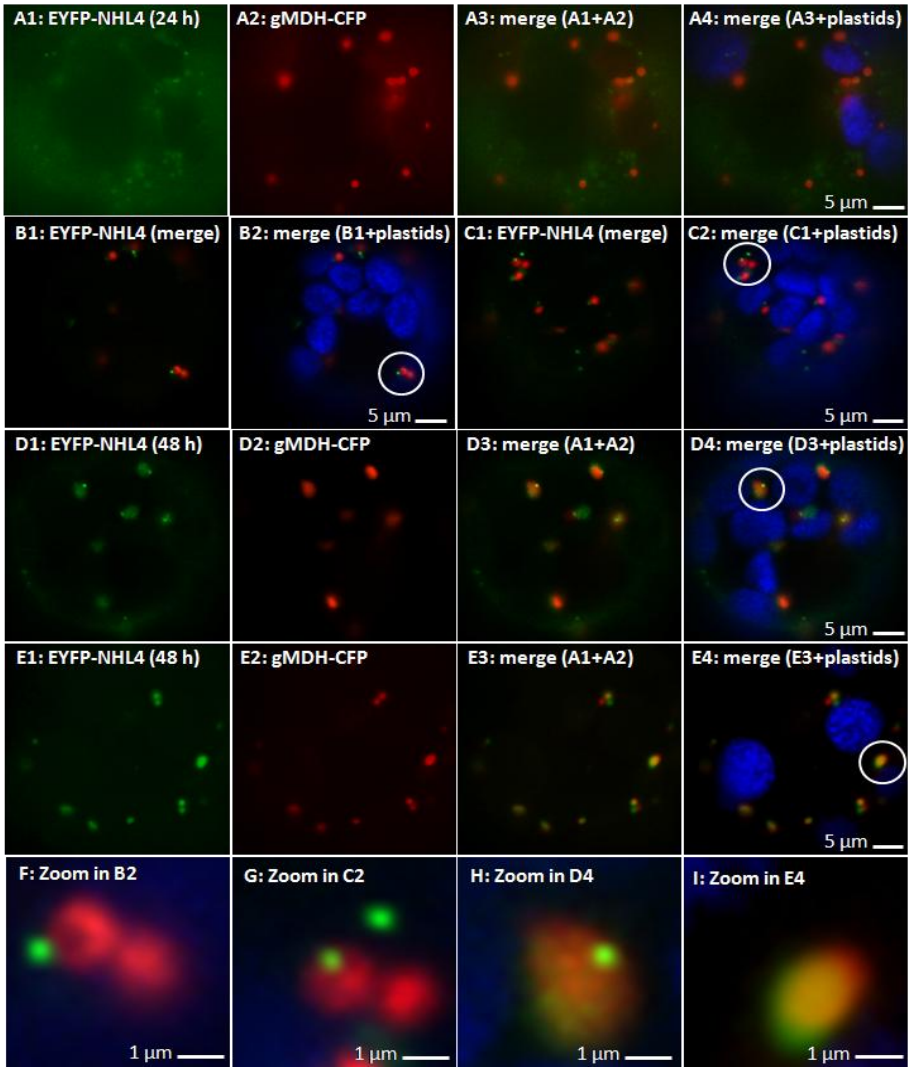

Figure 3.11: *In vivo* subcellular localization of NHL4 in tobacco protoplasts
The full-length NHL4 was fused N-terminally with EYFP. The fusion protein was transiently expressed in tobacco protoplasts. EYFP-NHL4 was detected in organelle-like structures 24 h P.T. (A) and in peroxisomes, 48 h P.T. (B, C, D, and E). B and C are showing surface association of the EYFP-labeled small structures with peroxisomes. D: is detecting EYFP fluorescence in both surface associated peroxisomes and organelle-like small structures. F-I are zoom in/blow-up of the circled single peroxisomes from B2, C2, D4 and E4. Peroxisomes were labeled with gMDH-CFP (Fulda et al., 2002). The cyan fluorescence was converted to red. Plastid autofluorescence was converted to blue. For fluorescence image acquisition details, see 2.1.4.1. Representative images of reproducible results obtained ≥3 are shown. Expression times (24-48 h).

In summary, EYFP-NHL4 was detected in tobacco protoplasts in 1) free small non-peroxisomal organelle-like structures, 2) peroxisome-associated non-peroxisomal organelle-like structures, and 3) peroxisomes (alone or with small EYFP-labeled organelle-like structures attached). Because of the lack of time-lapse imaging for the present study, a targeting mechanism for NHL4 into peroxisomes was hypothesized based on the patterns observed. The EYFP-NHL4 protein could be targeted to peroxisomes in three successive steps, 1) to be targeted to non-peroxisomal unidentified organelle-like structures, 2) the unidentified organelle-like structures associate with the peroxisome surface and 3) the organelle-like structures are releasing their cargo into peroxisomes.

The peroxisomal validation of NHL4 in protoplasts prompted us to construct full-length NHL4 fused N-terminally with CFP. The new CFP fusion protein could be used as a marker to investigate other EYFP-NHL proteins, to determine their coincidence with NHL4 in onion epidermal cells. Indeed, in co-localization experiments, EYFP-NHL25 coincided with the CFP-NHL4 in the same organelle-labeled structures upon transient expression in onion epidermal cells (Figure 3.12, B). It was also indicated (but from preliminary data) that EYFP-NHL6 partially coincided with CFP-NHL4 (Figure 3.12, A). To confirm that NHL4, NHL6 and NHL25 proteins indeed possess functional PTS1 domains as predicted (Table 3.3), the proposed PTDs were used to construct EYFP-PTDs for each of the three proteins. When the EYFP-PTD from NHL6 (LRL>) and NHL25 (FRL>) were transiently expressed in onion epidermal cells, the fusion proteins were targeted to punctate subcellular structures that were validated as peroxisomes by their coincidence with CFP-labeled peroxisomes (Figure 3.12, C and D). Subcloning of the corresponding NHL4 construct remained unsuccessful because of PCR-generated mutations. These data indicate that NHL6 and NHL25 have functional PTS1 domains and PTS1 tripeptides LRL>, and FRL>, respectively. Furthermore, their coincidence with NHL4 in the same subcellular structures in onion epidermal cells indicates that the two NHL proteins are most likely targeted to peroxisomes in tobacco protoplasts, similar to NHL4. This could not be investigated in the present study because of time limitations and needs to be done in the future.

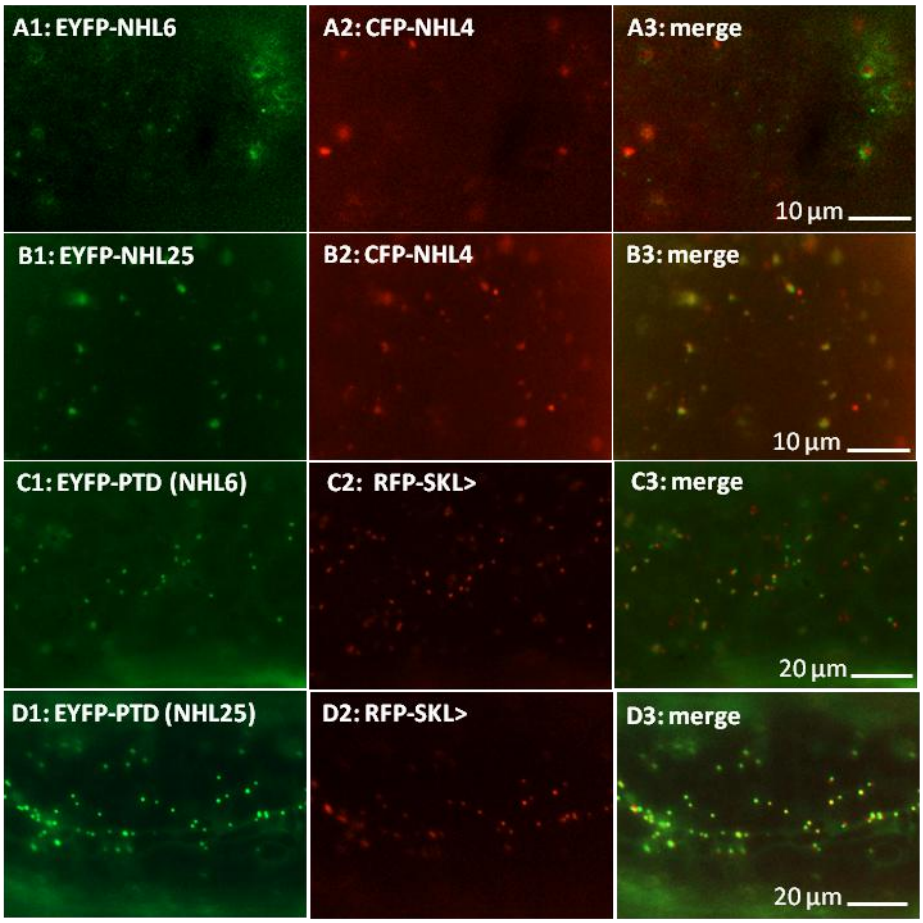

Figure 3.12: *In vivo* subcellular localization of NHL6 and NHL25
A-B: The full-length proteins of NHL6 and NHL25 were fused N-terminally with EYFP, while NHL4 was fused N-terminally with CFP. The EYFP-fusion proteins were co-expressed in onion epidermal cells with CFP-NHL4. Images show partial co-localization for EYFP-NHL6 (A) and complete co-localization of EYFP-NHL25 (B) with CFP-NHL4. C-D: Validation of LRL> and FRL> as functional PTS1 of NHL6 and NHL25, respectively, where the EYFP-PTD constructs of NHL6 and NHL25 were transiently expressed in onion epidermal cells. Peroxisomes were labeled with RFP-SKL> (Matre et al., 2009). The cyan fluorescence was converted to red. For fluorescence image acquisition details, see 2.1.4.1. Representative images of reproducible results obtained ≥3 are shown, except for A (n=1). Expression times are 18 h for C-D and 1 week for A-B.

Four additional NHL homologs (Table 3.3) were predicted to carry PTS1s (NHL39, NHL39H1, NHL13H1 and NHLx). The full-length proteins were also fused N-terminally with EYFP. Notably, *NHL13H1* cDNA was not available and was cloned from genomic DNA (see 2.2.2.1). All fusion proteins were targeted to organelle-like structures upon transient expression in onion epidermal cells (Figure 3.13) and showed similar localization patterns as NHL4, NHL6 and NHL25 in the same expression system. The aggregate like-structures were more pronounced for fusion proteins of NHL13H1 and NHL39H1 (Figure 3.13, C and D). Trials to identify the EYFP-labeled structures as peroxisomes failed in onion epidermal cells, and need further investigation. To sum up, all NHLs tested were targeted to organelle-like structures in onion epidermal cells and should be tested in other expression system in order to identify the identity of these subcellular structures.

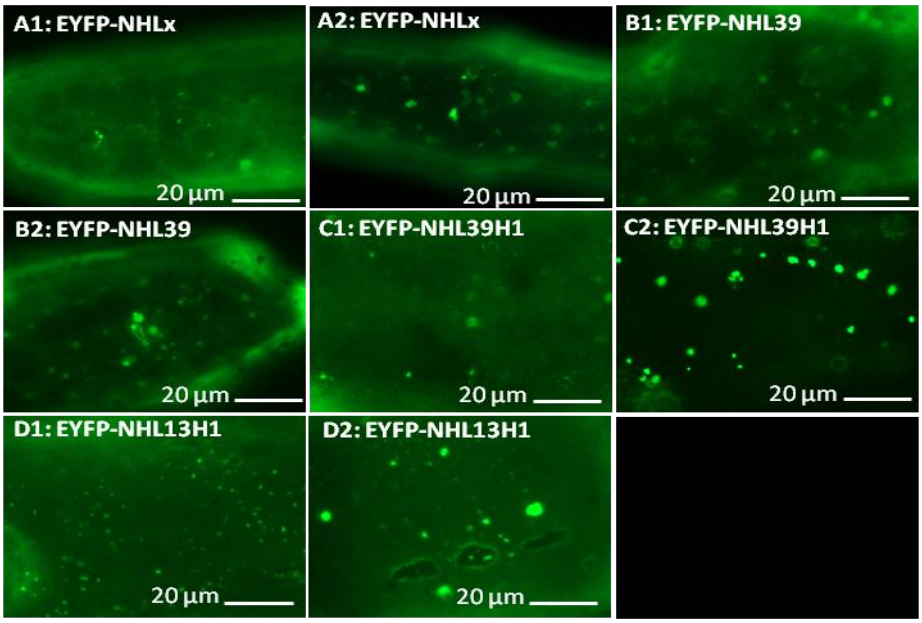

Figure 3.13: *In vivo* subcellular targeting of additional NHL proteins
The full-length proteins of NHL39, NHL39H1, NHL13H1 and NHLx were fused N-terminally with EYFP. The fusion proteins were targeted to organelle-like structures, upon transient expression in onion epidermal cells. Images X2 show formation of aggregate-like structures in different cells for NHL proteins. For fluorescence image acquisition details, see 2.1.4.1. Representative images of reproducible results obtained ≥3 are shown. Expression times (18 h for images X2 and 1 week for images, X1).

3.4.2 Isolation of homozygous *nhl4*, *nhl6*, and *nhl25* mutants

To initiate molecular analyses, homozygous mutants from *Arabidopsis* T-DNA insertion lines were isolated for five NHL proteins (see 2.2.1.5). Three homozygous mutants (*nhl4*, Sail_681_E12; *nhl6*, SALK_148523; *nhl25*, SALK_113216) will be mainly represented in this study (Figure 3.14, A). The T-DNAs were located in the 300-untranslated regions (UTR) in *nhl4*, in the 1st of 2 exons in *nhl6*, and in the 2nd of 2 exons in *nhl25*. In order to obtain homozygous plants, a series of genomic PCRs were applied using the two gene-specific primers (LP and RP) together with the T-DNA specific primer (LBa1: SALK or LB1S: SAIL). Several homozygous plants were identified for each line (Figure 3.14, B). Next, after seeds collection and growth of the next generation, one representative homozygous mutant for each line was verified by applying genomic PCR using either two gene-specific primers (LP and RP, for the wt allele) to confirm the absence of any wild-type allele or (LBa1 or LB1S and RP) to confirm the presence of the T-DNA insertion (Figure 3.14, C).

In preliminary phenotypic analyses, both *nhl6* and *nhl4* showed a dramatic developmental phenotype. On MS plates containing 3% sucrose, homozygous *nhl4* mutants were chlorotic, dwarfed, highly retarded in growth, and accumulated anthocyanins. All dwarf plants died (e.g., Figure 3.14, D1), but a few chlorotic plants recovered after transfer to soil and slowly developed true leaves, inflorescences and a few seeds (e.g., Figure 3.14, E1). Homozygous *nhl6* mutants were highly retarded on MS plates (Figure 3.14, F1) but grew at normal speed and were indistinguishable from wt plants after transfer to soil. For unknown reasons, the *nhl4* phenotype was less pronounced in the new generation, but still obvious for 20-30% of the homozygous plants. Moreover, *nhl6* retardation of growth was no longer observed in the next generation. The variation in phenotypes needs to be further analyzed in the future.

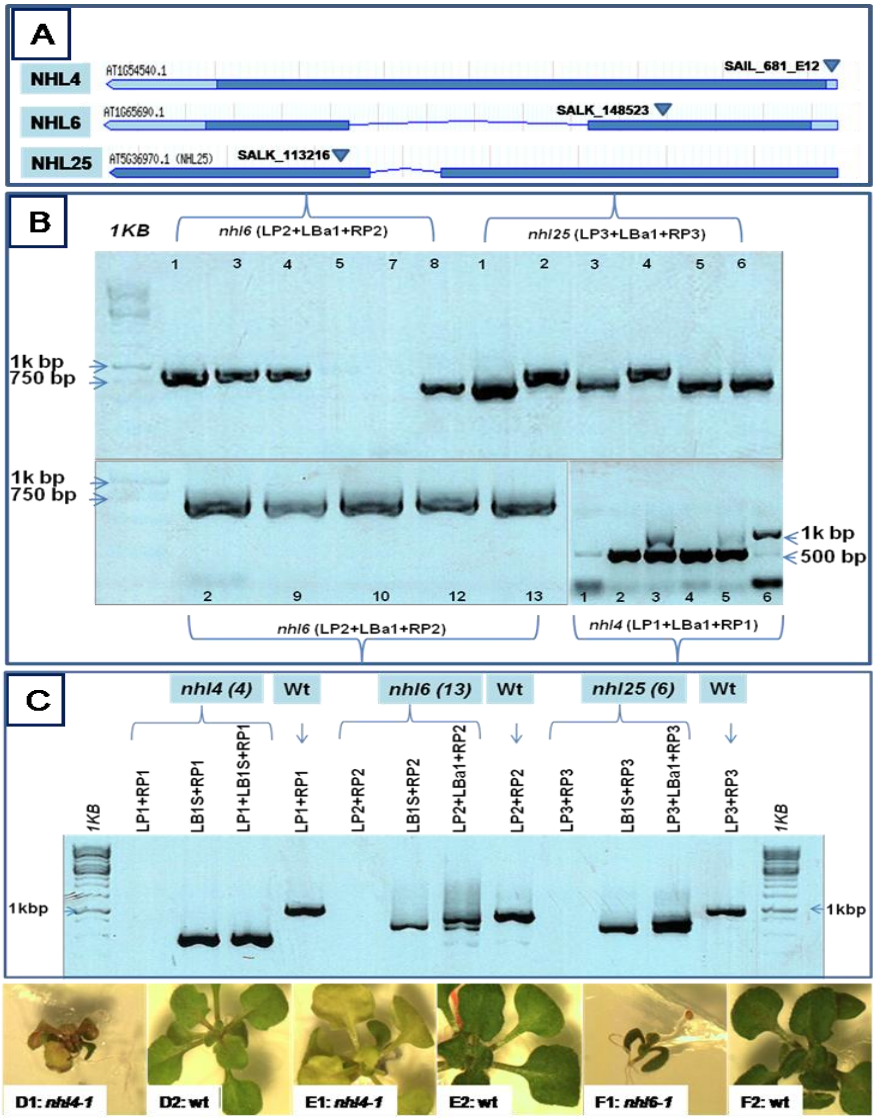

Figure 3.14: Isolation of *nhl* mutants by genomic PCR
A: Diagram of *Arabidopsis NHL4*, *NHL6* and *NHL25* genes. B: indicates the identified homozygous mutants by genomic PCR for *nhl4* (1, 2, and 4); nhl6 (2, 8, 9, 10, 12, and 13); nhl25 (1, 3, 5, and 6). The wt band for all *NHL*s is (=~ 1 kb), while the T-DNA specific band size for all *NHL*s is (=~400-700). C: Confirmation of homozygous mutant representatives for each gene by different combination of primers as shown in the figure. D-F: Developmental defect of *Arabidopsis* mutants deficient in *NHL4* and *NHL6* (single experiment). Plant images were taken at the age of 19 (D, F) and 26 days. Mutants are shown magnified.

3.4.3 Generation of *NHL* overexpresser and amiRNA lines

To study NHL4, NHL6 and NHL25 function more specifically, stable *Arabidopsis* lines with specific gene overexpression or knockdown by amiRNAs were generated. Both *NHL4* and *NHL25* stable overexpresser lines and amiRNA lines were generated, while delayed for *NHL6* because of cloning and subcloning difficulties (Table 3.4). The available lines were produced by standard procedures, i.e. subcloning the target genes into binary vectors (see 2.2.2.1) and further plant transformation (see 2.2.1.4). After obtaining the transformed seeds, T1 plants were selectively (see 2.2.1.4) isolated, and their seeds were subsequently harvested. The available T1s for each line were approved as a preliminary step by genotyping of the plant genomic DNA for the presence of the transformed constructs using gene- and vector-specific primers (see 2.2.1.4). Moreover, the full-length *NHL4* was fused in the back of *EYFP*, and the fusion construct is available in pGEMT Easy vector. The *EYFP-NHL4* will be subcloned into binary vector for stable and transient expressions in order to study the subcellular localization of NHL4 in plant tissues.

Table 3.4: List of *NHL* overexpresser and amiRNA lines
Transformed seeds availability is indicated by (+), and the Transformation (TF) rate is indicated. T1 available lines number is indicated from the successfully genotyped plants. TF rates, expressed as 'percentage transformation', were calculated as [(#marker-resistant seedlings)/(total # seedlings tested)] x 100 (Clough and Bent, 1998).

No	Gene/ amiRNA	Plasmid/ promoter	TF Seeds	TF Rate (%)	T1 lines
1	*NHL4*	pBA002/35S	+	30	11
2	*NHL4*	pER10/Estradiol	+	0.28	7
3	*EYFP-NHL4*	subcloned in pGEMT			
4	*NHL25*	pBA002/35S	+	30	4
5	*NHL25*	pER10/Estradiol	+	30	1
6	*NHL6*	cloning delayed			
7	*EYFP-NHL6*	cloning delayed			
8	amiRNA (*NHL4*)	pER10/Estradiol	+	30	5
9	amiRNA (*NHL25*)	pER10/Estradiol	+	0.25	5
10	amiRNA (*NHL6*)	cloning failed	+		
11	control	pBA002/35S	+		
12	control	pER10/Estradiol	+	0.2	3

3.4.4 Plant immunity assays

3.4.4.1 *Pst* DC3000 proliferation in *Arabidopsis*

One crucial characteristic of resistant plants is their ability to restrict *in planta* growth of avirulent bacteria. Virulent pathogens (e.g., *Pst* DC3000) inoculated at low concentrations (e.g., 10^4 CFU/cm^2 leaf tissue, which approximately corresponds to an inoculation of 10^6 CFU/ml) can colonize the host tissue and multiply more than 10,000-fold within the host tissue in several days (up to 10^8 CFU/cm^2 leaf tissue) (Katagiri et al., 2002). In contrast, nonpathogenic mutant strains (e.g., *Pst* DC3000 hrpH$^-$ mutant, deficient in TTSS secretion system) or avirulent pathogens (e.g., *Pst* DC3000 carrying avrRpm1 or avrRpt2 effectors) in the same time course will either not multiply significantly or grow only 10- to 100-fold within the host tissue [see 2.1.2.3 and 1.2.1.2, (Katagiri et al., 2002)]. The assay was established in the group by monitoring the growth of virulent *Pst* DC3000 and avirulent *Pst* DC3000 (avrRpt2) on wt Col-0 after syringae infiltration of 10^6 CFU/ml. The virulent bacteria proliferated in the wt up to 10,000 fold in 2 days, while the avirulent strain only proliferated 10 fold (Figure 3.15, A). Moreover, avirulent bacteria produced no disease symptoms, while virulent bacteria caused chlorosis and necrosis of the infiltrated tissue of a susceptible host plant within 3-4 days (data not shown). From these data, and consistent with previous literature, wt Col-0 was more resistant to the avirulent than the virulent strain. The above mentioned observations were considered to be successful and nicely reproduced two times similarly and aligned with the published data (Katagiri et al., 2002).

3.4.4.2 Proliferation of avirulent *Pst* DC3000 in *nhl* mutants

To investigate innate immunity in *nhl4, nhl6, and nhl25* mutants, *Pst* DC3000 (avrRpt2) growth was monitored in leaves of intact plants (see 2.2.4.1) and compared with wt Col-0, *ndr1-1*, see 1.2.3.1, (Century et al., 1995; Century et al., 1997) and *npr1-1*, see 1.2.2.3 (Cao et al., 1994) (Figure 3.15, C). wt Col-0 is resistant to the avirulent strain because of ETI (see 1.2.1.2), while *ndr1.1* and *npr1.1* are susceptible plants because of the loss of NDR1 and NPR1, respectively (see 1.2.2.3 and 1.2.3.1). The population of *Pst* DC3000 (avrRpt2) in wt Col-0 plants (2-4 days after inoculation) proliferated only 10 fold, while in *ndr1-1* and *npr1-1* mutants the bacteria proliferated 10,000 and 1000 fold, respectively. Interestingly, the population proliferated around

1000 fold in all of the 3 *nhl* mutants (Figure 3.15, C). Disease symptoms appeared on the inoculated leaves of all mutants, 2-4 days after inoculation while wt Col-0 did not show any symptoms (Figure 3.15, C3). In summary, consistent with previous literature both *ndr1.1* and *npr1.1* plants were more susceptible than wt Col-0, besides that, *nhl* mutants were more susceptible, which indicates their probability to be important in pathogen resistance. However, it needs to be pointed out that the proliferation assay remained preliminary due to insufficient number of only two biological replicates in independent experiments. Several trials were done to generate the 3rd repetition but these were hindered by some technical difficulties with the available plant growth chamber facility.

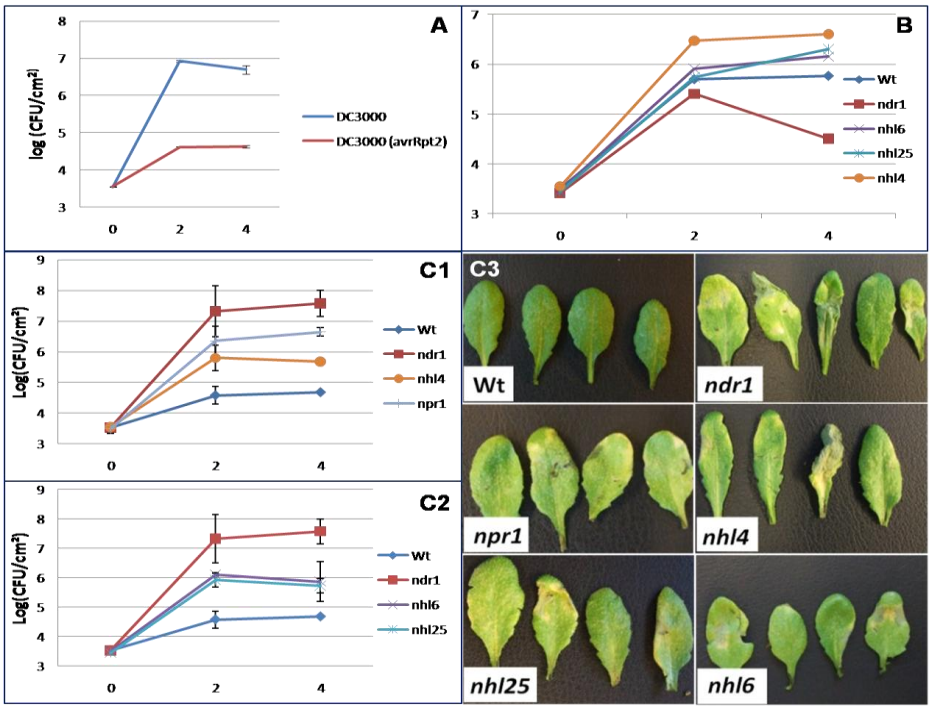

Figure 3.15: Pathogen proliferation analyses in *nhl* mutants
A: *Pst* DC3000 proliferation comparison in wt Col-0 between virulent and avirulent *Pst* DC3000 (avrRpt2) (n=2 with similar results, and SD between the 2 experiments is shown). B: Pathogen proliferation analyses (virulent *Pst* DC3000) in *nhl* mutants (n=1). C: Pathogen proliferation analyses by [*Pst* DC3000 (avrRpt2)] (left) and increased pathogen susceptibility (right panel) in *nhl* mutants (n=2). For A-C, mature soil-grown plants were infiltrated with low density avirulent *Pst* DC3000 (avrRpt2) or virulent *Pst* DC3000 solutions (concentration of 10^6 CFU/ml). The horizontal axis is in days. Bars show the SD, for calculations see 2.2.4.1. C: These results were obtained twice with a higher SD for some readings, while the 3rd repetition failed twice because of plant growth technical problems and needs to be further investigated.

3.4.4.3 Proliferation of virulent *Pst* DC3000 in *nhl* mutants

Pst DC3000 bacteria were used in a single experiment to address their growth in *nhl4, nhl6, and nhl25* mutant plants and to compare this with avirulent bacterial growth (see 3.4.4.2). *Pst* DC3000 growth was monitored in leaves of intact plants and compared with wt Col-0, *ndr1-1* ((Century et al., 1995; Century et al., 1997), Figure 3.15, B). The population of *Pst* DC3000 in wt Col-0 plants and *ndr1-1* mutants (2-4 days after inoculation) proliferated 1000 fold. Moreover in *nhl* mutants the bacteria proliferated similar to wt Col-0 (Figure 3.15, B).

3.4.4.4 Callose deposition analysis in *nhl* mutants

Furthermore, callose deposition induced by flg22 (see 1.2.1.1 and 2.2.4.2) was further investigated in *nhl* mutants. Two *Arabidopsis* wt ecotypes (Col-0 and Ws-0), *pen2-1* (Lipka et al., 2005; Clay et al., 2009), *nhl4*, *nhl6*, and *nhl25* were treated by 1 µM flg22 (see 2.2.4.2). As expected, callose was deposited in wt Col-0, while Ws-0 showed approximately no callose depositions consistent with being a negative control (Gomez-Gomez et al., 1999). Moreover, *pen2-1* and *nhl* mutants show callose depositions which quantitvely varied between plants in each of the mutants (Figure 3.16). The number of callose deposits per microscopic field was calculated from leaves from independent plants, by using the ImageJ software (Figure 3.16), and the average number of callose deposits was calculated and blotted for each mutant (Figure 3.16). The callose deposits average number in *nhl* mutants and *pen2-1* demonstrates that the callose depositions decreased as compared to wt Col-0, as averaged from two biological dublicates.

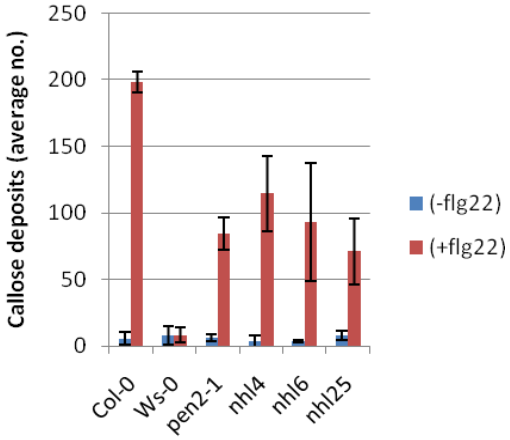

Figure 3.16: Callose depositions analysis in *nhl* mutants
Wt (Col-0 and WS-0), *pen2-1*, *nhl4*, *nhl6* and *nhl25* seedlings were incubated in the presence or abscence of 1 µM flg22 (see 2.2.4.2), seedlings were then stained by aniline blue and callose deposits were detected by fluorescence microscopy (see 2.1.4.2). The graph shows average number of callose deposits of 5 different leaf samples from at least 5 independent seedlings. Callose deposits were analyzed using ImageJ. This experiement was repeated twice in 3 replicates (n=2x3), and the bars indicate SD, for calculations see 2.2.4.2.

3.4.5 Analysis of metabolic peroxisome functions in *nhl* mutants

To investigate whether NHL proteins of interest indirectly participate in fatty acid β-oxidation (see 1.1.1.1) and IBA-to-auxin conversion, the homozygous T-DNA mutants (*nhl4*, *nhl6* and *nhl25*) were subjected to sucrose dependence (see 2.2.5.1) and IBA-response (see 2.2.5.2) assays using the *pex14* null mutant as a positive control (Orth et al., 2007). In the absence of sucrose, hypocotyl elongations of the *nhl* mutant seedlings was slightly inhibited similar to wt plants, while hypocotyl length was significantly reduced in the *pex14* mutant, consistent with its defect in fatty acid β-oxidation (Figure 3.17, A). This growth inhibition was largely rescued by exogenous sucrose. Second, the response of the *nhl* mutants to IBA was analyzed. Low levels of IBA (10-15 µM) inhibited root elongation in wt and *nhl* mutants similarly, while *pex14* mutant was largely insensitive to IBA, consistent with previous reports [(Zhang and Hu, 2010), Figure 3.17, B]. These observations indicate that it is likely that NHL proteins are not involved in fatty acid β-oxidation.

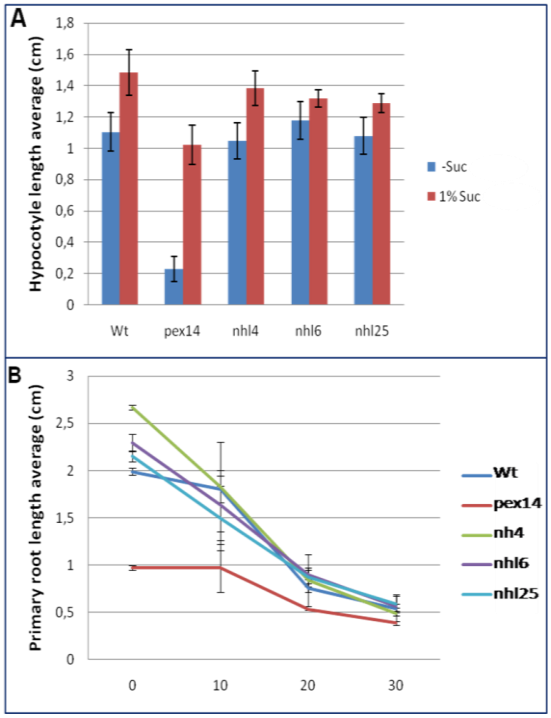

Figure 3.17: Analysis of metabolic peroxisome functions in *nhl* mutants
A: Sucrose dependence assay. Hypocotyl lengths of seedlings grown for 6 d in the dark on half-strength LS media with or without the supplement of 1% sucrose (w/v) are shown. The experiment was repeated 3 times with similar results (n=3). B: Effect of IBA on primary root elongation. Plants were grown for 7 d in the light on half-strength LS media supplemented with 0, 10, 20, 30 µM IBA. The experiment was repeated 2 times with similar results (n=2). Hypocotyl and root lengths were measured by Image J. Bars indicating SD. For SD calculations see 2.2.5.

3.4.6 Expression analysis of *NHL* genes

According to Genevestigator, expression of *NHL4* and *NHL6* was analyzed. *NHL4* transcripts were constitutively expressed in seedlings and roots, while *NHL6* transcripts were mainly found in senescent leaves (Figure 3.18, A). *NHL6* appeared to be induced by several infections (virulent and avirulent bacteria, fungi, oomycetes and viruses). *NHL6* was also induced when treated by different types of elicitors e.g. flg22. In contrast, *NHL4* was induced by bacteria, GST-NPP1, SA and ABA but *NHL4* was less pronounced than *NHL6* (Figure 3.18, C). *NHL25* was induced by avirulent *Pst* DC3000 infection of wt Col-0, that harbors one of the effectors (avrRpm1, avrRpt2, avrB, or avrRps4). Additionally, *NHL25* was induced by SA, while it was not induced by either ethylene or JA (see 1.2.3.1, (Varet et al., 2002)). In summary, the three *Arabidopsis NHL* genes appeared to be induced in response to several biotic stresses. These expression patterns are supporting their suggested importance in plant resistance to pathogen infection.

Real time PCR (see 2.2.2.8) was used for quantification of mRNA transcripts levels to investigate *NHL* genes induction. wt Col-0 plants were grown and treated either by flg22 or pathogen (see 2.2.4). RNA was then isolated from the treated leaves, and subjected to real time PCR (for primer optimization and testing of the genes, see 2.2.2.8). Preliminary expression analyses indicated pathogen-dependent mRNA accumulation for *NHL*s (Figure 3.19). *NHL4*, *NHL6* and *NHL25* transcripts accumulated similar to *PR2* (Edreva, 2005) after 8 h post infection (P.I.) by virulent *Pst* DC3000 (Figure 3.19, A). *NHL6* transcripts specifically and to lesser extent *NHL25* accumulated 8 h P.I. when the bacteria carried the effector avrRpt2 (Figure 3.19, B). Specifically, *NHL6* transcripts accumulated after treatment with flg22 (Figure 3.19, C), but did not accumulate in *fls2* plants carrying mutations in the flagellin receptor gene *FLS2* (Zipfel et al., 2004; Heese et al., 2007) suggesting its role in PTI (see 1.2.1.1 and Figure 3.19, D). Furthermore, *NHL6* induction was not affected in *npr1.1* plants (see 1.2.2.3) after treatment by flg22 which shows that *NHL6* induction is NPR1-independent, i.e., not induced downstream of NPR1 (Figure 3.19, D). However, these data are preliminary, but indicated the importance of NHL6 in both PTI and ETI. Furthermore, *NHL4*, *NHL6* and *NHL25* appear to be induced by bacterial pathogens.

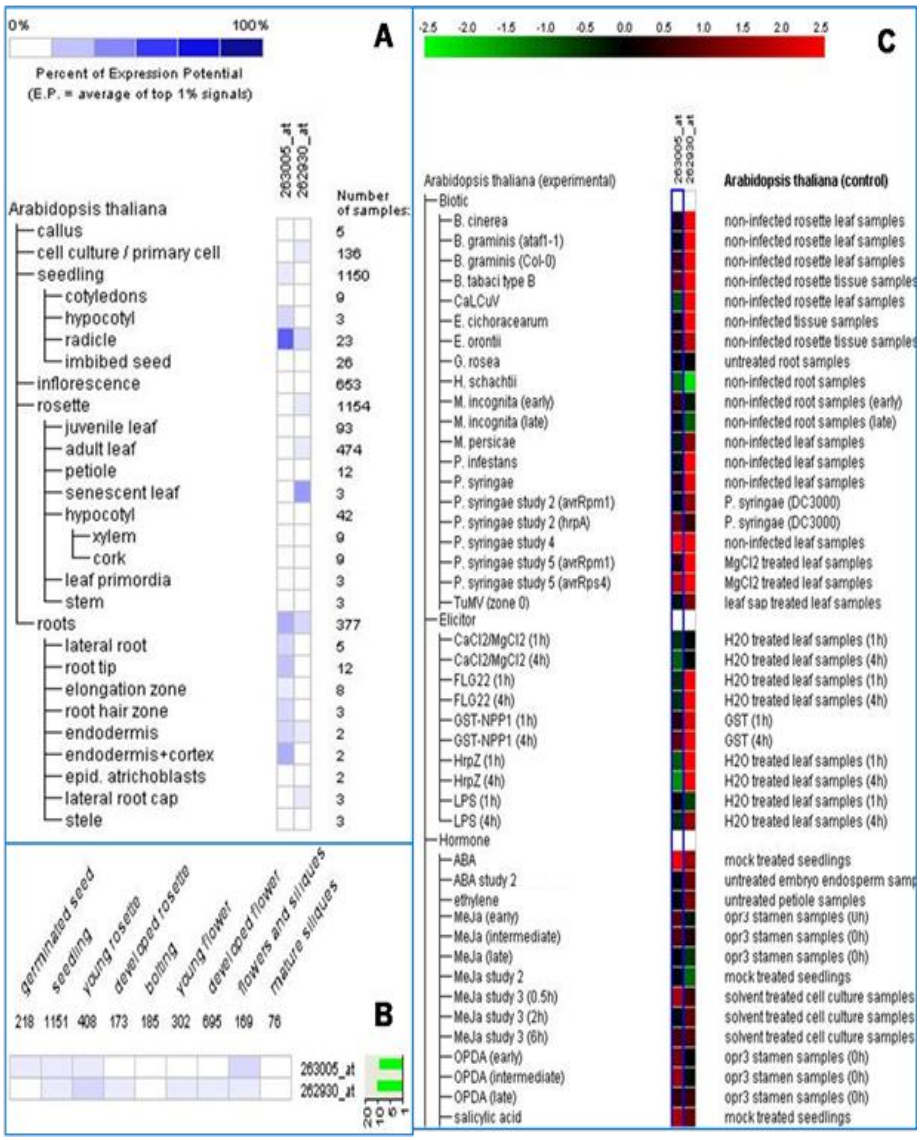

Figure 3.18: Gene expression analyses for *NHL4* and *NHL6*
Gene expression analyses of *Arabidopsis NHL4* and *NHL6*, which were investigated in the present study. A, B and C are images representing anatomy, development, and stress-related expressions, respectively. The expression data derive from microarray experiments and were retrieved using Genevestigator (www.genevestigator.com; (Zimmermann et al., 2004)). High and low expression levels are reflected semi-quantitatively by *dark* and *light* coloring, respectively. 263005_at: *NHL4*; 262930_at: *NHL6*.

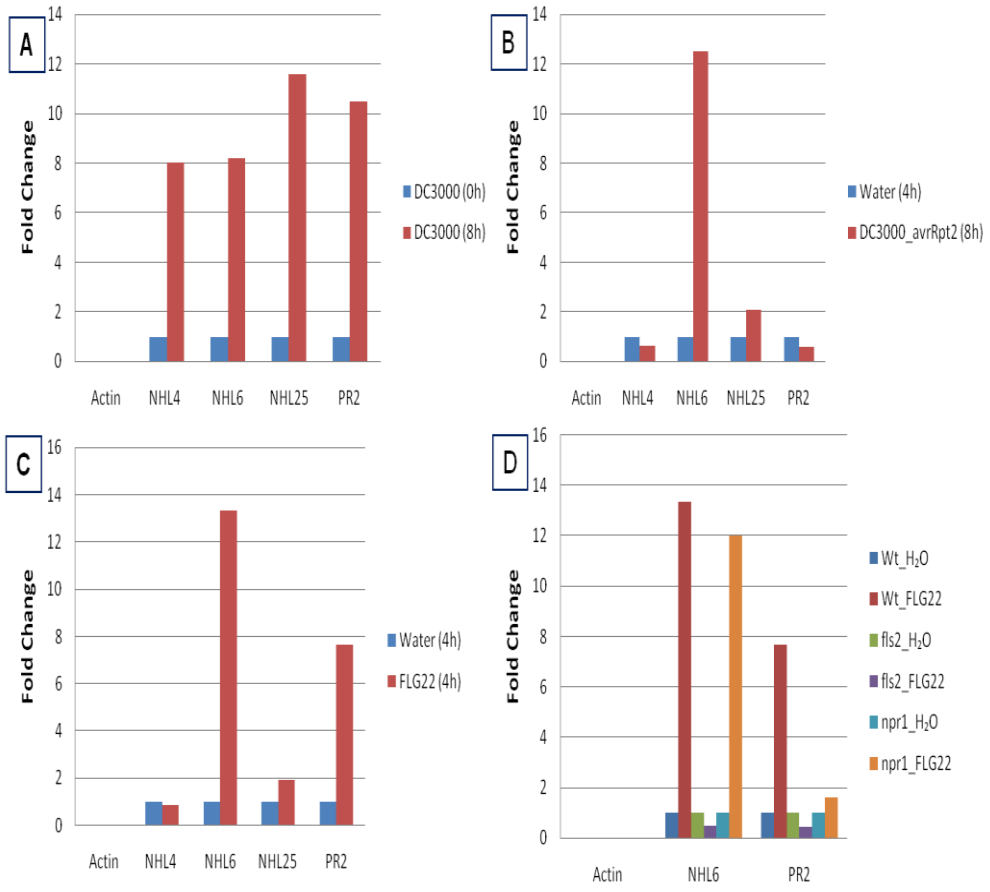

Figure 3.19: Pathogen induction of *NHL* genes
A: *NHL4*, *NHL6* and *NHL25* genes were induced by the virulent *Pst* DC3000. B and C: *NHL6* and *NHL25* genes were induced by the avirulent *Pst* DC3000 and by flg22. D: *NHL6* is expressed by flg22 in Wt Col-0 and *npr1-1* mutant but was not induced in the *fls2* mutant upon the same treatment. A: Plants infiltrated with virulent *Pst* DC3000. B: Plants infiltrated with water or *Pst* DC3000 carrying the *avrRpt2* avirulence gene. C: Plants infiltrated with water or 1 µM flg22. D: Wt Col-0, *fls2*, *npr1-1* plants infiltrated with water or 1 µM flg22. Leaf tissues were collected at the indicated time points and analyzed by real time PCR. The data are preliminary (n=1). For A-B, six-week-old soil-grown plants were infiltrated with high density virulent *Pst* DC3000 or avirulent *Pst* DC3000 (avrRpt2) solutions (concentration of 10^8 CFU/ml).

3. 5. AtIAN protein family investigations

AIG (here referred to as AtIAN) proteins (see 1.2.3.2), are a family of GTPases, one member of which (AIG1/AtIAN8) are suggested to be involved in the RPS2-dependent plant resistance pathway [(Liu et al., 2008), see ETI, 1.2.1.2] based on the expression of *AIG1/AtIAN8* in *Arabidopsis* after infection by avirulent *Pst* (avrRpt2) (Reuber and Ausubel, 1996). Apart from two studies in *Arabidopsis* (Reuber and Ausubel, 1996; Liu et al., 2008), AtIANs were not reported to be further studied. AtIAN12 (At4g09940) had been identified by experimental proteomics in *Arabidopsis* leaf peroxisomes (Reumann, unpub. data). AtIAN12 terminates with IIM>, which resembles plant PTS1 tripeptides such as AKM>. However, PTS1 prediction algorithms did predict neither AtIAN12 nor any of its homologs as peroxisome-targeted PTS1 proteins. However, several family members were scored slightly below threshold in the gray zone in which several true positive peroxisomal PTS proteins are found ((Lingner et al., 2011), e.g., AtIAN3, and AtIAN8, Table 3.5).

Table 3.5: PTS1 protein prediction scores for AtIAN homologs
The threshold of the prediction scores for predicted peroxisome targeting for the PWM model is 0.412 (Lingner et al., 2011). The gray zone is up to 0.130.

Acronym	AGI code	C-term. tri-peptide	PWM model score
AtIAN3	At1g33890	SIL>	0.326
AIG1/AtIAN8	At1g33960	SIL>	0.216
AtIAN1	At1g33830	VKL>	0.128
AtIAN11	At4g09930	IIL>	-0.47
AtIAN12	At4g09940	IIM>	-0.52

3.5.1 *In vivo* subcellular localization of AtIAN proteins

To validate peroxisome targeting of AtIAN12, the full-length protein was fused N-terminally with EYFP under the control of CaMV 35S promoter in two different vectors (pCAT and pBA002; see 2.1.3). The pBA002 binary vector was used for *Agrobacterium*-mediated transformation of tobacco intact leaves (see 2.2.3.2). The vector pCAT was used in both onion epidermal cells (see 2.2.3.1) and tobacco protoplast (see 2.2.3.3) transformations. Upon transient expression in onion epidermal cells the fusion protein was detected in morphologically diverse subcellular structures, including

interconnected punctate structures ("beads on a string", Figure 3.20, A-C, 18-48 h expression times). Some EYFP-labeled subcellular structures were demonstrated to coincide with CFP-labeled peroxisomes in a limited number of cells in two different experiments (Figure 3.20, A and C, 18-48 h expression times). In further experiments, however, the EYFP-labeled subcellular structures, even though intensively ($n \geq 6$) investigated, no longer coincided with CFP-labeled peroxisomes for unknown reasons (Figure 3.20, B and C). EYFP-AtIAN12 was also transiently expressed in tobacco protoplasts. As in onions, yellow fluorescence was detected in organelle-like structures and sometimes interconnected punctate structures surrounding plastids (Figure 3.21, A-C). However, both subcellular structures did not coincide with CFP-labeled peroxisomes (data not shown). EYFP-AtIAN12 was also co-expressed with an ER marker [(OFP-ER, see 2.1.3, (Frank et al., 2008)]. Preliminary data showed partial co-localization of EYFP-AtIAN12 with the ER marker (Figure 3.21, D and E). The data imply that AtIAN12 partially or transiently localizes to the ER.

To further analyze the subcellular localization of AtIAN12, EYFP-AtIAN12 was transiently co-expressed with CFP-PTS1 [see 2.1.3 (Zhang and Hu, 2008)] in tobacco leaves by *Agrobacterium*-mediated transformation (see 2.2.3.2). EYFP-AtIAN12 was detected in organelle-like structures that mostly coincided with CFP-labeled peroxisomes (Figure 3.22, A-C). However in some leaf cells, the coincidence was only partial or even absent (data not shown). EYFP-AtIAN12 was also co-expressed with a CFP-fused markers for the ER and Golgi [see 2.1.3 (Nelson et al., 2007)]. Additionally, mitochondria were stained by incubation of the leave tissue for 1 h in the red stain (1 µM MitroTracker red-CMXRos, Invitrogen, USA). In the three cases, no co-localization was detected, indicating that AtIAN12 is not targeted to ER, Golgi, or mitochondria in this expression system (Figure 3.22, C-E). Non-punctate interconnected structures as observed in onion epidermal cells and tobacco protoplasts were not seen in tobacco leaves. In summary, it was concluded from the subcellular targeting data for full-length AtIAN12 in onions, tobacco protoplasts and intact tobacco leaves that AtIAN12 is targeted to peroxisomes in intact tobacco leaves, possibly due to special "defense conditions" caused by *Agrobacterium*-mediated transformation.

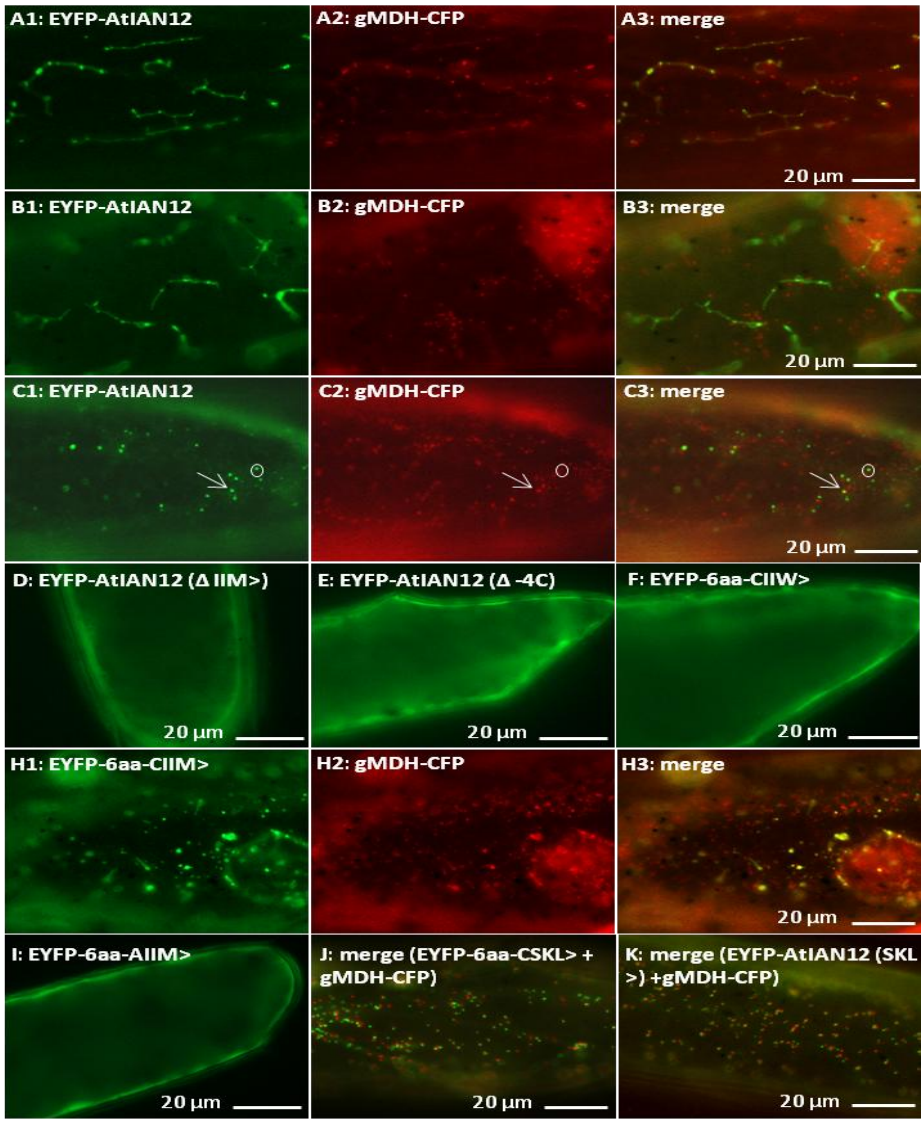

Figure 3.20: *In vivo* subcellular localization of AtIAN12 in onions
A-C: EYFP-AtAIN12 was targeted to organelle-like structures and interconnected structures that partially coincided with CFP labeled peroxisomes upon transient expression in onion epidermal cells. H: EYFP-PTD (AtIAN12, IIM>) shows enlarged vesicle structures. D-F and I: SDM of the predicted isoprenylation motif (CIIM>) in both EYFP-AtIAN12 and EYFP-PTD (Table 3.6) made the proteins to remain cytosolic. J-K: replacing IIM> with SKL> targeted the full-length protein and decapeptide fusions to peroxisomes. Peroxisomes were labeled with gMDH-CFP. The cyan fluorescence was converted to red. For fluorescence image acquisition details, see 2.1.4.1. Representative images of reproducible results obtained ≥3 are shown. Expression times (18 h for A, D-K and1 week for B-C).

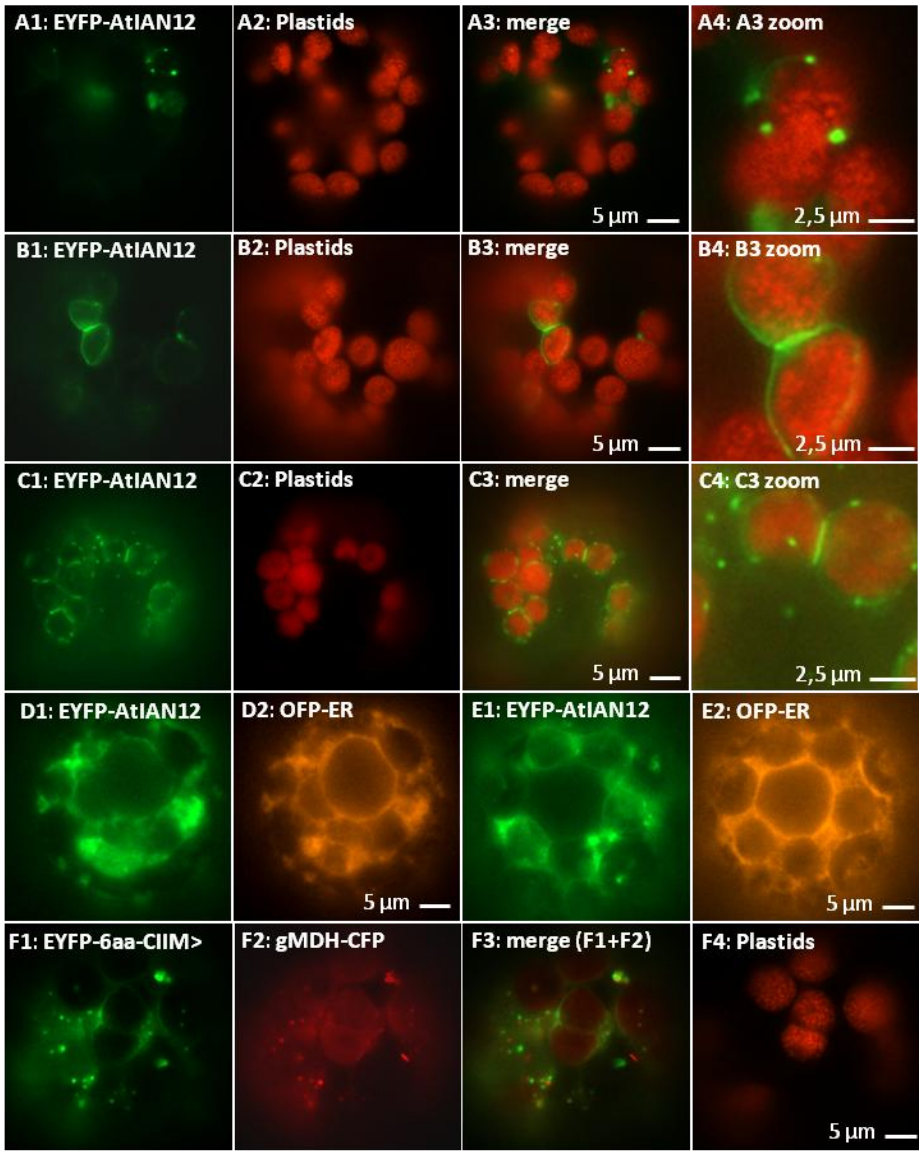

Figure 3.21: *In vivo* subcellular localization of AtIAN12 in tobacco protoplasts
A-C: EYFP-AtIAN12 was targeted to organelle-like structures, and interconnected structures surrounding plastids. D and E: preliminary data show partial localization of AtIAN12 to the ER. F: EYFP-decapeptide (AtIAN12, IIM>) shows vesicle (atypical) structures. Peroxisomes were labeled with gMDH-CFP (Fulda et al., 2002). The ER was labeled by OFP-ER (Frank et al., 2008). The cyan fluorescence was converted to red. For fluorescence image acquisition details, see 2.1.4.1. Representative images of reproducible results obtained ≥3 except for D-F (n=1) are shown. Expression times (18 h-48 h).

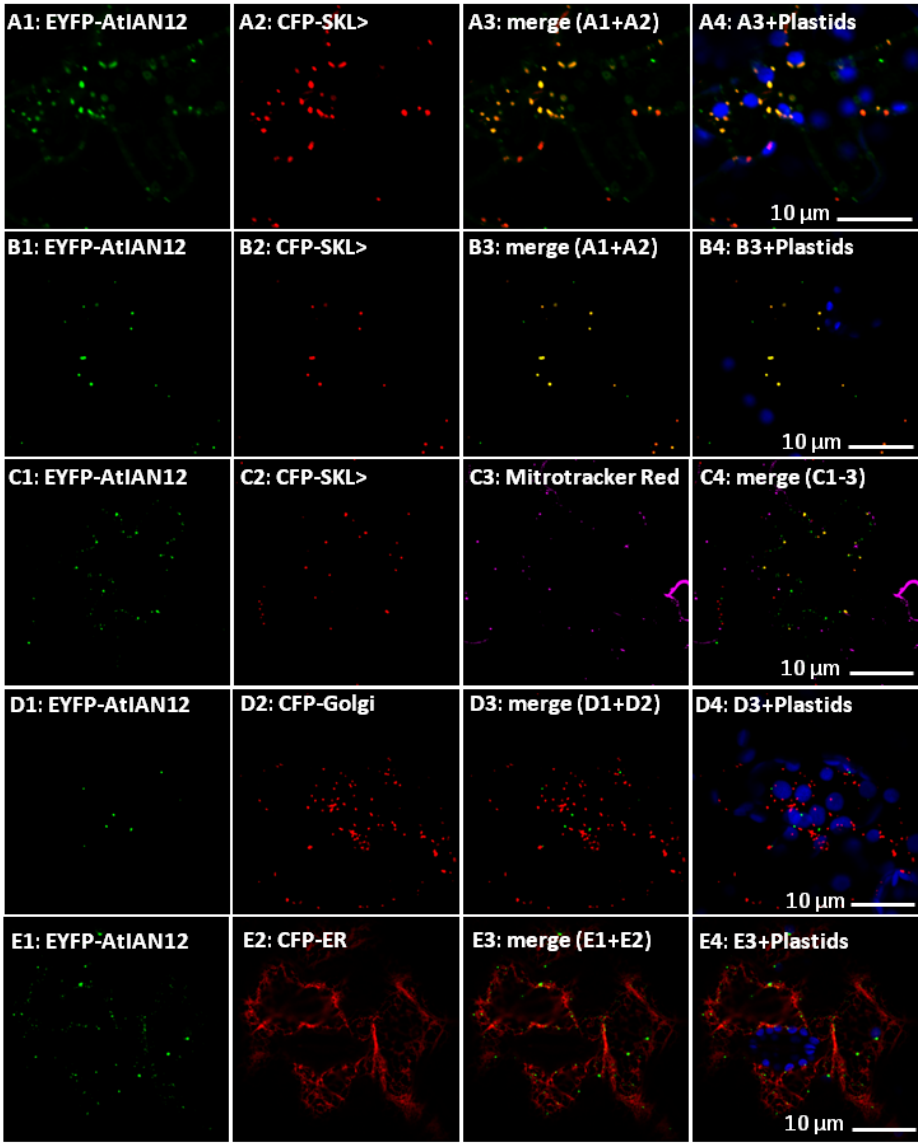

Figure 3.22: *In vivo* subcellular localization of AtIAN12 in tobacco leaves
Confocal laser scanning microscopic images (CLSM) for leaf cells from 6-week-old intact tobacco leaves. A-C: EYFP-IAN12 was targeted to peroxisomes labeled with CFP–PTS1. D and E: EYFP-AtIAN12 did not coincide with CFP-Golgi or CFP-ER. C: AtIAN12 did not coincide with mitochondria that were stained by incubating the leaf tissue for 1 hour in 1 µM Mitrotracker red solution (Invitrogen, USA). In A-E red signals indicate CFP; blue signals indicate plastids; pink signals indicate MitoTracker-stained mitochondria. For organelle marker details see 2.1.3. For fluorescence image acquisition details, see 2.1.4.4. Representative images of reproducible results obtained ≥3 are shown. Expression times (2-7 d).

In order to study if IIM> is a functional PTS1, the EYFP-PTD of AtIAN12 was constructed. Upon transient expression in onion epidermal cells, the fusion protein targeted to both organelle-like and larger vesicle-like structures that reproducibly and convincingly did not coincide with CFP-labeled peroxisomes (Figure 3.20, H). Similar results were obtained in a single experiment done with tobacco protoplasts (Figure 3.21, F). Thus, the data indicated the EYFP-PTD of AtIAN12 targeting to non-peroxisomal subcellular structures.

Peroxisome targeting for AtIAN12 (Figure 3.22, A-D) and the possibility that AtIAN12 carried an atypical PTS1 tripeptide prompted us to investigate subcellular targeting of additional AtIAN family members with PTS1 prediction scores higher than that of AtIAN12, including the prototypical family member, AtIAN8/AIG1. Two full-length proteins (AtIAN8, SIL> and AtIAN11, IIL>, see Table 3.5) were fused N-terminally with EYFP. The reporter fusion proteins did reproducibly targeted to organelle-like structures in onion epidermal cells (Figure 3.23, A-C, n≥3, 18 h to 1 week) and tobacco protoplasts (Figure 3.23, D-G, n=2 , 18-48 h). Simultaneously with the full-length fusions AtIAN8 and AtIAN11, their proposed PTDs were fused N-terminally with EYFP. The reporter fused PTDs of both proteins targeted weakly to organelle-like structures in both onion epidermal cells (Figure 3.23, L and M, n≥3, 18 h- 1 week) and tobacco protoplasts (Figure 3.23, J and K, n=1, 18-48 h). The identified structures did not coincide with CFP-labeled peroxisomes in both systems. However, despite variation of expression times and a significant number of experimental repetitions, these organelle-like structures could not be identified as peroxisomes. Identification of the nature of these non-peroxisomal organelle-like structures was beyond the scope of this study and requires further investigations.

In conclusion, by using the transient expression systems of onion epidermal cells and tobacco protoplasts, AtIAN8, AtIAN11 and AtIAN12 and their reporter fused PTDs were targeted mainly to unidentified non-peroxisomal organelle-like structures. However, these data could not validate peroxisome targeting, but indicated that the targeting signal is located in the C-terminal decapeptides.

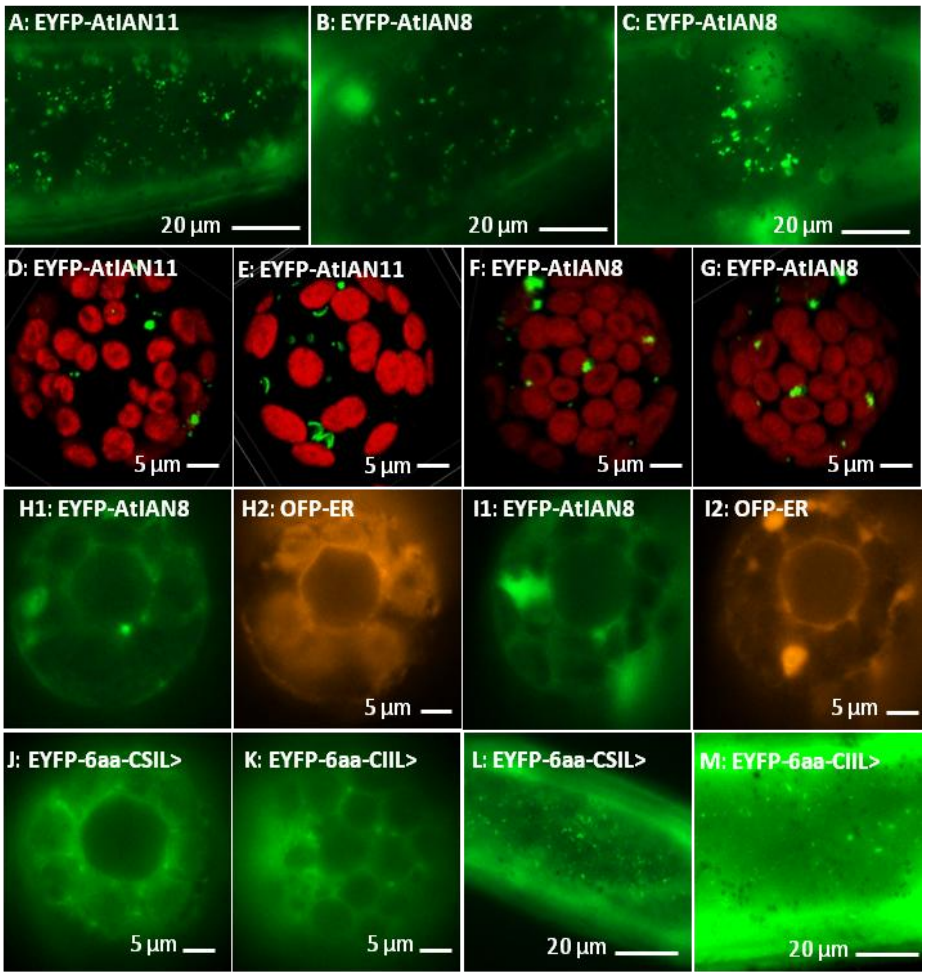

Figure 3.23: *In vivo* subcellular localization of AtIAN8 and AtIAN11
The EYFP-AtIAN8 and EYFP-AtIAN11 were transiently expressed in isolated tobacco protoplasts and onion epidermal cells. A-C: EYFP-AtIAN8 and EYFP-IAN11 were targeted to yet unidentified organelle-like structures in onions. D-G: 3D CLSM snapshot images for EYFP-AtIAN11 and AtIAN8 in protoplasts, show targeting of both fusion proteins to yet unidentified organelle-like structures. H and I: Epifluorescent images show preliminary data for partial detection of EYFP-AtIAN8 in the ER. J and L: EYFP- PTD (AtIAN8) targeted to non-peroxisomal unidentified organelle-like structures in both protoplasts and onions. K and M: EYFP-PTD (AtIAN11) targeted to non-peroxisomal unidentified organelle-like structures in both protoplasts and onions. For organelle marker details see 2.1.3. For fluorescence image acquisition details, see 2.1.4.1, and 2.1.4.3 for D-G images. Representative images of reproducible results obtained ≥3 except for D-G (n=2) and H-K (n=1) are shown. Expression times (18-48 h for protoplast and 18 h-1 week (for L-M) for onion epidermal cells).

3.5.2 AtIAN12 appears to be post-translationally modified

To investigate whether the C-terminal decapeptides of AtIAN12, AtIAN11, and AtIAN8 might contain alternative targeting signals for subcellular organelles other than PTS1s, the full-length proteins were subjected to prediction analysis of post-translational modifications and subcellular targeting (Prenylation Prediction Suite, PrePS, http://mendel.imp.ac.at/sat/PrePS/). The three AtIAN homologs of interest were found to carry isoprenylation/farnesylation sites predicted with high probability [(Maurer-Stroh and Eisenhaber, 2005), e.g., for AtIAN12; Figure 3.24)]. Protein isoprenylation refers to the covalent attachment of a 15-carbon farnesyl or 20-carbon geranylgeranyl moiety to a cysteine residue at/or near the carboxyl terminus (Crowell and Huizinga, 2009). The isoprenylation motif is CaaX, and is located at the extreme C-terminus, where "C" is cysteine, "a" is an aliphatic residue, and "X" is usually methionine, glutamine, serine, alanine, or cysteine in case of farnesylation, and leucine or isoleucine in case of isoprenylation (Crowell and Huizinga, 2009). Protein post-translational modification starts in the cytosol (farnesyl or geranylgeranyl moiety attachment), processed in the ER (aaX cleavage followed by cysteine methylation), and further exported to its final destination from ER (Crowell, 2000; Galichet and Gruissem, 2003).

The presence of predicted isoprenylation motifs in AtIAN12 (CIIM>), AtIAN11 (CIIL>), and AtIAN11 (CSIL>) suggested that the EYFP-PTDs of the three AtIAN proteins might be targeted to and anchored in the membrane of endomembrane vesicles via attachment of an isoprenyl moiety. Thereby, the isoprenylation motif predictions overlapped with the location of possible PTS1 tripeptides (IIM>, IIL>, and SIL>). The three AtIAN proteins might be similar to PEX19 which is reported to be farnesylated [see 1.1.2, (Rucktaschel et al., 2009)]. The isoprenylation motif predicted in the C-terminus for the three IAN proteins of interest suggested that the EYFP-AtIAN (full-length and PTDs) proteins were targeted to and remained in ER-derived vesicles for isoprenylation in onion epidermal cells and tobacco protoplasts. EYFP-AtIAN12 was transported (probably via the same ER vesicles) to its final destination, mature peroxisomes, in mesophyll cells of intact tobacco leaves.

Peroxisome targeting via isoprenylation was studied in greater details representatively for AtIAN12. The predicted motif (CIIM>) was found to be conserved in its plant homologs (see Figure 3.24). Several full-length and C-terminal domain constructs containing point mutations in critical amino acid residues were constructed (Table 3.6). EYFP-AtIAN12 lacking the C-terminal tripeptide (IIM>) was no longer targeting to subcellular structures and remained cytosolic (Figure 3.20, D) in onions, indicating that the deletion of the putative PTS1 tripeptide and/or disruption of the predicted isoprenylation motif (CIIM>) prevented protein targeting to subcellular structures. Likewise, EYFP-AtIAN12 (GIIM>) (i.e., C-to-G point mutation in the predicted isoprenylation motif) remained cytosolic (Figure 3.20, E). SDMs introduced into the EYFP-decapeptide (EYFP-6aa-CIIM>) further supported the idea that C-terminal protein isoprenylation determined subcellular targeting. For example, when M at pos. -1 was mutated to W (EYFP-6aa-CIIW>), the fusion protein remained in the cytosol (Figure 3.20, F), consistent with a significantly lowered prediction score for isoprenylation (from 1.064 to -8.235). Likewise, by mutating C at pos. -4 to A (EYFP-6aa-AIIM>), the fusion protein remained in the cytosol (Figure 3.20, I). By contrast, the change of the C-terminal tripeptide IIM> to SKL> in both full-length AtIAN12 and the C-terminal domain construct caused re-direction of both constructs to different subcellular structures that coincided with CFP-labeled peroxisomes (Figure 3.20, J and K), consistent with a significant reduction in the prediction score for isoprenylation (from 1.064 to -8.565) and the well-known function of SKL> in directing proteins to peroxisomes.

Taken together, these results supported the idea that EYFP-AtIAN12 is first targeted to the ER for post-translational modification by isoprenylation at the C-terminal CIIM> motif and subsequently directed to small ER-derived subcellular vesicles. In onion epidermal cells and tobacco protoplasts these vesicles appear to be the final destination, while in tobacco mesophyll cells of intact leaves, EYFP-AtIAN12 was detected in peroxisomes (Figure 3.22, A-C), suggesting a third targeting step from the ER vesicles to peroxisomes.

Table 3.6: Summary of subcellular localization of AtIAN proteins

Construct name	Subcellular targeting	Figure
EYFP-IAN12 (CIIM>)	In tobacco leaves: peroxisomes In onions and tobacco protoplasts: organelle-like structures and interconnected punctate structures	Figure 3.22 Figure 3.20 & Figure 3.21
EYFP-IAN12 (ΔIIM>)	Cytosol	Figure 3.20
EYFP-IAN12 (GIIM>)	Cytosol	Figure 3.20
EYFP-IAN12 (CSKL>)	Peroxisomes	Figure 3.20
EYFP-6aa-CIIM>	Organelle-like structures	Figure 3.20 Figure 3.21
EYFP-6aa-CIIW>	Cytosol	Figure 3.20
EYFP-6aa-AIIM>	Cytosol	Figure 3.20
EYFP-6aa-CSKL>	Peroxisomes	Figure 3.20
EYFP-IAN11(CIIL>)	Organelle-like structures	Figure 3.23
EYFP-6aa-CIIL>	Organelle-like structures	Figure 3.23
EYFP-IAN8 (CSIL>)	Organelle-like structures	Figure 3.23
EYFP-6aa-CSIL>	Organelle-like structures	Figure 3.23

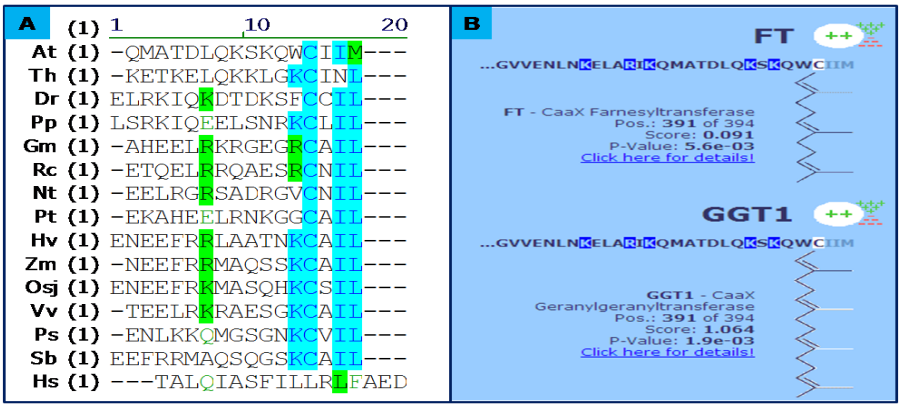

Figure 3.24: Conservation of the AtIAN12 isoprenylation motif (CIIM>)
A: Sequences of full-length protein AtIAN12 homologs were identified by BLAST search (NCBI) and aligned by AlignX program (Vector NTI, Invitrogen). The species abbreviations are as follows: At, *Arabidopsis thaliana*; Dr: *Danio rerio*; Gm: *Glycine max*; Hv: *Hordeum vulgare*; Hs: *Homo sapiens*; Nt, *Nicotiana tabacum*; Osj, *Oryza sativa japonica*; Pp, *Physcomitrella patens*; Ps, *Pisum sativum*; Pt, *Populus trichocarpa*; Rc, *Ricinus communis*; Sb: *Sorghum bicolor*; Tn: *Thellungiella halophila*; Vv, *Vitis vinifera*; Zm, *Zea mays*. B: prediction of AtIAN12 isoprenylation motif by http://mendel.imp.ac.at/sat/PrePS/ (Maurer-Stroh and Eisenhaber, 2005).

3.4.7 Generation of *AtIAN* overexpresser and amiRNA lines

To study the physiological function of AtIAN protein family members, T-DNA insertion lines were intended to be used but only a single line was available for *AtIAN11* (Sail_404_H08, see 2.2.1.5) in the wt Col-0 background. The T-DNA was inserted at the 300-UTRs of AtIAN11. Homozygous mutants (*ian11*) were isolated (Figure 3.25, A), similarly as described for *nhl* mutants (see 3.4.2). Two homozygous plants were identified and one of them was verified by making genomic PCR using either two gene-specific primers (LP and RP, for the wt allele) to confirm the absence of any wt allele and (LB1S and RP) to confirm the presence of the T-DNA insertion (Figure 3.25, B). In addition and similar to *NHL* genes (see 3.4.3), stable lines for *AtIAN* genes overexpression or knockdown by amiRNAs were created for all the three members of research focus (see Table 3.7).

Table 3.7: List of *AtIAN* overexpresser and amiRNA lines
Transformed seeds availability is indicated by (+), and the TF rate is indicated. T1 available lines number is indicated from the successfully genotyped plants. TF rates, expressed as 'percentage transformation', were calculated as [(#marker-resistant seedlings)/(total # seedlings tested)] x 100 (Clough and Bent, 1998).

No	Gene/ amiRNA	Plasmid/ promoter	TF Seeds	TF Rate (%)	T1 lines
1	*AtIAN12*	pBA002/35S	+	30	8
2	*AtIAN12*	pER10/Estradiol	+	0.25	8
3	*EYFP-AtIAN12*	pBA002/35S	+	40	11
4	*AtIAN8*	pER10/Estradiol	+	40	4
5	*AtIAN11*	pER10/Estradiol	+	0.14	2
6	*EYFP-AtIAN11*	Subcloned in pGEMT			
7	amiRNA (*AtIAN8*)	pER10/Estradiol	+	0.1	2
8	amiRNA (*AtIAN12*)	pER10/Estradiol	+	0.1	2
9	amiRNA (*AtIAN11+12*)	pBA002/35S	+	0.28	6

3.5.3 Proliferation of *Pst* DC3000 in *ian11* mutant

Bacterial growth of *Pst* DC3000 (avrRpt2) was monitored in *ian11* mutant plants. Together with *nhl* mutants (see 3.4.4) and under similar experimental conditions (n=2), the growth of *Pst* DC3000 (avrRpt2) was monitored in leaves of intact plants of *ian11* and compared with wt Col-0, *ndr1-1* (Century et al., 1995) and *pen2-2* (Lipka et al., 2005). The population of *Pst* DC3000 (avrRpt2) in wt Col-0 plants (2-4 days after inoculation) proliferated only 10 fold, while in *ndr1-1* and *pen2-2* mutants, bacteria proliferated 10,000 and 1000 fold, respectively. In *ian11* plants, bacteria proliferated around 1000 fold (Figure 3.25, D1). Disease symptoms appeared on the inoculated leaves for *ndr1-1* (2-4 d) after inoculation while did not show any symptoms on wt Col-0 (Figure 3.25, D2). Disease symptoms were less pronounced for *ian11*, while in *pen2-2*, leaf HR-like necrosis was most pronounced (Figure 3.25, D2). On the other hand in a single experiment, virulent *Pst* DC3000 proliferated similarly in *ian11* plants compared to the wt Col-0 (Figure 3.25, D2, single experiment). Taken together, *ian11* plants appeared to show less resistance to the avirulent strain than the wt, which indicates its possible important role in plant resistance.

3.5.4 Expression analysis of *AtIAN* genes

To study AtIAN8, AtIAN11 and AtIAN12 functions in plant responses, expression analysis by analysis of publicaly available microarray data and by real-time PCR were investigated. Briefly, the microarray available data indicate that *AtIAN8* is highly induced by a broad spectrum of biotic stresses, while *AtIAN11* and *AtIAN12* were also induced by different biotic stresses but to a lesser extent when compared with *AtIAN8* (data not shown). Preliminary data (n=1) for expression analysis of *AtIAN8*, *AtIAN11* and *AtIAN12* identified their pathogen-dependent mRNA accumulation. The real-time PCR conditions were similarly done as in *NHL* genes expression analysis (see 3.4.6). *AtIAN8*, *AtIAN11* and *AtIAN12* transcripts accumulated during the infection with the virulent *Pst* DC3000 (data not shown). *AtIAN8* only accumulated when the bacteria carried the avirulence gene *avrRpt2* (data not shown). Moreover, similar to the microarray data (data not shown), neither of *AtIAN8*, *AtIAN11* or *AtIAN12* transcripts accumulated after treatment of plants with flg22 which indicates that AtIAN proteins are not important in PTI (data not shown).

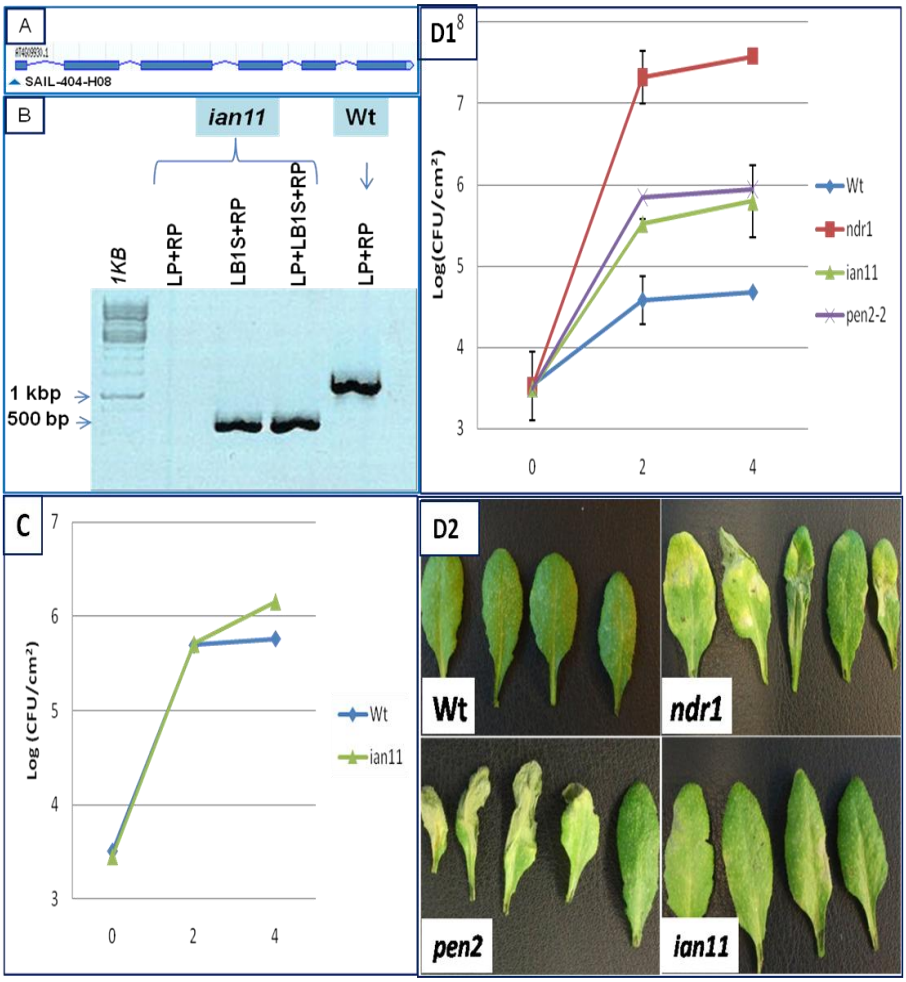

Figure 3.25: Identification of *ian11* and pathogen proliferation analysis
A: Diagram of the *Arabidopsis IAN11* gene. B: indicate the identified homozygous mutant by genomic PCR for *ian11* by different combination of primers as shown in the figure (wt band size = 1.2 kb, while the T-DNA specific band is ~500 bp). C: Pathogen proliferation analysis (virulent *Pst* DC3000) in wt Col-0 and *ian11* plants (n=1). D1: Pathogen proliferation analysis in wt Col-0, *ndr1-1*, *pen2-2*, *ian11* plants by avirulent *Pst* DC3000 (avrRpt2) (n=2, with higher SD, and needs further investigation. SD is calculated between the 2 experiments). D2: increased pathogen susceptibility. For C and D, mature soil-grown plants were infiltrated with low density *Pst* DC3000 (avrRpt2) or virulent *Pst* DC3000 solutions (concentration of 10^6 CFU/ml). The horizontal axis is in days. Bars show SD. For SD calculations see 2.2.4.1.

4. Discussion

Identification of the entire proteome of plant peroxisomes is crucial to understand all physiological functions of peroxisomes. The major focuses in the course of this study were experimental validation of novel PTS1 tripeptides and peroxisomal proteins identified by prediction algorithms, and understanding peroxisome functions in plant innate immunity. To investigate peroxisome functions in plant innate immunity, *Arabidopsis* proteins were screened for peroxisome-targeted PTS1 proteins with annotated functions related to plant defense against pathogens or stress responses. Several candidates were identified and their peroxisome targeting was validated by *in vivo* subcellular localization studies.

To get first insights into the molecular mechanisms of the validated peroxisomal defense proteins, two proteins (NHL4 and AtIAN12) were selected to initialize functional studies. Several members of the NHL and AtIAN protein families were found to carry predicted PTS1s and were subjected to *in vivo* subcellular localization targeting analyses as well. The functional studies, for NHL and AtIAN protein families, major purposes were to study their possible indirect involvement in metabolic peroxisome functions and to address if they are indeed important for plant innate immunity. Several steps were initiated to achieve these objectives 1) to generate homozygous T-DNA insertion lines, 2) to set up and apply immune-related assays on mutants, 3) to generate knockdown mutants using a siRNA approach, 4) to generate overexpression lines, and 5) to analyze their expression profiles under different biotic stress conditions by real-time PCR.

As part of a side-project, an investigation of the peroxisome function in H_2O_2 detoxification was initiated by *in vivo* subcellular analysis of several proteins (GR1, DHAR1, and GSTs) that previously were identified by experimental peroxisome proteomics. After the validation of GR1 and DHAR1 targeting to peroxisomes, genetic and molecular tools such as homozygous T-DNA insertion lines and recombinant proteins were generated to facilitate functional analyses in future studies.

4.1 Prediction models validation

The newly developed prediction models (PWM and RI, see 3. 1), predicted several novel plant PTS1 tripeptides and peroxisomal PTS1 proteins for *Arabidopsis*. Furthermore, the models were able to predict unknown low-abundance proteins. The models yielded high performance sensitivity and specificity values, allowing them to predict novel PTS1 tripeptides. Besides, the identification of several new PTS1 tripeptides from low-abundance proteins will allow searching for orthologous plant sequences, and most likely the recognition of further atypical PTS1s (see manuscript 1).

The accuracy of the prediction models was validated by extensive *in vivo* subcellular localization analyses. As part of the present dissertation, several predicted PTS1 tripeptides (SRV>, CKI>, STI>, AKM>, STI>, SPL>, PKI>, TRL>, LKL>, SGI>, and SEM>) were experimentally tested for functionality (manuscript 1, Table 1), where LCR>, LNL> were tested as cytosolic controls. The verification rate of predicted peroxisomal PTS1 tripeptides was high. For weak PTS1 tripeptides the sensitivity in detecting peroxisome targeting was improved by incubating the transformed tissue at low temperature for extended periods of time (from 24 h to 1 week expression time). All positive example sequences from the reliable data set that were tested experimentally were verified as functional PTS1 tripeptides (see 3.1.1). These data supported the high quality of the putatively orthologous sequences of this data set, and the accuracy of both prediction models (PWM and RI) on example sequences and the identification of several novel PTS1 tripeptides even including novel residues (manuscript 1, Table 1).

Furthermore, by applying the newly developed prediction models to the *Arabidopsis* genome (gene annotation of TAIR10), several proteins of unknown functions were predicted to be peroxisome-targeted by the PTS1 pathway. Some example proteins that were predicted and experimentally validated in the present dissertation included AC3, a Cys protease, S28FP, NUDT19, and pxPfkB (see manuscript 1, Figure 4, and Supplemental data set 2). These data supported the accuracy of the models to correctly predict low-abundance *Arabidopsis* PTS1 proteins (for more details see manuscript 1).

4.2 Detoxification-related proteins

The last two missing members of the peroxisomal ASC-GSH cycle, GR1 and DHAR1, had been identified at the molecular level by experimental proteome analysis of *Arabidopsis* leaf peroxisomes (see 1.1.1.2, (Reumann et al., 2007; Reumann et al., 2009)). Moreover, DHAR1, when fused C-terminally with EYFP, was detected in peroxisomes in intact tobacco leaves, but without determination of its targeting signal (Reumann et al., 2009). In the present study, validation of the peroxisomal localization of GR1 and identification of its C-terminal tripeptide (TNL>) as a novel functional PTS1 was accomplished (see manuscript 2). To investigate the location and nature of the PTS of DHAR1, DHAR1 was fused N-terminally with EYFP in order to investigate the possibility of the presence of unknown PTS1. This fusion protein, however, remained cytosolic, indicating that DHAR1 does not contain a PTS1 (Figure 3.1, A and J). On the other hand, the N-terminal domain was screened for the presence of any hidden PTS2-like structure. A PTS2-like structure ($RAx_{13}HL$) was found to be conserved in putative DHAR1 plant orthologs (Figure 3.2), and resembled the PTS2 nonapeptide motif $R[TMAV]x_5HL$ (Reumann, 2004) with the major difference that the four conserved residues are spaced by 13 rather than five residues. The N-terminal domain (46 aa) of DHAR1 was fused C-terminally with EYFP, and targeted to organelle-like structures (Figure 3.1, B). These data indicated that a PTS, and most likely a PTS2, is located in this N-terminal 46-aa domain of DHAR1. However, the mutation of the conserved R residue of ($\underline{R}Ax_{13}HL$) did not abolish organelle targeting (Figure 3.1, C), indicating that this peptide did not act as a PTS2. Thus, the identification of the PTS2 within this N-terminal 46-aa domain of DHAR1 remains elusive and requires further investigation that were beyond this side-project of this dissertation.

Similarly, five GSTs [see 1.1.1.2 (GSTT1, GSTU19, GSTU20, GSTF7, and GSTF10)], and HMGDH had been identified at the molecular level by experimental proteome analysis of *Arabidopsis* leaf peroxisomes (Reumann et al., 2007; Reumann et al., 2009). Four GSTs and HMGDH lacked recognizable PTS-like peptides. In this study, the identified proteins were fused N-terminally with EYFP. The reporter fusions were investigated by *in vivo* subcellular localization analyses,

but remained in the cytosol (Figure 3.1, E-I and K-L). EYFP-GSTF10 was also detected mostly in the cytosol but also in organelle-like structures in a limited number of transformants whose identity could not be further investigated due to weak organelle targeting efficiency (Figure 3.1, G). These data indicate the absence of PTS1s in the investigated proteins. The peroxisomal identity of the GSTs remains to be verified by C-terminal reporter protein fusion studies. Alternatively, one could search for interaction partners that contain PTSs and could transfer these proteins to peroxisomes by piggy-backing (Kaur et al., 2009).

The validation of GR1 and DHAR1 targeting to peroxisomes prompted us to initiate functional analyses of the ASC-GSH cycle. Heterologous overexpression of DHAR1 and GR1 in *E. coli* was largely accomplished. GR1 and DHAR1 were successfully expressed as soluble MBP-tagged proteins, and DHAR1 was also produced as a soluble His_6-tagged protein (Figure 3.4). The availability of both enzymes *in vitro* will allow analysis of their function by determination of their kinetic properties. Homozygous *gr1* and *dhar1* mutants were also isolated from T-DNA insertion lines. As a quick screen for deficiencies in peroxisome metabolic functions, photorespiration and β-oxidation assays were applied to *gr1* and *dhar1* plants. It was found that these metabolic functions of peroxisomes were not affected to major extent in both mutant plants as compared to the wt (Figure 3.3). Furthermore, several *Arabidopsis* leaf peroxisome fractions were isolated from mature leaves by the two-density gradient approach (Reumann et al., 2007). The isolated leaf peroxisomes will be used in future studies for downstream biochemical analyses of the ASC-GSH cycle in order to determine the activities of GR1 and DHAR1.

4.3 Peroxisome defense-related proteins

Apart from maintaining redox homeostasis under different stress conditions, much information about peroxisome functions regarding defense against pathogen is unknown. Indeed, peroxisome functions in plant innate immunity were reported only recently (see 1.1.1.3). To be able to understand these functions in greater details, it is important to identify further peroxisomal defense-related proteins other than SGT and PEN2 (see 1.1.1.3). *Arabidopsis* proteins were screened using the newly developed prediction algorithms (Lingner et al., 2011) for peroxisome-targeted PTS1 proteins with annotated functions related to

plant defense against pathogens or stress responses. Several unknown candidate proteins studied as defense-related but which had not been linked before with peroxisomes, were predicted as peroxisomal proteins (Table 3.2). Moreover, in latest and relatively high quality proteome studies of mature leaf peroxisomes, two stress-related proteins were also identified, AtMIF1 and AtOZI1 (Reumann et al., 2007; Reumann et al., 2009). *In vivo* validation of the predicted defense-related proteins was further investigated for their full-length proteins and/or for their PTDs by their N-terminal fusions with EYFP. Several defense-related proteins were validated to be peroxisomal such as AtMIF1, AtSurE, AtLIMDP and AtCAD7. Two other defense-related proteins also gave strong indications to be peroxisomal such as AtDRP and AtCDR1. The details for each of the identified proteins will be addressed for each one separately.

AtMIF1 (a homolog of human MIF that is important immune-regulator molecule in human) had been identified by proteome analysis (Reumann et al., 2007; Reumann et al., 2009) and was validated by subcellular localization analysis in peroxisomes in the present study (Figure 3.5, A and B). The protein has the prototypical PTS1 tripeptide (SKL>). In parallel to this study, similar data on peroxisome targeting validation for AtMIF1 were published. The authors established a new method for transient expression, referred to as fast *Agrobacterium*-mediated seedling transformation (FAST) using AtMIF1 as an example protein for peroxisome targeting (Li et al., 2009), consistent with the peroxisome targeting data for AtMIF1 in onions and tobacco protoplasts obtained in the present study. AtMIF1 might have important roles in plant resistance responses towards biotic stresses, because *AtMIF1* is highly induced by a broad spectrum of biotic and abiotic stress conditions (Figure 3.7 and Table 3.1). In *Arabidopsis*, there are two other homologs of AtMIF1 that were referred to as AtMIF2 and AtMIF3. Both proteins have less pronounced stress-related induction patterns and were detected in a chloroplast proteome study (Zybailov et al., 2008). Despite its PTS1-like tripeptide (ATL>), EYFP-AtMIF2 remained in the cytosol. In order to initiate functional studies, one T-DNA insertion line for *AtMIF1* was obtained but several trials to isolate homozygous mutants failed. Other trials need to be further pursued in the near future. It will be very important to obtain a conditional knockout and/or knockdown mutant for AtMIF1 to be able to test different pathogen assays on the loss-of-function mutant to investigate

the protein's postulated role in plant innate immunity. Notably, human MIF is an immune cytokine that is released from the peripheral immune cells and pituitary gland, and acts as a signal in immune regulation and has a central role in the development of innate and adaptive immune systems (Golubkov et al., 2006). It was postulated previously that peroxisomes are involved in preinvasion defense against fungi via PEN2 and PEN3 (see 1.1.1.3 and Figure 1.3, D). Moreover, because peroxisomes accumulate at infection sites, they might release different toxic and signaling molecules similar to immune vesicles (see 1.1.1.3). By combination of the above mentioned postulations and facts, AtMIF1 might mediate signaling in response to pathogen infection. AtCDR1 is another protein that is predicted to be in peroxisomes, and reported to be involved in SAR signaling in *Arabidopsis*, where it was found to accumulate in intercellular fluid in response to pathogen attack (see 1.2.2.3, (Xia et al., 2004)).

AtSurE is a homolog of SurE which has activities as a nucleotidase and an exopolyphosphatase and is thought to be in involved in stress response in *E. coli* (Proudfoot et al., 2004). AtSurE was identified by the new PTS1 prediction algorithms (SSL>, (Lingner et al., 2011)). AtSurE is a constitutive protein but was also detected by microarray analysis to be induced by biotic and abiotic stresses (Figure 3.7 and Table 3.1). The EYFP-AtSurE fusion protein was targeted to non-peroxisomal organelle-like structures in both onion epidermal cells (Figure 3.5, C), and tobacco protoplasts 24 h P.T. (Figure 3.5, G). In both expression systems the reporter fusion was also detected in aggregate-like structures in a considerable number of transformants (Figure 3.5, D and H). The pattern of these aggregate-like structures was not previously observed during the present study and indicates that a large number of small punctate structures must have aggregated, or the fusion protein was accumulated somehow intensively in unknown structures and failed to be exported. In contrast, EYFP-AtSurE was detected in peroxisomes 48 h P.T. in tobacco protoplasts (Figure 3.5, F). The identification of AtSurE as peroxisomal protein was further supported after the identification of the C-terminal domain of AtSurE PTD as a functional PTS1 domain (Figure 3.5, E). These data indicate an indirect transport of AtSurE to peroxisomes through an intermediate step that remains elusive and was beyond the scope of the present study. In order to initiate functional studies, one AtSurE T-DNA insertion line was obtained and homozygous mutants were successfully

isolated. A first mutant screen indicated that basic metabolic functions of peroxisomes were not severely affected in *atsure* plants (data not shown).

AtDRP and AtLIMDP belong to the R protein classes TIR-NBS-LRR and CC-NBS-LRR (see 1.2.1.2), respectively, members of which are implicated in signal transduction leading to ETI (see 1.2.1.2). Both proteins were identified by PTS1 prediction algorithms to contain PTS1 tripeptides (CRL> and SKL>, respectively). Both *AtDRP* and *AtLIMDP* appear to be induced upon different biotic and abiotic stresses based on their expression patterns deduced from publicly available microarray experiments (Figure 3.7 and Table 3.1). Recently AtLIMDP, also referred to as CHS3, was reported to be important in defense response and chilling tolerance. In this study, *chs3-1 Arabidopsis* mutant plants showed arrested growth, chlorosis, and exhibited constitutively activated defense responses when grown at 16^{o}C, which were alleviated at 22^{o}C (Yang et al., 2010), but the protein targeting was not investigated in the mentioned study. In the present study, EYFP-AtLIMDP (C-terminal 472 aa) was targeted to peroxisomes (Figure 3.6, E). For the full-length protein (1613 aa), a cloning strategy has been recently developed and will be pursued in the near future. On the other hand, EYFP-AtDRP was targeted to peroxisomes in onion epidermal cells (Figure 3.6, C). It is noteworthy mentioning that during transient expression of *EYFP-AtDRP* in three different experiments in onion epidermal cells, the detection level of both fluorophores (EYFP, or CFP for the peroxisomal marker) was very low for unknown reasons. Long acquisition times were needed for capturing images (Figure 3.6, C). For this reason, and to further confirm its peroxisome localization, this construct is recommended to be expressed in other expression systems. The C-terminal domain of AtDRP PTD was validated to be functional PTS1 domain (Figure 3.6, D), and hence the CRL> tripeptide as a functional PTS1 further supported the prediction. *AtDRP* has two transcriptional variants as proposed by TAIR10 (Figure 3.26, A), where variant number 2 is the one represented in the present study because of its C-terminal tripeptide CRL>. The peroxisomal verification of these two R proteins will shift the thoughts about possible modes of action of peroxisomes in plant innate immunity. Presently, the only proposed role of peroxisomes is that they contain enzymes that synthesize toxic molecules that are released into the apoplast (see 1.1.1.3 and Figure 1.3, D). The identification of these two R protein homologs is strongly

suggesting that peroxisomes could be also involved in pathogen recognition and further downstream signal transduction pathways. R proteins are usually PM-associated and are implicated in signal transduction (see 1.2.1.2). In order to initiate functional studies, one T-DNA insertion line for *AtLIMDP* was obtained and homozygous mutants were successfully isolated. A first mutant screen indicated that basic metabolic functions of peroxisomes were not severely affected in *atlimdp* plants (data not shown).

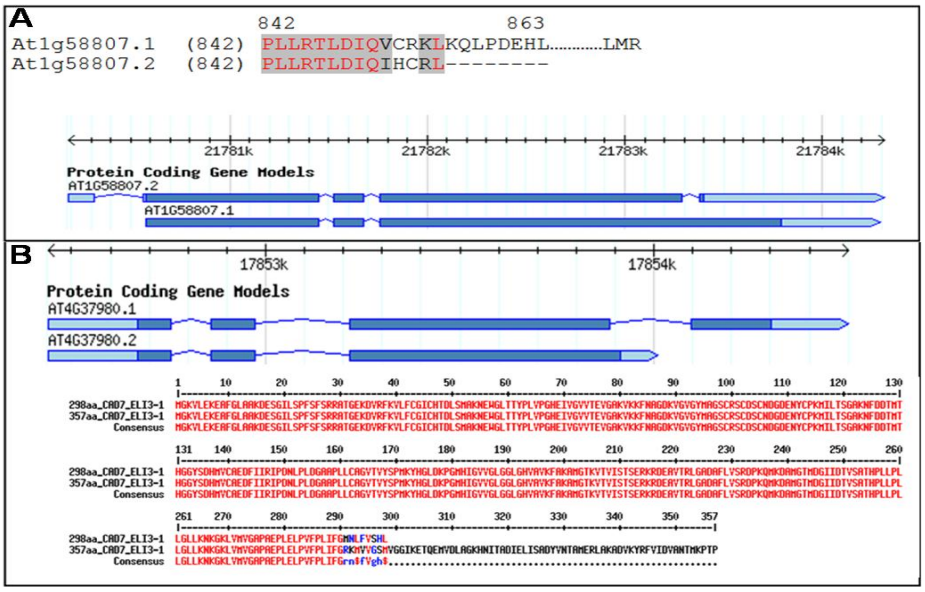

Figure 3.26: Transcriptional variants of *AtDRP* and *AtCAD7*
A: AtDRP C-terminal alignment and TAIR proposed protein coding gene models indicate the difference between the two variants. B: AtCAD7 alignment and TAIR proposed protein coding gene models demonstrate the difference between the two variants. The AtCAD7 variant 1 is 357 aa long, while variant 2 is 298 aa long.

Another two proteins were identified, AtCAD7 and AtCDR1, by PTS1 prediction algorithms. Interestingly, the reporter fusion of AtCAD7 was detected in peroxisomes in the present study (Figure 3.6, A), also referred to as ELI-3, which has been implicated in defense response. ELI-3 was identified in parsley after treatment by a heat-released elicitor from the fungus *Phytophthora rnegasperma*, f. sp. *Glycinea*, and in *Arabidopsis* after treatment by fungal elicitor. Additional

evidence for an important role of the ELI-3 in plant disease resistance came from genetic studies demonstrating that *ELI-3* expression was dependent on the presence of *RPMI* (see 1.2.1.2) in *A. thaliana* (Somssich et al., 1989; Debener et al., 1991; Kiedrowski et al., 1992; Trezzini et al., 1993). Furthermore, the C-terminal domain of AtCAD7 PTD was also validated to be functional PTS1 domain, as the fusion protein EYFP-PTD was detected in peroxisomes (Figure 3.6, B), and hence SHL> is a functional PTS1. SHL> has been characterized previously as a functional but weak PTS1 whose peroxisome targeting capability depends on auxiliary targeting enhancing elements immediately upstream of the tripeptide (Ma and Reumann, 2008). *AtCAD7* has two transcriptional variants as proposed by TAIR (Figure 3.26, B), where the short variant number 2 (298 aa) is the one investigated in this study. The fusion protein EYFP-AtCDR1 remained in the cytosol and was not detected in peroxisomes (Figure 3.6, G) in onion epidermal cells. However, the C-terminal domain of AtCDR1 PTD was found to be functional PTS1 domain, as the fusion protein EYFP-PTD was detected in peroxisomes (Figure 3.6, H), and hence AKM> was found be functional PTS1. AtCDR1 is an aspartic proteinase involved in disease resistance. AtCDR1 was also reported to be involved in SAR signaling in *Arabidopsis*, where it was found to accumulate in intercellular fluid in response to pathogen attack. Moreover, AtCDR1 was implicated in SAR signaling by generating small mobile signals (see 1.2.2.3 (Xia et al., 2004; Simöes et al., 2007)). Why did the full-length AtCDR1 remain in the cytosol? This question shall be addressed in the upcoming studies, especially with the confirmation that it has a functional PTS1 tripeptide. The full-length protein shall be further analyzed in tobacco protoplasts, and most preferably in intact tobacco leaves.

4.4 NHL protein family investigations

4.4.1 PTS1 prediction and sequence analysis of NHL proteins

Using PTS1 predictions algorithms, seven NHL protein (see 1.2.3.1) family members from *Arabidopsis* were predicted to carry a potential PTS1 (Table 3.3). In this study, the subcellular localization of all predicted members was investigated, with the focus on three NHL candidate proteins with highest PTS1 protein prediction scores, namely NHL4, NHL6, and NHL25, all of which belong to one phylogenetic

clade among 45 identified *Arabidopsis* NHL homologs (Figure 3.8). By protein multiple sequence alignment analysis of PTS1 predictable proteins with selected NHLs and tobacco HIN1 (Figure 3.9), the three studied members were confirmed to be similar to *Arabidopsis* NDR1, tobacco HIN1 and NHL members that were implicated in disease resistance, for example NHL2, NHL3 and NHL10 (see 1.2.1.2). The three candidates have three conserved motifs, and the WHy domain, all of which are conserved in NHL family and are found in tobacco HIN1. The WHy domain is also found in the LEA-14 family [expressed during embryogenesis and in plant responses to desiccation (extreme drying)] which suggests a shared mechanism in plant response during HR and desiccation stresses (Ciccarelli and Bork, 2005).

Additionally, NHL4, NHL6, and NHL25 were predicted to be membrane proteins similar to NDR1 and NHL3 (see 1.2.1.2). The computational analysis using transmembrane prediction programs, DAS-TM filter [http://mendel.imp.univie.ac.at/sat/DAS/DAS.html, (Cserzo et al., 2002)] indicated a single putative transmembrane helix domain (NHL4: 54-78, NHL6: 67-90, NHL25: 62-87). This domain was also predicted as an uncleavable signal anchor by SignalP-3.0 [www.cbs.dtu.dk/services/SignalP, (Bendtsen et al., 2004)]. NDR1 was reported to be localized to the PM via a C-terminal GPI-anchor (see 1.2.1.2), and is suggested to be located in the outer surface of the PM to act in a pathogen signal transduction cascade (Coppinger et al., 2004). A GPI anchor was not predicted for NHL4, NHL6, and NHL25. This is supporting the localization data that no PM-association was detected. Identification of protein sequence properties for the studied candidates implies that they are definitely important in pathogen response, and the possibility to be organelle membrane associated. Because of time limitations and the intensive studies on subcellular targeting analyses for NHL proteins, more detailed investigation of the possible organelle membrane association was beyond this study. The major focus was to identify the in *vivo* subcellular localization of the predicted candidates, and further initiation of functional studies to understand their function in plant innate immunity.

4.4.2 *In vivo* subcellular localization of NHL proteins

Identification of the subcellular localization of NHL proteins will assist in the elucidation of their biochemical function and mode of action in

plant responses to biotic stresses. NHL4 has a high PTS1 prediction score (AKL>, see Table 3.3), but EYFP-NHL4 unexpectedly was targeted to non-peroxisomal organelle-like structures in onion epidermal cells even after extended cold incubation (Figure 3.10, A). On the other hand, and consistent with the prediction, EYFP-NHL4 was detected in peroxisomes in tobacco protoplasts (Figure 3.11). NHL4 was thereby the first NHL member to be associated with peroxisomes. The identification of this protein in peroxisomes is giving more indications of the peroxisome functions in plant innate immunity.

Notably, EYFP-NHL4 targeting to peroxisomes was indirect, and the fusion protein was found to change its localization to peroxisomes in a time-dependent manner of expression in tobacco protoplasts. Based on the experimental data (Figure 3.11), the EYFP-NHL4 fusion protein is suggested to target peroxisomes through three successive steps, 1) first to be targeted to non-peroxisomal organelle-like structures (Figure 3.11, A), 2) the organelle-like structures dock to the peroxisome surface (Figure 3.11, B-D) and 3) the organelle-like structures fuse with the peroxisomal membrane and release their matrix content into peroxisomes (Figure 3.11, D and E). To better explain the hypothetical import pathway of NHL4 into peroxisomes: NHL4 might be inserted into specific ER domains, that pre-peroxisomes (organelle-like structures) bud off from the ER and that these pre-peroxisomes merge with mature peroxisomes similar to PMP1s (see 1.1.2, Figure 1.4). Notably, in onion epidermal cells these putative pre-peroxisomes do not appear to merge with mature peroxisomes. In the present study, AtSurE was also detected in onion epidermal cells in putative pre-peroxisomes or vesicles, which were identified in tobacco protoplasts to be in peroxisomes in a time-dependent manner. It is worth mentioning that research studies from oilseed rape (*Brassica napus*) identified two NHL homolgs, namely BnNHL18 (A and B), and their subcellular localization was also reported to change from the ER to an unknown destination according to their studies, when expressed in protoplasts subjected to stress treatments [sodium chloride, H_2O_2, JA and SA, (Lee et al., 2006)]. These data indicate that these protein family members could change their localization according to stress conditions.

Similarly, NHL6 and NHL25 reporter fusion proteins were targeted to non-peroxisomal organelle-like structures in onion epidermal cells

(Figure 3.10, B and C). Interestingly, EYFP-NHL25 was targeted to the same organelle-like structures which were labeled with CFP-NHL4 in onion epidermal cells (Figure 3.12, B). Moreover, preliminary data for EYFP-NHL6 show, in a limited number of transformed onion epidermal cells, coincidence with CFP-NHL4 within the same structures (Figure 3.12, A). These data indicate that both NHL6 and NHL25 target peroxisomes as well and share a common import pathway with NHL4. Another indication for peroxisomal targeting of both NHL6 and NHL25 was the detection of their EYFP-PTDs in peroxisomes (Figure 3.12, C and D) and establishing their PTS1s as a functional tripeptides (LRL>, NHL6 and FRL>, NHL25), consistent with PTS1 predictions. Finally, other predictable PTS1 NHL proteins (NHL39, NHL39H1, NHL13H1, and NHLx), all of which were investigated by the *in vivo* subcellular localization in onion epidermal cells. The four fusion proteins targeted to unidentified organelle-like structures in onions (Figure 3.13). These data indicate that NHL family members are targeted to peroxisomes and are likely to give more insights into peroxisome functions in plant innate immunity in the near future. Earlier studies reported targeting of NHL3 to PM (Varet et al., 2003), and NHL2 and NHL10 to chloroplast (Zheng et al., 2004). Overall, these family members appear to have different mode of actions according to their different subcellular localization.

4.4.3 Generation of transgenic lines for reverse genetic analyses

To initiate molecular analysis for NHL4, NHL6 and NHL25, T-DNA insertion lines were obtained and homozygous mutants were successfully isolated (*nhl4*, *nhl6*, and *nhl25*). Moreover amiRNA stable lines were generated to be used for future analyses. Previously, loss-of-function mutants of NHLs were not adequately studied, except for NDR1. *ndr1-1* (fast-neutron-generated mutant, see 1.2.3.1) is reported to be more susceptible to several avirulent *Pst* DC3000 strains containing one avirulence gene [*avrB*, *avrRpm1*, *avrRpt2*, or *avrPph3*, (Century et al., 1995; Century et al., 1997)]. Moreover, the generation of overexpresser stable lines was largely accomplished for *NHL4* and *NHL25*. The overexpresser lines for each gene were produced by both a constitutive (35S) and an inducible (estradiol) promoter. The overexpresser lines will be used to investigate gene overexpression effects on plant response to pathogen infection. Several members from this family were identified to confer resistance (Varet et al., 2003;

Coppinger et al., 2004), and affect plant responses towards pathogen infection (see 1.2.3.1).

4.4.4 Functional studies on NHL protein family

To investigate whether the NHL proteins of interest indirectly participate in fatty acid β-oxidation and IBA-to-auxin conversion of peroxisomes, the available homozygous mutants (*nhl4*, *nhl6* and *nhl25*) were subjected to sucrose dependence, and auxin assays. *pex14* plants showed growth inhibition in the absence of sucrose and also were insensitive to IBA, both of which is consistent with being as a positive control for these assays. In this mutant peroxisome functions were altered due to the absence of PEX14. *nhl* mutants were similar to wt in the results obtained from both assays. The data led to the conclusion that the absence of NHL4, NHL6 and NHL25 did not affect the two metabolic functions of peroxisomes (Figure 3.17).

To investigate the functions of the selected genes in plant response to pathogens, the corresponding infection assays were first established in the group, as learned previously in the He group (PRL, MSU, USA). One crucial characteristic of resistant plants is the ability to restrict *in planta* growth of avirulent bacteria. To be able to monitor plant resistance to pathogens, the bacterial proliferation assay was established. *Pst* DC3000 virulent and avirulent strains (e.g., carrying *avrRpt2*) were obtained and used for analysis of *in planta* bacterial proliferation (Figure 3.15, A). Using this assay, the knockout mutants (*nhl4*, *nhl6*, and *nhl25*) were subjected for checking their possible susceptibility to pathogen infection. Preliminary results indicated that virulent bacteria proliferated at similar rate in *nhl* mutants and wt plants upon leaf infiltration (Figure 3.15, B). In contrast, the avirulent (avrRpt2) strain proliferated differently in *nhl* mutants indicating elevated pathogen susceptibility (Figure 3.15, C1). The rates of bacterial proliferation were increased for the positive controls *ndr1-1* and *npr1-1* mutants (Figure 3.15, C1) as reported previously (Cao et al., 1994; Century et al., 1997). Because of the presence of the effector protein avrRpt2 in the avirulent strain, the plants should be more resistant, and the bacteria should grow slowly as indicated in wt Col-0 plants, because of the induction of ETI. In contrast, the avirulent bacteria grew at high rate in both positive controls and *nhl* mutants (Figure 3.15, C1), which indicates that the plant immune system was

not up-regulated, and the plants were more susceptible to bacterial infection. These results suggest that NHL4, NHL6 and NHL25 are involved in ETI (see 1.2.1.2). However, it needs to be pointed out that the proliferation assays remained preliminary due to an insufficient number of only two biological replicates in independent experiments. Several trials were done to generate 3rd repetition, but these were hindered by technical difficulties with plant growth chamber facility. The plants generated in the last trials sufferd and were delayed in growth because of the growth conditions. It is crucial to obtain very healthy and immune plants to be able to have a successful assay. However, some healthy plants were selected from these conditions and subjected for the assays; but unfortunately, varied proliferation rates of bacterial growth in the wt Col-0 was obtained and halted the interpretation of the complete assay.

PAMP-induced callose deposition in cotyledons of hydroponically grown *Arabidopsis* seedlings was carried out in duplicate experiments in another lab at Hu group (PRL, MSU, USA). The time scale was too limited to establish the system and reproduce the same data in the Reumann lab. It is important to mention that a recent study on this assay indicated that callose is a multifaceted defense response and is controlled by distinct signaling pathways, depending on the growth conditions (Luna et al., 2011). In the present study, when applying flg22 to plant seedlings, wt Col-0 plants showed a high average number of callose depositions indicative of functional PTI response, which were absent in wt WS-0 (Figure 3.16), consistent with this ecotype representing a negative control for this assay because lacking the FLS2 receptor that is responsible for flg22 recognition. Furthermore, analysis of callose depositions for *nhl4*, *nhl6*, *nhl25* and *pen2-1* mutants after the same treatment indicated varied numbers of callose depositions between plants. On average, five representative leaves from five independent plants were used for calculations. These numbers indicated that the mutants were able to induce callose formation but at significantly lower frequency than wt Col-0. To conclude, these data shall be reproduced, and *pen2-1* mutant shall be replaced by another negative control, because previously it was shown that callose depositions are completely absent (Clay et al., 2009; Luna et al., 2011). Another possibility to support these results is to investigate callose depositions after infiltrating 4-week-old leaves by the PAMP (Galletti et al., 2008), and further compare with the results from hydroponic

grown seedlings. This will help in getting rid of the possible invariability which is produced by hydroponic growing seedlings.

4.4.5 Expression analysis of *NHL* genes

NHL proteins are proposed to be possible mediators in plant resistance against pathogen infections. The mechanism of their action, however, is not well-known, for instance, if they are required as R function or involved in defense gene activations (Dormann et al., 2000). Several family members were induced during pathogen infections and signaling molecule treatment (see 1.2.3.1). To study possible functions of NHL4, NHL6 and NHL25 in plant responses, expression analysis of available microarray data and real-time PCR were carried out. Briefly, the microarray data (Figure 3.18) indicated that *NHL6* is highly induced by a broad spectrum of biotic stresses. *NHL4* similarly is induced but less pronounced than *NHL6*. In the present study, preliminary mRNA transcript quantification using real-time PCR identified the induction of the three genes by virulent *Pst* DC3000 (Figure 3.19, A) and SA (data not shown, M.Sc. thesis, (Mwaanga, 2011)) while specifically *NHL6* and *NHL25* were induced by avirulent (Figure 3.19, B) *Pst* DC3000 (avrRpt2). Interestingly, *NHL6* specifically was induced after the treatment by flg22 (Figure 3.19, C). To dissect if NHL6 is induced downstream the recognition of FLS2 for flg22, another experiment was applied on *fls2* mutant plants. In contrast to wt plants, *NHL6* transcripts did not accumulate in *fls2* mutant plants after the treatment by flg22 (Figure 3.19, D). Taken together, these results indicate that *NHL6* is induced through FLS2 recognition of pathogens as part of PTI (see 1.2.1.1).

NPR1 is induced through SA signal transduction. *Arabidopsis NPR1* is a key regulator of SAR (see 1.2.2.3), and it is highly expressed upon infection, in turn inducing expression of a battery of downstream *PR* genes (see 1.2.2.3) through binding to TGA2 transcription factor in the nucleus (Cao et al., 1998; Subramaniam et al., 2001). Because *NHL6* is already found to be induced by SA, it worth investigating if *NHL6* is induced downstream or upstream of NPR1. *NHL6* transcripts were monitored in *npr1-1* mutants after flg22 treatment, and found to be accumulated similarly to wt plants (Figure 3.19, D). These preliminary data indicate that *NHL6* induction is NPR1-independent and that NHL6 appears to be located upstream of NPR1 in the SA induction cascade.

Even though, these data are preliminary, the flg22 treatment of wt plants similarly gave the same induction fold increase for *NHL6* in two different experiments, and is strongly supporting the expression analyses in this study.

4.5 AtIAN protein family investigation

The IAN protein family has been largely studied in humans and has important role in immune responses (see 1.2.3.2). In plants, AtIAN8/AIG1 has previously been identified and partially been studied upon pathogen infection (Reuber and Ausubel, 1996). This study initiates the first molecular analyses of plant IAN proteins after the identification of one AtIAN8 homolog (AtIAN12) by *Arabidopsis* leaf peroxisome proteomics (Reumann, unpub. data). *AtIAN*s are mostly clustered on chromosomes I, II, and IV. This study focuses on *AtIAN8*, which is located on chromosome I, and one phylogenetic clade comprising *AtIAN11* and *AtIAN12*, which are located on chromosome IV (Liu et al., 2008).

4.5.1 *In vivo* subcellular localization of *AtIAN* proteins

In this study, subcellular localization studies validated AtIAN12 targeting to peroxisomes after transient expression in intact tobacco leaves using the *Agrobacterium*-mediated transformation method. The EYFP-AtIAN12 was detected in organelle-like structures, which coincided with CFP-labeled peroxisomes in intact tobacco leaves (Figure 3.22). However, the reporter fusion protein was targeted to organelle-like structures and interconnected organelle-like structures in onion epidermal cells, and tobacco protoplasts (Figure 3.20 and Figure 3.21). But peroxisomal validation was not possible in both of these expression systems. Similarly, AtIAN8 and AtIAN11 were targeted to organelle-like structures in onion epidermal cells and tobacco protoplasts that could not be shown to be identical with peroxisomes (Figure 3.23). The transient expression of both AtIAN8 and AtIAN11 in intact tobacco leaf cells was delayed because of the unavailability of their EYFP-cDNAs in a binary vector. Additionally, the EYFP-PTDs for the three selected AtIANs were mostly targeted to non-peroxisomal organelle-like structures (Figure 3.23). Taken together, these data mostly could not validate peroxisome targeting, but indicated that the targeting signal is located in the C-terminal decapeptides.

Initially, the C-terminal IIM> of AtIAN12 was suggested to be an atypical PTS1 based on its similarity to the weak PTS1 (AKM>). Methionine is an abundant and "strong" residue at pos. -1, isoleucine has both been shown to represent an allowed PTS1 tripeptide residue at pos. -3, and pos. -2 is presently considered the most flexible residue with 15 allowed amino acid residues, even though presently excluding isoleucine [(Lingner et al., 2011), Figure 1, B]. In addition, the three AtIANs were shown to carry predicted isoprenylation motifs in the C-terminal domain CaaX>; (AtIAN12: CIIM>, AtIAN11: CIIL>, and AtIAN8: CSIL>), offering the possibility that EYFP-PTDs of the three AtIANs might be targeted to and anchored in the membrane of endomembrane vesicles via attachment of an isoprenyl moiety.This prediction analysis was tested by Prenylation Prediction Suite, PrePS (http://mendel.imp.ac.at/sat/PrePS/).

The peroxisomal AtIAN12 was further validated for the presence of isoprenylation motif. Notably, the prediction motif CaaX> was found to be conserved in its plant orthologs (Figure 3.24). Several point mutations and deletions were introduced into *AtIAN12* full-length cDNA and PTD to generate EYFP-AtIAN12 (ΔIIM> and GIIM>) and PTD (AIIM>, and CIIW>), in order to validate functionality of the isoprenylation motif. As predicted all the applied mutations made the fusion proteins to remain cytosolic and strongly indicated CIIM> as a functional isoprenylation motif (Figure 3.20). The protein isoprenylation pathway in plant cells includes an intermediate step at the ER for the cleavage of the tripeptide aaX and C-terminal methylation (Crowell, 2000; Galichet and Gruissem, 2003). Preliminary data indicated that EYFP-AtIAN12 was partially detected in the ER upon transient expression in tobacco protoplasts (Figure 3.21, D and E), while this was not the case upon transient expression in tobacco leaves (Figure 3.22, E). The absence of AtIAN12 in the ER in tobacco leaves could indicate that the isoprenylation modification was active and that peroxisome targeting was accelerated. In contrast, in tobacco protoplasts, protein isoprenylation might be less active, thereby halting EYFP-AtIAN12 in the ER and ER-export vesicles. Taken together, these results indicate that EYFP-AtIAN12 is isoprenylated, and targeted to the ER for IIM> cleavage and C-methylation, and subsequently directed to small ER-derived subcellular vesicles. In onion epidermal cells and tobacco protoplasts, these organelle-like

structures appear to be the final destination, while in tobacco mesophyll cells of intact leaves; EYFP-AtIAN12 was detected in peroxisomes. Furthermore, AtIAN12 might be exported to peroxisomes under special conditions such as during upregulation of immune systems because of pathogen infection. Consistent with this hypothesis, *Agrobacterium* could led to upregulation of the immune system of the plant and gave the conditions needed for AtIAN12 targeting to peroxisomes from ER in *Agrobacterium*-mediated transformation in intact tobacco leaves. This hypothesis can be tested on the available EYFP-AtIAN12 stable lines, where if AtIAN12 will not be detected in peroxisomes, the plants could be infected by *Agrobacteria* and to investigate the possible peroxisome targeting of EYFP-AtIAN12 afterwards.

Only little information is available on isoprenylation of peroxisomal proteins for all three kingdoms to date. Yeast PEX19p is farnesylated and seems essential for proper matrix protein import into peroxisomes through possible induction of a conformational change in PEX19p, and hence affecting on PMPs (Rucktaschel et al., 2009). Moreover, Rho family members (G-proteins) that are known to play a role in actin reorganization and membrane dynamics also contain the isoprenylation consensus sequence and are reported to have a role in plant response towards infection (Goritschnig et al., 2008). Interestingly, one small GTPase (Rho1p, YPR165W) localizes to peroxisomes through interaction with the PMP PEX25, and regulates the assembly state of actin on the peroxisome membrane (Marelli et al., 2004). However has not been reported previously that Rho1p includes a predicted isoprenylation motif (CVLL>, score 3.065). If Rho1p indeed uses the isoprenylation pathway for peroxisome targeting, this would be another link on the importance of isoprenylation pathway on sorting proteins to peroxisomes and possibly to interact with PMPs. Noticeably, protein farnesylation was reported to play a role in plant innate immunity, because the mutant *era1* (enhanced response to ABA 1), which has a defect in the enzyme farnesyltransferase, is more susceptible toward virulent bacterial and oomycete pathogens (Goritschnig et al., 2008). Finally, another possible experimental evidence for AtIAN12 farnesylation confirmation could be by studying the subcellular localization of AtIAN12 in the mutant *era1*, to determine if the farnesyltransferase absence could affect on AtIAN12 targeting and make it to remain in the cytosol.

4.5.2 Generation of transgenic lines for reverse genetic analyses

To initiate molecular analyses for AtIAN proteins, T-DNA lines for AtIAN11 were only available, and homozygous plants were successfully isolated (*ian11*). The generation of amiRNA stable lines for AtIAN12, AtIAN11 and AtIAN8 was largely accomplished. Also, one amiRNA stable line was generated to silence both *AtIAN11* and *AtIAN12*, which share high sequence similarity with each other. Moreover, the generation of overexpresser stable lines was largely accomplished with the genes (*AtIAN12* and *AtIAN8*) to be expressed from both a constitutive (35S) and an inducible (estradiol) promoter. Overexpresser line of *EYFP-AtIAN12* was also produced, and to be expressed by 35S promoter. *AtIAN11* and *EYFP-AtIAN11* were cloned and will be transformed to *Arabidopsis* as well. The overexpresser lines shall primarily be used to investigate the genes overexpression effect on the plant response to pathogen infection.

Pathogen infection assay using *in planta* bacterial (*Pst* DC3000) proliferation assay was applied on *ian11* mutant plants. Preliminary results indicate that the virulent bacteria proliferated similarly in both *ian11* mutant and wt plants during the virulent strain proliferation assay (Figure 3.25, C). In contrast, increase in plant susceptibility, monitored by the increase in bacterial proliferation, was noticed during avirulent (avrRpt2) strain proliferation assay in *ian11* mutant plants (Figure 3.25, D1). The positive controls *ndr1-1* and *pen-1* mutants showed as well increase in plant susceptibility to infection. It is considered important to mention that the disease assays on the mutants are promising but remain preliminary similarly to *nhl*s.

4.5.3 Expression analysis of *AtIAN* genes

Primarily, *AtIAN8* was discovered in plants after its isolation in *Arabidopsis thaliana* after treatment by *Ps* pv. maculicola carrying the effector *avrRpt2* (Reuber and Ausubel, 1996). In the present study, preliminary mRNA transcript quantification using real time PCR identified the induction of *AtIAN* genes by virulent *Pst* DC3000 and SA (data not shown, Master thesis: (Mwaanga, 2011)) while specifically *AtIAN8* was induced by avirulent *Pst* DC3000 (avrRpt2). Interestingly, all three *AtIAN* genes were induced by *Pst* DC3000, but not induced by flg22. These results indicate that *AtIAN*s are only induced by the signal transduction cascades leading to ETI (see 1.2.1.2).

5. Conclusions and future perspectives

In the present study the combination of both experimental and prediction methodologies allowed the identification of several novel PTS1 tripeptides and peroxisomal *Arabidopsis* proteins. Several peroxisome-targeted proteins are implicated in plant defense mechanisms based on protein annotations, domain conservation, sequence homology and microarray-based expression data. The development of the first high-accuracy prediction method for plant PTS1 proteins will be instrumental in identifying low-abundance and stress-inducible peroxisomal proteins as indicated in the present study.

Proteome and prediction methods identified 17 defense-related proteins, six of which were demonstrated to be targeted to peroxisomes (AtIAN12, NHL4, AtMIF1, AtMIF1, AtCAD7, and AtLIMDP), four are strongly indicated to be in peroxisomes (AtDRP, AtCDR1, NHL6, NHL25,), and six were found to be organelle-targeted (NHL39, NHL39H1, NHL13H1, NHLx, AtIAN8 and AtIAN11). The high number of newly identified peroxisomal proteins with predicted functions in plant defense against pathogens will be used intensively to understand the emerging evidences of peroxisome functions in defense responses and plant innate immunity. Moreover, the preliminary molecular studies on two immune-related families (NHL and AtIAN) and the peroxisomal identification of several members from both families will be instrumental in understanding peroxisome functions in innate immunity. Future goals emerging from this study are numerous and might advance our understanding of the new roles of peroxisome in plant innate immunity. In the near future, the NHL and AtIAN protein families will be further dissected to understand their roles in plant innate immunity.

Several detoxification-related proteins were investigated by *in vivo* subcellular localization studies. These studies could verify the peroxisomal identification of GR1 and its targeting signal TNL> as a novel functional PTS1. The ASC-GSH cycle functional studies were initiated in order to understand its mode of action in peroxisomes, involving heterologous expression of GR1 and DHAR1, isolation of peroxisomes for biochemical studies of the cycle in *Arabidopsis* leaf peroxisomes, and finally isolation of T-DNA homozygous mutants.

6. References

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7. Appendix

Table 2.4: Primers used for cloning and genotyping

Primer	Construct name	Template	Dest. vector	Nucleotide sequence (5'--3')	R. E.
SR491f	At3g51660_AtMIF1	G50544/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCTATGCCTTGTCTTTACATTAC	NotI
SR492r	At3g51660_AtMIF1	G50544/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGTCTAGAGCTAAAGTTTAGAAGGAAGAG	XbaI
AK27F	At5g01650.1 _AtMIF2	U17152/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCTATGCCGTGCCTCAACCTCTCC	NotI
AK28R	At5g01650.1 _AtMIF2	U17152/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGTCTAGAGTTAAAGAGTCGCCCCGTTCCA	XbaI
AK3F	At4g14930_AtSurE	U25020/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCTATGGAGATTGACGGTGGAGAT	NotI
AK4R	At4g14930_AtSurE	U25020/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGTCTAGAGTCAAAGGGATGAGGAGGAGCA	XbaI
AK183R	EYFP-PTD (AtSurE, SSL>)	pCAT-EYFP	pCAT	TATGTCTAGAGTCAAAGGGATGAGGAGGAGCATGACTGGTTTGTCTTGTACAGCTCGTCC ATGCC	XbaI
AK5F	At5g33340 _AtCDR1	U85644/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCTATGGCCTCTCTATTCTCTTCA	NotI
AK6R	At5g33340 _AtCDR1	U85644/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGTCTAGAGCTACATCTTTGCACAATCTGT	XbaI
AK9F	At5g17890.1_AtLIMDP	pda07886/RIKEN	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCTATAGCATTAATAGAGTCAAAG	NotI
AK10R	At5g17890.1_AtLIMDP	pda07886/RIKEN	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGTCTAGAGTCATAACTTTGAATATTGTGG	XbaI
AK62F	AtLIMDP_SDM (ΔT)	pCAT-AtLIMDP	pCAT-EYFP	GTGTTAGGCTATATGTGGTTGGAGTGTCAGACATACGTTTTTG	
AK63R	AtLIMDP_SDM (ΔT)	pCAT-AtLIMDP	pCAT-EYFP	CAAAAACGTATGTCTGACACTCCAACCACATATAGCCTAACAC	
AK57F	AT1G58807.2_AtDRP	pda20094/RIKEN	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCTGGTTGGAAAGTGTTGCTTACTTCT	NotI
AK58R	AT1G58807.2_AtDRP	pda20094/RIKEN	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGCCGCGGCTAGAGTCGGCAATGGATCTGAATATCGAGAGT	SacII
AK182R	EYFP-PTD (DRP, CRL>)	pCAT-EYFP	pCAT	TATGTCTAGAGTCAGAGTCGGCAATGGATCTGAATATCGAGAGTCTTGTACAGCTCGTCCA TGCC	XbaI
AK60F	At4g37980.2_AtCAD7	pda01912/RIKEN	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCT ATGGGAAAGGTTCTTGAGAAG	NotI
AK61R	At4g37980.2_AtCAD7	pda01912/RIKEN	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGCCGCGGTTAAAGATGACTGACAAATAGGTTCATACCAAAGATGAGAGG	SacII
AK184R	YFP-PTD (CAD7, SHL>)	pCAT-EYFP	pCAT	TATGTCTAGAGTCAAAGATGACTGACAAATAGGTTCATACCAAACTTGTACAGCTCGTCC ATGCC	XbaI
AK1F	AT4G09940_AtIAN12 (CIIM>)	DQ056647/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCTATGTTTTCAGAATCTCTCCCA	NotI
AK2R	AT4G09940_AtIAN12 (CIIM>)	DQ056647/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGCCGCGGTCACATAATGATGCACCACTG	SacII
AK73R	AT4G09940_AtIAN12 (CSKL>)	DQ056647/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGCCGCGGTCACAATTTGGAGCACCACTGCTTGGATTT	SacII
AK65R	AT4G09940_AtIAN12 (ΔIIM>)	DQ056647/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGCCGCGGTCAGCACCACTGCTTGGATTT	SacII

Primer	Construct name	Template	Dest. vector	Nucleotide sequence (5'--3')	R. E.
AK164R	AT4G09940_AtIAN12 (GIIM>)	DQ056647/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGCCGCGGTCACATAATGATGCCCCACTG	SacII
AK104F	AT4G09940_AtIAN12	DQ056647/ABRC	pBA002 & pER10	ACTTTAATTAACATGTTTTCAGAATCTCTCCCA	PacI
AK105R	AT4G09940_AtIAN12	DQ056647/ABRC	pBA002 & pER10	AGACTAGTTCACATAATGATGCACCACTG	SpeI
AK19R	EYFP-6aa-CIIM>_AT4G09940	pCAT-EYFP	pCAT	TATGTCTAGAGTCACATAATGATGCACCACTGCTTGGATTTTTGCTTGTACAGCTCGTCCATGCC	XbaI
AK74R	EYFP-6aa-CSKL>_AT4G09940	pCAT-EYFP	pCAT	TATGTCTAGAGTCACAATTTGGAGCACCACTGCTTGGATTTTTGCTTGTACAGCTCGTCCATGCC	XbaI
AK75R	EYFP-6aa-AIIM>_AT4G09940	pCAT-EYFP	pCAT	TATGTCTAGAGTCACATAATGATGGCCCACGCCTTGGATTTTTGCTTGTACAGCTCGTCCATGCC	XbaI
AK64R	EYFP-6aa-CIIW>_AT4G09940	pCAT-EYFP	pCAT	TATGTCTAGAGTCACCAAATGATGCACCACTGCTTGGATTTTTGCTTGTACAGCTCGTCCATGCC	XbaI
AK33F	At4g09930_AtIAN11	GC103086/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCT ATGGGTGGAGGACTCGTAGAA	NotI
AK34R	At4g09930_AtIAN11	GC103086/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGTCTAGAG TCAAAGAATGATGCAACCTTG	XbaI
AK35R	EYFP-6aa-CIIL>_At4g09930	pCAT-EYFP	pCAT	TATGTCTAGAGTCAAAGAATGATGCAACCTTGATCCCTTTTCTCCTTGTACAGCTCGTCCATGCC	XbaI
AK108F	At4g09930_AtIAN11	GC103086/ABRC	pBA002 & pER10	ACTTTAATTAACATGGGTGGAGGACTCGTAGAA	PacI
AK109R	At4g09930_AtIAN11	GC103086/ABRC	pBA002 & pER10	AGACTAGTTCAAAGAATGATGCAACCTTG	SpeI
AK36F	At1g33960_AtIAN8	pda15002/RIKEN	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCT ATGGCCAACGATCAGAAGAAT	NotI
AK37R	At1g33960_AtIAN8	pda15002/RIKEN	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGTCTAGAG TCAGAGAATGCTGCACTGCTG	XbaI
AK38R	EYFP-6aa-CSIL>_At1g33960	pCAT-EYFP	pCAT	TATGTCTAGAGTCAGAGAATGCTGCACTGCTGACGGCTGAGCATCTTGTACAGCTCGTCCATGCC	XbaI
AK106F	At1g33960_AtIAN8	pda15002/RIKEN	pBA002 & pER10	AAGACTCTCGAGATGGCCAACGATCAGAAGAAT	XhoI
AK107R	At1g33960_AtIAN8	pda15002/RIKEN	pBA002 & pER10	AGACTAGTTCAGAGAATGCTGCACTGCTG	SpeI
	AtIAN8_amiRNA		pBA002 & pER10	TATAAAAACGTGTCGCCTCAC	
AK110	I miR-s	pRS300		GATATAAAAACGTGTCGCCTCACTCTCTCTTTTGTATTCC	
AK111	II miR-a	pRS300		GAGTGAGGCGACACGTTTTTATATCAAAGAGAATCAATGA	
AK112	III miR*s	pRS300		GAGTAAGGCGACACGATTTTATTTCACAGGTCGTGATATG	
AK113	IV miR*a	pRS300		GAAATAAAATCGTGTCGCCTTACTCTACATATATATTCCT	

Primer	Construct name	Template	Dest. vector	Nucleotide sequence (5'--3')	R. E.
	AtIAN12_amiRNA		pBA002 & pER10	TATCTTTAATGCAAAAGGCGC	
AK122	I miR-s	pRS300		GATATCTTTAATGCAAAAGGCGCTCTCTCTTTTGTATTCC	
AK123	II miR-a	pRS300		GAGCGCCTTTTGCATTAAAGATATCAAAGAGAATCAATGA	
AK124	III miR*s	pRS300		GAGCACCTTTTGCATAAAAGATTTCACAGGTCGTGATATG	
AK125	IV miR*a	pRS300		GAAATCTTTTATGCAAAAGGTGCTCTACATATATATTCCT	
	AtIAN12+AtIAN11_ amiRNA		pBA002 & pER10	TAGAATGCTATTCCGTGTCGC	
AK130	I miR-s	pRS300		GATAGAATGCTATTCCGTGTCGCTCTCTCTTTTGTATTCC	
AK131	II miR-a	pRS300		GAGCGACACGGAATAGCATTCTATCAAAGAGAATCAATGA	
AK132	III miR*s	pRS300		GAGCAACACGGAATACCATTCTTTCACAGGTCGTGATATG	
AK133	IV miR*a	pRS300		GAAAGAATGGTATTCCGTGTTGCTCTACATATATATTCCT	
AK7F	At1g54540_NHL4	PENTR221-AT1G54540/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCTATGGGAGATCAACAAAAAATT	NotI
AK8R	At1g54540_NHL4	PENTR221-AT1G54540/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGGAGCTCTCAGAGTTTGGCCTTAAAACT	SacI
AK134F	At1g54540_NHL4	PENTR221-AT1G54540/ABRC	pBA002 & pER10	AAGACTCTCGAGATGGGAGATCAACAAAAAATT	XhoI
AK135R	At1g54540_NHL4	PENTR221-AT1G54540/ABRC	pBA002 & pER10	AGACTAGTTCAGAGTTTGGCCTTAAAACT	SpeI
AK180F	EYFP-NHL4	PENTR221-AT1G54540/ABRC	pBA002 & pER10	ACTTTAATTAACATGGGAGATCAACAAAAAATT	PacI
AK181R	EYFP-PTD (NHL4, AKL>)	pCAT-EYFP	pCAT	TATGTCTAGAGTCAGAGTTTGGCCTTAAAACTGCAATCACTAGCCTTGTACAGCTCGTCCATGCC	XbaI
AK43F	At1g65690_NHL6	Senescent leaves_mRNA	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCTATGTCTCAACACCAAAAAATCTATCCGGTCCAAG	NotI
AK44R	At1g65690_NHL6	Senescent leaves_mRNA	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGCCGCGG CTATAACCTAAGACGAAATTTGCAACT	SacII
AK45R	EYFP-PTD (NHL6, LRL>)	pCAT-EYFP	pCAT	TATGTCTAGAGTCATAACCTAAGACGAAATTTGCAACTACTACTCTTGTACAGCTCGTCCATGCC	XbaI
AK136F	At1g65690_NHL6	To be repeated	pBA002 & pER10	ACTTTAATTAACATGTCTCAACACCAAAAAATCTAT	PacI
AK137R	At1g65690_NHL6	To be repeated	pBA002 & pER10	AGACTAGTCTATAACCTAAGACGAAATTTGCA	SpeI
AK46F	At5g36970_NHL25	SA_Sprayed_Leaves_mRNA	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCTATGTCCGATCACCAGAAAATTCATCCGGTGAGCG	NotI

Primer	Construct name	Template	Dest. vector	Nucleotide sequence (5'--3')	R. E.
AK47R	At5g36970_NHL25	SA_Sprayed_Leaves_mRNA	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGTCTAGAG TTATAGTCTAAACCTGTATTTGCAGTT	XbaI
AK48R	EYFP-PTD (NHL25, FRL>)	pCAT-EYFP	pCAT	TATGTCTAGAGTCATAGTCTAAACCTGTATTTGCAGTTACTACTCTTGTACAGCTCGTCCATGCC	XbaI
AK138F	At5g36970_NHL25	SA_Sprayed_Leaves_mRNA	pBA002 & pER10	AAGACTCTCGAGATGTCCGATCACCAGAAAATTCAT	XhoI
AK139R	At5g36970_NHL25	SA_Sprayed_Leaves_mRNA	pBA002 & pER10	AGACTAGTTTATAGTCTAAACCTGTATTTGCA	SpeI
AK49F	At5g21130_NHL13H1	Genomic DNA	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCT ATGACGGTCGAGAAACCACAA	NotI
AK50R	At5g21130_NHL13H1	Genomic DNA	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGTCTAGAG TTACAACAGGCTCAAGCCCGT	XbaI
AK51F	At3g54200_NHL39	pda19744/RIKEN	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCT ATGAGTGATTTTTCAATCAAA	NotI
AK52R	At3g54200_NHL39	pda19744/RIKEN	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGTCTAGAG TTATAACTTAGTCGAATACTT	XbaI
AK53F	At3g05975_NHL39H1	DQ446637/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCT ATGTCCAAGCGACGCATTTGC	NotI
AK54R	At3g05975_NHL39H1	DQ446637/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGTCTAGAG TTACAGCTTAGTTTTGAGATC	XbaI
AK55F	At1g08160_NHLx	G11858/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCT ATGGTGCCTCCAAACCCAGCC	NotI
AK56R	At1g08160_NHLx	G11858/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGTCTAGAG CTAAAGACGAGTTTTGCATAA	XbaI
	NHL4_amiRNA		pBA002 & pER10	TTTCGTTGGGATTACGCGCTA	
AK140	I miR-s	pRS300		GATTTCGTTGGGATTACGCGCTATCTCTCTTTTGTATTCC	
AK141	II miR-a	pRS300		GATAGCGCGTAATCCCAACGAAATCAAAGAGAATCAATGA	
AK142	III miR*s	pRS300		GATAACGCGTAATCCGAACGAATTCACAGGTCGTGATATG	
AK143	IV miR*a	pRS300		GAATTCGTTCGGATTACGCGTTATCTACATATATATTCCT	
	NHL6_amiRNA		pBA002 & pER10	TTATAGTCACGTTAAAAGCCC	
AK148	I miR-s	pRS300		GATTATAGTCACGTTAAAAGCCCTCTCTCTTTTGTATTCC	
AK149	II miR-a	pRS300		GAGGGCTTTTAACGTGACTATAATCAAAGAGAATCAATGA	
AK150	III miR*s	pRS300		GAGGACTTTTAACGTCACTATATTCACAGGTCGTGATATG	
AK151	IV miR*a	pRS300		GAATATAGTGACGTTAAAAGTCCTCTACATATATATTCCT	
	NHL25_amiRNA		pBA002 & pER10	TTATGGTAACGTTAAATCCGG	
AK156	I miR-s	pRS300		GATTATGGTAACGTTAAATCCGGTCTCTCTTTTGTATTCC	
AK157	II miR-a	pRS300		GACCGGATTTAACGTTACCATAATCAAAGAGAATCAATGA	
AK158	III miR*s	pRS300		GACCAGATTTAACGTAACCATATTCACAGGTCGTGATATG	
AK159	IV miR*a	pRS300		GAATATGGTTACGTTAAATCTGGTCTACATATATATTCCT	
SR476f	At3g24170_GR1	G25518/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCTATGGCGAGGAAGATGCTT	NotI

Primer	Construct name	Template	Dest. vector	Nucleotide sequence (5'--3')	R. E.
SR477r	At3g24170_GR1	G25518/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP/pMAL.c2X	CAAGTCTAGAGTCATAGATTTGTCTTAGG	XbaI
SR478r	EYFP-7aa-TNL> (AtGR1)	pCAT-EYFP	pCAT	TATGTCTAGAGTCATAGATTTGTCTTAGGTTTGGGTTTGTGGGCCTTGTACAGCTCGTCCATGCC	XbaI
SR481f	At1g19570_DHAR1	pda00270/RIKEN	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCTATGGCTCTGGAAATCTGTGT	NotI
SR482R	At1g19570_DHAR1	pda00270/RIKEN	pCAT-EYFP/pMAL.c2X	CAAGTCTAGAGTCAAGGGTTAACCTTGGG AG	XbaI
AK66F	At1g19570_DHAR1	pda00270/RIKEN	NS-EYFP	GTCACCATGGCT CTG GAA ATC TGT GT	NcoI
AK67R	At1g19570_DHAR1	pda00270/RIKEN	NS-EYFP	GAGCTCCATGGAAGGGTTAACCTTGGGAGC	NcoI
AK68R	DHAR1 (47aa)	pda00270/RIKEN	NS-EYFP	GAGCTCCATGGAGTCAGAGAGGTTAATCAGATGGAT	NcoI
AK90F	DHAR1 (47aa)_SDM (R to L)	DHAR1 (47aa)	NS-EYFP	GACTGTCCGTTCAGCCAATTGGCTCTTCTCACACTCGAG	
AK91R	DHAR1 (47aa)_SDM (R to L)	DHAR1 (47aa)	NS-EYFP	CTCGAGTGTGAGAAGAGCCAATTGGCTGAACGGACAGTC	
SR483F	At1g02920_GSTF7	U16241/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCTATGGCAGGAATCAAAGTTTT	NotI
SR484R	At1g02920_GSTF7	U16241/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGTCTAGAgTTAAAGAACCTTCTTAGCAG	XbaI
SR485F	At2g30870_GSTF10	U17031/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCTATGGTGTTGACAATCTATGC	NotI
SR486R	At2g30870_GSTF10	U17031/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGTCTAGAGTTAAACAGGTAGTGAGTACT	XbaI
SR487F	At1g78380_GSTU19	U12572/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCTATGGCGAACGAGGTGATTCT	NotI
SR488R	At1g78380_GSTU19	U12572/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGTCTAGAGTTACTCAGGTACAAATTTCT	XbaI
SR489F	At1g78370_GSTU20	U17780/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCTATGGCGAACCTACCGATTCT	NotI
SR490R	At1g78370_GSTU20	U17780/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGTCTAGAGTCAGAGATTGTTCTTCCTAT	XbaI
SR479F	At5g43940_HMGDH	pda17160/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	AAGACTGCGGCCGCTATGGCGACTCAAGGTCAGGT	NotI
SR480R	At5g43940_HMGDH	pda17160/ABRC	pCAT-EYFP	CAAGTCTAGAGTCATTTGCTGGTATCGAGGA	XbaI
AK18F	At5g41210_GSTT1	pGEMT-GSTT1	pQE-31	ACTGGATCCCATGATGAAGCTCAAAGTGTAT	BamHI
AK19F	At5g41210_GSTT1	pGEMT-GSTT1	pMAL-c2X	ACTGGATCCATGATGAAGCTCAAAGTGTAT	BamHI
AK20R	At5g41210_GSTT1	pGEMT-GSTT1	pQE-31/pMAL-c2X	CAAGTCGACTTAGATCTTGGATTGAAGACC	SalI
AK21F	At3g24170_GR1	G25518/ABRC	pQE-31	ACTGGATCCCATGGCGAGGAAGATGCTTGTT	BamHI
AK22F	At3g24170_GR1	G25518/ABRC	pMAL.c2X	ACTGGATCCATGGCGAGGAAGATGCTTGTT	BamHI
AK23R	At3g24170_GR1	G25518/ABRC	pQE-31	AAGGAGCTCTCATAGATTTGTCTTAGG	SacI
AK24F	At1g19570_DHAR1	pda00270/RIKEN	pQE-31	ACTGAGCTCCATGGCTCTGGAAATCTGTGTG	SacI
AK25F	At1g19570_DHAR1	pda00270/RIKEN	pMAL.c2X	ACTGAATTCATGGCTCTGGAAATCTGTGTG	EcoRI

Primer	Construct name	Template	Dest. vector	Nucleotide sequence (5'--3')	R. E.
AK26R	At1g19570_DHAR1	pda00270/RIKEN	pQE-31	CAAGGTCGACTCAAGGGTTAACCTTGGGAG	SalI
AK162F	EYFP	pCAT-EYFP	pGEMT-Easy	AAGACTGTCGACATGGTGAGCAAGGGCGAGGAG	SalI
AK163R	EYFP	pCAT-EYFP	pGEMT-Easy	TGCACTAGTTCCGTTAATTAACTTGTACAGCTCGTCCAT	PacI-SpeI
pRS300-A	pRS300 vector specific			CTGCAAGGCGATTAAGTTGGGTAAC	
pRS300-B	pRS300 vector specific			GCGGATAACAATTTCACACAGGAAACAG	
pER10/F	pER10 vector specific			GTGGTAATGCCATGTAATATGCTCG	
pER10/R	pER10 vector specific			ATACTCAAACTTAGTAGGATTCTGGTGTG	
pBA002/F	pBA002 vector specific			CGTCTTCAAAGCAAGTGGATTGATG	
pBA002/R	pBA002 vector specific			TGCTTAACGTAATTCAACAACAGAAATTATA	
SR194F	pCAT-N-terminal			GCATTCTACTTCTATTGCAGC	
SR320r	pCAT-C-terminal			CCTTATCTGGGAACTACTCAC	
SR321F	pCAT-downstream_EYFP			ACTACCTGAGCTACCAGTCC	
LBa1	T-DNA specific			TGGTTCACGTAGTGGGCCATCG	
LB1-SAIL	T-DNA specific			GCCTTTTCAGAAATGGATAAATAGCCTTGCTTCC	
AK94LP	NHL4 (SAIL_681_E12)_LP			TGGCCTTAAAACTGCAATCAC	
AK95RP	NHL4 (SAIL_681_E12)_RP			ACGGGTTGTTGCTGAACATAG	
AK78LP	NHL6 (SALK_148523)_LP			TGGTAAAATTTTGGCAACGAC	
AK79RP	NHL6 (SALK_148523)_RP			AATCTATCCGGTCCAAGATCC	
AK80LP	NHL25 (SALK_113216)_LP			GGCAAAAACATACGGATTGTG	
AK81RP	NHL25 (SALK_113216)_RP			GGTTACAGCTAACCCGGTTTC	
AK82LP	NHL13H1 (SALK_080000)_LP			TGCAATCACGTCCTAATCTCC	
AK83RP	NHL13H1 (SALK_080000)_RP			AAAGCCCATCAAGGCATAAAC	

Primer	Construct name	Template	Dest. vector	Nucleotide sequence (5'--3')	R. E.
AK84LP	NHL39 (SAIL_204_E02)_LP			CACACGAAATTAGGCAAAAGC	
AK85RP	NHL39 (SAIL_204_E02)_RP			CTGCGTTTCAGAGAGTAACCG	
AK86LP	NHL39H1 (SAIL_1213_B03)_LP			AACGAGTCAAACTTTAGGTGGC	
AK87RP	NHL39H1 (SAIL_1213_B03)_RP			AAGAACAGCGATCAAGAGCAC	
AK88LP	AtIAN11 (SAIL_404_H08)_LP			CCTCAAGCAATGTGGCAATAG	
AK89RP	AtIAN11 (SAIL_404_H08)_RP			GCTGCTTGTCCTTTTGACTTG	
AK100LP	LIMDP (SALK_024264)_LP			TTGAAGATTTCTTGGCAGGTG	
AK101RP	LIMDP (SALK_024264)_RP			GTTGTTTTTCCTTTCTTGGGC	
AK102LP	AtSurE (SALK_037615)_LP			CAGTTCCAGAATAGACGCTGG	
AK103RP	AtSurE (SALK_037615)_RP			TTTGGTATACGATCGAATCGC	
SR563LP	AtGR1 (SALK_105794C)_LP			TATCGATCGGGTTTGTTTTTG	
SR564RP	AtGR1 (SALK_105794C)_RP			GTTGCGGAAAAATATCAATGC	
SR565LP	DHAR1 (SALK_005382.46.25.x)_LP			ATGTCGTTTCGTATCGTCGTC	
SR566RP	DHAR1 (SALK_005382.46.25.x)_RP			TTCTCAAAAGAGTCGAGCGAG	

Paper I

Paper II