COMPARISON OF HIGH PERFORMANCE LIQUID CHROMATOGRAPHY AND ENZYMATIC ANALYSIS OF SOLUBLE CARBOHYDRATES IN LOBLOLLY PINE

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ABSTRACT: Foliar tissue was collected from a field study designed to test impacts of atmospheric pollutants on loblolly pine (Pinus taeda L.) seedlings. Standard enzymatic (ENZ) and high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) methods were used to analyze the tissue for soluble sugars. A comparison of the methods revealed no significant differences in accuracy or in detection of treatment differences, but did find the HPLC results had a greater within-method variability, thus lowering method precision. This variability may be reduced by consistent maintenance and monitoring of sugar detection. If both methods are performed with equal care, soluble sugar values will be comparable.

1Funded by the Southeastern Forest Experiment Station, Southern Commercial Forest Research Cooperative of the Forest Response Program. The Forest Response Program is jointly sponsored by the USDA Forest Service, the US Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Council of the Paper Industry for Air and Stream Improvement. Mention of trade names or products does not imply USDA endorsement.

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INTRODUCTION

Carbohydrate production and mobilization influence the ability of plants to regulate functions such as the acquisition and transport of nutrients (2), maintenance and expansion of roots (1,5,6) and resistance to environmental stresses (7). Quantitative measures of available carbohydrates (i.e., hexose, sucrose, and starch) are useful in gaining a fuller understanding of plant physiological processes. Available carbohydrate levels may be analyzed by various methods that differ in their complexity and sensitivity to detect and quantify the individual sugars. The method chosen will depend on the objectives of the study, the accuracy required, and the available resources.

The two techniques compared in this paper are an enzymatic (ENZ) assay and high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC). In the ENZ method, enzymatic conversion of fructose, sucrose and starch to glucose is measured indirectly by assaying conversion of nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate (NADP) to NADPH. The amount of conversion is directly proportional to the glucose content of the sample (3). The detection of glucose units is by a colorimetric reaction that is measured by spectrophotometry. Detection range for this method is 30 to 300 ppb of glucose equivalents (3). The HPLC system employed in this comparison has an ion chromatograph with a pulsed amperometric detector, and extracted carbohydrates are identified after oxidation at a gold electrode (8). Detection limits for this method have been reported as low as 30 ppb for monosaccharides (i.e., glucose, fructose) and 100 ppb for oligosaccharides (i.e., sucrose, trehalose) (8).

The major advantage of each method is the high level of specificity in detecting individual sugars. For the purposes of our studies, the ENZ method has been adapted to identify hexose (fructose + glucose combination) and sucrose. Other species of sugars may be measured through the addition of selective enzymes and minor procedural modifications. The HPLC method of analysis differentiates simple monosaccharide mixtures and oligosaccharides. These may include: glucose, fructose, sucrose, trehalose, raffinose, and maltose. Additional

sugar peaks can be detected by proper manipulation of eluent strength and flow speed, with quantification dependent on accurate identification of each sugar.

The ENZ method for soluble sugar analysis has been thoroughly tested on loblolly pine tissue and is deemed to be reliable and fast (Schoeneberger, unpublished data). The processing time is 4-5 days for a batch of 96 samples, including duplicates and standards. The required standard laboratory equipment (centrifuges, concentrator, and spectrophotometer) and basic technical knowledge allow this method to be readily adapted to most labs. However, the ENZ method is labor intensive and does necessitate the use of small quantities of lead acetate for removal of phenolics and other interfering compounds found in pine tissue.

The HPLC method has also been tested extensively at our laboratory. Like the ENZ technique, it has a processing time of 4-5 days for a batch of 96 samples. Speed of sample processing varies depending upon the number and species of sugars being analyzed. Automation capabilities of the HPLC allow analyses to be conducted overnight, thus dramatically reducing labor requirements. The HPLC method does require more elaborate and expensive equipment and a higher level of operator expertise than the alternative ENZ method.

The primary objective of this study was to compare the accuracy and precision of the two techniques with regard to quantified soluble sugar concentrations. A secondary objective was to determine whether the method of available carbohydrate analysis affected statistical detection of treatment differences. This consideration is important for laboratories involved in cooperative studies requiring data transfer and comparison.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Plant material for the comparison was loblolly pine foliage collected from a field study designed to test the effects of ozone and acid deposition on loblolly pine seedlings from known open-pollinated families (4). Detection of any treatment differences from the field study would be compared between carbohydrate methods. The available soluble carbohydrates targeted for analysis in the field
study were sucrose and hexoses, which are a combination of fructose and glucose. Comparison of the two methods (ENZ and HPLC) was therefore limited to these sugars. Samples were collected and kept separate by block (micro-site differences), chamber (ozone treatments), family-within-chamber, and flush-within-family. Needle fascicles were collected during full-sun periods, quick frozen with dry ice, and freeze-dried in preparation for analysis (10). Ground tissue was stored at 0°C pending analysis.

Available carbohydrates were extracted according to the procedure outlined by Schoeneberger et al. (1992). Approximately 0.025 g of ground tissue was extracted three times with 10 ml of 80% ethyl alcohol (EtOH) to produce a total volume of 30 ml supernatant. This supernatant was stored at ≤ 0°C prior to the method analyses.

For the ENZ technique, a 1 ml aliquot of supernatant was evaporated to dryness in a vacuum centrifuge and resuspended to 4 ml in a solution of deionized water, lead acetate, sodium carbonate and hydrochloric acid. A 0.5 ml aliquot of this centrifuged suspension was used for the ENZ assay (10). The prepared samples (a total volume of 2 ml) were analyzed for light adsorption at a wavelength of 340 nm on a spectrophotometer. The final hexose and sucrose values were calculated as glucose equivalents in mg/g according to formulations listed in Schoeneberger et al. (1992).

The HPLC method required a smaller aliquot (1 ml) of supernatant. This volume was also evaporated to dryness, but was resuspended to 2 ml in deionized water. One ml of this new solution was further diluted with 4 ml of deionized water for a final volume of 5 ml. This solution was then processed through a Dionex ion chromatograph Series 4000i with ion pac carbohydrate column HPIC AS6. The eluent was 0.035 M sodium hydroxide solution, and the electrode voltages were +0.07, +0.60 and -0.60 volts. Peak occurrence was recorded as mg of sugar per 100 ml of solution. Concentrations of glucose, fructose, and sucrose (mg per gram of dried tissue) were calculated with the following equation:

\[ A \times B/C \times D/E \times F/G = \text{mg/g} \]  

(1)

**Carbohydrates in Loblolly Pine**

where:  
A = concentration value from HPLC (mg/100 ml\(^{-1}\))  
B = volume of EtOH used in the initial extractions (ml)  
C = plant tissue dry weight (g)  
D = resuspended volume (ml)  
E = evaporated volume (ml)  
F = final solution volume for HPLC (ml)  
G = aliquot used in making up final solution for HPLC (ml)

Concentrations of the hexose sugars, glucose and fructose, from the HPLC analyses were summed for comparison with the ENZ hexose values. Sucrose values estimated by the two methods were compared directly. Total soluble sugars were calculated as the sum of hexose and sucrose values. For quality control (QC) purposes, 15% of the samples was duplicated and a standard tissue was analyzed with each set of 20 samples. The standard tissue was a bulk sample of loblolly pine seedling roots collected, processed, and stored as recommended by Schoeneberger et al. (1992).

Statistical analyses of the QC data were performed using PC Statistical Analysis Systems (SAS) procedures for univariate and general linear models (9). Coefficients of variation (CV) were computed to assess method precision and accuracy. To test the impact of carbohydrate method on the detection of treatment differences in the field study, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) (9) by carbohydrate method and flush was done. Sample data were examined for normality and homogeneity of variance using \( F_{max} \) test (\( F = s^2_{max}/s^2_{min} \)) (11) and ANOVA, and data were weighted as deemed necessary.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Method Precision:** CVs reveal both similarities and differences in the precision of the two carbohydrate methods. Precisions of the methods differed significantly at the 0.05 level for hexose and at the 0.10 level for total soluble sugars (Table 1). CVs for hexose and total soluble sugars were below the 5% level for the ENZ
## Table 1. Quality control data for method precision estimates showing mean sugar concentration and range of concentrations in mg/g glucose equivalents, and mean coefficients of variation (CV) and range of CV in percentile.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Mean mg/g</th>
<th>Range min - max mg/g</th>
<th>Coefficient of variation Mean %</th>
<th>Range min - max %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zymatic Method</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hexose</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td>61.1 - 108.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.1 - 4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sucrose</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>0.2 - 11.7</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>1.3 - 95.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total soluble sugars</td>
<td>93.1</td>
<td>64.9 - 112.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.2 - 4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LC Method</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hexose</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>56.2 - 122.3</td>
<td>3.7*</td>
<td>0.3 - 15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sucrose</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>0.0 - 13.9</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>0.6 - 141.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total soluble sugars</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>59.0 - 122.3</td>
<td>3.3†</td>
<td>0.1 - 12.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*an coefficients of variation for the two methods of sugar analysis differ significantly; \( * P \leq 0.05 \), and \( ** P \leq 0.01 \).
TABLE 2. Estimates of within-method variability for HPLC and ENZ soluble sugar analyses by flush and error using Fmax test for ratios of mean squares.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Error A</th>
<th>Error B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flush 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hexose</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>3.69*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sucrose</td>
<td>5.55*</td>
<td>4.72*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total sugars</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flush 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hexose</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>3.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sucrose</td>
<td>12.65**</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total sugars</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flush 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hexose</td>
<td>6.76**</td>
<td>2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sucrose</td>
<td>4.53*</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total sugars</td>
<td>7.19**</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean squares for the two methods of sugar analysis differ significantly: ** = P \leq 0.01, and * = P \leq 0.05.

TABLE 3. Analysis of variance of soluble sugars concentrations in loblolly pine needle tissue quantified by two different carbohydrate detection methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of variation</th>
<th>d.f.</th>
<th>Flush 1</th>
<th>Flush 2</th>
<th>Flush 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Block (BL)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>7.16**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone (O3)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>4.82*</td>
<td>3.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L x O3 (error a)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amaryl (FAM)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J x FAM</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L x O3 x FAM</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>error b)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method (M)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J x M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W x M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J x FAM x M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean squares significantly different: ** = P \leq 0.01, * = P \leq 0.05, and * * = P \leq 0.10.
3 was a marginal difference for sucrose (p < 0.056) detected (Table 3). Ozone
treatment from the field study was significantly different for flush 2 total soluble
sugars (p < 0.01) and hexose (p < 0.05), but no other major effect differences
were found. Overall, there was no evidence of an effect of carbohydrate method
on the interpretation of the ANOVA. Thus, the results of the field experiment
were the same regardless of laboratory method of sugar analysis.

CONCLUSIONS
Examination of results from accuracy data and treatment detection
comparisons showed no differences between the two carbohydrate analyses.
Neither method accuracy was comparable for estimating soluble sugar concentrations, potential problems exist with the HPLC
method. Because of the differences found in method precision, coupled with the
higher within-method variability of the HPLC technique, this analysis is less
precise than the ENZ procedure. HPLC variability could potentially affect the
ability to detect significant differences between treatments. Since variability
increases as sampling size decreases, analysis with a smaller sample set than the
one used in this study might have yielded statistical differences in treatment
detection.

The variability of HPLC analysis is likely due to equipment misidentification
of the detection windows for individual sugars. This misidentification was more
common for fructose and sucrose, which elute closely. Results of inflated ranges
for both the hexose (fructose+glucose) and sucrose detection will also affect the
total soluble sugar value. While the HPLC technique requires consistent standard
maintenance and observation of chromatograms to ensure separate elutions for
sugar identification, it does provide the opportunity to quantify multiple sugars
with a single analysis. If equal care is taken in performance of both the ENZ and
HPLC analyses, soluble sugar concentrations will be comparable.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
The authors thank Greg Ruark for his helpful review and Susan Spruill of
North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, for her assistance in the statistical
analyses.

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COMMUN. SOIL SCI. PLANT ANAL., 24(1&2), 161-169 (1993)

A KINETIC PARAMETER FOR EVALUATION OF THE REACTIVITY OF AGRICULTURAL LIME

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Abstract: The "reactivity" and dissolution rate of an aglime in soil is not adequately described by chemical analysis involving neutralization/dissolution under harsh conditions. A method related to dissolution rate at ambient soil pH values should provide important information on aglime "reactivity". We developed a constant pH titration method, using an automated titration assembly, to achieve this aim. Fifteen aglimes, differing widely in composition and reactivity, were compared by titration at pH 4.0, 5.0 and 5.5 and noting the neutralization rate. The time, in minutes, at which 50% of an aglime's neutralizing ability (HCl-value) had been neutralized, was considered to be a useful kinetic parameter and designated T½. The aglimes tested had widely different T½ values even when the aglimes were comparable with regard to particle size and chemical and physical properties. The T½ values were significantly correlated (negatively) with a quality parameter obtained by an acid resin suspension method.

Introduction

The estimation of the "quality" of an aglime is dependent on several measurements and parameters, some of which are unquestionably related to the dissolution kinetics thereof. Thus, in several laboratory determinations of aglime quality, reaction time is of critical importance and must be specified (1, 2, 3). Nevertheless, many of the parameters employed for aglime characterization are related to dissolution and reaction rates, which obviously are, amongst others,