

## Protein Extraction, Acid Phosphatase Activity Assays, and Determination of Soluble Protein Concentration

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**[Abstract]** Acid phosphatases (APases) catalyze the hydrolysis of inorganic phosphate (Pi) from a broad range of Pi-monoesters with an acidic pH optimum. The liberated Pi is reassimilated into cellular metabolism via mitochondrial or chloroplastic ATP synthases of respiration or photosynthesis, respectively. Eukaryotic APases exist as a wide variety of tissue- and/or cellular compartment-specific isozymes that display marked differences in their physical and kinetic properties. Increases in intracellular (vacuolar) and secreted APase activities are useful biochemical markers of plant nutritional Pi deficiency. The protocols for protein extraction, APase activity determination and measurement of soluble protein concentration from plant tissues or cell suspension cultures are presented.

### **Materials and Reagents**

1. Plant tissues
2. Sodium acetate (Bioshop, catalog number: SAA305)
3. EDTA (Bioshop, catalog number: EDT001)
4. Dithiothreitol (DTT) (Bioshop, catalog number: DTT 002)
5. Phenylmethyl sulfonyl fluoride (PMSF) (G-Biosciences, catalog number: 786-0555)
6. Thiourea (Sigma-Aldrich, catalog number: T-7875)
7. Polyvinyl (polypyrrolidone) (PVPP) (Sigma-Aldrich, catalog number: P-6755)
8.  $\beta$ -nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide reduced form (NADH) (Bioshop, catalog number: NAD002)
9. Phosphoenolpyruvate (PEP) (Biovectra, catalog number: 2552)
10.  $MgCl_2$  ((Biolynx, catalog number: 18641)
11. Rabbit muscle lactate dehydrogenase (LDH) (Sigma-Aldrich, catalog number: L-2500)
12. para-nitrophenyl-phosphate (pNPP, phosphatase substrate) (Sigma-Aldrich, catalog number: P-4744)
13. Coomassie Brilliant blue G-250 (Serva, catalog number: 35050 C.!.42655)
14. Bovine gamma globulin (BGG) (2.0 mg/ml) (Thermo Fisher Scientific, catalog number: 23212)

15. NaOH
16. Extraction buffer (EB) (see Recipes)
17. Bradford working solution (see Recipes)
18. Acid phosphatase enzyme assay mix #1 (see Recipes)
19. Acid phosphatase enzyme assay mix #2 (see Recipes)
20. Bradford assay stock (see Recipes)

## **Equipment**

1. Whatman #1 filter paper
2. 1.5 ml microfuge tubes
3. 10 and 25  $\mu$ l Hamilton syringes
4. Pipetor
5. Small mortar and pestle
6. Eppendorf microfuge
7. 96 well polystyrene microtitre plate (flat bottom)
8. A computer supported microplate spectrophotometer (Spectromax Plus, Molecular Devices)

## **Procedure**

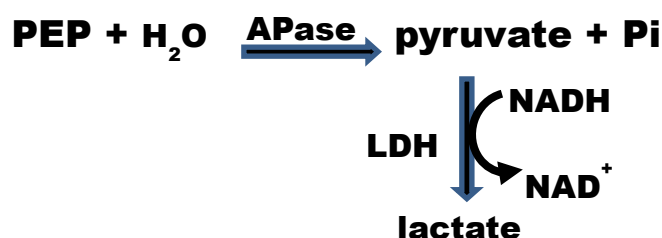
### **A. Extraction**

This protocol applies to extraction of intracellular (vacuolar) APases from plant tissues and suspension cell cultures (e.g., Tran *et al.*, 2010a; Veljanovski *et al.*, 2006). Refer to Tran *et al.* 2010b and Robinson *et al.*, 2012 for information on the isolation and analysis of plant cell wall localized and secreted APase isoforms.

1. Weigh tissue and freeze in liquid N<sub>2</sub>. Store at -80 °C until use.
2. Place a small spatula of sea sand into the mortar, add small amount of liquid N<sub>2</sub>, followed by frozen tissue, and grind to a powder. Carefully add more liquid N<sub>2</sub> if needed to keep frozen.
3. Invert tube with extraction buffer (EB) to mix and add to sample at a ratio of 1:2, w/v (e.g. 0.5 g powdered tissue + 1.0 ml EB) although this may need to be increased to 1:3 for leaf tissue and 1:4 for roots. Grind for several minutes and place in 1.5 ml microfuge tubes.
4. Centrifuge 5 min at 4 °C and 11,000 x g. Remove supernatant (clarified extract) to a fresh microfuge tube and keep it on ice. Measure APase activity immediately at room temperature (24 °C). Aliquots of clarified extracts can be snap frozen in liquid N<sub>2</sub> and stored at -80 °C for future use.

## B. APase activity assay 1

1. Conveniently measure APase activity by coupling the hydrolysis of phosphoenolpyruvate (PEP) to pyruvate to the lactate dehydrogenase (LDH) reaction at 24 °C and using a spectrophotometer to continuously monitor NADH oxidation at 340 nm. PEP seems to be an excellent APase substrate for since it occupies the highest position on the thermodynamic scale of phosphorylated intermediates (and thus its P atom is an excellent leaving group). For every PEP molecule hydrolyzed to pyruvate, one NADH molecule is oxidized to NAD<sup>+</sup> by LDH as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. APase activity can be conveniently determined by coupling the hydrolysis of PEP to pyruvate to the lactate dehydrogenase (LDH) reaction and using a spectrophotometer to continuously monitor NADH oxidation to NAD<sup>+</sup> at 340 nm**

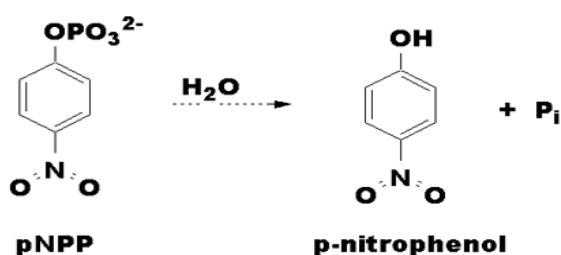
2. Accurately pipette 1-10 µl of clarified extract into a microplate well. We prefer to use a 10 or 25 µl Hamilton syringe as opposed to automated pipetors for accurate pipetting of enzyme protein extracts into wells of the microtitre plate.
3. Use repeat pipetor to add 200 µl APase assay mix #1 to each well and immediately place in microplate spectrophotometer. Continuously monitor NADH oxidation to NAD<sup>+</sup> as a decline in absorbance at 340 nm ( $A_{340}$ ), taking readings every 5-10 sec for up to 5 min.
4. Correct for background NADH oxidation by omitting PEP from the reaction mixture. Ensure that the decline in  $A_{340}$  (amount of NADH being oxidized;  $\epsilon_{340} = 6,220 \text{ M}^{-1}\text{cm}^{-1}$ ) is proportional to assay time and concentration of enzyme assayed. Dilution of clarified extract in extraction buffer (lacking PVPP) may be necessary for samples containing abundant APase activity.

*Note: One international unit (U) of enzyme activity is defined as the amount of enzyme resulting in the hydrolysis of 1 µmol of substrate (e.g. one µmol of NADH oxidized to NAD<sup>+</sup>) per min at 24 °C. APase activity in (U/ml clarified extract) = ( $\Delta A_{340}/\text{min} \times \text{clarified extract dilution factor}$ )/6.22. Thus, if 2.0 µl of clarified extract mixed with 200 µl of APase reaction mixture yields a  $\Delta A_{340}/\text{min}$  of 0.1 at 340 nm, then the APase activity =  $(0.1 \times 100)/6.22 \text{ U/ml} = 1.6 \text{ U/ml}$ .*

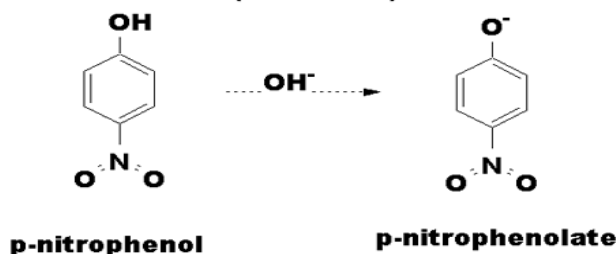
## C. APase activity assay 2

This is a 'stopped-time' APase assay based upon the hydrolysis of the synthetic substrate, para-nitrophenyl-phosphate (pNPP), to para-nitrophenol (pNP) and  $P_i$  (Figure 2). The pNP product forms a yellow color at alkaline pH ( $\lambda_{max} = 410$  nm; extinction coefficient =  $\epsilon_{410} = 18.2$   $\text{mM}^{-1}\text{cm}^{-1}$ ; meaning a 1 mM solution of pNP should have an  $A_{410}$  of 18.2). The amount of yellow color formed is thus directly proportional to the amount of pNP produced and is therefore an indicator of the APase activity. This assay tends to be more popular in the APase literature. However, care needs to be taken to ensure that the amount of pNP being formed is proportional to the assay time and volume of clarified extract being assayed.

### 1. Phosphatase Catalyzed Reaction



### 2. Color Reaction (add NaOH)



**Figure 2. APase activity is often assayed spectrophotometrically at 410 nm by determining the amount of pNP produced following the hydrolysis of  $P_i$  from pNPP. Addition of NaOH after a specified assay time (e.g., 10 min) serves to stop the APase reaction while simultaneously converting the product p-nitrophenol into the yellow colored p-nitrophenolate ( $\lambda_{max} = 410$  nm).**

1. Accurately pipette 1-10  $\mu\text{l}$  of clarified enzyme extract into a well of the microtitre plate. Add 200  $\mu\text{l}$  of APase assay mix #2 to each well containing enzyme extract and incubate for 10 min at room temperature (24  $^{\circ}\text{C}$ ).
2. At  $t = 10$  min, add 50  $\mu\text{l}$  of 3 M NaOH to each well containing APase reactions. This stops the reaction (denatures APase) while simultaneously converting pNP product into the yellow colored p-nitrophenolate.
3. Determine  $\Delta A_{410}/\text{min}$  for each well to determine the amount ( $\mu\text{mol}$ ) of pNP formed per min.

### D. Bradford Assay of Soluble Protein Concentration

1. Prepare standard curve using the template below:

Well #	Vol BGG (0.4 mg/ml)	Amt Protein (BGG)	Vol H <sub>2</sub> O
	( $\mu$ l)	( $\mu$ g)	( $\mu$ l)
1a	0	0	25 (blank)
1b	2	0.8	23
1c	4	1.6	21
1d	8	3.2	17
1e	12	4.8	13
1f	16	6.4	9
1g	20	8.0	5
1h	25	10.0	0
2a	0	0	25 (blank)

2. Pipette 2-20  $\mu$ l of the clarified extract (dilute as necessary) and adjust final volume to 25  $\mu$ l in each well with H<sub>2</sub>O. Dilute sample if necessary to remain in linear range of standard curve. A 25  $\mu$ l Hamilton syringe is more accurate than automated pipetors for pipetting of BGG standard and clarified extract into wells of the microtitre plate.
3. Add 250  $\mu$ l of Bradford working solution to each well using a repeat pipetor and read A<sub>595</sub> of protein standards and unknowns. Ensure that A<sub>595</sub> values of clarified extract samples aliquot falls within range of A<sub>595</sub> values of the BGG standards. The absorbance maximum for an acidic solution of Coomassie Brilliant blue G-250 shifts from 465 nm to 595 when protein binding occurs. Determine amount of protein in clarified extract aliquot from the standard curve (if 2  $\mu$ l aliquot of clarified extract yields an A<sub>595</sub> value equivalent to 5  $\mu$ g of protein, then the extract would have a protein concentration of 2 mg/ml).

## Recipes

1. Extraction buffer (EB, keep on ice)  
50 mM Na-acetate (pH 5.6)  
1 mM EDTA  
1 mM DTT

- 1 mM PMSF (prepare 100 mM stock in absolute ethanol and store at -20 °C, add fresh to EB immediately prior to tissue extraction as PMSF is unstable in aqueous solution)
- 5 mM thiourea
- 1% (w/v) PVPP
2. APase assay #1 reaction mixture (prepare freshly and keep at room temperature)
  - 50 mM Na-acetate (pH 5.6)
  - 10 mM MgCl<sub>2</sub>
  - 0.2 mM NADH
  - 5 mM PEP
  - 3 U/ml rabbit muscle LDH (Desalt LDH by centrifuging an aliquot 3 min at 11,000 x g. Discard supernatant and resuspend the pellet in an equal volume of EB).
3. APase assay #2 reaction mixture
  - 10 mM pNPP (sodium salt), dissolved in 50 mM acetate-KOH (pH 5.8)
  - 3 M sodium hydroxide (NaOH) also needed to stop the reaction
4. Bradford assay stock
  - 100 ml 95% EtOH
  - 200 ml 88% H<sub>3</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>
  - 350 mg Brilliant blue G-250
5. Bradford working solution
  - 30 ml Bradford Stock
  - 425 ml H<sub>2</sub>O
  - 15 ml EtOH
  - 30 ml 88% H<sub>3</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>
  - Filter through Whatman #1 filter paper and store in brown or dark glass bottle.
  - Protein assay solutions are stable for months at room temperature.
6. Bradford Protein standard
  - Dilute bovine Gamma Globulin with H<sub>2</sub>O to 0.4 mg/ml and store 100 µl aliquots at -20 °C.

### **Acknowledgments**

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## References

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