Growth Control and Cell Wall Signaling in Plants

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Abstract

Plant cell walls have the remarkable property of combining extreme tensile strength with extensibility. The maintenance of such an exoskeleton creates nontrivial challenges for the plant cell: How can it control cell wall assembly and remodeling during growth while maintaining mechanical integrity? How can it deal with cell wall damage inflicted by herbivores, pathogens, or abiotic stresses? These processes likely require mechanisms to keep the cell informed about the status of the cell wall. In yeast, a cell wall integrity (CWI) signaling pathway has been described in great detail; in plants, the existence of CWI signaling has been demonstrated, but little is known about the signaling pathways involved. In this review, we first describe cell wall–related processes that may require or can be targets of CWI signaling and then discuss our current understanding of CWI signaling pathways and future prospects in this emerging field of plant biology.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most striking features of plant architecture is the use of a hydrostatic skeleton to generate the large surfaces required for efficient photosynthesis at low metabolic cost. To this end, plant cells are large and pressurized owing to two essential attributes: a large central vacuole, allowing the accumulation of water and solutes, and a strong cell wall. The wall is made primarily of carbohydrates (an abundant building material for a photosynthetic organism) with only a small amount of protein.

Cell walls are highly heterogeneous and complex structures, which in growing cells have the remarkable property of combining extreme tensile strength with extensibility. Once the final cell size is reached, a secondary cell wall is deposited in many cell types. The latter provides strength to cells and tissues even after the cell content has disappeared, and it can be made impermeable—for instance, in waterconducting vessels—through the incorporation of lignin. In some storage cells, the secondary walls contain easily degradable polysaccharides that are used as a carbon reserve (156). Finally, cell wall polymers also mediate cell–cell adhesion and, as discussed below, can have a role in signaling.

PLANT CELL WALL ARCHITECTURE: BELT AND BRACES

Plant cell walls show a large diversity in composition in different species, in different cell types, and even in different subcellular cell wall domains and over time during cellular differentiation (49, 69, 136, 149). Despite this diversity, all cell walls are composite materials with a similar building plan based on stiff and tensionally strong cellulose microfibrils, which are cross-linked to a matrix consisting of hemicellulose and/or pectin, structural proteins, and, in certain cell types, lignin (41). In what follows, we focus on the primary dicot walls (so-called type I walls) because most of our knowledge of cell wall integrity (CWI) signaling concerns this type of wall.

The growth of walled cells depends on the force balance between the extensibility of the wall and the mechanical force exerted by the turgor pressure of the cells. In principle, growth can be controlled by changing either parameter; in most cases, however, growth changes reflect changes in wall mechanics. As outlined below, the wall extensibility is an emergent property of a complex network of covalent and noncovalent interactions between cell wall polymers. To understand growth regulation, it is fundamental to understand how the strength of these interactions can be modulated and kept in check.

Excellent recent reviews have appeared on the composition and synthesis (22, 27, 156, 164), growth (41), and evolution (140) of cell wall polymers. We therefore do not recapitulate the structure and synthesis of every polysaccharide here, but instead focus on the architectural features that are relevant for CWI control.

The primary cell wall is a robust structure consisting of partially redundant but interdependent polysaccharide and protein networks. Cellulose microfibrils, with their extreme



Structure of some cell wall components. (*a*) Schematic representation of cellulose, xyloglucan, and the pectic rhamnogalacturonan I (RG-I), homogalacturonan (HG), and RG-II. Adapted from Reference 22 with permission. (*b*) Alternative models for pectin domain organization. A linear, contiguous arrangement of HG interspersed with RG-I is shown on the left, whereas on the right, HG is drawn as side chains linked to Rha residues of the RG-I scaffold. A combination of both models may also be possible. Adapted from Reference 152 with permission.

tensile strength, are the main load-bearing elements of the cell wall. In most cases, microfibrils are highly oriented, creating mechanical anisotropy in the wall, which in turn determines the growth direction of the cell. Matrix polysaccharides not only cross-link microfibrils but also prevent the self-association of nascent microfibrils into larger aggregates. In type I walls, xyloglucan (XG) is the main hemicellulose (Figure 1). XG not only strongly binds to the cellulose surface but also may be trapped inside the microfibril (133) either during synthesis or through a covalent link via a transglycosylation reaction (89). Depending on the chain length, XG chains can cross-link microfibrils and reinforce the cell wall (168, 188).

How XG chain length (and hence the degree of cross-linking) is regulated is discussed below. Interestingly, this is not the only loadbearing network. Indeed, Arabidopsis xxt1/xxt2 mutants, which entirely lack XG, have only subtle growth phenotypes and walls with mechanical properties comparable to those of the wild type (34). Pectin can also interact in vitro with cellulose through arabinan or galactan side chains of rhamnogalacturonan I (RG-I) (Figure 1) (203). Pectin molecules can be crosslinked to each other either through Ca²⁺ bonds between demethyl-esterified portions of homogalacturonan (HG) or through boratediester bonds between two RG-II molecules (147). Recent 3-D solid-state nuclear magnetic

In addition to the polysaccharide network, structural proteins also play an important role in cell wall architecture, and typically constitute approximately 10% of the wall of growing cells. Among the structural proteins, extensins are defined as extracellular, basic, hydroxyproline (Hyp)-rich structural glycoproteins with alternating hydrophilic (X-Hyp_n) and hydrophobic motifs that frequently carry tyrosine residues as potential cross-linking sites (105). Arabidopsis has 20 highly similar extensin genes (30). Mutant analysis shows an essential role for certain extensins in primary cell wall assembly. For instance, AtEXT3 is present in cell plates and mature walls, and loss-of-function mutants for the corresponding gene are embryo lethal with incomplete cell plates. The amphiphilic extensins can self-assemble into networks in vitro, as shown by atomic force microscopy (30). Interestingly, the positively charged extensins can create an interpenetrating network with negatively charged pectin, and thus constitute a scaffold for the assembly of the new cell plate. Ingenious in vitro studies (175) showed that extensin promotes the dehydration and compaction of the pectin and suggested that besides charge, the extensin conformation is also critical for this strong interaction. This conformation depends on proline hydroxylation and the presence of Olinked arabinosyl side chains on Hyp (179). Interestingly, pectin demethyl-esterification increases the negative charge density of pectin and thus can also promote extensin-pectin interaction and cell wall compaction (156).

CELL WALLS AND GROWTH CONTROL

Cell Wall Synthesis and Cell Expansion

The study of the growth regulation of various cell types suggests that turgor-driven cell expansion is the result of a delicate balance between wall relaxation and wall stiffening linked by a mechanosensing feedback loop (Figure 2d). As shown below, this can be observed clearly by analyzing the oscillatory growth of tip-growing root hairs and pollen tubes, but it is likely that a similar regulatory loop controls the growth of diffusely growing cells (122). In principle, one can distinguish the following events: (a) hydration of newly deposited cell wall material and wall relaxation (Figure 2*a*); (*b*) turgor-driven deformation of the cell wall; (c) mechanosensing, followed by the release of apoplastic reactive oxygen species (ROS), cross-linking, partial dehydration, and stiffening of the wall; and (d) the secretion of new wall material. In what follows, these events are discussed separately.

Wall hydration. Rapid auxin-induced growth acceleration [lag time of 8-10 min (39)] is mediated at least in part by the activation of the plasma membrane proton ATPase (P-ATPase), causing the hyperpolarization of the plasma membrane and the acidification of the apoplast (39). Interestingly, this in turn causes the rapid hydration and swelling of the cell wall as observed in Arabidopsis hypocotyls (26). A more pronounced swelling (up to 40%) was observed upon addition of the brassinosteroid hormone brassinolide (BL). BL binds the receptor kinase BRI, which in turn activates the P-ATPase, presumably through a direct BLpromoted protein-protein interaction and requiring the BRI kinase activity (Figure 2a) (26). The mechanism of the cell wall swelling is not well understood, but it requires both acidification and plasma membrane hyperpolarization. One actor in this process may be the wallloosening protein expansin, which has the ability to promote hydration of isolated walls with an acidic pH optimum (169, 195). The contribution of the plasma membrane hyperpolarization to the cell swelling in vivo is not clear, but it might influence the delivery of new matrix material to the cell wall.

The regulation of the hydration status of the wall also may involve other enzyme

activities. For instance, β -galactosidase activity encoded by the *MUM2* gene is required for normal hydration of seed mucilage in *Arabidopsis*. In the mutant *mum2*, normal amounts of mucilage are produced, which, however, fails to hydrate (111). Interestingly, the mutant mucilage has not only higher galactose content but also increased HG-methyl-esterification (184, 187). This suggests that the β -galactosidase activity is required for pectin methylesterase (PME, EC 3.1.1.11; see below) activity. The physicochemical basis of the effect of the removal of galactose residues and/or the PME activity on the hydration of the mucilage remains to be determined.

Wall extension. Increased hydration promotes the extensibility of the wall, as shown on isolated sunflower coleoptile walls (64). This is presumably the result of the increased spacing between the cellulose microfibrils in the hydrated wall, which should facilitate their rearrangement. For polylamellated walls, this rearrangement involves the rotation of the microfibrils (110), which was recently observed in living Arabidopsis root cells (1). Expansins are also thought to promote microfibril rearrangement through the rupturing of hydrogen bonds between cellulose and XGs (41). As discussed below, the control of XG length may also contribute to promoting wall rearrangement (168, 177).

Mechanosensing and wall cross-linking. Work on tip-growing root hairs and pollen tubes has shown that growth rate, cytosolic calcium levels, and cytosolic and apoplastic pH oscillate with the same period (Figure 2c) (120). The phase of the oscillations and the results of inhibitor studies suggest the involvement of a mechanosensing feedback loop (121): Wall relaxation and cell expansion are expected to stretch the plasma membrane and to open stretch-activated calcium channels. The resulting increase in cytosolic calcium slows down growth in at least two ways: First, it inhibits the P-ATPase and opens H⁺ channels, leading to the alkalinization of the apoplast, which in turn may lead to the inhibition of expansin

activity, the activation of PMEs, and pectin cross-linking (see below); second, it activates the plasma membrane NADPH-oxidase. This enzyme releases superoxide into the cell wall, which is rapidly converted into H₂O₂ spontaneously or catalyzed by apoplastic superoxide dismutases. H₂O₂ and peroxidases can cause the cross-linking of cell wall components, which may be extensins (105), feruloylated pectin (129), or monolignols (176), depending on the cell type and environment (Figure 2*c*). This leads to partial wall dehydration and slowing down of growth (Figure 2b) (137). Besides stretch-activated calcium channels, other mechanosensors may also play a role in growth control (see below).

Wall deposition. The accumulation of new wall material at the tip of growing pollen tubes also oscillates, and it peaks before the growth rate, indicating that cell wall deposition initiates a new growth cycle (117). The composition of the secreted material-which, besides polysaccharides, can include wall-modifying proteins, structural proteins, and phenolic compoundsdepends on the cellular and environmental context. Cellulose is synthesized by large cellulose synthase complexes (CSCs) that migrate in the plasma membrane, propelled by the polymerization of the glucan chains. This can be observed spectacularly in living cells by using green fluorescent protein (GFP)-labeled CSCs (131).

Cortical microtubules play a key role in the organization of the cellulose deposition. They target the insertion of the CSCs at specific positions in the plasma membrane (42, 76), guide their trajectories, may control the CSC velocity (36), and may determine the density of the CSCs in the plasma membrane (42). Paradoxically, in the absence of cortical microtubules for instance, upon treatment with the microtubule inhibitor oryzalin—the CSCs are still inserted into the plasma membrane and continue their trajectories (110). The difference is that insertion patterns are random and no reorientation of the trajectories is possible. The cortical microtubules therefore orchestrate the



plasticity of the cellulose deposition patterns required for the generation of complex cell shapes in higher plants.

In contrast to cellulose, matrix polysaccharides are synthesized in the Golgi apparatus and transported via vesicles to the cell surface. (For excellent recent reviews and detailed discussions of the synthesis of matrix polysaccharides, see 22, 27, 156, 157.) It should be noted here that XGs are delivered to the cell surface as precursor molecules of unknown size, which can be modified in the apoplast by glycoside hydrolases and incorporated into the polymer by XG endo-transglycosylases (XETs) (156). Given the large molecular weights of certain pectin molecules (145), it is conceivable that similar apoplastic assembly steps occur, but so far no pectin-transglycosylase activity has been demonstrated (27, 102). The high turgor pressure of plant cells (0.5–1.5 MPa) appresses the plasma membrane to the cell wall. This high pressure also forces newly secreted wall material through pores into the cell wall. For instance,

the cell wall of the green alga Chara has a pore size of approximately 4.6 nm. Interestingly, depending on the turgor pressure, molecules with a larger diameter can be forced through these pores, probably by partially unfolding or deforming the polymer (141, 143). The insertion of new wall material into pores (intussusception) of a stretched wall should lead to a larger plastic deformation of the inner wall layers as opposed to the outer layer. This is indeed suggested by the buckling of inner layers in plasmolyzed cells observed in etiolated sunflower hypocotyls (82). Finally, the secretion of wall material can be restricted to highly specific locations within the cell-for instance, during the formation of specific cellular outgrowths (70) or pathogen attack (83).

The four events of the regulatory loop discussed above can be controlled differently in different cellular and environmental contexts. This is strikingly illustrated in the dark-grown *Arabidopsis* hypocotyl, where cells show two distinct postmitotic growth phases: a slow growth

Figure 2

Cell walls and growth control. (a) Growth promotion through wall hydration. In vivo cell wall swelling (at least in part due to hydration) has been observed within minutes after brassinolide or auxin treatment of Arabidopsis root or hypocotyl cells. Brassinolideinduced wall swelling requires the activation of the receptor BRI1, which in turn associates with and activates the P-type proton ATPase (AHA1). The combined apoplastic acidification and plasma membrane hyperpolarization causes the cell wall swelling (26). Hydration increases the extensibility of the wall, presumably by enlarging the distance between cellulose microfibrils (64). (b) Growth inhibition through extensin cross-linking. The hydroxyproline-rich cell wall protein extensin (red bars) can form networks through intermolecular tyrosine cross-links. The amphiphilic extensin binds to pectin through electrostatic interactions, leading to the dehydration of the matrix. This may be part of the mechanism for the decrease in cell wall extensibility and growth deceleration (137, 175). (c) Negative control of growth through a mechanosensing feedback loop. The growth rate of pollen tubes or root hairs oscillates with the same period as cytosolic Ca²⁺ concentration, intracellular and apoplastic pH, and extracellular reactive oxygen species (ROS) levels (121, 167). The phase shift of the respective oscillations and the results of pharmacological experiments lead to the following model: Wall extension causes plasma membrane stretching and Ca^{2+} influx, presumably through a stretch-activated Ca^{2+} channel related to MCA1. The increased cytosolic Ca2+ concentration, in turn, slows down growth by negatively regulating AHA1 and enhancing H⁺ influx. The resulting wall alkalinization might inhibit the activity of expansins and activate wall-consolidating enzymes such as pectin methylesterase. In addition, increased cytosolic Ca²⁺ levels cause ROS production through the activation of NADPHoxidase. This leads to wall strengthening through cross-linking of, for instance, extensins. Panel adapted from Reference 167 with permission. (d) A model for a growth-controlling regulatory loop. This model summarizes evidence obtained from the different systems mentioned above. Growth acceleration is initiated by apoplastic acidification and plasma membrane hyperpolarization, causing the hydration and the increase in extensibility of the cell wall. Turgor-driven cell wall extension takes place, which in turn leads to the activation of the mechanosensing feedback loop, cell wall cross-linking, and dehydration. New cell wall material is deposited and inserted into the wall, and a new cycle is initiated. Plant growth regulators and environmental factors can impinge on different steps of this cycle. This is exemplified by Arabidopsis dark-grown hypocotyl development. Hypocotyl cells first show a phase of slow growth during which a thick, polylamellated wall is deposited. During this phase, wall hydration levels may be low and mechanosensing may be high. Transition to rapid growth may be initiated by increased wall hydration and loosening and reduced mechanosensing. After the growth acceleration, wall extension outpaces wall synthesis, resulting in the thin walls associated with elongated cells. Panel images adapted from References 65 and 146 with permission.

phase during which a thick multilamellated cell wall is deposited, followed by an abrupt growth acceleration (fivefold increase in strain rate), after which wall extension outpaces wall synthesis, leading to extensive thinning of the wall (Figure 2d) (49, 146). One can speculate that in slowly growing cells, the walls maintain a low extensibility through limited hydration and increased mechanosensing, whereas the growth acceleration may be initiated by the hydration of the multilamellated wall, the secretion of additional wall-loosening agents, and the lowering of the feedback control. Brassinosteroidand auxin-induced wall swelling was indeed observed in this organ (26), as was the upregulation of transcripts encoding wall-loosening proteins prior to and during the growth acceleration (136). Finally, a lowering of the feedback control was also suggested by the lack of growth inhibition by the cellulose inhibitor isoxaben once the growth had accelerated (136, 146). Abiotic stresses and/or pathogen attack impinge on this scheme by promoting ROS production, extensin cross-linking (64), and (mostly irreversible) growth inhibition.

Pectin and Growth Control

A prominent example of how chemical modification of a component of the cell wall can influence its extensibility is the in muro demethylesterification of HG by PMEs (CAZY CE8). It is generally accepted that the amount and distribution of methyl groups impact the pectin matrix's rheological properties, adhesive capacities, and resistance against degradation (190). However, the precise nature and properties of individual HG epitopes remain to be elucidated (38, 189). One well-characterized epitope, at least in vitro, exhibits Ca2+-mediated crosslinking of blocks (>9) of demethyl-esterified HG, forming so-called egg-box pectin with characteristic gelling properties (25). The capacity of PMEs to produce multiple distinct epitopes is potentially modulated and refined by small interacting proteins termed PME inhibitors, the pH of the apoplast, and the methylesterification status of the neighboring GalA

residues (28, 29, 33, 47, 91, 96). Furthermore, regulated secretion of PME and/or the presence of alternative trafficking routes for polysaccharides might influence the biogenesis of pectin methyl-esterification epitopes (43, 108, 150, 171, 191). In addition to its effect on the properties of the pectin matrix, PME activity is also a prerequisite for pectin turnover, because the HG-degrading activities of polygalacturonases and presumably pectate lyases (114) are dependent on certain patterns of methyl-esterification (68, 182, 183). Immunological and spectroscopic detection of highly methyl- and demethyl-esterified HG epitopes seem to suggest that the former is associated with extensible walls in growing parts of the cell, whereas the latter is associated with nonextensible walls (50, 90, 132, 136). A welldocumented example is on display in the pollen tube, where a highly methyl-esterified epitope is restricted to the growing tip region, whereas a less methyl-esterified epitope is confined to the shank. Notably, a sharp border zone is located at the position where wall stiffness (measured by microindentation) increases and where cell wall stress is predicted to peak by computational modeling (12, 66, 199). However, in more complex tissues, the correlation might be much less clear (135). Although there seems to be a general agreement that the amount of in muro demethyl-esterification correlates with the stiffness conferred on the wall by HG, little is known about the persistence and half-lives of the different epitopes that are observed in situ through immunolabeling. Therefore, a more rigid HG epitope could actually be a short-lived intermediate toward degradation and hence softening of the wall. This was illustrated by recent work on the Arabidopsis shoot apical meristem, in which the initiation of organ primordia depends on HG demethylesterification. Through the use of atomic force microscopy, a causal relationship could be established between HG demethyl-esterification and cell wall softening, not stiffening (134). A major challenge for future research will be the development of cell-biological tools for realtime measurements of the turnover of pectic

epitopes. The identification of pectin-binding domains (32, 46, 166, 181), which could be used as genetically encoded sensors, or the use of click chemistry for in vivo labeling of pectin (107) might help to overcome this bottleneck.

Judging from the presence or absence of different pectic polysaccharides in present-day plant taxa, HG is the evolutionarily most ancient pectin, whereas the more complex RG-I and RG-II seem to be later additions (116, 139, 165). HG can be readily detected in cell walls of charophycean green algae (CGAs), the group that presumably harbors the extinct

Figure 3

Evolution of pectic epitopes. The functional module regulating pectin methyl-esterification status is present in both charophycean green algae and higher plants, where its use has expanded. Panels show immunostaining of pectin with JIM5 (panels a, e, g, and i) and 2F4 (panel k), both labeling an epitope with a low degree of methyl-esterification, and immunostaining of pectin with JIM7 (panels b, f, *b*, and *j*), which labels an epitope with a high degree of methyl-esterification. (a,b) Pectin immunolabeling of the charophycean green alga Micrasterias denticulate with (a) JIM5 and (b) JIM7. Adapted from Reference 60. (c,d) Penium margaritaceum pulselabeled with JIM5 and JIM7 (arrowheads) (c) before and (d) after cell separation. Algae were first labeled with JIM5, then recultured and labeled with JIM7. Only sites of active pectin secretion are strongly labeled by JIM7. Adapted from Reference 56. (e,f) Pectin immunolabeling of tobacco pollen tubes with (e) JIM5 and (f) JIM7, which label the shank and growing tip, respectively (14). Thus, in pollen tubes, as in *Penium* (c and d), the JIM7 epitope is associated with the growing apex. Adapted from Reference 14. (g,b) Pectin immunolabeling of root cross sections of rice with (g) JIM5 and (b) JIM7. JIM5 labels only the cell corners, whereas JIM7 labels the walls more homogeneously. Adapted from Reference 194. (i,j) Pectin immunolabeling of dividing tobacco BY-2 cells with (i) JIM5 and (j)JIM7. JIM5 labels pectin in the forming cell plate, whereas JIM7 does not. Adapted from Reference 53. (k) Demethyl-esterification of pectin precedes primordia formation in Arabidopsis shoot apical meristems, as demonstrated by labeling with the 2F4 antibody. Abbreviations: M, meristem dome; I, incipient primordium; P, primordium. Adapted from Reference 135. All images used with permission.

predecessor of land plants (56, 57, 60, 141). Interestingly, immunolabeling of CGA cell walls indicated the presence of HG epitopes with different degrees of methyl-esterification, very similar to what is observed in higher plants (**Figure 3**). Specifically, an immunolabel for highly methyl-esterified (and thus presumably softer) pectin was enriched in actively growing parts of the algal cells, mimicking the distribution described above for pollen tubes (13, 56, 57, 60, 132). Therefore, wall consolidation by regulated pectin demethyl-esterification seems to be a relatively old mechanism. This



preexisting system of pectin demethylesterification has apparently been adopted by embryophytes for the control of development in the much more intricate context of a multicellular organism. For example, a profound impact of regulated HG methyl-esterification has been demonstrated for cellular adhesion (59, 103, 124, 170, 186), fruit ripening (19,

maturation (68), and, as mentioned above, phyllotactic patterning in the meristem (134, 135). Taken together, the functional module controlling HG methyl-esterification status seems

138), hypocotyl development (50, 136), pollen

to have expanded from a relatively simple wall consolidation mechanism, as present in CGAs and pollen tubes, to an array of more complex functions in multicellular organisms. This is reflected, possibly, by the emerging interlacing of pectin with other cell wall polymers (see above) and the multitude of PME isoforms that differ in pI, pH optimum, salt dependence, and other traits. As a result, in higher plants, PME may promote at least the following processes: (a) wall stiffening by favoring the formation of egg boxes and electrostatic interactions with extensin (175), (b) wall loosening through promotion of wall hydration, (c) wall degradation through initiation of pectin turnover, and (d) wall signaling by favoring the generation of active oligogalacturonides (OGAs), small breakdown products of HG (discussed below).

Interestingly, the presence of HG with different methyl-esterification degrees coincides with the first appearance of the rosette-type CSCs in the CGAs (140, 165). Furthermore, evidence is accumulating for direct interaction between cellulose and pectin (54, 201-203) as well as for a role of pectin in cellulose deposition (196). Reconstruction of pectincellulose networks by bacterial cellulose synthesis into a preexisting pectin framework demonstrated not only a requirement for a certain degree of methyl-esterification but also pectin-induced alterations in the extensibility and stiffness of the microfibril network, which persisted even after the removal of the matrix polysaccharides from the network (35).

Consistent with these data, target analysis of cobtorin, a compound that disrupts microfibril alignment, identified HG as a key regulator of cellulose microfibril deposition (196).

Xyloglucan and Growth Control

XG strongly binds to the cellulose surface (79) and, depending on the length of the backbone and the nature of the side chains, can form cross-links between microfibrils (79, 188). These parameters are regulated by the interplay between sugar hydrolases and XETs in the apoplast. Recent findings suggest an unexpected role for phosphorylation in the regulation of enzyme activity in the cell wall. Phosphoproteomics on cell wall extracts from tobacco cell cultures showed that three cell wall enzymes are tyrosine-phosphorylated, two of which— α -xylosidase and β -glucosidase—are involved in XG and XG/cellulose metabolism, respectively (93). The cell wall-located purple acid phosphatase (PAP) dephosphorylates the two hydrolases in vitro and in vivo, which causes the loss of their activity. As expected, XG- and cello-oligosaccharides accumulated in a PAP-overexpression tobacco line (92, 93). Interestingly, PAP overexpression also promotes β -glucan (cellulose and callose) synthesis at the plasma membrane (92). The authors speculated that secretion of PAP indirectly stimulates β glucan synthesis through the inhibition of XG and cello-oligosaccharide turnover. More work is needed, however, to prove such a causal relationship. These findings raise new important questions: What is the mechanism for tyrosine phosphorylation of cell wall proteins? How is the secretion of PAP regulated? Do XG- and/or cello-oligosaccharides promote glucan synthesis, and what is the biological relevance for such a regulation? Another consequence of the accumulation of these oligosaccharides may be the promotion of cell elongation. Indeed, Takeda et al. (168) showed in pea stem segments that the incorporation by XET of short XG fragments into XG promoted cell elongation, presumably through the loosening of the cell wall.

CELL WALL SIGNALING IN PLANTS

As outlined above, regulation of the cell wall's physical properties is pivotal for plant growth control during development. Moreover, the wall is constantly subjected to various extrinsic chemical and biophysical cues and constitutes a primary target of plant pathogens. Thus, the existence of a cell wall signaling pathway that reports on the status of the wall has long been inferred. Recently, evidence has begun to mount in support of this hypothesis. For example, cell wall biosynthesis and cell wall remodeling genes are differentially regulated in various cell wall-related mutants (reviewed in 158) and in response to such conditions as inhibition of cellulose synthesis (113), interference with arabinogalactan proteins (AGPs) (74), and exposure to pectin fragments (20, 123).

In addition, interference with CWI results in a variety of compensatory reactions, which have been studied extensively using genetic or pharmacological inhibition of cellulose synthesis. Under these conditions, a canonical set of responses seems to emerge-namely, ROS production, ectopic deposition of lignin (31, 48), altered pectin methyl-esterification status (21, 87, 113), elevated callose deposition (52), and an increase in jasmonic acid and ethylene production with an associated resistance to pathogens (61, 62). Further evidence for the existence of CWI signaling comes from the intriguing observation that stunted growth and reduced cell elongation associated with attenuation of cell wall biosynthesis are responses mediated by signaling components, rather than caused directly by a physically weakened cell wall (85, 173). Therefore, the reduced growth of many cell wall mutants is, at least to some extent, rather a secondary effect and can be considered part of the list of responses to cell wall damage outlined above.

Another context in which CWI signaling may play a role is the control of the cellulosematrix ratio. In light of the two different subcellular locations of the synthesis, it is surprising that the cellulose-matrix ratio is so reproducible

for a given tissue at a given developmental stage. What controls this homeostasis is not known. An obvious metabolic connection is constituted by the equilibration of nucleotide sugar precursors for the different polysaccharides. The substrate for cellulose synthesis, UDP-Glc, is converted into other nucleotide sugars that are precursors for XG, pectin, and other polysaccharides (157), and in principle, polysaccharide ratios may be controlled by regulating the nucleotide sugar interconversion enzyme activities. Controlling the cellulose-matrix ratio in this way would require the presence of a cytoplasmic UDP-Glc pool shared between the Golgi and the plasma membrane biosynthetic processes. It should be noted, however, that the free cytosolic UDP-Glc pool is very small compared with that of sucrose [for instance, 30-35 versus 1,000 nmol mg⁻¹ chlorophyll in spinach leaves (71)], probably too small to support high cellulose-synthesis rates. An alternative possibility is that abundant cytosolic sucrose is used by plasma membrane-located sucrose synthases that channel UDP-Glc directly into the cellulose synthase (see Reference 40 for evidence for a role of sucrose synthase in cellulose synthesis and Reference 6 for an opposing view). This suggests that another mechanism exists to coordinate matrix delivery with cellulose synthesis. In this context it is interesting to note that pectin may actually undergo continuous secretion and internalization in growing cells (5, 53), which might facilitate the control of the cellulose-pectin ratio.

Despite the overwhelming evidence for cell wall signaling, only relatively few components involved in the respective pathways have been identified (see below).

Wall-Derived Signaling Molecules

It is a long-standing observation that specific cellular responses can be elicited by certain wall fragments that are thus considered signaling molecules (2, 3). For example, OGAs—short breakdown products of HG with a chain length between 9 and 15 GalA residues—can cause changes in gene expression, stomatal closure,

ethylene production, cell wall reinforcement, and ROS production. The potential functions of OGAs in defense have drawn by far the most attention, because pectin is a prominent target for many microbial cell wall-degrading enzymes during pathogenic attack (77, 123, 128, 130, 147, 163). However, a role during normal plant development also seems likely (8, 18). The signaling function of OGAs is dependent on HG demethyl-esterification and hence PME activity, as only certain HG epitopes are prone to degradation (68, 182, 183) and a certain amount of demethyl-esterification is essential for OGA activity (130).

As discussed above, Ca²⁺-mediated HG cross-linking is associated in vitro with pectin gelation; however, egg-box formation is also potentially important for the biological activity of OGAs (25). The egg-box conformation is prone to perturbation by excess monovalent or divalent cations and the presence of polycations such as polyamines and chito-oligosaccharides, the latter of which are short deacetylated breakdown products of chitin (24, 25). Although speculative at this point, it is worth noting that these dynamic interactions, which are able to modulate plant responses (24), could be perceived by a cell wall surveillance system and in this way provide a sensing system for salt stress or pathogenic attack (P. Van Cutsem, personal communication).

In addition to a structural role, XG oligosaccharides may also have a role in signaling. XG nonasaccharides (XG9s) have been shown to inhibit auxin-stimulated elongation of pea stem segments at nanomolar concentrations (197). XG9 shows a bell-shaped dose-response curve owing to the XET-mediated growthstimulatory effect of XG9 at higher concentrations mentioned above. The specificity of the XG9 effect was shown by the total absence of activity of XG10 (XG9 + galactose) and XG8 (XG9 – fucose), the latter showing the requirement of fucosylation for activity. The highly specific activity suggested the existence of an XG9 receptor that may play a role in the feedback regulation of auxin-induced growth. However, the discovery of the Arabidopsis XG fucosyl

transferase mutant *mur2*, which produces XG lacking fucose and which does not show an observable phenotype (178), suggested that XG signaling does not play a significant role in vivo. Alternatively, XG signaling capacity may be species dependent (pea versus *Arabidopsis*), or other fucosyltransferase family members [there are 10 family members in *Arabidopsis* (154)] may allow the production of small amounts of fucosylated XG at critical developmental stages.

Signal Perception at the Cell Surface

Plasma membrane-localized kinase proteins with a distinguished extracellular domain appear to be primary candidates for CWI receptors. Among the over 600 receptor-like kinases (RLKs) in Arabidopsis (161), several proteins have been implicated in cell wall-related signaling. However, it is unclear to what extent structural cell wall components are actual ligands of these proteins (85, 193). For example, an interesting group of potential cell wall receptors are L-type lectin RLKs (17), of which one member has been shown to bind RGD (arginine-glycine-aspartic acid) tripeptides and has been implicated in plasma membrane-cell wall attachment (72). Although lectin domains are known for carbohydrate binding (9), no carbohydrate-binding partner for the lectinlike extracellular domain has been proposed.

In contrast, several RLKs have been implicated in cell wall binding, but no clear connection to CWI signaling has been established. Interestingly, one member of the proline-rich extensin-like receptor kinase (PERK) family involved in abscisic acid signaling has been found to be pectin associated (4). Other RLKs bind carbohydrates, such as those of the PR5-like receptor kinase/thaumatin family and the LysM family, but seem to have a specific role in defense signaling (94, 112, 118, 144, 160, 172, 185). Together, these findings demonstrate at the very least the multitude of carbohydratebinding extracellular domains among RLKs.

Besides RLKs, stretch-activated ion channels are promising candidates for CWI sensors, because any weakening of the cell wall is expected to influence membrane properties. For example, MCA1 partially complements the yeast mid1 mutants and hence encodes a putative calcium channel likely involved in mechanoperception (Figures 2c and 4) (125). In addition, plant homologs of the bacterial mechanosensitive channels of small conductance (MscS-like proteins) were shown to be required for mechanosensitive ion channel activity (80). Various other proteins (such as AGPs) may be implicated in cell wall signaling, linking the cell wall with the plasma membrane and potentially with the cytoskeleton (153, 162) and leucine-rich repeat (LRR) extensins, which could be cell wall cross-linked signaling molecules (7, 55). An intriguing recent discovery is the finding that AtFH1, a protein homologous to animal formin with an extracellular extensin-like domain, can interact with the cell wall and is localized in plasma membrane patches that align with actin microfilaments. Thus, AtFH1 could provide a direct link between the cell wall and the cytoskeleton, analogous to the integrin mechanosensors in mammalian cells (Figure 4) (115). In addition, a protein with sequence similarity to integrins has been recently identified and is involved in plasma membrane-cell wall adhesion (98).

Recent findings show that the interaction of plasma membrane proteins with the cell wall may be more common than previously thought. One interesting case is the auxin efflux carrier PIN1 (67). The polar localization of this protein within the cell is responsible for the establishment of auxin gradients that control patterning and growth. FRAP (fluorescence recovery after photobleaching) experiments on GFP-labeled versions of PIN1 reveal a surprisingly low lateral mobility in the plasma membrane. This is most likely the result of an interaction with the cell wall, because cellulosedeficient mutants or very low concentrations of the cellulose-synthesis inhibitor isoxaben perturb the polar localization of GFP-PIN1. It will be interesting to see with which cell wall components PIN1 interacts and whether changes in the cell wall during development have an impact on auxin signaling in this way.

Wall-Associated Kinases

One of the best-studied potential CWI receptors belongs to the family of wall-associated kinases (WAKs). The Arabidopsis genome harbors five WAK genes arranged in a gene cluster and several WAK-like genes. WAKs are characterized by an intracellular serine-threonine kinase domain and an extracellular domain that contains epidermal growth factor-like repeats (81, 99). The WAK1 extracellular domain binds tightly to pectins (181), apparently with a pronounced preference for the Ca²⁺-mediated egg-box conformation (45, 46). Recently, using chimeric receptors between WAK1 and EFR, the receptor for the pathogen-associated molecular pattern EF-Tu (200), Brutus et al. (20) provided evidence that WAK1 is the receptor for OGAs in Arabidopsis. Despite the interaction of the WAK1 extracellular domain with OGAs, it remains unclear whether WAK1 is also involved in CWI signaling. The WAK1 extracellular domain can be sedimented in vitro with Ca²⁺-cross-linked HG, and therefore interaction is certainly not limited to short fragments (45). This, together with the abovementioned possibility that biotic and abiotic stress could be perceived through conformational changes of egg-box pectin, places WAK1 among the most interesting candidates for true CWI receptors. Consistent with this, WAKs and WAK-like proteins have been implicated in cell elongation, salt tolerance, and the coordination of solute concentrations with growth (81, 88, 100, 101, 104, 181).

The CrRLK1-Like Family of Cell Wall Signaling Receptors

Members of the *Catharanthus roseus* RLK1 (CrRLK1)–like protein family have recently emerged as interesting candidates for CWI sensors. This plant-specific family of RLKs contains 17 members in *Arabidopsis* (84). *THE-SEUS1* (*THE1*) was identified in a screen for the suppression of the elongation defect of the cellulose-deficient mutant *cesa6/procuste1* (*prc1*) (85). Mutations in *THE1* attenuate the growth



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inhibition and ectopic lignification of several cellulose-deficient mutants without rescuing the cellulose deficiency. THE1 is also required for the oxidative burst induced by the cellulosesynthesis inhibitor isoxaben in the root (48). Among the genes upregulated in *prc1*, a subset depend on THE1 signaling. Some of those encode ROS-detoxifying enzymes, extensins, and a peroxidase, suggesting a role in cell wall crosslinking. Other genes encode enzymes involved in the synthesis of glucosinolates and other defense proteins, indicating a role in pathogen defense. Together, these data suggest a role for THE1 in transducing the responses to cell wall perturbations. The responses include ROS production, leading to the inhibition of cell growth, presumably through cell wall crosslinking. The responses may be triggered during pathogen attack and perhaps during normal development.

Other *Arabidopsis* members of the CrRLK1like family have been implicated in control of cell growth in different biological contexts (10, 37, 84). Most notably, FERONIA (FER), together with THE1 and HERCULES1 receptor kinase (HERK1), is required for normal brassinosteroid-induced cell elongation in both light and dark growth conditions (51, 75). FER is broadly expressed during plant development and is necessary for normal cell elongation of various cell types, including root hairs (58, 75). In the ovule, FER is specifically expressed in the synergid cells, where it is polarly localized at the filiform apparatus to detect pollen tube arrival and trigger discharge of its sperm cells (63). Interestingly, ANXUR1/2 (ANX1/2), the two closest paralogs of FER, are expressed in pollen and are necessary for pollen tube growth because anx1anx2 mutant pollen tubes burst prematurely before reaching the ovule (11, 119). Most recently, FER has been shown to control the polar localization of AtMLO7/NORTIA, another protein required for pollen tube recognition by the synergid (95). AtMLO7 belongs to a 15-member protein family initially identified by MLO1, an integral membrane protein with seven membrane-spanning domains required for powdery mildew susceptibility in

Figure 4

Schematic illustration of the differences and similarities found in cell wall (CW) integrity pathways across kingdoms. Yeasts (Saccharomyces cerevisiae) have a layered cell wall mostly composed of noncrystalline β -glucans and highly mannosylated proteins on the outer face and chitin on the inner face (97). Higher-plant cell walls instead have a crystalline backbone made of cellulose microfibrils interconnected by hemicelluloses and embedded in a pectic matrix with few structural proteins (198). In mammals, the extracellular matrix (ECM) is organized around a protein scaffold made of collagen and fibronectin. It also contains proteoglycans from the group of glycosaminoglycans and a matrix of the polysaccharide hydronic acid. The ECM/CW integrity signaling pathway can be activated by several stresses, including mechanical forces (e.g., changes in the osmolarity of the environment), changes in the structure or composition of the ECM/CW during the cell cycle and cell expansion, and (a)biotic stresses. Perturbation of ECM/CW integrity is perceived by several kinds of sensors located at the plasma membrane; mechanical stress-induced membrane deformation can be sensed by stretch-activated calcium channels (namely, Mid1, MCA1, and TRPC in Saccharomyces cerevisiae, Arabidopsis thaliana, and Homo sapiens, respectively) but also by a variety of receptors that can probe different components of the ECM/CW. In Saccharomyces, the main sensors are Mid2 and Wsc1, which are both anchored in the membrane and exhibit an extracellular domain composed of a highly mannosylated serine/threonine-rich region (STR domain) conferring nanospring properties on the sensors (109, 148). In animal cells, integrins transduce mechanical signals by linking the extracellular fibronectin scaffold to the intracellular cytoskeleton to sense ECM remodeling and control cell proliferation and migration (106). Hyaluronan is bound and internalized by the receptor CD44 (15, 16). In Arabidopsis, several receptor-like kinase families comprise candidates for a CW integrity sensor, such as the CrRLK1-like family (including THE1 and FER) and the pectin-bound wall-associated kinases (WAKs). Despite the variability in cell wall composition and sensor types between the three systems, some common mechanisms seem to be in place, such as mechanoreception through stretchactivated ion channels, downstream signaling through Rho-GTPases, and a common set of responses leading to ECM/CW repair and cell fate control. The signaling pathway downstream from the sensors is best characterized in yeast, where activation of Rho is relayed by Pkc1 to a mitogen-activated protein kinase (MAPK) cascade leading to nucleus translocation of the transcription factors Rml1 and Swi, which control CW synthesis and cell cycle progression, respectively. A faster CW repair can by induced by Rho through posttranslational regulation of glucan synthases (e.g., Fks1). Other abbreviations: ACC, 1-aminocyclopropane-1-carboxylic acid; JA, jasmonate; ROS, reactive oxygen species.

barley (23). Interestingly, *fer* homozygous mutants are also resistant to powdery mildew (95), possibly as a result of the mislocalization of an MLO7-like protein.

The only direct downstream targets of a CrRLK1-like family member reported so far are ROPGEF proteins (58). ROPGEFs are guanine-exchange factors required for activation of the plant Rho GTPases (RAC/ROPs) into their GTP-bound state (73, 126, 192). FER is part of a dynamic complex containing a ROPGEF and a RAC/ROP. GTP-bound RAC/ROPs activate NAPDH-oxidases, which produce ROS required for root hair formation.

Ligands for the CrRLK1-like extracellular domains are not known. All family members contain one or two copies of a domain with sequence similarity to the carbohydratebinding malectin domain (Mal) from *Xenopus laevis* (10), which binds Glc₂-*N*-glycan in the endoplasmic reticulum (155). This suggests that CrRLK1-like proteins also recognize carbohydrate-containing ligands.

In conclusion, the CrRLK1-like family appears to be part of a regulatory module controlling ROS production, presumably triggered by a carbohydrate-containing ligand and involving, at least in one case, the RAC/ROPmediated activation of NADPH-oxidase. This module has been recruited to control growth in different developmental contexts: pollen tube elongation (ANX1/2), synergid-induced pollen tube growth arrest and bursting (FER), root hair elongation (FER), fungal pathogen response (FER), control of leaf expansion (THE1, HERK, FER), and inhibition of cell expansion upon wall damage (THE1) (**Figure 4**).

Downstream Signaling

Several lines of evidence point to the involvement of ROS and the phytohormones ethylene, jasmonate, and salicylic acid in signaling events downstream of cell wall damage perception. Moreover, numerous studies have demonstrated convergence or overlap with defense signaling pathways (86, 127, 180). For example, the *cev1 (cesa3*) mutant displays enhanced ethylene and jasmonate signaling and shows increased resistance toward various pathogens (62), whereas treatment with isoxaben induces jasmonate and salicylic acid synthesis (78).

Interestingly, recent studies have demonstrated involvement of 1an aminocyclopropane-1-carboxylic acid (ACC), the direct precursor of ethylene, in regulating cell wall function and the response to cell wall damage (44, 173, 193). Simultaneous mutation of two LRR-type RLKs, FEI1 and FEI2, leads to a conditional cell wall-related phenotype: fei1fei2 mutant cells show anisotropic growth, ectopic lignin deposition, and hypersensitivity to isoxaben under high-sucrose or high-salt conditions, reminiscent of the AGP mutant sos5 and cellulose-deficient mutants such as prc1 and cob-1 (65, 151, 159). In contrast to combination with prc1 and cob, fei1fei2 showed nonadditive effects when combined with sos 5 in a triple mutant, which suggests a role for the three genes in the same pathway.

Interestingly, interference with ACC function through the application of either a biosynthesis inhibitor (aminoethoxyvinylglycine or aminooxyacetic acid) or of a nonfunctional structural analogue (aminoisobutytic acid) completely rescued the fei1fei2 conditional phenotype. Importantly, genetic or pharmacological interference with ethylene perception could not mimic this effect. These data, together with the observations that the FEIs can interact with ACC synthase and that the FEI kinase domain is dispensable for mutant complementation, suggest that the two RLKs are involved in recruiting a signaling platform that uses ACC rather than ethylene as a signaling molecule. Consistent with such a role for ACC in contrast to ethylene, mutants completely insensitive to ethylene are viable and seem relatively healthy, whereas simultaneous knockdown of multiple ACC synthase isoforms results in embryonic lethality (174).

Evidence for the involvement of ACC in signaling downstream of cell wall damage perception came from the cell length analysis in the root elongation zone in response to ACC and isoxaben (44, 173). It was shown that ACC and isoxaben rapidly inhibit cell elongation (lag time <1 h) and that this inhibition is reversed by interfering with ACC synthesis, but not with ethylene perception. Remarkably, cell length could be completely reverted to wild-type levels despite the reduced cellulose content in the wall. As a result, the cells showed excessive bulging consistent with a fragilized cell wall (173). The short-term inhibition of cell elongation caused by integrity defects fosters the notion that reduced elongation after cell wall damage is mediated by signaling and is not a mere biophysical effect of the weakened cell wall (85). In addition to ACC, H₂O₂ production and auxin biosynthesis (but not auxin transport) were necessary for the short-term

inhibition of cell elongation in response to isoxaben. Conversely, the long-term response additionally relied on both ethylene perception and auxin transport, suggesting a cell-autonomous short-term response involving ACC and a longterm non-cell-autonomous response involving ethylene (173). It has to be noted, though, that cellulose synthesis is downstream of the proposed FEI signaling pathway, whereas isoxaben is the agent used for cell wall perturbation in the study of Tsang et al., thus placing cellulose biosynthesis upstream of the signaling events (173, 193). Therefore, ACC seems to function both in the control of cell wall synthesis and in the response to cell wall damage. Further work is needed to clarify this conundrum.

SUMMARY POINTS

- 1. The plant cell wall is a dynamic composite structure, consisting of distinct but interdependent networks that change during cellular development and in response to biotic or abiotic stresses.
- 2. Plant cells monitor the status of their cell walls to coordinate physicochemical and cellular processes involved in cell growth control.
- 3. Plants cells possess various types of sensors at the plasma membrane (and possibly in the cell wall) that can probe mechanical deformations or changes in cell wall structure or composition.
- 4. As for yeast and animals, early CWI signaling involves activation of Rho-like GTPases.
- Plant cells respond to cell wall perturbation by a rapid growth inhibition coupled with production of ROS, ACC, and jasmonate and by reinforcing their cell walls through deposition of lignin and cross-linking of cell polymers.

FUTURE ISSUES

- 1. Researchers should work to establish a detailed understanding of cell wall architecture and critical interactions between polymers, including predictive models for the control of cell expansion.
- Further development of real-time in vivo imaging tools is needed for the quantification
 of growth rate and parameters critical for the control of wall extensibility: ROS, pH,
 Ca²⁺, cell wall deposition rate, polymer composition and orientation, pectin-methylesterification status, and mechanical properties.
- 3. Actors involved in CWI signaling need identification using, for instance, forward genetic screens in cell wall-damaging conditions or analysis of protein complexes.

- 4. Cell wall–associated and free ligands for CrRLK1-like, lectin RLK, and other putative cell wall sensors are also still in need of identification.
- 5. The structural basis of the receptor-ligand interactions and the mechanism of CWI sensing need to be elucidated.
- 6. The CWI signaling networks require reconstruction, including the roles of ROPGEF, ROP, ROS, ACC, mitogen-activated protein kinase (MAPK), and jasmonate.
- 7. The role of regulated secretion and endocytosis in the regulation of cell wall deposition and remodeling needs dissection.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

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