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Particulate matter deposition on roadside plants and the importance of leaf trait combinations

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ABSTRACT

Road and vehicle use in urban environments are key contributors to urban air pollution and increase concentrations of carbon monoxide, polyaromatic hydrocarbons and particulate matter (particles <100 μm diameter). Plants, which can intercept these pollutants, are increasingly recognised as practical mitigation methods to reduce ambient pollution, especially adjacent roadsides. We quantified particulate matter loads in 16 common native species along Sydney roadsides and linked findings to leaf traits. For each species, we tagged individuals within the first 2 m of road edges and recorded leaf area, shape and arrangement, also noting the presence of leaf hairs. We then quantified particulate matter loads deposited in each sample over three months and, for two morphologically distinct species, *Acacia parramattensis* and *A. longifolia*, the composition and concentration of metals in deposited particulate matter. We found particulate deposition varied according to species and leaf shapes but not sample months and, those species with leaf hairs accumulated significantly more particulate matter. Furthermore, we found metals associated with vehicle use including copper, chromium and manganese in collected particulate matter. Ultimately, our results highlight the importance leaf trait combinations can have in affecting particulate matter deposition.

1. Introduction

Air pollution is a pervasive and increasing threat to both human and ecosystem health that requires practical remediation methods. One specific air pollutant of particular concern is particulate matter (PM) or particles with aerodynamic diameters in the range of 0.001–100 μm. These particles can contain toxic compounds including polyaromatic hydrocarbons and heavy metals (Ram et al., 2015) which, if inhaled can lead to respiratory and cardiac diseases (Polichetti et al., 2009). In urban areas a major source of PM is vehicle use (Vu et al., 2015). Whilst we can reduce PM by restricting the number of vehicles or limiting construction and industrial processing, an additional way to reduce PM involves using vegetation (Hirabayashi and Nowak, 2016; Nowak et al., 2014). Model estimates of PM deposition on vegetation in urban areas indicate plants offer a significant sink for PM and a route by which pollutants, including heavy metals, can be removed from the atmosphere (Räsänen et al., 2014; Popek et al., 2013; Qiu et al., 2009; Escobedo and Nowak, 2009). Quantifying the amount of PM that deposits and accumulates on different plant species is the first step towards improving these model estimates and understanding the implications of PM accumulation on vegetation.

The surfaces and waxy epicuticlar layers of leaves are the primary receptors of PM. A plant's capacity to capture PM is affected by several factors including the microstructure of the leaf's surface, the macrostructure of vegetation and environmental variables like wind and temperature (Mo et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2016). Microstructural features like rough surfaces, pubescence, thick waxy epicuticles and low stomatal densities along with macrostructural features like increased plant height, whorled leaf arrangements and larger leaf areas are all individual traits that enhance PM accumulation (Mo et al., 2015; Nowak et al., 2006; Popek et al., 2013; Chaturvedi et al., 2013; Prusty et al., 2005). To maximise the amount of PM captured and thereby the improvement to air quality that urban plantings have, it is necessary to understand which species and micro- and macrostructural traits are most effective in removing PM. Whilst the importance of individual traits on PM deposition is well known, we are yet to appreciate how different combinations of these traits interact to influence PM accumulation.

Depending on the amount and elemental composition of PM deposited on a leaf's surface and/or epicuticular wax layer and the plant species considered, PM can cause physiological and morphological impacts including increased cell alkalinity, photosynthetic

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inhibition, leaf senescence, stomatal damage, and reduced growth and yield (Rai, 2016; Daresta et al., 2015). For this reason, it is critical to quantify PM deposition in multiple plant species, especially species that are commonly planted along roadsides and in cities where ambient PM levels are greatest (Vu et al., 2015).

We quantified PM deposition on leaf surfaces in 16 native Australian species along roadsides in the Greater Sydney Region. Specifically, we determined the concentrations of metals in the PM on leaves and quantified differences in PM deposition among species, relating this to several micro- and macro-structural traits. We hypothesised that species with leaf hairs (e.g. *Westringia fruticosa*) would report greater PM deposition values because these traits typically enhance deposition.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Plant material and study sites

We quantified particulate matter deposition on 16 native species at eight sites along moderately to highly trafficked roads in the Greater Sydney Region (Table 1). We chose sites that were greater than 10 m wide, were flat or had little slope and were adjacent roads with speed limits between 60 and 70 km/h.

2.2. Sample collection

To quantify variation in the PM depositing on plant species over time, we sampled once a month for three months between October 2012 and December 2012. In each case, sampling occurred in the last week of each month. Due to differences in plant abundance between sites, numbers of replicate plants ranged between two and six individuals. We sampled plants along ≤50 m strips of roadside, within ∼2 m of the road edge. For those plants with few individuals per site, we sampled all individuals. For abundant species, we sampled replicates according to an n^{th} nearest sampling protocol, where n is a random number (Barbour et al., 1987). Once sample plants were initially located, we tagged and sampled the same individual for the next three months. For each sample, we collected 2–5 terminal shoots of similar length (<20 cm) at breast height (approximately 1.5 m). We chose this sampling height due to height dependent differences in particulate deposition (Mitchell et al., 2010). Samples were randomly selected and either directed towards the road or not. For each terminal shoots, we picked 30 young and undamaged leaves, between the 2nd and 8th node for PM analysis. We found 30 leaves to be the minimum number required to quantify PM deposition. Upon collection, we placed 30 leaves in plastic bags with strips of absorbent towel, labeled each bag and stored in a refrigerator until analysis.

2.3. Quantitative analysis of particulate matter

We first dried all filter papers for 60 min at 100 °C in a drying oven stored them in a desiccating chamber to stabilise the humidity and after 10 min weighed papers.

To quantify PM for each sample, we placed leaves in a glass container with 200 mL of reverse osmosis water and agitated for 60 s; this represents the PM washed off during rainfall and not PM captured in the epicuticular wax layer Dżierzanowski et al., 2011. We then filtered the water using a sieve with mesh diameter 100 μm. We next filtered the solution using a 15 mm Buchner funnel connected to a vacuum pump, first on pre-weighed filter paper, Whatman grade 541 (retention 22 μm) and next on Whatman grade GF/A (retention 1.6 μm). We, therefore, collected two size fractions of PM: (1) 'large': 22 μm–100 μm, and (2) 'small': 1.6 μm–22 μm. We quantified the large fraction for all species but could only quantify the small fraction for *Acacia parramattensis*, *Acacia longifolia* and *Banksia integrifolia* (small fraction results not reported due to low replicate number). We then dried and reweighed papers following the same procedure as in pre-weighing, to calculate PM mass in each fraction of every sample.

To measure the total area of each leaf we used image analysis program imageJ (Rasband, W.S., ImageJ, U. S. National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Maryland, USA, http://imagej.nih.gov/ij/, 1997–2012) following Osunkoya et al. (2010). Although PM was washed from both abaxial and adaxial leaf surfaces, we expressed the amount obtained per unit area of leaf. In addition to leaf area, we recorded habit (tree or shrub), leaf shape (linear, lanecolate, obovate, needle like or elliptic), leaf arrangements (opposite, alternate or whorled) and the presence of leaf hairs for each plant species sampled (Table 1).

2.4. Metal element analysis by ICP-AES

To determine the metal species in the PM collected, we first dissolved filter papers by gently refluxing with nitric and hydrochloric acids. We then analysed trace metal species using inductively coupled plasma-atomic emission spectroscopy (ICP-AES) following the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) method 200.8 (USEPA, 1994). We tested for aluminium (Al) and iron (Fe), in addition to metal species more commonly associated with traffic, including: lead (Pb), zinc (Zn), cadmium (Cd), chromium (Cr), nickel (Ni), manganese (Mn) and copper (Cu) Herngren and Goonetilleke (2006). Issues with detectability meant we could only quantify Cu, Cr, Mn, Al and Fe in each sample. In each case, we ran metal analysis on leaf material collected from two morphologically distinct species: *A. parramattensis* and *A. longifolia* at three sites.

2.5. Statistical analysis

As data were not distributed normally, we used the non-parametric equivalent of a 1-way ANOVA, known as Kruskal-Wallis test (Field, 2009) to determine if the dependent variable, PM amount on leaves differed between each of five independent variables including (1) species, (2) leaf shapes, (3) leaf arrangements, (4) plant habits and (5) sampling sites. In cases where we found significant differences, we used Dunn's non-parametric pairwise comparisons to determine which levels of the independent variable were significantly different from each other. We used Mann-Whitney *U* tests to compare the PM amount between leaves with or without hairs. For each analyses, we used the average PM amount recorded over the three-month sampling period. To determine if PM deposition varied over the sampling period we used Friedman's analysis of variance (ANOVA), a non-parametric version of repeated measures ANOVA (Field, 2009).

To compare differences in the concentrations of metals (Cu, Cr, Mn, Al and Fe) quantified in the PM collected from *A. parramattensis* and *A. longifolia* leaves, we conducted separate 1-way ANOVAs. We applied a Bonferroni correction to account for increased type 1 error (adjusted significance level $P < 0.01$). We used multiple ANOVAs rather than a multivariate ANOVA owing to multicollinearity between several metals (Quinn and Keough, 2002). In each case data conformed to assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances.

3. Results

3.1. PM deposition: species and leaf traits

PM loads differed significantly among species ($H_{15} = 82.68$, $P < 0.001$; Fig. 1), leaf shapes ($H_4 = 28.08$, $P < 0.001$; Fig. 2) and plants with or without leaf hairs ($U = 4295$, $z = 2.14$, $P = 0.03$; Fig. 3). Pairwise comparisons revealed *Westringia fruticosa* had significantly