

Original article

Estimating the Minerals, Nitrogen, and Phosphorus Contents and Antibacterial Investigation of Fruits and Leaves of *Lotus edulis* Plant Extracts

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Keywords:

Lotus Edulis, Minerals, Antibacterial Activity, Leaves, Fruits.

ABSTRACT

The present study investigated the mineral composition and antibacterial activity of leaves and fruits of *Lotus edulis* collected from Al-Marj, northeastern Libya. Mineral analysis revealed significant variations between plant organs, with potassium and nitrogen predominating in leaves (1319 ppm and 673.5 ppm, respectively) compared to fruits (919 ppm and 249 ppm). Phosphorus was slightly higher in fruits (111.91 ppm) than in leaves (98.96 ppm), while sodium and calcium were consistently greater in leaves. Antibacterial assays demonstrated concentration-dependent inhibition against selected bacterial strains. Leaf extracts exhibited stronger activity than fruit extracts, particularly against *Bacillus cereus* and *Escherichia coli*, with inhibition zones ranging from 14–8 mm and 10–5 mm, respectively. Notably, leaf extracts inhibited *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (15–8 mm), whereas fruit extracts showed no effect. Neither organ extract produced detectable inhibition against *Staphylococcus aureus*. These findings highlight organ-specific mineral distribution and suggest that *L. edulis* leaves contain bioactive compounds with promising antibacterial potential. Further phytochemical characterization and standardized assays are recommended to identify active constituents and validate antimicrobial efficacy.

Introduction

Medicinal and edible plants remain an important source of nutrients and biologically active substances. Their value does not depend on a single class of compounds; rather, it reflects the combined contribution of primary nutrients, mineral elements and secondary metabolites. Minerals such as potassium, calcium, sodium and phosphorus participate in osmotic regulation, membrane function, energy transfer and structural processes in plants, while nitrogen is a fundamental component of amino acids, proteins, nucleic acids and many specialized metabolites. The concentration of these constituents can vary considerably between plant organs because leaves and fruits have different physiological roles and because mineral allocation is influenced by soil conditions, plant age, season and water availability [1].

The genus *Lotus* belongs to the family Fabaceae and includes annual and perennial species distributed widely in Mediterranean and temperate regions. *Lotus edulis* L. is an annual Mediterranean legume with edible young pods. As a member of Fabaceae, it is also of interest from a nutritional and ecological perspective because legumes form symbiotic associations that influence nitrogen acquisition. Despite this potential, the chemical composition and biological activity of *L. edulis* collected from Libya have received little direct investigation. Available studies on the genus indicate that *Lotus* species may contain flavonoids, tannins, coumarins and other phenolic constituents, although their abundance differs according to species, genotype, organ and extraction procedure [2].

Interest in plant-derived antibacterial substances has increased alongside the continuing problem of antimicrobial resistance. Plant extracts can contain chemically diverse constituents capable of affecting bacterial membranes, enzymes, energy metabolism or cellular targets. Their apparent activity, however, is strongly dependent on extraction solvent, extract concentration, test organism and assay conditions [3]. Evidence from other *Lotus* species supports the antimicrobial potential of the genus. Girardi et al. for example, detected tannins, coumarins and flavonoids in extracts from several *Lotus* taxa and reported species- and cultivar-dependent antimicrobial effects. Likewise, an ethanolic extract of *L. corniculatus* showed activity against several bacterial strains, including *Escherichia coli* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* [6]. For *L. edulis* specifically, flavonol glycosides with biological activity have been isolated, supporting further assessment of this species as a source of bioactive compounds [4].

Al-Jabal Al-Akhdar in northeastern Libya is distinguished by a Mediterranean climate and comparatively rich plant diversity. Evaluating local edible plants from this region can therefore provide baseline information on their chemical composition and potential biological uses. The estimate the plant contents were taken place in different studies carried out in Libya [5 - 42]. Accordingly, the present study determined sodium, potassium, calcium, phosphorus and nitrogen in the leaves and fruits of *L. edulis* collected near Al-Marj and evaluated aqueous extracts of the two organs against *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Bacillus cereus*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Escherichia coli*. By examining mineral composition and antibacterial response together, the work aims to provide an initial chemical and biological profile of a locally occurring and understudied species. The use of different instruments, such as a flame photometer, Spectrophotometer, HPLC, GC-Mass, X-ray, and others, in many studies in Libya was established on different environmental samples [43 -110]. In this study, the Flame photometer and Spectrophotometer instruments were used.

Methods

Sampling

In this study, the leaves and stems of *Lotus edulis* plants were selected, and the samples were collected from different locations around Al-Marj farms. The study area is located on the second terrace of El- Jabal El- Akhdar mountain. The climate of the study area is comparable to that of El-Jabal El-Akhdar, with a mean temperature of about 15 °C in winter and 24 in summer. The average rainfall ranges between 200- 300 mm.

Sample extraction

10 grams of each dried sample were taken and transferred to a beaker containing 100 ml of distilled water; the mixture was mixed. Then the extraction was carried out by an evaporator system at 75 °C. After two hours, the mixture was filtered; the filtrate was used to determine the selected minerals [6-10].

Determination of Minerals

The sodium and potassium, calcium contents measured by a Flame Photometer (JENWAY Flame Photometer) according to the method described by some studies [60-70]. Nitrogen and phosphorus were estimated by spectrophotometer methods by Vanadate and Nisler reagents , respectively in central lab of Faculty of Science, Omar Al- Mukhtar University.

Results

Minerals

The contents of sodium , potassium ,calcium phosphorus and Nitrogen in leaves and fruits of the studied plant showed wide variations , where the higher concentrations were recorded for potassium of (1419 and 1233 ppm) in leafs and Fruits , respectively , follows by Nitrogen (652.25 and 262.20 ppm) in leaves and fruits , respectively. On the other side the contents of phosphorus , sodium and calcium were fluctuated as following : 85.09 , 30.36 and 10.76 ppm in leaves and 85.04 , 22.36 and 8.76 ppm in fruits ,Generally there are relative increase in the minerals contents in leaves comparing with their values fruits of the studied plant except for nitrogen ,Table 1.

Table 1. Contents (ppm) of minerals (Na, K, Ca, P and N) in fruits and leaves of the studied samples

Plant part	Sodium	Potassium	Calcium	Phosphorus	Nitrogen
Leaves	26.36	1319	10.76	98.96	673.5
Fruits	11.36	919	8.776	111.91	249

Antibacterial activity

The antibacterial activity of the studied extracts showed effect of fruits and leaves of plant against *Bacillus Cereus* bacteria species, where the effect were decreased according to concentrations of fruits or leaves extracts, the inhibition zones were 14 , 12 , 10 and 8 mm for leaves extracts of concentrations of 0.9 , 0.6 , 0.4 and 0.2 g/ml , on the other side the fruits extract recorded inhibition zone values of 12 ,10 ,9 and 8 mm.

The results of antibacterial of extracts of fruits and leaves showed antibacterial activity against different bacteria species including gram positive bacteria (*Staphylococcus aureus*) and (*Bacillus cereus*) , beside gram negative bacteria (*Pseudomonas aeruginosa*) and (*Escherichia coli*) species , the results of antibacterial activities are illustrated in the tables of (2-5).Higher concentration of 0.9 g/ml showed higher inhibition zones for *Bacillus Cereus* ,there are relative increase of the effect of leaves extracts comparing with fruits For the effect of the studied abstracts the results showed the leaves extracts showed higher values of inhibition zones (5 -11 mm) against *Escherichia coli* comparing with the values of 3-5 mg/l.

Also all concentrations showed inhibition zones were fluctuated between (12 -16 mm) of leaves comparing with the fruits extract (6-12 mm).

Table 2. Antibacterial activity of leaf and fruit extracts against *Staphylococcus aureus*

Concentration	Leaves (mm)	Fruits (mm)
0.9 g/mL	–	–
0.6 g/mL	–	–
0.4 g/mL	–	–
0.2 g/mL	–	–

Table 3. Antibacterial activity of leaf and fruit extracts against *Bacillus cereus*

Concentration	Leaves (mm)	Fruits (mm)
0.9 g/mL	14	12
0.6 g/mL	12	10
0.4 g/mL	10	9
0.2 g/mL	8	9

Table 4. Antibacterial activity of leaf and fruit extracts against *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*

Concentration	Leaves (mm)	Fruits (mm)
0.9 g/mL	15	–
0.6 g/mL	12	–
0.4 g/mL	10	–
0.2 g/mL	8	–

Table 5. Antibacterial activity of leaf and fruit extracts against *Escherichia coli*

Concentration	Leaves (mm)	Fruits (mm)
0.9 g/mL	10	7
0.6 g/mL	7	5
0.4 g/mL	7	5
0.2 g/mL	5	3

Discussion

The mineral analysis demonstrates that the leaves and fruits of *L. edulis* contain all five measured elements, but their distribution is not uniform between organs. Potassium was the predominant measured mineral, reaching 1319 ppm in leaves and 919 ppm in fruits. Nitrogen was the next most abundant measured constituent, with 673.5 ppm in leaves and 249 ppm in fruits. Sodium and calcium were also higher in leaves (26.36 and 10.76 ppm, respectively) than in fruits (11.36 and 8.776 ppm), whereas phosphorus showed the opposite pattern: 111.91 ppm in fruits compared with 98.96 ppm in leaves. Thus, the statement that leaves contained higher values applies to potassium, nitrogen, sodium and calcium, but not to phosphorus. The predominance of potassium is physiologically reasonable. Potassium is highly mobile in plants and contributes to enzyme activation, stomatal regulation, osmotic adjustment and the transport of assimilates. Its high concentration in leaves is consistent with the intensive metabolic and water-regulatory functions of photosynthetic tissue [111-114]. The marked leaf-to-fruit difference in nitrogen may likewise reflect the abundance of photosynthetic proteins,

enzymes and nitrogen-containing metabolites in leaves. Legumes can acquire nitrogen through root-associated biological fixation, although the present work did not examine nodulation or fixation rates; consequently, the nitrogen result should not be attributed directly to symbiotic fixation without additional evidence [115]. The slightly higher phosphorus concentration in fruits may be associated with the demand of developing reproductive tissues for phosphorylated metabolites, membranes and energy transfer.

Calcium, in contrast, is relatively immobile in the phloem and often accumulates more readily in transpiring vegetative organs than in fruits, which provides a plausible explanation for its higher value in leaves [114]. Sodium occurred at relatively low concentrations in both organs, as expected for a non-halophytic plant, although interpretation requires information about soil salinity and irrigation water that was not included in this study. Differences between the present values and those reported for other plants from Al-Jabal Al-Akhdar may arise from species-specific uptake, soil properties, rainfall, sampling season, organ maturity and analytical preparation [5,19,21–23]. Direct nutritional comparisons should nevertheless be made cautiously because studies may report concentrations on different fresh- or dry-weight bases and may use different digestion and calibration procedures.

The antibacterial findings show a selective, concentration-related response rather than uniform activity against all organisms. Neither the leaf nor fruit extract produced a detectable inhibition zone against *S. aureus* at any tested concentration. In contrast, *B. cereus* was inhibited by both organs. Leaf extract zones declined from 14 mm at 0.9 g/mL to 8 mm at 0.2 g/mL, while fruit extract zones ranged from 12 to 9 mm. This general decline with dilution supports a concentration-dependent effect, although the fruit values at 0.4 and 0.2 g/mL (9 mm at both concentrations) indicate that the relationship was not perfectly linear. The clearest difference between plant parts was observed against *P. aeruginosa*. The leaf extract produced inhibition zones of 15, 12, 10 and 8 mm from the highest to the lowest concentration, whereas the fruit extract showed no detectable inhibition. *E. coli* was susceptible to both extracts, but the leaf preparation was consistently more active: 10, 7, 7 and 5 mm compared with 7, 5, 5 and 3 mm for the corresponding fruit concentrations. Taken together, these results place the observed susceptibility broadly in the order *P. aeruginosa* (leaf extract only) and *B. cereus*, followed by *E. coli*, with *S. aureus* showing no detectable response under the conditions used.

The stronger activity of the leaf extract may reflect a greater abundance or a different mixture of soluble secondary metabolites in leaves. Flavonoids, tannins and coumarins have been reported in other *Lotus* species, and antimicrobial effects within the genus vary with taxon and cultivar [116]. Moreover, flavonol glycosides have been isolated from *L. edulis* itself [117]. Such evidence offers a biologically plausible explanation for the present activity, but it does not identify the active constituents in these extracts. Mineral content alone also cannot explain the antibacterial response. A phytochemical profile, total phenolic and flavonoid measurements, and bioassay-guided fractionation would be required before a mechanism can be assigned.

The activity against *P. aeruginosa* is noteworthy because the outer membrane and efflux systems of Gram-negative bacteria often restrict the action of many antimicrobial compounds. Nevertheless, the present data also show that a simple Gram-positive/Gram-negative explanation is inadequate: *B. cereus* was susceptible whereas *S. aureus* was not, and the two Gram-negative species responded differently. Susceptibility is therefore more likely to depend on the individual strain and on the chemical composition and diffusion behavior of the extract than on Gram classification alone [118].

These findings should be interpreted as preliminary screening evidence. Inhibition-zone diameter is affected not only by antibacterial potency but also by solubility, molecular size and diffusion through agar. Consequently, zones produced by crude extracts cannot be treated as direct measures of minimum inhibitory concentration [118,120]. The manuscript does not report replicate number, measures of variation, statistical testing, positive and negative controls, inoculum standardization or extract yield. The high nominal concentrations (0.2–0.9 g/mL) further limit comparison with purified antimicrobials. Future work should repeat the assays in independent replicates, include a standard antibiotic and solvent control, report mean $\pm$ standard deviation, and determine minimum inhibitory and bactericidal concentrations by broth dilution. Chromatographic characterization of the extracts and verification with authenticated bacterial strains would clarify whether the observed inhibition is reproducible and which compounds are responsible.

Within these limitations, the results provide useful baseline data for Libyan *L. edulis*. The organ-specific mineral pattern and the greater antibacterial activity of the leaf extract support further chemical investigation. At the same time, the absence of activity against *S. aureus* and the lack of confirmatory dilution assays mean that the extracts should not yet be described as broad-spectrum antibacterial agents.

Conclusion

The results of this study showed the presence of minerals including sodium, potassium, calcium, nitrogen, and phosphorus in the studied plant; also, the extracts showed antibacterial activities against the selected species (*Staphylococcus aureus*) and (*Bacillus cereus*), beside gram negative bacteria (*Pseudomonas aeruginosa*) and (*Escherichia coli*) species in this study

Acknowledgment

Special thanks for the botany department, Faculty of Science, Omar Al-Mukhtar University, for their supporting during the establishing the antibacterial investigation in this study.

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