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Metabolism of airborne methyl salicylate in adjacent plants

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1

2 **Abstract**

3 Salicylic acid (SA) and methyl salicylate (MeSA) are synthesized in many plants  
4 and are crucial components that establish their disease responses. The metabolism of  
5 airborne MeSA to SA has been previously reported. In this report, it was found that SA  
6 glucose ester (SAGE), ether (SAG), and salicyloyl-L-aspartic acid (SA-Asp) are  
7 metabolites of airborne MeSA. Furthermore, it was found that airborne MeSA was able  
8 to increase the endogenous amount of rosmarinic acid in *Perilla frutescens*, which is  
9 known as one of the functional components that contributes to the maintenance of  
10 human health.

11

12 **Keywords;** airborne methyl salicylate; salicylic acid; *Arabidopsis thaliana*;  
13 *Perilla frutescens*; volatile organic compounds

1           Plants have unique and complex chemical systems to act against various stresses,  
2 such as biotic and abiotic stresses [1]. Methyl salicylate (MeSA) is a volatile organic  
3 compound that plays critical roles in plants to establish defense systems against  
4 biotrophic attacks, such as viral attacks [2]. MeSA is synthesized in plants from  
5 salicylic acid (SA), and the biosynthesis of SA starts from chorismic acid and is  
6 followed by a series of chemical reactions through two distinct pathways: the  
7 isochorismate (IC) pathway and the phenylalanine ammonia-lyase (PAL) pathway  
8 (Figure 1) [3]. In the IC pathway, SA is synthesized from chorismic acid via  
9 isochorismic acid [4]. However, recently, Rekhter et al. [5] reported an additional  
10 metabolite, isochorismate-9-glutamate in cytosol that converts from isochorismate and  
11 further metabolizes into SA. In contrast, in the PAL pathway, prephenic acid is  
12 synthesized from chorismic acid and then converted into L-phenylalanine (Phe).  
13 Subsequently, Phe is further converted into cinnamic acid [6]. The cinnamic acid is then  
14 converted into benzoic acid, which is further converted to SA [7]. Several SA  
15 metabolites are known, such as MeSA, which is produced via reactions catalyzed by  
16 carboxyl methyltransferases [8]. As with other kinds of metabolites, SA glucose ether  
17 (SAG), SA glucose ester (SAGE), and salicyloyl-L-aspartic acid (SA-Asp) have been  
18 reported [9]. SAG is the major conjugate of SA and glucose, which is catalyzed by two  
19 UDP-glucosyltransferases, UGT74F1 and UGT74F2, while its minor conjugate is  
20 salicylic glucose ester (SGE), which is catalyzed by UGT74F2 in *Arabidopsis thaliana*  
21 upon pathogen attack [9]. SA-Asp is the only SA-amino acid conjugate reported in  
22 various plants, such as *Vitis* (grape) species, *Phaseolus vulgaris* and *A. thaliana* [9],  
23 although several conjugated forms of jasmonic acid with amino acids have been  
24 reported [10]. The GH3.5 protein in *A. thaliana*, a multifunctional acetyl-amido  
25 synthetase, has been found to show adenylating activity on SA *in vitro* [11]. It has been  
26 found that SA-Asp induced *PR* gene expression in *A. thaliana* and enhanced disease  
27 resistance against *Pseudomonas syringae* [12].

1 As mentioned above, MeSA is a pivotal component in preparing biotrophic  
2 attacks. Shulaev et al. [13] reported that MeSA was the major volatile compound  
3 produced by tobacco plants inoculated with the tobacco mosaic virus. Another study  
4 showed that the production of MeSA significantly increases in *P. syringae* inoculated  
5 onto *A. thaliana* leaves and that it activated systematic acquired resistance (SAR) [14].  
6 In addition to being a volatile compound, it has been reported that MeSA is a mobile  
7 component through the phloem to activate SAR in undamaged leaves [4, 8]. Recently,  
8 Salamanca et al. [15] reported that MeSA has the ability to attract beneficial arthropods,  
9 natural enemies of herbivores. Therefore, it is generally accepted that MeSA activates  
10 defense responses in healthy tissues of infected plants and in neighboring plants as an  
11 airborne signal [13].

12 Thus far, most studies have focused on MeSA synthesis and emission triggered  
13 by biotrophic damage. However, there is a very limited amount of information on the  
14 metabolic fate of airborne MeSA. To the best of our knowledge, there have been no  
15 reports other than the metabolic pathway from MeSA to SA [13]. Here, we report the  
16 metabolism of airborne MeSA into SAGE, SAG, and SA-Asp using *A. thaliana*. In  
17 addition, we proposed that airborne MeSA might be used in agriculture.

18

## 19 **Materials and Methods**

### 20 *General*

21 NMR spectra were recorded using a JNM-EX 270 FT-NMR spectrometer (JEOL,  
22 Tokyo, Japan, <sup>1</sup>H NMR: 270 MHz, <sup>13</sup>C NMR: 67.5 MHz). FDMS and FIMS analyses  
23 were performed on a JMS-T100GCV (JEOL, Tokyo, Japan), and CIMS was performed  
24 on a JMS-SX102A (JEOL, Tokyo, Japan) instrument. [<sup>2</sup>H<sub>1-3</sub>, <sup>2</sup>H<sub>1-4</sub>, <sup>2</sup>H<sub>1-5</sub>, <sup>2</sup>H<sub>1-6</sub>]-SA  
25 (SA-*d*<sub>4</sub>), SAG and SA were purchased from Medical Isotope Inc. (Pelham, NH, USA),  
26 Toronto Research Chemicals (Toronto, ON, Canada), and Kanto Chemical Co., Inc.  
27 (Tokyo, Japan) respectively. MeSA, acetyl salicylic acid and diethyl-L-aspartate  
28 hydrochloride were purchased from Tokyo Chemical Industry Co., Ltd. (Tokyo, Japan).

1 *Preparation of filter papers containing MeSA and MeSA-d<sub>4</sub>*

2 An aliquot (0.1 mL) of a solution containing MeSA (1 mg/0.1 mL Et<sub>2</sub>O) was dropped  
3 onto a filter paper (φ 10 mm), and the paper was left for 10 min at room temperature to  
4 allow the organic solvent to evaporate. An aliquot (0.1 mL) of the solution containing  
5 [<sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-3, <sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-4, <sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-5, <sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-6]-SA (SA-d<sub>4</sub>) (1 mg/0.1 mL MeOH) was dropped onto a filter  
6 paper (φ 10 mm), and an excess amount of CH<sub>2</sub>N<sub>2</sub> in Et<sub>2</sub>O was added to give MeSA-d<sub>4</sub>.  
7 The conversion yield of MeSA-d<sub>4</sub> from SA-d<sub>4</sub> was evaluated to be 92%, which was  
8 estimated by GC-MS analysis using MeSA as a standard. GC-MS analysis was carried  
9 out according to the method given in supplemental material. The paper was left for 10  
10 min at room temperature to allow the organic solvent to evaporate for use in the  
11 treatment of airborne [<sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-3, <sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-4, <sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-5, <sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-6]-MeSA (MeSA-d<sub>4</sub>).

12

13 *Determination of metabolites of airborne MeSA and MeSA-d<sub>4</sub>*

14 *A. thaliana* plants were grown at 23 °C with a 16 h light and 8 h dark photoperiod for  
15 thirty days. Six plants were placed in a semiclosed chamber (Triple L, 40.0 cm x 25.6  
16 cm x 28.0 cm, Kotobuki Co., Ltd. Tenri, Japan) together with three filter papers  
17 containing MeSA (1 mg/filter paper) or MeSA-d<sub>4</sub> (1 mg/filter paper) for 24 h. A  
18 solution of Et<sub>2</sub>O was used as a control treatment instead of MeSA or MeSA-d<sub>4</sub>. The  
19 upper parts of the plants were harvested and extracted with EtOH. To determine the  
20 endogenous amounts of the metabolized compounds when using airborne MeSA, an  
21 aliquot solution containing [<sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-3, <sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-4, <sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-5, <sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-6]-SA (25 ng) and [<sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-3, <sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-4,  
22 <sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-5, <sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-6]-SAG (200 ng) was added. UPLC MS/MS analysis was performed with  
23 MRM in negative mode according to a previously reported method [16].

24

25 *Synthesis of salicyloyl-L-aspartic acid (SA-Asp)*

26

27 *Synthesis of acetyl salicyloyl-L-diethyl aspartate (ASA-Asp(OEt)<sub>2</sub>)*

28 To synthesize acetyl salicyloyl-L-diethyl aspartate (ASA-Asp(OEt)<sub>2</sub>), a reaction mixture

1 of acetyl salicylic acid (185.2 mg, 1.03 mmol), diethyl-L-aspartate hydrochloride (309.2  
2 mg, 1.37 mmol), 1-(3-dimethylaminopropyl)-3-ethylcarbodiimide hydrochloride (206.3  
3 mg, 1.08 mmol) and 1-hydrochloride-1*H*-benzotriazole (140.1 mg, 1.04 mmol) in 10  
4 mL of *N,N*-dimethylformamide was stirred overnight at room temperature. To the  
5 stirred mixture, EtOAc (50 mL) was added, and the mixture was washed with 90 mL  
6 (30 mL  $\times$  3) of 0.1 M HCl and 30 mL of saturated NaHCO<sub>3</sub>, successively. After drying  
7 over with anhydrous Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, the EtOAc soluble layer was concentrated under reduced  
8 pressure. The resulting oil was purified by silica gel column chromatography using  
9 EtOAc:hexane, 7:13 (v/v) to yield ASA-Asp(OEt)<sub>2</sub> (153.6 mg, 42.50%). <sup>1</sup>H NMR (270  
10 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>, Figure 2S in supplemental material)  $\delta$  7.96 (dd, *J* = 7.7, 1.8 Hz, 1H), 7.74  
11 (br d, *J* = 7.3 Hz, 1H), 7.51-7.42 (m, 1H), 7.30 (t, *J* = 7.5 Hz, 1H), 7.12 (dd, *J* = 8.1, 1.2  
12 Hz, 1H), 5.01-4.93 (m, 1H), 4.29-4.05 (m, 4H), 3.14-2.90 (m, 2H), 2.43-2.38 (m, 3H),  
13 1.30-1.17 (m, 6H).

14

#### 15 *Synthesis of salicyloyl-L-aspartate (SA-Asp)*

16 To a solution of ASA-Asp(OEt)<sub>2</sub> (141.3 mg, 0.40 mmol) in MeOH (360  $\mu$ L), a solution  
17 of 0.5 M NaOH (4 mL) was added, and the reaction mixture stirred for 1 h. Volatile  
18 components of the reaction mixture were removed under reduced pressure. To the  
19 resulting oil, H<sub>2</sub>O (10 mL) was added, and the mixture was washed with 30 mL of Et<sub>2</sub>O.  
20 The aqueous solution was acidified using HCl (12 N) by adding dropwise at 0  $^{\circ}$ C, and  
21 the solution was extracted using EtOAc (30 mL  $\times$  3). The combined organic layers were  
22 dried over anhydrous Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, and the volatile components of the organic layer were  
23 removed to afford an oil. The resulting oil was purified using silica gel column  
24 chromatography (MeOH:CHCl<sub>3</sub>; 1:1 (v/v) to afford SA-Asp (100 mg, 98.9%, [ $\alpha$ ]<sub>D</sub><sup>23</sup>  
25 = +19.65, MeOH).

26 <sup>1</sup>H NMR (270 MHz, CD<sub>3</sub>OD, Figure 3S in supplemental material)  $\delta$  7.80 (dd, *J* = 8.2,  
27 1.6 Hz, 1H), 7.41-7.26 (m, 1H), 6.92-6.88 (m, 1H), 6.88-6.81 (m, 1H), 4.99-4.90 (m,  
28 1H), 2.94 (d, *J* = 5.6 Hz, 2H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (67.5 MHz, CD<sub>3</sub>OD, Figure 4S in supplemental

1 material)  $\delta$  174.62, 174.48, 170.31, 160.86, 135.20, 130.14, 120.58, 118.51, 117.61,  
2 50.52, 37.09.

3

#### 4 *Detection of rosmarinic acid in P. frutescens using the UPLC MS/MS system*

5 *Perilla frutescens* plants were grown at 23 °C with a 16 h light and 8 h dark photoperiod  
6 for thirty days. Six plants were put in a semiclosed chamber together with three filter  
7 papers containing MeSA (1 mg/filter paper) for 24 h. A solution of Et<sub>2</sub>O was used as a  
8 control treatment instead of MeSA. The upper parts of the plants were harvested and  
9 extracted with EtOH. Before purification, a solution containing 100 ng of [<sup>2</sup>H<sub>3</sub>-12, <sup>2</sup>H<sub>2</sub>-  
10 11, <sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-10] jasmonic acid (JA-*d*<sub>6</sub>) was added to the extract. The method for extraction  
11 and UPLC MS/MS conditions in positive mode were in accordance with a reported  
12 method [16]. The MS/MS parameters in MRM to detect JA-*d*<sub>6</sub> was done according to  
13 the reported method [16]. The MS/MS parameters in MRM to detect rosmarinic acid  
14 were as follows: parent ion: *m/z* 359.12, transition ion: *m/z* 160.77, cone voltage: 50.0 V  
15 and collision energy: 17.50 eV, in negative mode. Relative areas were calculated  
16 according to the following formula:

17

18 (Relative area) = (Area derived from rosmarinic acid) x 100 [ng] / (Area derived from  
19 JA-*d*<sub>6</sub>) (fresh weight of the sample [g]) x 360 [g/mol]

20

#### 21 *Statistical analysis*

22 All experiments depicted in the figures were conducted three times with similar  
23 tendencies. Statistical analyses were performed using Welch's t-test for comparison of  
24 two data sets.

25

## 26 **Results**

### 27 *Metabolism of airborne MeSA into SA and its glucosides*

28 SA plays critical plant defense roles against biotic and abiotic responses [6]. During  
29 pathogen infection, SA plays critical roles in SAR activation [17]. It has been reported  
30 that there is a higher accumulation of SA in tobacco plants inoculated with tobacco



1 mosaic virus (TMV) [18]. Moreover, Shulaev et al. [13] showed a higher accumulation  
2 of SA in tobacco plants incubated with gaseous MeSA. We planned to determine  
3 whether endogenous amounts of SAG and relative amount of SAGE together with SA  
4 increased with treatment using airborne MeSA. Plants were placed in a semiclosed  
5 chamber and treated with airborne MeSA as shown in Figure 1S. The plants were  
6 harvested, and the endogenous amounts of the target compound were evaluated  
7 according to a reported method [16]. The results are given in Figure 2, in which higher  
8 accumulations of SA, SAG and SAGE were observed in treated plants compared with  
9 nontreated plants. In the case of the accumulation of SA, a 36-fold higher accumulation  
10 of SA was found in the treated plants compared to the nontreated plants (Figure 2a).  
11 Since SA is active and toxic in some cases, it is generally accepted that the active  
12 compounds should be readily subjected to several modifications leading to its inactive  
13 forms, such as glucosylation, methylation and amino acid conjugation [14]. It has been  
14 reported that SAG is then actively transported to the vacuole from the cytosol until the  
15 plant requires its use in its active form of SA [19]. Consistent with this, our findings  
16 also showed a 28-fold higher accumulation of SAG than the control treatment in *A.*  
17 *thaliana* upon exposure to airborne MeSA (Figure 2b). Moreover, we detected relative  
18 accumulated amount of SAGE using SAG-*d*<sub>4</sub> as an internal standard. Based on the  
19 results we found that there was a 236-fold higher accumulation of SAGE compared to  
20 the control treatment (Figure 2c). However, there were two possibilities for this higher  
21 accumulation, which might be due to the upregulation of the SA biosynthetic pathways  
22 or exogenously inhaled MeSA.

23

#### 24 *Metabolism of airborne MeSA-d<sub>4</sub> into SA-d<sub>4</sub>, glucose ester and ether and SA-Asp*

25 To further understand whether airborne MeSA is metabolized in neighboring plants,  
26 MeSA-*d*<sub>4</sub> was used. The biological activities of MeSA-*d*<sub>4</sub> are thought to be the same as  
27 those of nonlabeled MeSA, and MeSA-*d*<sub>4</sub> are not converted into nonlabeled compounds  
28 [20]. Prior to the experiment, SA-Asp was synthesized according to the report of

1 Anabuki et al. [21]. Plants were placed in a semiclosed chamber and treated with  
2 airborne MeSA-*d*<sub>4</sub> as in the procedure used for application of airborne MeSA. The  
3 plants were harvested, and the endogenous target compounds were evaluated using the  
4 UPLC MS/MS system. The results are given in Figures 3-5, and we detected the peaks  
5 derived from SA, SA-*d*<sub>4</sub> (Figure 3), SAG, SAG-*d*<sub>4</sub>, SAGE, SAGE-*d*<sub>4</sub> (Figure 4), SA-  
6 Asp, and SA-Asp-*d*<sub>4</sub> (Figure 5) from the leaves of *A. thaliana* treated with airborne  
7 MeSA-*d*<sub>4</sub> in the UPLC chromatogram with the same retention times as those of the  
8 authentic compounds. The conversion of <sup>14</sup>C-labeled MeSA to <sup>14</sup>C-labeled SA has been  
9 reported by Shulaev et al. [13], whose result coincided well with that of the conversion  
10 of MeSA-*d*<sub>4</sub> to SA-*d*<sub>4</sub> found in this study. We synthesized other kinds of SA-amino acid  
11 conjugates: SA-glutamic acid, SA-tryptophan, SA-isoleucine, SA-cysteine and SA-  
12 methionine, but no peaks corresponding to these conjugates were detected (data not  
13 shown).

14

#### 15 *Airborne MeSA stimulated the biosynthesis of rosmarinic acid*

16 Treatment with airborne MeSA resulted in the accumulation of a vast amount of SA and  
17 SA metabolites derived from airborne MeSA itself compared to endogenous compounds  
18 (Figures 3-5). Thus, it was hypothesized that MeSA might stimulate other important  
19 components present in the plants which might be important to maintain human health.

20 Rosmarinic acid is a polyphenolic phytochemical (Figure 6) that shows anti-  
21 inflammatory, anti-allergic and anti-oxidative activities [22]. It has been proven that  
22 rosmarinic acid is one of the main constituents of *P. frutescens* leaf extract [23]. In  
23 order to examine the above hypothesis, the endogenous amount of rosmarinic acid in *P.*  
24 *frutescens* plants treated with airborne MeSA was evaluated using the UPLC MS/MS  
25 system. Plants were exposed to airborne MeSA as previously described, and the leaves  
26 were harvested and extracted. Since there is no availability to get a stable isotope  
27 labelled rosmarinic acid, we used JA-*d*<sub>6</sub> as a putative internal standard to calculate  
28 relative endogenous amounts of rosmarinic acid. The results are given in Figure 6,  
29 which revealed a higher accumulation of rosmarinic acid in treated plants compared  
30 with that in nontreated plants. In addition to that, we evaluated the accumulation of SA

1 and its metabolites in *P. frutescens* treated with airborne MeSA. The results showed  
2 higher accumulation of SA, SAG and SAGE compare to the control treatment (Figure  
3 5S in supplementary material). However, there was no peak corresponding to SA-Asp  
4 in *P. frutescens* treated with airborne MeSA.

## 5 6 **Discussion**

7 There were no other examples of the experimental method that we adopted, so it was  
8 unclear whether the plant actually elicited the wound response in our experimental  
9 system. Thus, the transcriptional levels of *PR1* and *PR5* in plants exposed to airborne  
10 MeSA were evaluated using a qRT-PCR system. The results are given in Figure 6S in  
11 the supplemental material, which indicated that a resistant response against biotrophs  
12 was established due to higher transcriptional levels of *PR1* and *PR5* in the treated plants  
13 compared with those in the nontreated plants. The results supported that the  
14 experimental method employed in this study was indicated to be as tolerable as any  
15 other study that discusses the metabolism and biological activity of airborne MeSA.  
16 With this experimental belief, it was first proven that airborne MeSA was metabolized  
17 not only to SA but also to SAG, SAGE, and SA-Asp. Since the biological activities of  
18 SAG and SAGE, have not been reported, it should be safe to say that these metabolites  
19 are inactive forms of SA. In addition, the promising usage of airborne MeSA in the  
20 agricultural industry has been suggested, such as to induce a higher accumulation of  
21 rosmarinic acid in *P. frutescens*, which is a well-known functional ingredient that  
22 contributes to the maintenance of human health [22-25].

## 23 24 **Author Contributions**

25 RM performed the experiments and wrote the paper. KO helped draft the manuscript.  
26 KT performed the experiments. HM designed the study and wrote the paper.

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2 The authors would like to thank Mr. Y. Takata and Dr. E. Fukushi (Faculty of Agriculture,  
3 Hokkaido University) for assistance in obtaining the spectroscopic data.  
4 UPLC MS/MS systems (Waters, USA) at the Research Faculty of Agriculture,  
5 Hokkaido University were used for this study.

6

7 **Disclosure statement**

8 No potential conflicts of interest are reported by the authors.

9

10 **Supplemental materials**

11 The supplemental materials for this paper are available at <http://>

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11

1 **Figure legends**

2

3 **Figure 1.** Biosynthesis pathway of salicylic acid.

4

5 **Figure 2.** Evaluation of SA, SAG and SAGE in *A. thaliana*.

6 Plants were exposed to airborne MeSA for 24 h. The upper parts of the plants were

7 harvested and extracted with EtOH. Accumulated amounts of SA, SAG and SAGE were

8 analyzed by UPLC-MS/MS. a) accumulated amount of SA. b) accumulated amount of

9 SAG. c) relative accumulated amount of SAGE. Each value is represented as the mean

10  $\pm$  SD of six independent replicates. Welch`s test, \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

11 x) The peak area was calculated corresponding to the internal standard of SAG- $d_4$ .

12

13 **Figure 3.** Metabolism of airborne MeSA- $d_4$  into SA- $d_4$  in *A. thaliana*.

14 Plants were exposed to airborne MeSA- $d_4$  for 24 h and extracted with EtOH. Peaks

15 were detected with a UPLC-MS/MS system in MRM negative mode. a) the peak was

16 monitored by selecting  $m/z$  140.8 as the pseudomolecular ion and  $m/z$  96.6 as the

17 transition ion for SA- $d_4$ . b) the peak was monitored by selecting  $m/z$  136.8 as the

18 pseudomolecular ion and  $m/z$  92.5 as the transition ion for endogenous SA.

19 x) The peak intensity is shown by converting the peak intensity value of  $1.1 \times 10^5$  to

20 100%. y) Insets indicate the chemical structures of the target compounds.

21

22 **Figure 4.** Metabolism of airborne MeSA- $d_4$  into SAG- $d_4$  and SAGE- $d_4$  in *A. thaliana*.

23 Plants were exposed to airborne MeSA- $d_4$  for 24 h and extracted with EtOH. Peaks

24 were detected with a UPLC-MS/MS system in MRM negative mode. a) the peaks were

25 monitored by selecting  $m/z$  302.9 as the pseudomolecular ion and  $m/z$  140.8 as the

26 transition ion for metabolized SAG- $d_4$  and SAGE- $d_4$ . b) the peaks were monitored by

27 selecting  $m/z$  298.9 as the pseudomolecular ion and  $m/z$  136.8 as the transition ion for

28 endogenous SAG and SAGE.



1 x) The peak intensity is shown by converting the peak intensity value of  $3.5 \times 10^3$  to  
2 100%. y) Insets indicate the chemical structures of the target compounds.

3

4 **Figure 5.** Metabolism of airborne MeSA- $d_4$  into SA-Asp- $d_4$  in *A. thaliana*.

5 Plants were exposed to airborne MeSA- $d_4$  for 24 h and extracted with EtOH. Peaks  
6 were detected with a UPLC-MS/MS system in MRM negative mode. a) the peaks were  
7 monitored by selecting  $m/z$  256.2 as the pseudomolecular ion and  $m/z$  139.8 as the  
8 transition ion for metabolized SA-Asp- $d_4$ . b) the peaks were monitored by selecting  $m/z$   
9 252.2 as the pseudomolecular ion and  $m/z$  135.8 as the transition ion for endogenous  
10 SA-Asp.

11 x) The peak intensity is shown by converting the peak intensity value of  $2.0 \times 10^3$  to  
12 100%. y) Insets indicate the chemical structures of the target compounds.

13

14 **Figure 6.** Evaluation of rosmarinic acid in *P. frutescens* treated with airborne MeSA.

15 Plants were exposed to airborne MeSA for 24 h. The upper parts of the plants were  
16 harvested and extracted with EtOH. The accumulated amount of rosmarinic acid was  
17 analyzed with a UPLC-MS/MS in positive mode. The peak area was calculated  
18 corresponding to the internal standard of JA- $d_6$ . Each value is represented as the mean  $\pm$   
19 SD of six independent replicates. Welch`s test, \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

20 x) Inset indicates the chemical structures of rosmarinic acid.

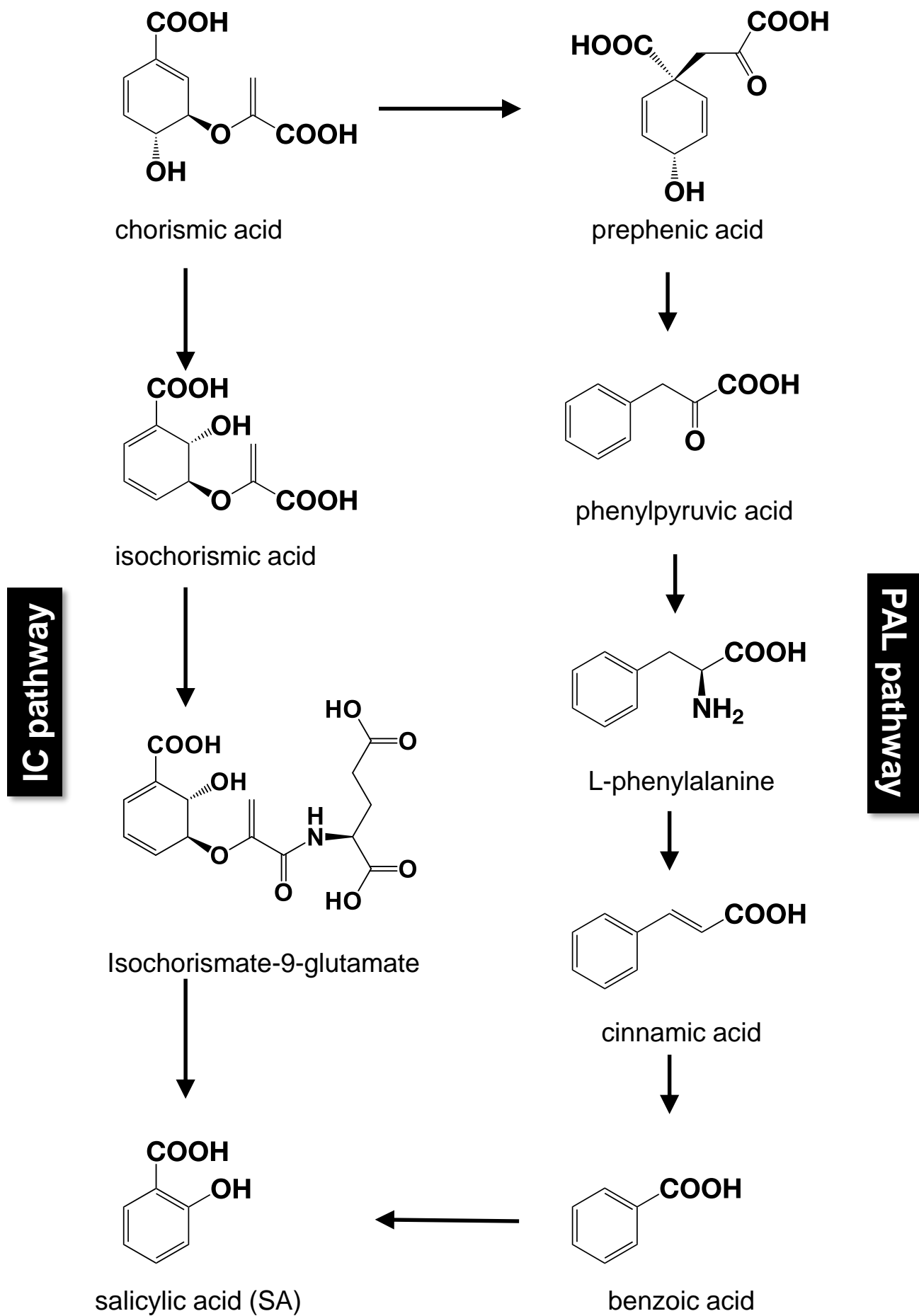
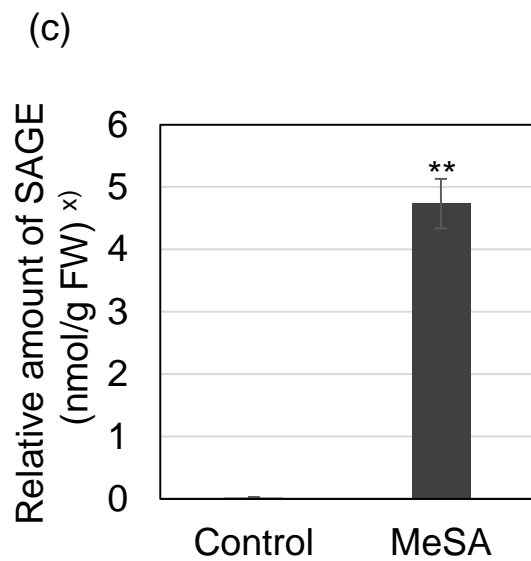
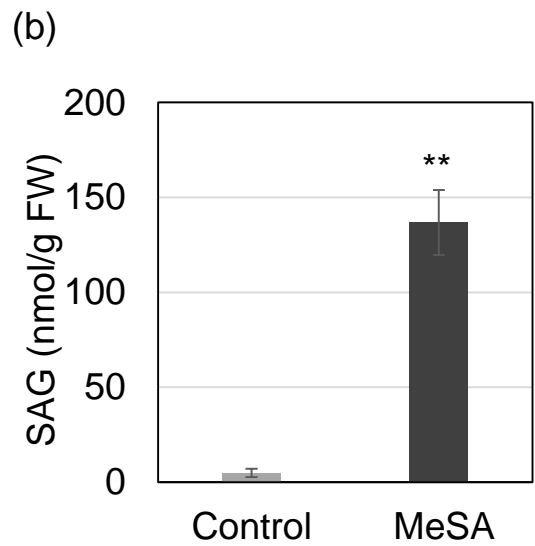
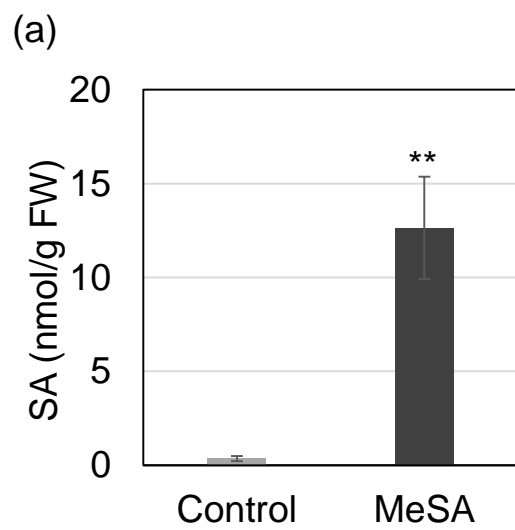
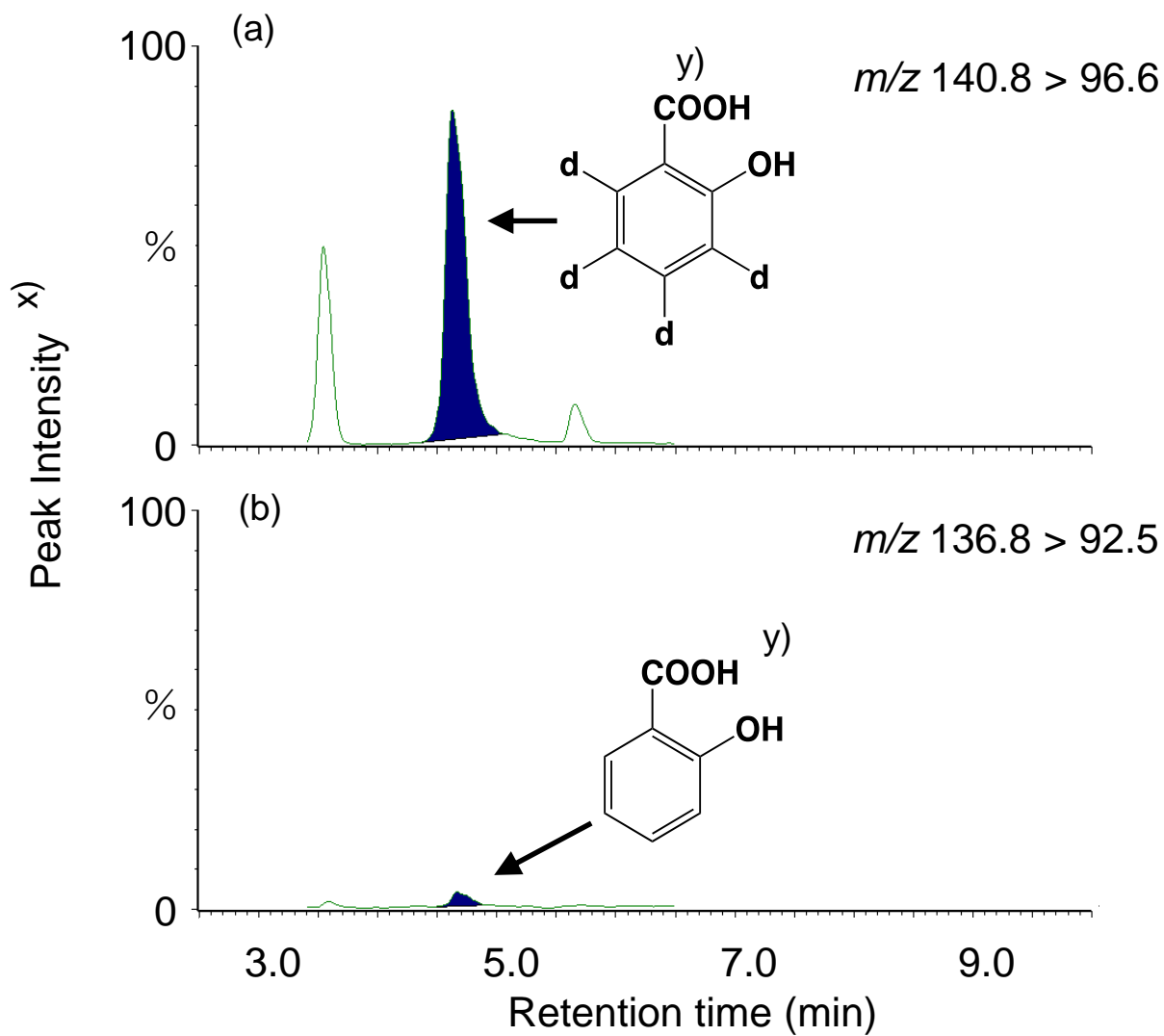


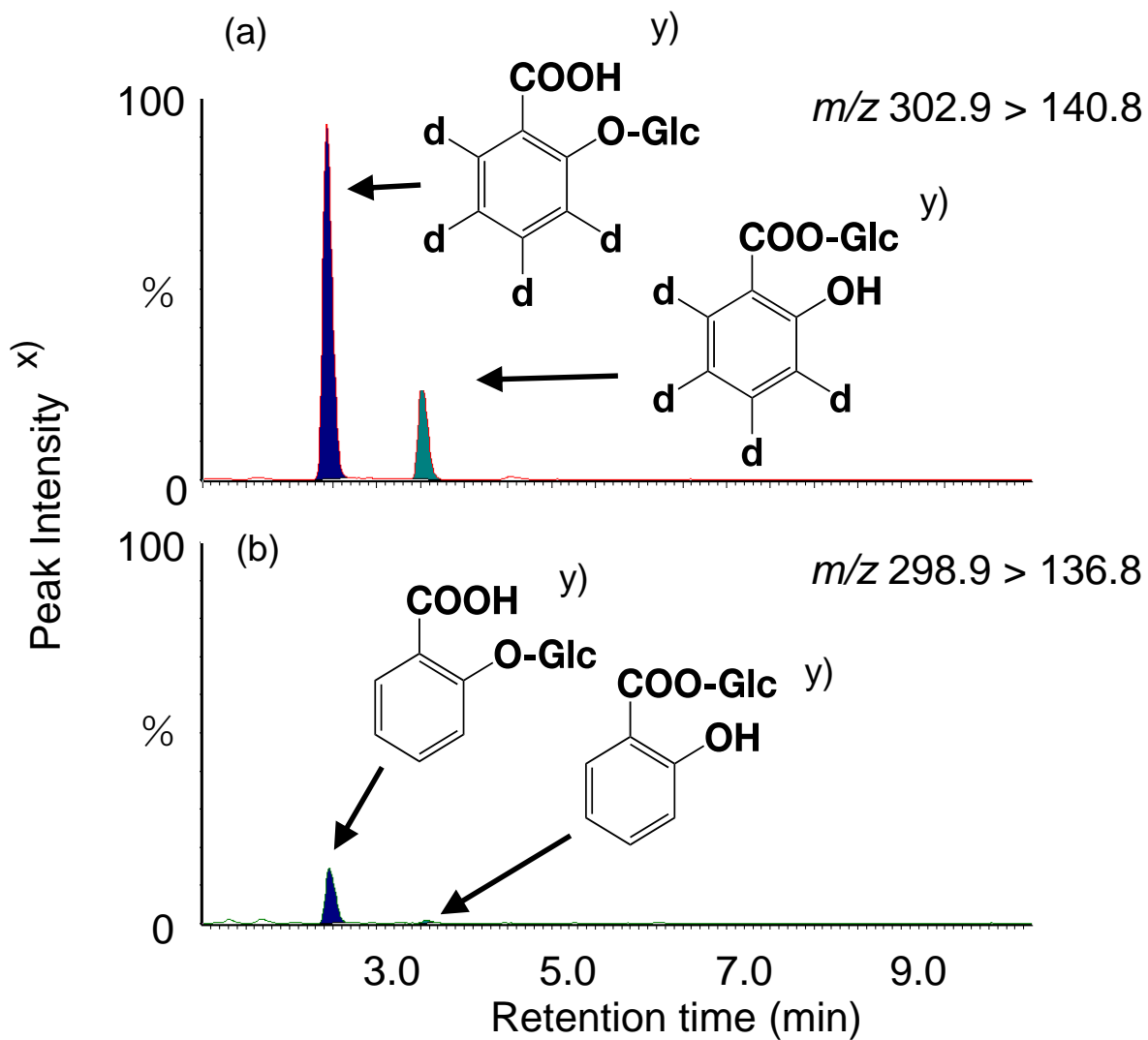
Figure 1. Biosynthesis pathway of SA.



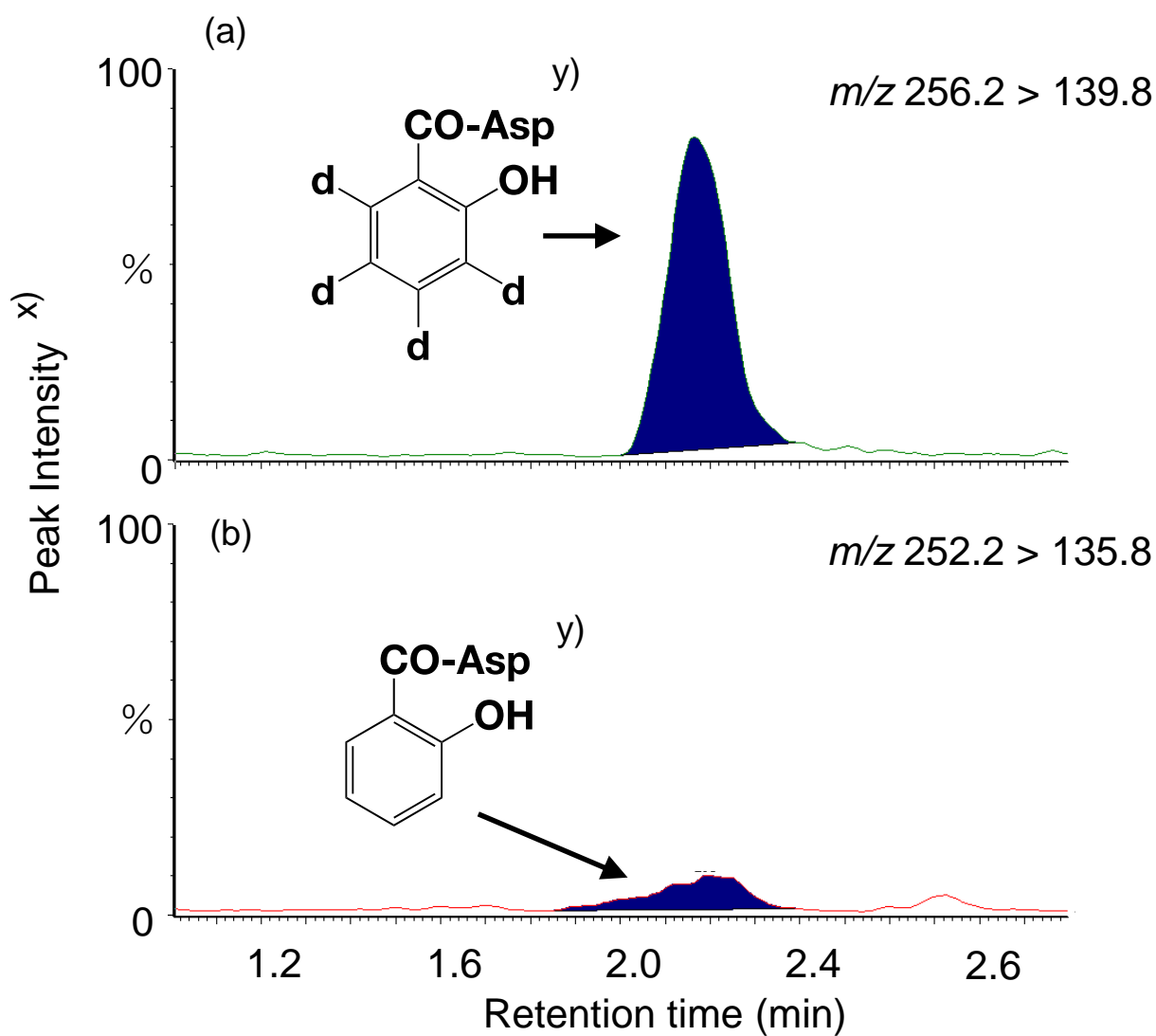
**Figure 2.** Evaluation of SA, SAG and SAGE in *A. thaliana*.



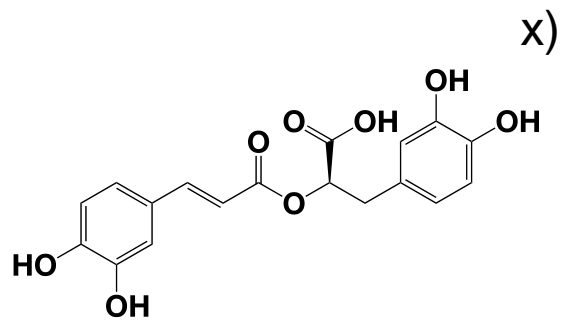
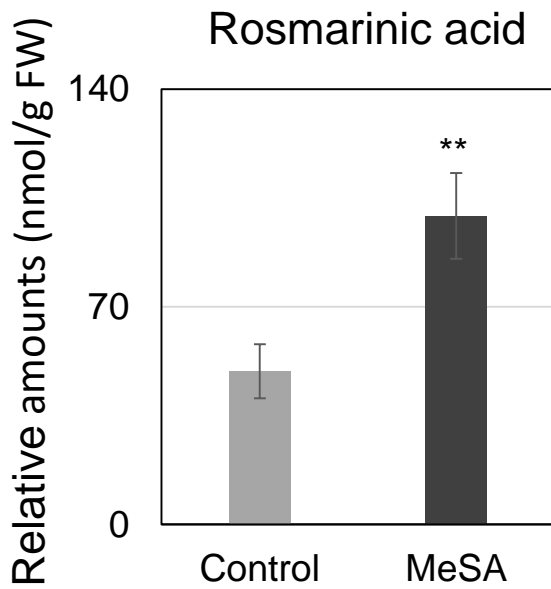
**Figure 3.** Metabolism of airborne MeSA- $d_4$  into SA- $d_4$  in *A. thaliana*.



**Figure 4.** Metabolism of airborne MeSA- $d_4$  into SAG- $d_4$  and SAGE- $d_4$  in *A. thaliana*.



**Figure 5.** Metabolism of airborne MeSA- $d_4$  into SA-Asp- $d_4$  in *A. thaliana*.



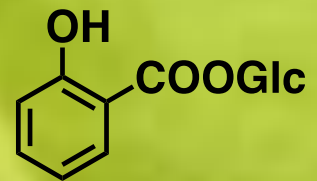
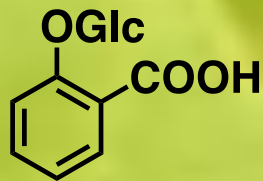
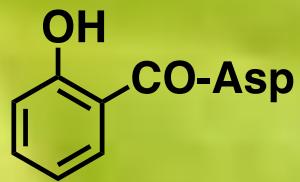
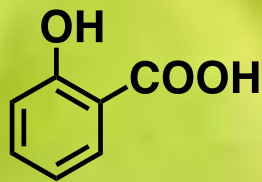
**Figure 6.** Evaluation of rosmarinic acid in *P. frutescens* treated with airborne MeSA.

**Airborne**

**MeSA**



**MeSA**





## Supplemental material

# Metabolism of airborne methyl salicylate in adjacent plants.

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**Figure 3S.**  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum of SA-Asp (270 MHz,  $\text{CD}_3\text{OD}$ ).

**Figure 4S.**  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectrum of SA-Asp (67.5 MHz,  $\text{CD}_3\text{OD}$ ).

**Figure 5S.** Evaluation of SA, SAG and SAGE in *P. frutescens*.

**Figure 6S.** Evaluation of transcriptional level of mRNA encoding *PR1* and *5*.

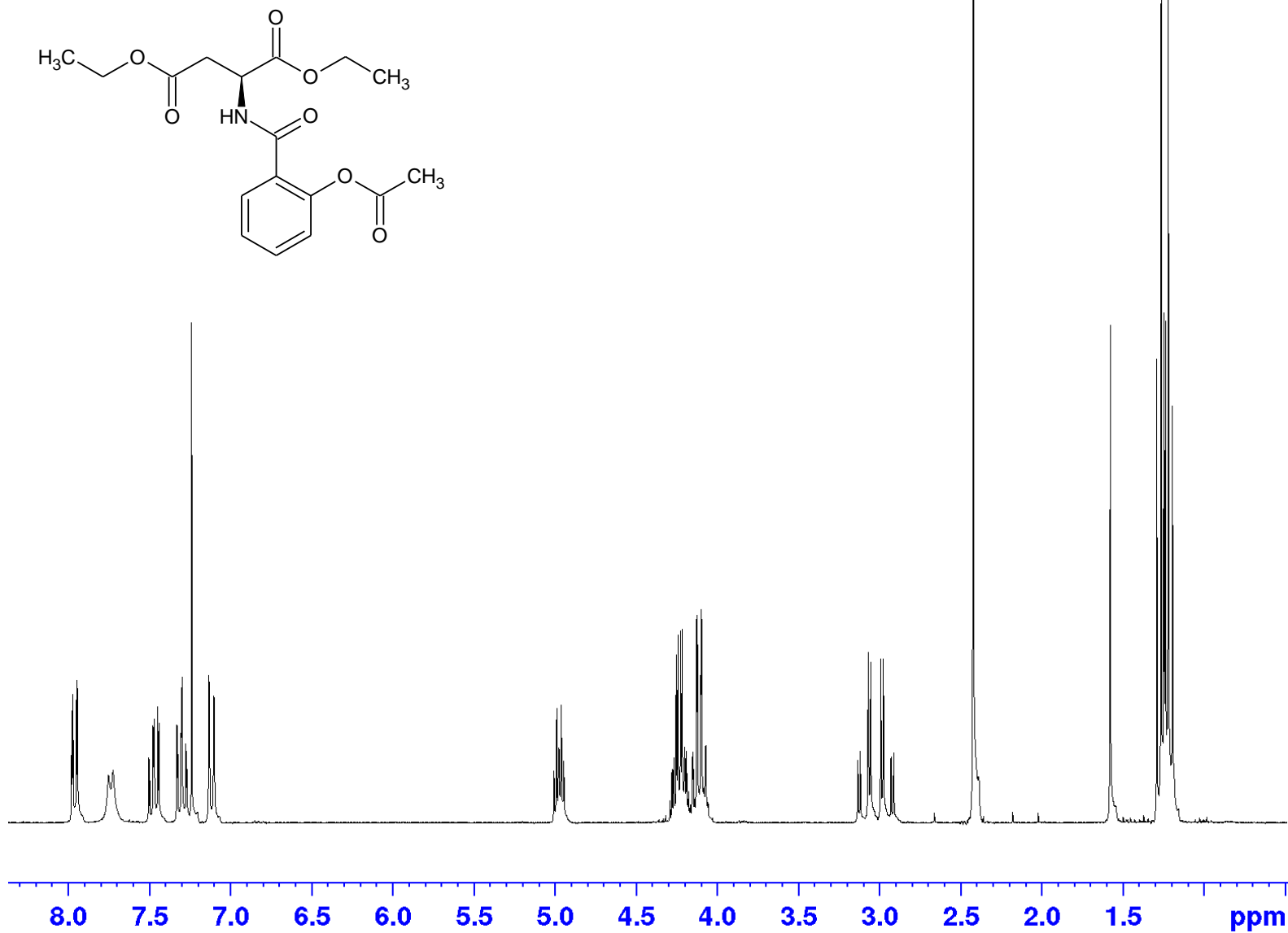
**Table 1S.** Primer sets used for this study

**Experimental.**



**Figure 1S.** Exposure of airborne MeSA or MeSA- $d_4$  to plants.

*A. thaliana* plants were grown at 23 °C with a 16 h light and 8 h dark photo period for thirty days. Six plants were placed in a semiclosed chamber (Triple L, 40.0 cm x 25.6 cm x 28.0 cm, Kotobuki Co., Ltd. Tenri, Japan) together with three filter papers containing MeSA (1 mg/filter paper) or MeSA- $d_4$  (1 mg/filter paper) and kept for 24 h. The conversion yield of MeSA- $d_4$  from SA- $d_4$  was evaluated to be 92% according to the method shown in Experimental section in this supplemental material.



**Figure 2S.** <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum of ASA-Asp(OEt)<sub>2</sub> (270 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>).

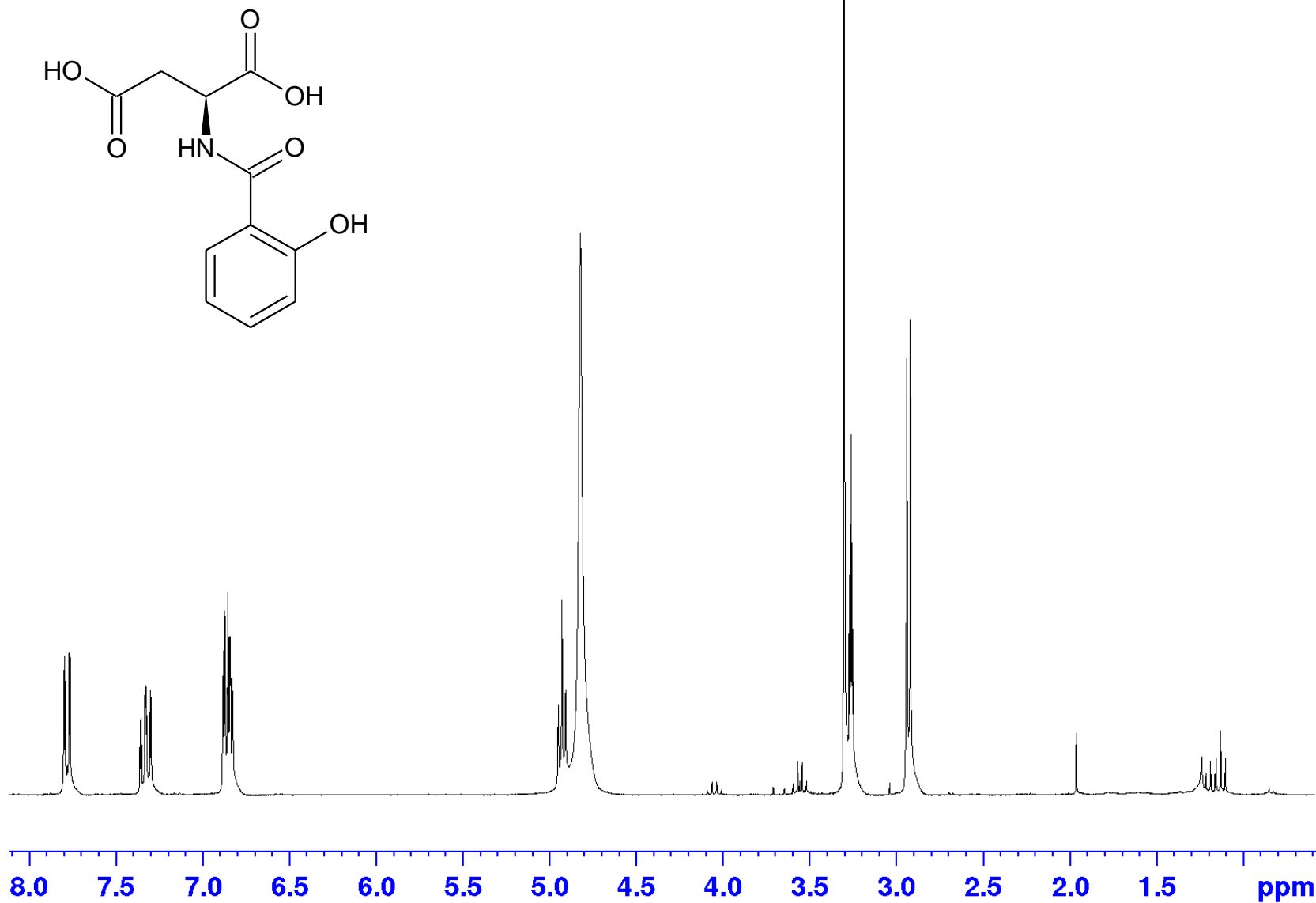


Figure 3S. <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum of SA-Asp (270 MHz, CD<sub>3</sub>OD).

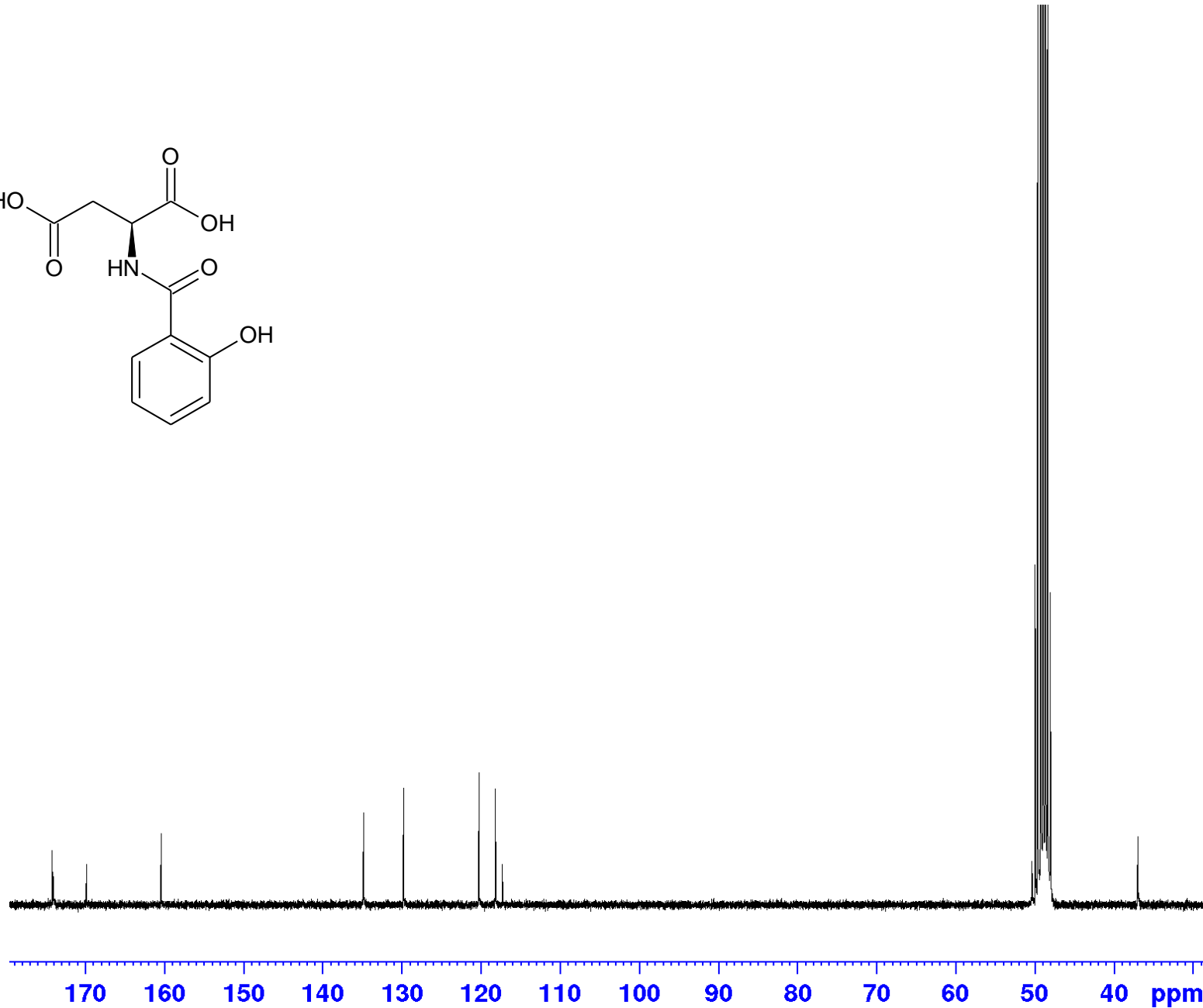
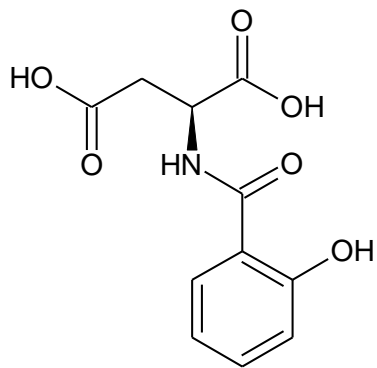
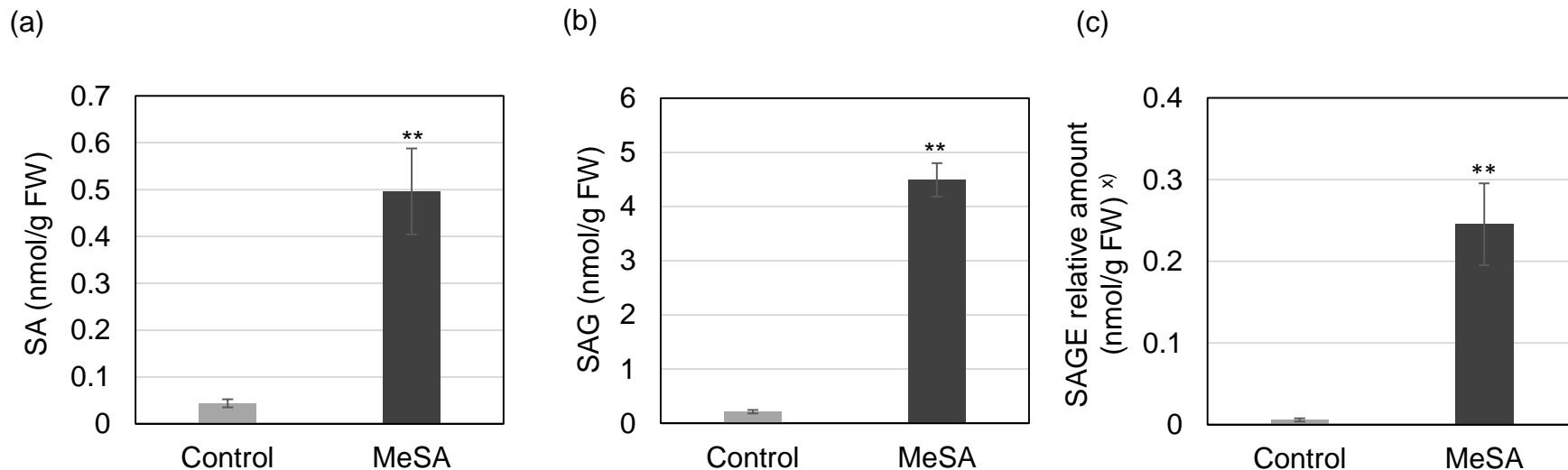


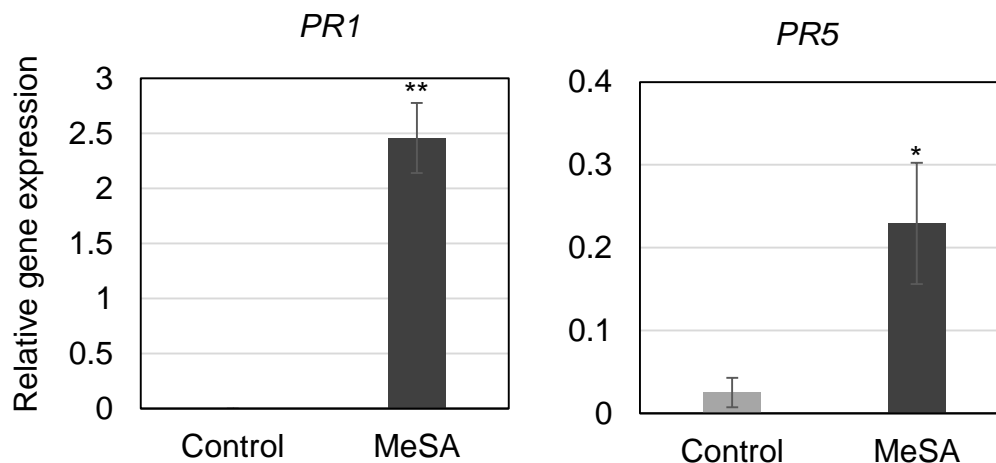
Figure 4S.  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectrum of SA-Asp (67.5 MHz,  $\text{CD}_3\text{OD}$ ).



**Figure 5S. Evaluation of SA, SAG and SAGE in *P. frutescens*.**

Plants were exposed to airborne MeSA for 24 h. The upper parts of the plants were harvested and extracted with EtOH. Accumulated amounts of SA, SAG and SAGE were analyzed by UPLC-MS/MS. a) accumulated amount of SA. b) accumulated amount of SAG. c) relative amount of SAGE. Each value is represented by the mean  $\pm$  SD of six independent replicates. Welch`s test, \*\*  $p < 0.01$

<sup>x)</sup> The peak area was calculated corresponding to the internal standard of SAG-*d*<sub>4</sub>.



**Figure 6S.** Evaluation of transcriptional level of mRNA encoding *PR1* and 5.

Plants were exposed to airborne MeSA for 24 h. Total RNA was extracted from frozen leaves (100 mg) of airborne MeSA treated and non-treated plants. mRNA was isolated using ISOSPIN Plant RNA extraction kit (Nippon gene, Japan) according to the manufacturer's protocol. The obtained RNA samples were subjected to reverse transcribed reaction using M-MLV reverse transcriptase (Invitrogen, USA). Quantitative real-time PCR was conducted using KOD SYBR qPCR Mix (Toyobo, Japan) as described in the manufacturer's protocol. Each reaction mixture contains 12.5  $\mu$ L of KOD SYBR, 9.5  $\mu$ L of MilliQ water, 1  $\mu$ L of each primer (10  $\mu$ M) and 1  $\mu$ L of cDNA. qRT-PCR was performed in a Thermal Cycler Dice Real Time system (TAKARA TP800, Japan) at 95  $^{\circ}$ C for 30 s followed by 40 cycles at 95  $^{\circ}$ C for 5 s, 54  $^{\circ}$ C for 30 s and 95  $^{\circ}$ C for 15 s, 60  $^{\circ}$ C for 30 s, 95  $^{\circ}$ C for 15 s. Primers used in this study are listed in supplementary Table 1. An actin gene was used as a reference gene in this study. Each gene was calculated and expressed as fold regulation in comparison with the housekeeping gene actin. Each value is represented by the mean  $\pm$  SD of six independent replicates. Welch's test, \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ,

**Table 1S.** Primer sets used for this study.

gene name		Annealing temperature [°C]
PR1 (AT2G14610)	forward: GAGAAGGCTAACTACAACACTACGC reverse: CATTAGTATGGCTTCTCGTTCACA	54
PR5 (AT1G75040)	forward: CTGAATTCACTCTAGTAGGCGATG reverse: TTGTTCTGATCCATGACCTTAAGC	54
ACT2 (AT3G18780)	forward: CTTGCACCAAGCAGCATGAA reverse: CCGATCCAGACACTGTACTTCCTT	54



## Experimental

**GC-MS analysis.** GC-MS analysis was completed on a Varian CP-3800 gas chromatograph with a Varian 1200L quadrupole MS/MS in electron ionization mode. GC MS parameters for the detection as following. Injection temperature was 200 °C, and a fused-silica capillary column (BetaDEX<sub>120</sub>; 30 m × 0.25 mm i.d., 0.25 μm film thickness; GL Sciences) was used. The temperature program started at 80 °C for 1 min and subsequently increased at 5 °C /min to 220 °C, which was maintained for 1 min. Helium was used as the carrier gas at a linear velocity of 1.2 mL/min, and all spectra were scanned within the range *m/z* 10-600.

**Evaluation of conversion yield of MeSA-*d*<sub>4</sub> from SA-*d*<sub>4</sub>.** An aliquot (0.1 mL) of the solution containing [<sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-3, <sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-4, <sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-5, <sup>2</sup>H<sub>1</sub>-6]-SA (SA-*d*<sub>4</sub>) (1 mg/0.1 mL MeOH) was dropped onto a filter paper (ϕ 10 mm), and an excess amount of CH<sub>2</sub>N<sub>2</sub> in Et<sub>2</sub>O was added, and the paper was left for 10 min at room temperature to allow the organic solvent to evaporate. The filter paper was extracted using EtOAc (1 mL) for 1h, and an aliquot (1 mL) of a solution containing MeSA (1 mg/mL in EtOAc) was added to the extract. An aliquot of the mixed solution was subjected to GC-MS analysis as mentioned above. The conversion rate was calculated as following:

conversion rate (%) = (peak area derived from *m/z* 156) × 100 / (peak area derived from *m/z* 152)