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Development of SSR markers identification system for *Carex* L. based on RAD sequencing

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Abstract

In this study, we designed and evaluated an efficient set of simple sequence repeat (SSR) markers from restriction site-associated DNA (RAD) sequencing data of four widely utilized *Carex* L. accession across Northern China, especially in Beijing. Based on their genomic sequencing data, we developed 400 SSR markers and evaluated their amplification specificities among which a total of 17 SSR markers were identified as a core set of molecular markers for efficient assessment of diverse *Carex* L. accessions. Using this molecular identification system, we classified 26 *Carex* L. accessions into 3 genetically distinct groups. The establishment of a molecular identification system based on a core set of 17 SSR markers provides an essential basis for evaluating genetic relationships among *Carex* L. accessions along with a wealth of genetic resources for marker-assisted selection and breeding of *Carex* L..

Key words: *Carex* L., Restriction site-associated DNA sequencing, SNP, SSR, Molecular identification

Introduction

The genus *Carex* L. contains at least 2,000 grass species belonging to the *Cyperaceae* family and are generally considered as sedges (Jiménez-Mejías *et al.* 2016; Martín-Bravo *et al.* 2019; Reznicek 1990). These grass species are mainly distributed in temperate, as well as cold regions, and contribute significantly in turf management, forage production, and ecological preservation (Martín-Bravo *et al.* 2019). However, only few studies have focused on genetic marker development for molecular breeding of *Carex* L. accessions. Previous studies were mainly limited to the physiological

investigation (Teng *et al.* 2019), geographical distribution (Jiménez-Mejías *et al.* 2016; Martín-Bravo *et al.* 2019), and stress-resistance evaluation (Li *et al.* 2018). Consequently, studies on the germplasm evaluation and molecular markers based marker-assisted breeding of this ecologically important genus lag far behind. Thus, *Carex* L. breeding urgently needs a theoretical basis at the molecular level and further exploration of its genetic resources.

Development of stable molecular markers based on genomic sequences are essential for the analyses of genetic divergence, quantitative trait loci (QTLs) mapping, and marker-assisted breeding (Vidak *et al.* 2021). Studies involving *Carex* L. have utilized polymorphisms of nuclear ribosomal DNA (nrDNA) internal transcribed spacers (ITS), the nrDNA external transcribed spacer (ETS), and the chloroplast DNA (cpDNA) maturase K (matK) as molecular markers in phylogenetic analyses (Hendrichs *et al.* 2004b; Hendrichs *et al.* 2004a; Jiménez-Mejías *et al.* 2016; Bruce *et al.* 2012; Martín-Bravo *et al.* 2019). Moreover, an inter-simple sequence repeats-polymerase chain reaction (ISSR-PCR) system is developed and optimized in *Carex* L. (Ning *et al.* 2014a; Ning *et al.* 2014b). However, the number of markers are relatively lower for establishing a genome-wide screening system and/or molecular breeding (Ning *et al.* 2014a; Ning *et al.* 2014b). Restriction site-associated DNA (RAD) sequencing is a useful strategy for genome sequence assembly and molecular markers development, especially for species with a shortage of genomic sequences (Wang *et al.* 2012). To date, RAD sequencing has been successfully used for various plant species, such as *Pinctada fucata* (Li and He 2014), *Pseudotaxus chienii*, *Trifolium pretense*, and *Vitis vinifera* (Wang *et al.* 2012). These studies highlight the power of RAD sequencing in genomic sequence production.

Carex L. is a perennial grass with wide distribution in China that occurs mainly beneath tree crowns, as it is highly shade tolerant (Xue *et al.* 2005; Shi 2007). As afforestation in China accelerates, *Carex* L. is expected to be planted more widely (Ma *et al.* 2001). However, to date, the genetic resources of *Carex* L. have not been properly exploited, hampering the progress of *Carex* L. breeding. In this study, we aimed to establish a molecular identification system based on genome-wide SSR markers for *Carex* L. We sequenced four widely used *Carex* L. accessions using a RAD sequencing strategy. Utilizing a set of 17 selected primers, we designed and evaluated SSRs by amplifying 26 *Carex* L. accessions mainly distributed in North China and having greater potential ornamental applications. Our results provide a novel molecular identification platform for genetic diversity analysis, molecular phylogenetic analysis, germplasm selection, and finally the molecular breeding of *Carex* L. accessions.

Material and Methods

Plant materials

Twenty-six *Carex* L. accessions were mainly distributed in North China, which were collected by the Beijing Institute of Landscape Architecture and used to evaluate the SSR markers (Table S1). Of these, four promising accessions (each with three biological replications)—Laoyv-2 (C11), Qinglv-2 (C12), Pizhen-2 (C13), and Jiao-2 (C15)—which were the most widely used in reproduction, market application, landscaping, and environmental engineering in North China (especially in Beijing), were used as plant materials for RAD sequencing (Figure 1). The SSR markers designed after RAD sequencing were evaluated on 26 *Carex* L. accessions for the development of molecular identification system.

RAD sequencing

A restriction site-associated DNA sequencing strategy was used for the genome sequencing. The RAD tags were obtained by digesting the total 1 µg genomic DNAs of the *Carex* L. accessions using the restriction enzyme *EcoR* I for 30 minutes at 37°C. The digested DNA fragments were purified and screened to ensure that fragments had a length of 300–500 bp, and then ligated with Illumina compatible dual indexed-adaptors (NEBNext Multiplex adaptors, Japan) according to the manufacturer instructions. The library was sequenced using an Illumina HiSeq4000 platform (BGI, Shenzhen, China) with Pair-End 150 bp mode. Three biological replicates were used for each accession in RAD sequencing.

RAD data analysis

Fastp software was used to remove low-quality raw reads (contain adapter-base, or valid read length < 18 bp, or reads average quality value < 20) (Chen *et al.* 2018). Finally, a total of 16.31 Gb clean data were kept for further analysis.

SNP sites were found mainly as following procedures: firstly, stacks command each sample clean reads were conservatively *de novo* assembled and clustered to generate putative loci by “ustacks” command in Stack software (version 2.5.4) (Rochette and Catchen 2017). Then, each locus was examined and filtered to generate cluster locus

by “cstacks” command (with the number of mismatches allowed between any two alleles of the population, N=3). “cstacks” command was used to match each population against the locus, to get variant sites for each individual.

The SSR sites in the locus were predicted by MISA software (with default parameters) (Beier *et al.* 2017). The target locus was evaluated and primers were designed using PRIMER3 software (primer length 18–28 nucleotides, PCR product size 200–300 bp) (Kõressaar *et al.* 2018). The sequences of each original primer set were listed in Table S2.

DNA preparation and PCR detection

Genomic DNAs of all of the plant materials were extracted from young leaves of *Carex L.* seedlings according to a modified cetyltrimethylammonium bromide (CTAB) method (Murray and Thompson 1980). The PCR reactions were performed in a 20 µl system comprising 0.3 µl (20 µM) of each primer, 0.4 µl (25 mM) of dNTPs, 10 µl 2X GC Buffer II, 0.2 µl LA Taq (Takara, Japan), 1.0 µl (50 ng/µl) of template DNA, and 4.8 µl ddH₂O. The PCR program consisted of an initial denaturation of 5 min at 94°C; 35 cycles of 30 s at 94°C, 30 s at 54°C, and 2 min at 72°C; and a final extension of 10 min at 72°C. The PCR products were separated by electrophoresis in 1.5% agarose gels and 8% polyacrylamide gels using ethidium bromide (Tiangen, China). The gel images were obtained using a UV spectrometer (BioRad, USA).

Data analysis

Quantity one 1-D software (version29.0, Bio-Rad) was used to illustrate the schematic pictures of polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis results. According to the size of SSR amplifications, products with same size were labeled as 1, and otherwise as 0. The genetic patterns of SSR markers for all accessions were compiled in a data matrix and further analyzed using NTSYS software to calculate the similarity coefficient (Dice coefficient). UPGMA clustering analysis was performed to calculate the genetic coefficients. Popgene32 software was used to analyze the genetic diversity of the tested plant materials.

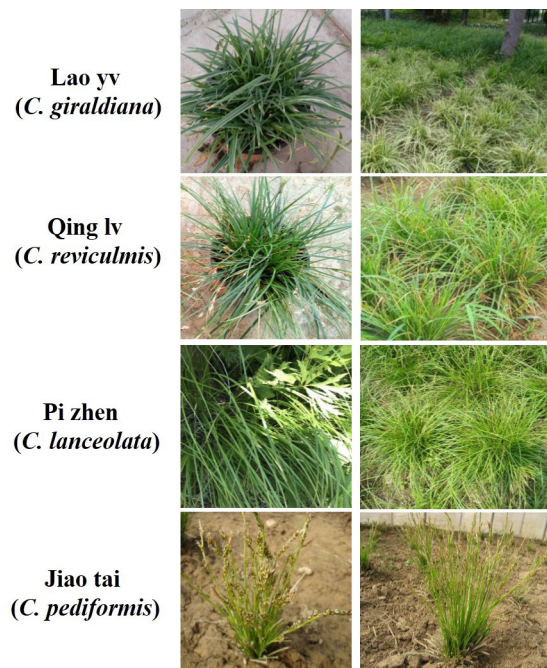


FIGURE 1. The *Carex L.* accessions used for DNA sequencing in this research.

Results

Sequence analysis of Carex L. by RAD sequencing

Through restriction site-associated DNA sequencing (RAD-seq), a total of 16.31 Gb of sequence data was obtained (SRA accession number: PRJNA656443), with an average of 1.34 Gb per sample. The proportion of base quality Q30 reached 92.62%. The average number of clean reads across the 12 samples was 4,388,585 (Table 1).

TABLE 1. RAD sequencing statistics.

| Sample ID | Clean Reads | Clean Base (bp) | GC (%) | Q30(%) | TagNumber | Accession Number in NCBI |
|-----------|-------------|-----------------|--------|--------|-----------|--------------------------|
| Jiaotai-1 | 4,399,020 | 1,308,286,295 | 43.94 | 93.49 | 308,059 | SAMN15785106 |
| Jiaotai-2 | 4,041,271 | 1,201,911,090 | 43.95 | 93.43 | 300,628 | SAMN15785107 |
| Jiaotai-3 | 4,180,933 | 1,239,084,143 | 43.97 | 93.46 | 305,670 | SAMN15785108 |
| Laoyv-1 | 4,533,212 | 1,338,944,443 | 36.54 | 92.75 | 182,994 | SAMN15785109 |
| Laoyv-2 | 4,161,007 | 1,229,088,285 | 36.42 | 92.78 | 174,267 | SAMN15785110 |
| Laoyv-3 | 4,735,957 | 1,849,387,980 | 35.5 | 90.83 | 209,505 | SAMN15785111 |
| Pizhen-1 | 3,978,999 | 1,179,160,585 | 36.55 | 92.89 | 300,901 | SAMN15785112 |
| Pizhen-2 | 4,232,541 | 1,245,735,165 | 36.87 | 92.87 | 314,835 | SAMN15785113 |
| Pizhen-3 | 4,795,877 | 1,411,540,613 | 36.64 | 92.64 | 324,683 | SAMN15785114 |
| Qinglv-1 | 4,376,454 | 1,292,480,174 | 37.50 | 92.81 | 276,261 | SAMN15785115 |
| Qinglv-2 | 4,495,448 | 1,327,856,714 | 37.46 | 92.92 | 216,780 | SAMN15785116 |
| Qinglv-3 | 4,732,310 | 1,407,311,143 | 37.27 | 92.87 | 222,893 | SAMN15785117 |

SNP statistics

Upon further analysis of polymorphic tags, high-quality SNP loci were obtained. For each *Carex L.* accession, the number of SNPs were comparable among three biological replications. Among four accessions, Jiaotai-2 (average 2,756.33±165.28), Pizhen-2 (average 2,806.00±171.58), and Qinglv-2 (average 2,637.33±463.80) had comparable numbers of SNPs; however, Laoyv-2 had considerably fewer SNPs (760.00±78.54) (Table 2). Interestingly, we found that the *Carex L.* genome contains a large heterozygous chromosome region based on the SNP analyses. In Jiaotai-2, the heterozygous SNPs accounted for 97% of the total SNPs, whereas in Pizhen-2 and Qinglv-2, the percentage of heterozygous SNPs were 75% and 60%, respectively. Similarly, Laoyv-2 had the lowest rate of heterozygous SNPs (33.15%) (Table 2).

Establishment of an SSR identification system for *Carex L.*

To establish the molecular identification system, we first designed SSR markers based on the clusters present in at least five sequencing samples (Figure 1). Then, we selected 400 pairs of SSR markers to detect whether they could produce the expected amplified fragments from *Carex L.* accessions (Table S3). Three accessions, Laoyv-1 (C1), Cyan-1 (C2), and Jiaotai-1 (C4), were randomly selected as small sample of the 26 accessions to screen the SSR markers (Figure S1). The results showed that out of the 400 SSR markers, 18 pairs produced clear bands with the expected size and these were further verified by DNA sequencing (Figure S1).

Then, we detected the polymorphism of 26 *Carex L.* accessions using the 18 SSR markers by polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (Supplementary file 1). Several bands were amplified by individual primers of individual samples, and some of the primers could not amplify the products. Then, based on the polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis, the allele patterns were transformed into schematic pictures (Supplementary file 2). Further, a 0-1 data matrix was obtained by reading the bands of each pair of primers (Table S3). According to the "0" and "1" matrix data, the polymorphisms of SSR markers were analyzed by Popgene32 software. Allelic loci analyses indicated that there were 193 alleles among 26 accessions based on 18 SSR markers, and the average number of alleles was 10.72. Marker P40 was eliminated due to low amplification specificity. Therefore, a total of 173 alleles (NA) were obtained by 17 pairs of primers, with an average of 10.18 for each pair of primers (Table 3). The numbers of amplified alleles were quite different among different primers, with the highest value being 16 (P35) and the lowest being 5 (P261). Furthermore, P35 possessed the highest PIC (0.9211) and distinguished 25 *Carex L.* accessions, except of C13 and C14 (Table S4). Therefore, the 17 polymorphic SSR primer pairs were considered as a molecular identification system for the *Carex L.* accessions, and P35 was the most efficient primer pair because it possessed highest polymorphism information content (Table 4).

TABLE 2. The statistical analysis of SNP among the four *Carex L.* accessions.

| ID Number | SNP Number | Transition Number | Transversion Number | Ti/Tv | Heterozygosity SNP Number | Homozygosity SNP Number | Heterozygosity SNP ratio | Homozygosity SNP ratio |
|-----------|----------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Jiaotai-1 | 2525.00 | 1369.00 | 1156.00 | 1.18 | 2440.00 | 85.00 | 0.96 | 0.03 |
| Jiaotai-2 | 2843.00 | 1570.00 | 1273.00 | 1.23 | 2749.00 | 94.00 | 0.97 | 0.03 |
| Jiaotai-3 | 2901.00 | 1592.00 | 1309.00 | 1.22 | 2797.00 | 104.00 | 0.96 | 0.04 |
| Average | 2756.33±165.28 | 1510.33±100.34 | 1246±65.31 | 1.21±0.02 | 2662.00±158.20 | 94.33±7.76 | 0.97±0.00 | 0.03±0.00 |
| Laoyv-1 | 701.00 | 435.00 | 266.00 | 1.64 | 248.00 | 453.00 | 0.35 | 0.65 |
| Laoyv-2 | 708.00 | 435.00 | 273.00 | 1.59 | 244.00 | 464.00 | 0.34 | 0.66 |
| Laoyv-3 | 871.00 | 519.00 | 352.00 | 1.47 | 258.00 | 613.00 | 0.30 | 0.70 |
| Average | 760.00±78.54 | 463±39.6 | 297.00±39.00 | 1.57±0.07 | 250.00±5.89 | 510.00±72.97 | 0.33±0.03 | 0.67±0.03 |
| Pizhen-1 | 2622.00 | 1563.00 | 1059.00 | 1.48 | 2015.00 | 607.00 | 0.77 | 0.23 |
| Pizhen-2 | 2761.00 | 1662.00 | 1099.00 | 1.51 | 2060.00 | 701.00 | 0.75 | 0.25 |
| Pizhen-3 | 3035.00 | 1781.00 | 1254.00 | 1.42 | 2203.00 | 832.00 | 0.73 | 0.27 |
| Average | 2806.00±171.58 | 1668.67±89.12 | 1137.33±84.1 | 1.47±0.04 | 2092.67±80.15 | 713.33±92.27 | 0.75±0.02 | 0.25±0.02 |
| Qinglv-1 | 3130.00 | 1829.00 | 1301.00 | 1.41 | 2082.00 | 1048.00 | 0.67 | 0.33 |
| Qinglv-2 | 2016.00 | 1219.00 | 797.00 | 1.53 | 1012.00 | 1004.00 | 0.50 | 0.49 |
| Qinglv-3 | 2766.00 | 1634.00 | 1132.00 | 1.44 | 1743.00 | 1023.00 | 0.63 | 0.37 |
| Average | 2637.33±463.8 | 1560.67±254.37 | 1076.67±209.44 | 1.46±0.05 | 1612.33±446.49 | 1025.00±18.02 | 0.60±0.07 | 0.40±0.07 |

TABLE 3. SSR primer sets developed in this study

| Code | SSR type | Forward primer (up, 5'-3') Reverse primer (down, 5'-3') | Annealing Temperature | Product size (bp) |
|------|----------|--|-----------------------|-------------------|
| P35 | (AG)9 | TCAGATTCTAATTGATTCATTGCTTCA TCGTCTGAAGAGAACAAGGTACC | 56 | 119 |
| P55 | (TCT)9 | ACCACTTCAAATCTCTCCTCCAC TGGTACCAACTAAGCTCAACCA | 54 | 82 |
| P73 | (GA)9 | CAGACCCGAGGTGAAAGAGG ACTCCGACAACGTTTACGGT | 55 | 89 |
| P98 | (TA)9 | CAGCGCATAATATATATATTGTCCTGT TCTCAAACAAAATGATGATGGTGA | 56 | 121 |
| P100 | (CT)9 | ACCAATCAGATCCATGATCTCCA TCCCATTTTTGTTGTTTTCTTCTTTT | 55 | 107 |
| P116 | (AG)9 | AGGCGAAAAGAAAACCCCAA GGGTTTTGAGAGCTCAGAGAGA | 53 | 93 |
| P119 | (GA)9 | TCACGGAAGGAAGGATTTTTATTTT GGATTGCTTGATTAACAGAGCCA | 54 | 118 |
| P123 | (TA)9 | TGTTCCACTTGCCAATTGTCC TCTCTTTTGGTCCAATTGATTATGAA | 55 | 106 |
| P128 | (CT)9 | ACATCTGCTGAAATCTCCATCCA GGAACCCTGTAATTAATCTTCATCCT | 56 | 102 |
| P154 | (TA)9 | GCATAACTCCCAACACGCT TCGATAGGCATGCATGGTGA | 56 | 98 |
| P261 | (AT)6 | TCTTGAAAAGTTGAAATGCTTGACA ACCCACATGAAGAAGGGAT | 55 | 123 |
| P280 | (TGTA)8 | TCACATTTTATTGCAAAATACTCGCA ACGAAACCAACAACCTCTTTTGT | 54 | 130 |
| P305 | (AT)6 | CCCGTTTTGCCCATCAGGTA CATCAAACAGAGGATATGAACATAGT | 55 | 124 |
| P318 | (TC)7 | TCGGTTGATACCAAGTGTCA TGCATCATCATCTCTCTCTCTGG | 55 | 123 |
| P337 | (TA)8 | TCTAGCTAGAATTATTGCGAAAGAAA ACCCTCCATCTTCAGTTGTGA | 56 | 119 |
| P346 | (AG)6 | TCCGTCAAACCCTAGTGCTC TCCGCCTCTTCGCTTTCAT | 54 | 119 |
| P356 | (GA)6 | TCAGTGAAGTACTAGAGATAACAAATGGA TGAACATCAAAGCAAGCCCT | 55 | 117 |

TABLE 4. Evaluation of the 17 pairs of SSR developed in this study

| Locus | Sample Size | na* | ne* | I* | PIC* |
|-------|-------------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| P35 | 52 | 16 | 13.52 | 2.674 | 0.9211 |
| P55 | 40 | 12 | 7.1429 | 2.192 | 0.8459 |
| P73 | 46 | 11 | 9.8879 | 2.3422 | 0.89 |
| P98 | 38 | 6 | 2.8314 | 1.3666 | 0.6161 |
| P100 | 44 | 8 | 6.4533 | 1.937 | 0.8256 |
| P116 | 50 | 12 | 8.1169 | 2.2443 | 0.8644 |
| P119 | 46 | 7 | 3.6357 | 1.5382 | 0.6887 |
| P123 | 50 | 10 | 5.9524 | 1.996 | 0.8134 |
| P128 | 44 | 7 | 2.8471 | 1.3833 | 0.6152 |
| P154 | 46 | 13 | 9.5315 | 2.3757 | 0.8858 |
| P261 | 48 | 5 | 2.0719 | 1.0409 | 0.4829 |
| P280 | 40 | 14 | 9.7561 | 2.4601 | 0.8892 |
| P305 | 48 | 12 | 7.7838 | 2.2473 | 0.8593 |
| P318 | 38 | 9 | 6.8113 | 2.0433 | 0.8367 |
| P337 | 52 | 11 | 7.9529 | 2.1907 | 0.8612 |
| P346 | 48 | 11 | 5.76 | 2.0044 | 0.8062 |
| P356 | 42 | 9 | 3.9552 | 1.7459 | 0.7257 |
| Mean | 45 | 10.1765 | 6.7065 | 1.9872 | 0.7898 |

Note: * na, Observed number of alleles; * ne, Effective number of alleles; * I, Shannon's Information index; * PIC, Polymorphic information content.

Kinship analysis of Carex L. using the SSR identification system

According to the genotypic matrix data, the genetic similarity coefficient and genetic distance matrix of 26 tested accessions were calculated (Table S4 and Table 5). The values of the genetic similarity coefficient (GSC) among the different *Carex L.* accessions ranged from 0.00 to 1.00, indicating prevalence of abundant genetic divergence among them (Table 5). Larger the GSC value, closer the relationship, and vice versa. Among all accessions, Pizhen-2 (C13) and Aicong-2 (C14) showed the largest GSC (1.0), whereas GSCs of other comparisons were relatively smaller, which indicated that Pizhen-2 and Aicong-2 possessed the closest relationship, whereas others had relatively distant relationships (Table 5). In addition, the GSC values of several other comparisons were zero indicating their most distant relationship and wider genetic diversities (Table 5). According to the GSC matrix, the SSR detection data of 26 tested accessions were analyzed by the UPGMA method to obtain a tree cluster diagram. The results revealed that 26 samples were roughly divided into three groups with an average genetic similarity coefficient of 0.1796 (Figure 2). Of the four widely used accessions, Laoyv-2 (C11) was in the group I, Qinglv-2 (C12) and Jiao-2 (C15) were in group II, Pizhen-2 (C13) in group III, indicating that each group of *Carex L.* accessions was fully utilized in garden landscapes.

Discussion

Carex L. has a broad prospect in the application of environmental greening and beautification (Zhang *et al.* 2010; Liang *et al.* 2012). Therefore, it is important to study the *Carex L.* classification and the relationship between different populations and environments, as well as to restore the fragility of the ecological environment of our country (Ma *et al.* 2001). It was essential to utilize nucleotide polymorphisms to study the *Carex L.* classification and determine the genetic relationships and evolution of *Carex L.* accessions.

Is the significantly high percentage of the heterozygous genome related to abiotic resistance?

The vitality of *Carex L.* is tenacious; many species in this genus are resistant to shade, barren land, and cold environments (Shi 2007). In this study, based on SNP analysis, we found that Jiao-2 had the highest heterozygosity (96.58%), followed by Pizhen-2 (74.68%), Qinglv-2 (59.91%), and Laoyv-2 (33.15%). The dramatic differences in

the heterozygous SNP percentages were possibly related to different degrees of asexual propagation among different *Carex L.* accessions. In addition, it is speculated that *Carex L.* accessions with high heterozygosity may have high heterosis, which may also be related to the wider adaptability of this genus to the environment and poor tolerance and resistance to diseases and insects. The heterozygous genome of *Carex L.* can be maintained by asexual propagation. *Carex L.* Jiaotai is the most primitive, with a low garden utilization rate, so its heterozygosity is the highest. In comparison, Laoyv is widely-used and gradually purified artificially; consequently, its genome is gradually becoming homozygous. The high heterozygosity of *Carex L.* is beneficial for protection of the diversity in genetic resources and have great significance for development of *Carex L.* varieties suitable for different ecological regions.

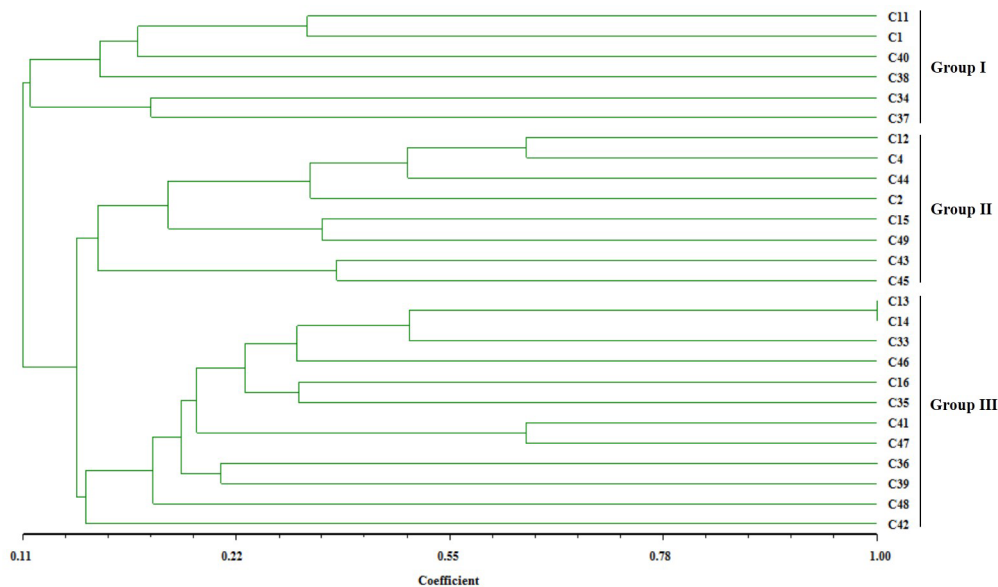


FIGURE 2. Cluster analysis of the twenty-six *Carex L.* accessions.

Establishment of the SSR identification for in Carex L.

There are several kinds of excellent lawn ground cover plants with early green return, good color, long growth duration, and good aesthetic beautification effects. The inherent reproductive strategies, strong vegetative reproduction ability, special physiological integration, and strong vitality enables *Carex L.* to grow in extremely fragile ecological environments, such as alpine grasslands, alpine ice margins, and many wetland systems (Yang *et al.* 2000). Therefore, it plays an extremely important role in maintaining the fragile ecological environment. However, there are few studies on the establishment of a *Carex L.* germplasm resource bank, gene bank, and the evaluation and classification of *Carex L.* species by molecular means. In this study, four representative *Carex L.* accessions were sequenced and analyzed for the first time by RAD sequencing, and a large number of genome sequences were obtained. Based on the genome sequences, a core SSR identification system was developed and evaluated to classify *Carex L.* accessions. SSRs are one of the important genetic markers for the QTL mapping, assessment of genetic diversity and population structure, hybridity testing, and marker-assisted plant breeding (Vidak *et al.* 2021). In wheat, the genome-wide SSR markers were utilized to construct genetic linkage maps (Somers *et al.* 2004; Han *et al.* 2015), identify the exotic introgressed fragments (Gu *et al.* 2015) and QTL mapping (Cui *et al.* 2011). Meanwhile, SSRs were also used in other crop species such as *Brassica*, rice and barley (Mohammadi *et al.* 2020; Daware *et al.* 2016; Lowe *et al.* 2004) as well as in cash crop species such as grape (Adam-Blondon *et al.* 2004), coconut (Caro *et al.* 2022), and *Lilium* species (Biswas *et al.* 2020). Here, this research bridge gaps in molecular identification system of *Carex L.* and lays a scientific foundation for plant researches for innovative molecular resources based improvement of *Carex L.* accessions. As more molecular markers would be available in near future, the genetic relationships would be established among diverse *Carex L.* accessions and their relative traits including shade-tolerance, green-returning, leaf color, and growth duration, which could accelerate efforts for molecular breeding based improvements of *Carex L.*

TABLE 5. Similarity coefficient matrix of 26 samples based on SSR Markers.

| | C11 | C12 | C13 | C14 | C15 | C16 | C33 | C34 | C35 | C36 | C37 | C38 | C39 | C40 | C41 | C42 | C43 | C44 | C45 | C46 | C47 | C48 | C49 | C1 | C2 | C4 |
|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| C11 | **** | 0.09 | 0.12 | 0.12 | 0.15 | 0.29 | 0.08 | 0.22 | 0.12 | 0.17 | 0.03 | 0.27 | 0.23 | 0.19 | 0.18 | 0.02 | 0.02 | 0.09 | 0.06 | 0.14 | 0.19 | 0.18 | 0.06 | 0.40 | 0.13 | 0.04 |
| C12 | 2.36 | **** | 0.14 | 0.14 | 0.22 | 0.11 | 0.15 | 0.09 | 0.13 | 0.04 | 0.03 | 0.02 | 0.15 | 0.08 | 0.24 | 0.13 | 0.20 | 0.40 | 0.15 | 0.27 | 0.37 | 0.07 | 0.29 | 0.10 | 0.27 | 0.63 |
| C13 | 2.12 | 1.94 | **** | 1.00 | 0.19 | 0.32 | 0.51 | 0.16 | 0.38 | 0.29 | 0.03 | 0.11 | 0.33 | 0.09 | 0.32 | 0.27 | 0.09 | 0.12 | 0.09 | 0.43 | 0.29 | 0.18 | 0.38 | 0.19 | 0.19 | 0.20 |
| C14 | 2.12 | 1.94 | 0.00 | **** | 0.19 | 0.32 | 0.51 | 0.16 | 0.38 | 0.29 | 0.03 | 0.11 | 0.33 | 0.09 | 0.32 | 0.27 | 0.09 | 0.12 | 0.09 | 0.43 | 0.29 | 0.18 | 0.38 | 0.19 | 0.19 | 0.20 |
| C15 | 1.87 | 1.53 | 1.67 | 1.67 | **** | 0.00 | 0.06 | 0.10 | 0.06 | 0.08 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.02 | 0.14 | 0.06 | 0.08 | 0.06 | 0.21 | 0.06 | 0.17 | 0.16 | 0.04 | 0.42 | 0.14 | 0.28 | 0.19 |
| C16 | 1.22 | 2.24 | 1.14 | 1.14 | 0.00 | **** | 0.33 | 0.21 | 0.40 | 0.24 | 0.12 | 0.19 | 0.32 | 0.09 | 0.31 | 0.17 | 0.11 | 0.21 | 0.12 | 0.27 | 0.17 | 0.27 | 0.13 | 0.24 | 0.13 | 0.23 |
| C33 | 2.50 | 1.92 | 0.67 | 0.67 | 2.75 | 1.12 | **** | 0.16 | 0.41 | 0.23 | 0.09 | 0.14 | 0.23 | 0.03 | 0.22 | 0.25 | 0.20 | 0.16 | 0.20 | 0.31 | 0.21 | 0.18 | 0.28 | 0.19 | 0.15 | 0.18 |
| C34 | 1.50 | 2.36 | 1.83 | 1.83 | 2.34 | 1.56 | 1.81 | **** | 0.27 | 0.23 | 0.24 | 0.08 | 0.17 | 0.14 | 0.16 | 0.20 | 0.16 | 0.17 | 0.21 | 0.24 | 0.21 | 0.18 | 0.17 | 0.23 | 0.09 | 0.08 |
| C35 | 2.09 | 2.08 | 0.97 | 0.97 | 2.75 | 0.93 | 0.89 | 1.32 | **** | 0.34 | 0.18 | 0.09 | 0.25 | 0.00 | 0.37 | 0.22 | 0.17 | 0.23 | 0.20 | 0.31 | 0.28 | 0.28 | 0.21 | 0.17 | 0.15 | 0.18 |
| C36 | 1.75 | 3.24 | 1.23 | 1.23 | 2.53 | 1.43 | 1.45 | 1.47 | 1.08 | **** | 0.00 | 0.19 | 0.31 | 0.12 | 0.18 | 0.13 | 0.10 | 0.13 | 0.09 | 0.31 | 0.24 | 0.28 | 0.21 | 0.10 | 0.21 | 0.10 |
| C37 | 3.62 | 3.60 | 3.54 | 3.54 | 0.00 | 2.11 | 2.42 | 1.43 | 1.73 | 0.00 | **** | 0.12 | 0.05 | 0.04 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.03 | 0.08 | 0.12 | 0.06 | 0.00 | 0.05 | 0.00 | 0.06 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| C38 | 1.32 | 3.87 | 2.20 | 2.20 | 0.00 | 1.68 | 1.99 | 2.50 | 2.40 | 1.65 | 2.13 | **** | 0.10 | 0.12 | 0.11 | 0.11 | 0.00 | 0.02 | 0.00 | 0.09 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.04 | 0.17 | 0.10 | 0.02 |
| C39 | 1.49 | 1.87 | 1.12 | 1.12 | 3.93 | 1.14 | 1.47 | 1.77 | 1.38 | 1.16 | 2.91 | 2.26 | **** | 0.08 | 0.30 | 0.20 | 0.26 | 0.11 | 0.21 | 0.29 | 0.18 | 0.20 | 0.12 | 0.10 | 0.07 | 0.14 |
| C40 | 1.64 | 2.47 | 2.40 | 2.40 | 1.94 | 2.36 | 3.48 | 1.97 | 0.00 | 2.16 | 3.22 | 2.09 | 2.47 | **** | 0.00 | 0.04 | 0.06 | 0.03 | 0.12 | 0.12 | 0.09 | 0.11 | 0.09 | 0.26 | 0.03 | 0.03 |
| C41 | 1.73 | 1.43 | 1.14 | 1.14 | 2.79 | 1.17 | 1.53 | 1.85 | 0.99 | 1.69 | 0.00 | 2.22 | 1.20 | 0.00 | **** | 0.18 | 0.15 | 0.26 | 0.17 | 0.19 | 0.63 | 0.25 | 0.14 | 0.18 | 0.07 | 0.23 |
| C42 | 3.70 | 2.07 | 1.31 | 1.31 | 2.56 | 1.78 | 1.40 | 1.62 | 1.51 | 2.05 | 0.00 | 2.21 | 1.60 | 3.29 | 1.69 | **** | 0.11 | 0.02 | 0.06 | 0.11 | 0.03 | 0.07 | 0.15 | 0.05 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| C43 | 3.93 | 1.61 | 2.46 | 2.46 | 2.79 | 2.20 | 1.63 | 1.85 | 1.75 | 2.28 | 3.56 | 0.00 | 1.35 | 2.83 | 1.93 | 2.25 | **** | 0.41 | 0.44 | 0.28 | 0.16 | 0.23 | 0.22 | 0.10 | 0.12 | 0.26 |
| C44 | 2.38 | 0.93 | 2.12 | 2.12 | 1.55 | 1.56 | 1.81 | 1.79 | 1.49 | 2.00 | 2.52 | 3.89 | 2.18 | 3.58 | 1.37 | 3.70 | 0.89 | **** | 0.21 | 0.22 | 0.33 | 0.15 | 0.25 | 0.13 | 0.35 | 0.62 |
| C45 | 2.79 | 1.92 | 2.42 | 2.42 | 2.75 | 2.15 | 1.59 | 1.58 | 1.59 | 2.46 | 2.13 | 0.00 | 1.57 | 2.09 | 1.75 | 2.90 | 0.83 | 1.58 | **** | 0.36 | 0.19 | 0.20 | 0.26 | 0.19 | 0.07 | 0.20 |
| C46 | 1.96 | 1.33 | 0.83 | 0.83 | 1.79 | 1.30 | 1.17 | 1.42 | 1.17 | 1.16 | 2.85 | 2.42 | 1.25 | 2.12 | 1.65 | 2.23 | 1.29 | 1.51 | 1.03 | **** | 0.48 | 0.33 | 0.35 | 0.15 | 0.24 | 0.33 |
| C47 | 1.65 | 0.99 | 1.23 | 1.23 | 1.83 | 1.75 | 1.55 | 1.55 | 1.28 | 1.43 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 1.73 | 2.45 | 0.46 | 3.66 | 1.81 | 1.12 | 1.65 | 0.73 | **** | 0.26 | 0.26 | 0.20 | 0.16 | 0.33 |
| C48 | 1.70 | 2.60 | 1.73 | 1.73 | 3.28 | 1.32 | 1.71 | 1.70 | 1.27 | 1.26 | 2.95 | 0.00 | 1.59 | 2.22 | 1.38 | 2.61 | 1.46 | 1.93 | 1.60 | 1.09 | 1.33 | **** | 0.17 | 0.23 | 0.07 | 0.14 |
| C49 | 2.85 | 1.22 | 0.98 | 0.98 | 0.87 | 2.03 | 1.28 | 1.75 | 1.55 | 2.12 | 0.00 | 3.16 | 2.14 | 2.45 | 1.95 | 1.86 | 1.49 | 1.39 | 1.36 | 1.04 | 1.35 | 1.77 | **** | 0.28 | 0.30 | 0.33 |
| C1 | 0.91 | 2.32 | 1.67 | 1.67 | 1.97 | 1.43 | 1.65 | 1.47 | 1.77 | 2.30 | 2.89 | 1.77 | 2.32 | 1.35 | 1.69 | 2.96 | 2.28 | 2.00 | 1.65 | 1.92 | 1.61 | 1.48 | 1.27 | **** | 0.14 | 0.06 |
| C2 | 2.02 | 1.31 | 1.65 | 1.65 | 1.29 | 2.08 | 1.92 | 2.43 | 1.92 | 1.58 | 0.00 | 2.32 | 2.70 | 3.41 | 2.66 | 0.00 | 2.15 | 1.04 | 2.61 | 1.43 | 1.83 | 2.73 | 1.21 | 1.98 | **** | 0.60 |
| C4 | 3.22 | 0.46 | 1.63 | 1.63 | 1.67 | 1.48 | 1.73 | 2.52 | 1.73 | 2.26 | 0.00 | 3.81 | 1.94 | 3.50 | 1.45 | 0.00 | 1.37 | 0.47 | 1.61 | 1.12 | 1.10 | 1.98 | 1.10 | 2.77 | 0.51 | **** |

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