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Importance of Plant Tissue Culture in Modern Botany

Sahil Dehraj
M.Sc Botany (Deptt. of Botany, MDU), CSIR-NET (Qualified)
sahilnub13@gmail.com

Abstract
Plant tissue culture is one of the crucial techniques used in modern botany and is the process of growing cells, tissues, organs, or explants of plants in a sterile, controlled laboratory environment. It is based on the principle of totipotency which states that a single living plant cell, when given proper nutrients, hormones and conditions can grow into a full grown plant. This method is used in mass propagation of plants, disease-free plants, conservation of rare and endangered plants, germplasm storage and genetic engineering and development of improved crop varieties. The plant tissue culture also is very useful for modern biotechnology and for the transfer of genes, selection of transformed cells, regeneration of transgenic plants, somatic hybridization and production of useful secondary metabolites. Hence, plant tissue culture is an effective tool for plant improvement, conservation of biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and future food security.

Keywords: Plant Tissue Culture, Modern Botany, Totipotency, Micro propagation, Genetic Engineering, Plant Conservation, Disease-Free Plants

Introduction

Plant tissue culture is one of the most important scientific techniques in modern botany. It is a lab technique in which plant cells, tissues, organs or small parts of a plant are cultivated on a artificial nutrient media in a controlled and sterile environment. The basis of this technique is the totipotency of all living cells of a plant, which is the property of cells to regenerate a whole plant if provided with proper nutritional, hormonal and environmental conditions. This special property of plant cells makes tissue culture a very valuable technique for propagation, conservation, improvement and research in plants. The application of plant tissue cultures is a very important facet of modern botany, especially in the understanding of growth, development, differentiation and regeneration of plants at the cellular level. Traditional methods of plant propagation like seeds, cuttings, grafting and layering can be time-consuming, seasonal and reliant on environmental factors. Plant tissue culture can however be used to multiply plants quickly all year round in a controlled laboratory setting. Micro propagation allows a large number of genetically identical and healthy plants to be grown from a small amount of plant tissue. The technique is very useful in agriculture, horticulture, forestry, production of medicinal plants, and plant biotechnology. The other important application of plant tissue culture is related to the production of disease free plants. Viruses, bacteria and fungi are responsible for many diseases affecting economically important crops, thereby lowering the productivity and quality of the crops. Disease-free plantlets can be generated using meristem culture and other tissue culture methods and they are suitable for commercial propagation. This is particularly beneficial for crops such as banana, potato, sugarcane, orchids and many medicinal plants. Through this, tissue culture plays a role in increasing yield, quality

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of plants and production of agriculture.

Plant tissue culture is also an important application in modern plant sciences in the conservation of species that are rare, endangered and threatened. Deforestation, climate change, over-exploitation, habitat destruction and environmental pollution are among the causes of the extinction of many valuable plant species. This is accomplished by multiplying and preserving germplasm of such plants under in vitro conditions in tissue culture, which method is effective. This is particularly helpful for the storage of long-term plant genetic resources, such as through cryopreservation and in vitro storage. So, this has made plant tissue culture an imperative for modern botanical science. It brings simple plant science to a range of practical disciplines including agriculture, biotechnology, plant breeding, medicine and conservation of the environment. It not only aids in the production of plants on a large scale, but also plays a role in research for genetic improvement, secondary metabolite production, disease elimination and biodiversity conservation. Thus, the significance of plant tissue culture in contemporary botany is quite wide, which offers scientific solutions to plant improvements, sustainable agriculture, conservation of plant resources and future food security.

Principles of Plant Tissue Culture

The plant tissue culture follows certain scientific principles which enable the growth of plant cells, tissues and organs in a controlled laboratory environment away from the natural plant body. These principles help in the successful growth, multiplication and regeneration of plants. The success of plant tissue culture relies on the proper sterilization, selection of the proper nutrient medium, right choice of the explant, balanced use of plant growth regulators, environmental control and natural ability of plant cells to regenerate into whole plants.

1. Principle of Totipotency

The most important principle of plant tissue culture is totipotency. The term totipotency refers to the fact that all living cells of a plant can give rise to a whole plant in the right conditions. A single plant cell carries the complete genetic information necessary for the development of roots, shoots, leaves, flowers and other parts of the plant. This cell, when placed in the proper nutrient, hormones, moisture, temperature and light, can divide, differentiate, and re-generate into a whole plant. This is the basis underlying tissue culture because it is the understanding of how one small piece of plant tissue can yield many new plants. For instance, a small portion of any leaf, stem, root, bud or meristem may be used in the lab to develop complete plantlets. Plant tissue culture is a broad application for micropropagation, genetic improvement, disease-free plants and germplasm conservation and production because of the totipotency.

2. Aseptic or Sterile Conditions

The second important guideline to plant tissue culture is the creation of aseptic conditions. Aseptic condition refers to a culture environment where bacteria, fungi, viruses and other microorganisms will not be present. The nutrient medium employed in tissue culture will contain sugar, minerals and vitamins; it is a perfect environment for the growth of plant tissue, as well as for the growth of microbes. When contamination occurs, microorganisms will grow faster than the plant tissues and kill the culture. Hence all the instruments, culture vessels, nutrient media and glassware and in fact any plant material used in the culture must be properly

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sterilized prior to use. The working area is normally sterilized and cultures are manipulated in a laminar airflow cabinet. Chemicals like sodium hypochlorite or alcohol are used to surface sterilize explants. Sterility is very important as any contamination from the outside could result in an entire culture process failure.

3. Selection of Explant

The success of plant tissue culture depends greatly on the proper selection of the explant. The portion of the plant which is removed and cultured is called the explant. It can be a piece of leaf, stem, root, node, shoot tip, meristem, embryo, anther, pollen or callus. The explant should be disease free, actively growing and young. Young tissues are usually preferred due to the fact that their cells are more active and can regenerate more. Actively dividing tissues are particularly useful like meristematic tissues, and are often free from viral infection. The age, size, physiological condition and source of the explant influence the success of tissue culture. A suitable explant can grow quickly and develop a callus, then grow shoots and roots and ultimately grow to a complete plant.

4. Nutrient Medium

A suitable nutrient medium is essential for the growth and development of plant tissues in culture. The plant tissue is detached from the parent plant, making it unable to obtain naturally from the parent plant food and nutrients. Hence, it is necessary to provide all the essential nutrients artificially in the culture medium. Major and minor nutrients, vitamins, amino acids, sugar, water, agar and plant growth regulators are generally components of the nutrient medium. Nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium and sulfur are major nutrients that are needed in greater quantities. Minor nutrients including iron, zinc, copper, manganese, boron and molybdenum are needed in low levels, but also play a significant role. In early stages cultured tissues may not be able to effectively perform photosynthesis so the main source of energy is used will probably be sugar, which is typically sucrose. Murashige and Skoog medium is the most common medium used for plant tissue culture. The medium can be different depending on the plant species, culture explant and the culture purpose. A balanced medium will promote cell division, callus growth, organ development and plant regeneration.

5. Role of Plant Growth Regulators

Plant growth regulators (PGR) or plant hormones are of great importance in tissue culture. Regulate cell division, cell enlargement, differentiation, formation of roots, shoots and callus. The two most important groups of plant growth regulators used in tissue culture are auxins and cytokinins. Auxins tend to stimulate root growth and callus and cytokinins tend to stimulate shoots and cell division. Development is regulated by the relative amount of auxin and cytokinin. Generally, a high auxin concentration will stimulate root growth; and a high cytokinin concentration will stimulate shoot growth. If there's an equal balance of both, it can result in the development of calluses. Thus, is of paramount importance the right concentration and mixture of hormones. However, the hormonal balance is not appropriate, then the tissue may not be able to grow or may only produce callus without shoots and roots. Plant growth regulators play, therefore, a key role in control of morphogenesis in tissue culture.

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6. Controlled Environmental Conditions

Plant tissue culture requires carefully controlled environmental conditions for successful growth. Important factors include temperature, light, humidity, pH and photoperiod. Most plant cultures grow well at a temperature of around 25°C, although the exact requirement may differ from species to species. Light is important for shoot development and chlorophyll formation, while some cultures such as callus or root cultures may grow better in darkness. The duration of light and dark periods also affects plant growth. The pH of the medium is usually maintained around 5.6 to 5.8 before sterilization because proper pH helps in nutrient absorption and tissue development. Humidity inside the culture vessel is generally high, which supports tissue growth. However, when plantlets are transferred from laboratory conditions to soil, they must be gradually acclimatized because they are delicate and not immediately adapted to the external environment.

7. Cellular Differentiation and Dedifferentiation

Plant tissue culture is also based on the principles of **differentiation** and **dedifferentiation**. Differentiation is the process by which unspecialized cells develop into specialized tissues such as roots, shoots, leaves, or vascular tissues. Dedifferentiation is the process by which mature specialized cells lose their specific function and return to an actively dividing condition. In tissue culture, explant cells often first undergo dedifferentiation and form an unorganized mass of cells called callus. Later, under suitable hormonal and nutritional conditions, the callus cells differentiate again and form shoots, roots, or embryos. This ability of plant cells to change their developmental pathway is very important in regeneration and plant improvement.

8. Organogenesis and Somatic Embryogenesis

Two important developmental processes in plant tissue culture are **organogenesis** and **somatic embryogenesis**. Organogenesis is the formation of organs such as shoots and roots from cultured tissues. In this process, shoots and roots may develop directly from the explant or indirectly through callus. Somatic embryogenesis is the formation of embryo-like structures from somatic cells, which are non-reproductive body cells. These somatic embryos can develop into complete plants. This process is very useful for large-scale propagation, artificial seed production and genetic transformation studies. Both organogenesis and somatic embryogenesis are based on the regenerative capacity of plant cells.

9. Acclimatization of Plantlets

Acclimatization is an important final principle of plant tissue culture. Plantlets produced in culture vessels grow under artificial, sterile, humid and protected conditions. Their leaves, roots and protective tissues are often weak because they have not been exposed to natural environmental stress. Therefore, they cannot be transferred directly to field conditions. Before field transplantation, plantlets are gradually adapted to external conditions. This process is called hardening or acclimatization. The plantlets are first transferred to pots containing sterile soil or growth substrate and kept under controlled humidity and light. Slowly, they are exposed to normal environmental conditions. Successful acclimatization ensures better survival and growth of tissue-cultured plants in the field.

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10. Genetic Stability

Genetic stability is also an important principle in plant tissue culture, especially when the aim is to produce identical plants. In micropropagation, the plants produced should be genetically similar to the parent plant. This is important for maintaining desirable characters such as high yield, disease resistance, flower quality, fruit quality, or medicinal value. However, sometimes genetic changes may occur during tissue culture, especially when callus culture is involved. These changes are called somaclonal variations. In some cases, somaclonal variation is useful for creating new plant varieties, but in commercial propagation it may be undesirable. Therefore, maintaining genetic stability is necessary for producing true-to-type plants. Thus, the principles of plant tissue culture are based on the biological ability of plant cells to grow, divide, differentiate and regenerate under controlled conditions. Totipotency, aseptic technique, proper explant selection, suitable nutrient medium, balanced growth regulators, controlled environment, organ formation and acclimatization are the main principles that determine the success of tissue culture. These principles make plant tissue culture an important tool in modern botany, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, medicinal plant research, genetic engineering and conservation of endangered plant species.

Types of Plant Tissue Culture

Plant tissue culture is an important technique in modern botany, agriculture, horticulture, plant breeding, biotechnology and conservation, and has several important types. The types are distinguished from each other by the plant part being cultured, the method of growth and the purpose of the experiment. The most basic requirements of all types of tissue culture are a sterile laboratory environment, proper nutrient medium, proper temperature control, proper light and balanced plant growth regulators. Various culture techniques are used by scientists to understand the growth of plants, to create disease-free plants, to preserve rare species, to breed new varieties of crops and to create new products from plants. Callus culture is one of the most common types of plant tissue culture. This involves placing a small piece of plant tissue (such as leaf, stem, root or bud) on a nutrient medium with appropriate plant hormones.

Once developed, the cells of the explant begin to multiply in an unorganized way to produce an unorganized pile of cells called callus. Callus lacks a distinct organization such as root, stem or leaf. It is a soft, irregular and actively dividing cell mass. Callus is formed through the cells losing their special function and reverting to a dividing stage. This is known as dedifferentiation. Callus culture is very significant as it can be used for plant regeneration, genetic transformation, somaclonal variation and production of secondary metabolites. It is also useful in plant breeding since new variations may develop in the growing callus; and the variants can sometimes be exploited to produce better plant varieties.

Table 1: *Types of Plant Tissue Culture and Their Applications in Modern Botany*

S. No.	Type of Plant Tissue Culture	Plant Material Used	Main Purpose	Applications in Modern Botany

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1	Callus Culture	Leaf, stem, root, or other explant	To produce an unorganized mass of dividing cells	Used for plant regeneration, genetic variation, mutation studies and production of secondary metabolites
2	Organ Culture	Roots, shoots, leaves, flower buds, ovaries, or anthers	To grow specific plant organs under laboratory conditions	Helps in studying organ development, root and shoot growth and plant morphogenesis
3	Embryo Culture	Mature or immature embryos	To grow embryos outside the seed	Used for embryo rescue, overcoming seed dormancy, hybrid development and production of difficult-to-germinate plants
4	Meristem Culture	Shoot tip or root tip meristem	To produce healthy and disease-free plants	Used for virus-free plant production, rapid clonal propagation and conservation of valuable plant varieties
5	Anther and Pollen Culture	Anthers or pollen grains	To produce haploid plants	Useful in plant breeding, development of pure lines, genetic studies and crop improvement
6	Protoplast Culture	Plant cells without cell wall	To culture naked plant cells for genetic manipulation	Used in somatic hybridization, protoplast fusion, genetic engineering and development of improved plant varieties
7	Suspension Culture	Free cells or small cell groups in liquid medium	To grow plant cells in liquid nutrient medium	Used for cell biology studies, large-scale production of secondary metabolites and industrial biotechnology

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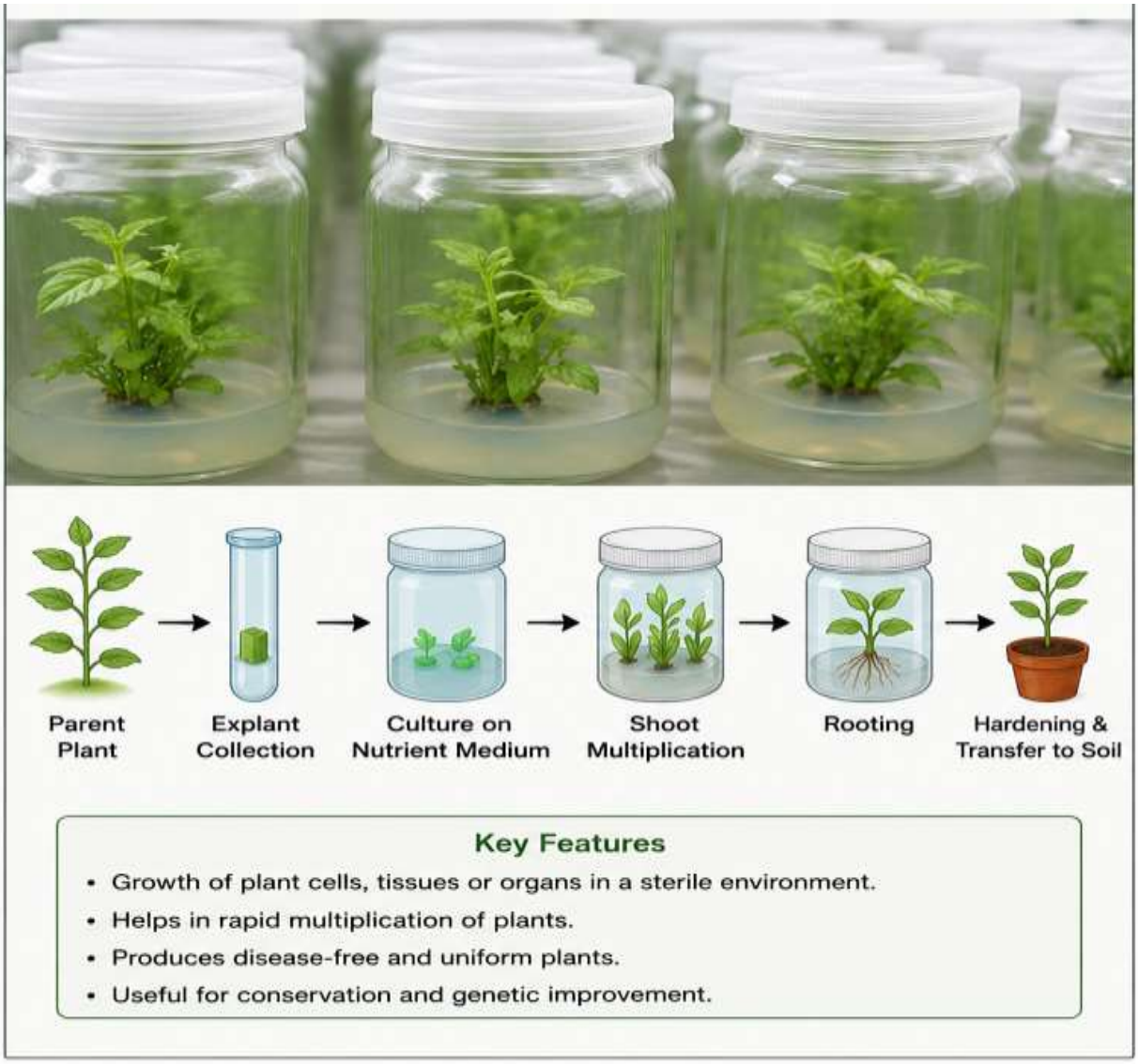
Image 1: *Plant Tissue Culture: An Overview*



Organ culture is a form of tissue culture that involves growing an entire plant organ or portion of an organ in an artificial environment in the laboratory. This is a process in which organs like the roots, shoots, leaves, flower buds, ovary or anthers are grown on an appropriate nutrient medium. Organ culture is a useful technique for the study of the growth and development of particular parts of the plant, away from the main plant body. It provides insight to the botanist in the development and reaction of roots, shoots, leaves and reproductive organs to various nutrients, hormones, and environmental factors. For instance, root culture has been used to observe the growth of roots, root metabolism and shoot culture has been used to get rapid multiplication of plants. Micropropagation is also significant in organ culture since many new shoots can be formed from shoot tips or nodal segments, which will subsequently regenerate into whole new plants. This technique can be used to get uniform and healthy plants in large numbers. A significant form of plant tissue culture is the culturing of germinative or mature plant embryos that are isolated from seeds and cultured on artificial nutrient medium. This is

particularly valuable for those seeds in which germination has not taken place because of seed dormancy, embryo weakness, or incompatibility between parent plants. Sometimes the embryo in hybrid plants will perish before maturity due to poor endosperm development. However, in such cases, the embryo can be rescued and cultured to develop into a whole plant. That is why embryo culture is also referred to as embryo rescue. It has proved very useful in plant breeding, particularly to develop hybrids between species that are widely different. Embryo culture is also helpful in reducing the breeding cycle, breaking seed dormancy and growing plants from hard-to-germinate seeds. In modern botany, it is a valuable method in agricultural improvement, hybrid production and in the preservation of endangered plants.

Meristem culture is very important tissue culture technique where meristematic region of the plant is cultured under sterile conditions. The tissue which is actively dividing at the tips of shoots and roots is known as meristem. Shoot apical meristem is used most often as it is very capable of growth and regeneration. It is particularly noteworthy for the production of disease-free and virus-free plants by meristem culture. Many plant viruses do not easily enter the rapidly dividing meristematic cells, so plants regenerated from meristems are often free from viral infection. It is popular in such crops as potato, banana, sugarcane, strawberry, citrus plants, ornamental plants etc. Meristem culture can also be employed to achieve high rate of multiplication of valuable plant varieties. Promotes maintenance of the genetic purity of the parent plant and uniformity of plants. For this reason, meristem culture has much significance in the commercial propagation of plants and disease management. The two other methods of tissue culture are anther and pollen culture, especially utilized in plant breeding and genetic research. Anther culture involves the removal of anthers from flower buds, which are then placed on a nutrient medium. In anther culture, the anther, where pollen grains are present, is removed from a flower bud and placed on the nutrient medium. In pollen culture, individual pollen grains are directly cultured. These techniques are significant as the pollen grain has only one set of chromosomes and thus can give rise to haploid plants. The use of haploid plants is important in plant breeding since they can be doubled to haploid plants. Doubled haploid plants are totally homozygous and therefore genetic characters are stable. This facilitates the establishment of pure lines in a short period of time for plant breeders. Traditional breeding to produce pure lines is a time-consuming process of many generations in most cases, but for anther and pollen culture, it may be reduced considerably. These techniques are extensively applied in crop improvement, genetic studies, mutation breeding and breeding for new plant varieties.

Protoplast culture is an advanced type of plant tissue culture in which plant cells are cultured after removing their cell walls. A plant cell without a cell wall, surrounded only by the plasma membrane is called a protoplast. Typically a cell wall is removed by cellulase and pectinase. Protoplast culture is very important because protoplasts can be used for genetic manipulation, somatic hybridization and protoplast fusion. The cell wall is absent, making it easier to insert foreign DNA, organelles or other genetic material into the cell. Protoplast culture is perhaps most important for the production of somatic hybrids. Protoplasts from two plant species are fused to give rise to a hybrid cell that can regenerate into an entire hybrid plant. This technique

can be used if sexual hybridization is not feasible or not easy. The use of protoplast culture is of great importance in plant biotechnology, genetic engineering, plant crop improvement and development of plants resistant to diseases and stresses. A technique of growing plant cells or small groups of cells in liquid nutrient medium is suspension culture. Typically, these cells are cryopreserved from callus tissue and maintained in a culture using continuous shaking or agitation. Shaking facilitates the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to all cells and helps to prevent settling of cells at the bottom of the culture vessel. The study of cell growth, cell division, metabolism and biochemical processes is extremely useful in suspension culture. It's also of importance for the large-scale production of secondary metabolites like alkaloids, flavonoids, pigments, enzymes and medicinal components. Many medicinal plants generate valuable chemical substances and suspension culture is a controlled technique to generate these compounds without relying 100% on field grown plants. This technique can also be applied in genetic transformation, mutation research and industrial plant biotechnology. Suspension culture is very useful for research and commercial production as the cells grow quickly in liquid medium. In general, all types of plant tissue culture are very important in that they offer various ways to study and improve plants. Regeneration and variation by callus culture, study of plant organs and propagation by organ culture, embryo rescue and hybrid production by embryo culture, producing disease-free plants by meristem culture, producing haploid plants and pure lines by anther and pollen culture, producing useful plant compounds by suspension culture, gene manipulation by protoplast culture, producing somatic hybrids by protoplast culture. The two together form the backbone of today's plant tissue culture for the fields of botany and plant biotechnology.

Importance in Modern Botany

Plant tissue culture has become an essential technique in modern botany because it provides scientific methods for the rapid production, protection, improvement and conservation of plants. It allows plant cells, tissues, or organs to grow under controlled laboratory conditions and helps botanists study plant growth, development, disease control, genetic improvement and biodiversity conservation. Among its many uses, rapid multiplication of plants, conservation of rare and endangered plants and production of disease-free plants are some of the most important contributions of plant tissue culture to modern botanical science.

- **Rapid Multiplication of Plants**

One of the most significant uses of plant tissue culture in contemporary botany is the ability to quickly multiply plants. Traditional methods of propagation involve seeds, cuttings, grafting, layering and division. These methods are useful, but may take a long time and are seasonal and dependent on environmental conditions. Some plants produce very few seeds, some seeds have low germination capacity and some valuable plants cannot be propagated easily through conventional methods. The solution to these problems is plant tissue culture where large number of plants can be produced from a small amount of plant tissue within a short period of time. This technique is called micropropagation. Micropropagation is the propagation of a small part of a parent plant (sometimes called propagules) like a shoot tip, nodal segment, leaf piece or meristem from a healthy parent plant on a nutrient medium in a sterile laboratory

setting. Minerals, vitamins, sugar and growth regulators are present in the medium that aid in cell division and shoot formation. One explant will give many shoots and each of these shoots will give rise to a plantlet. In this way, thousands of genetically identical plants can be obtained from a single superior plant. Rapid multiplication is of great value to high-value plants such as for commerce, agriculture or medicine, or for ornamentation. Banana, sugarcane, potato, strawberry and some ornamental plants are examples of crops that are propagated through tissue culture. It assists farmers and horticulturists to get uniform plants with favourable characteristics of higher yield, better fruit quality, more attractive flowers, resistance to disease and improved growth. The production of plants in tissue culture can be done throughout the year, irrespective of season, climate, rainfall and soil conditions.

The ability to multiply rapidly is also significant in modern botany for research. Numerous uniform plants can be produced for experimentation, thus obtaining accurate results. Experiments making genetic differences more easily studied if plants are similar. This is helpful in plant physiology, genetics, biotechnology, plant breeding and environmental stress studies. Thus, plant tissue culture is of great value not only for commercial plant production but it is also a valuable means for research and crop improvement.

- **Conservation of Rare and Endangered Plants**

Plant tissue culture is an important element in the conservation of plant species that are rare, endangered and threatened. Deforestation, overexploitation, urbanization, climate change, pollution and habitat loss as well as too much collection for medicinal or commercial purposes are causing the disappearance of many plant species from nature. When a species goes extinct its genetic information is forever removed. Conservation of plant biodiversity is thus one of the most important issues of the modern botanical science and a viable approach to the conservation of valuable plant species is the tissue culture. Rare plants can be multiplied under laboratory conditions using plant tissue culture even if only a little tissue from the plant exists. Complete plants can be regenerated from a small fragment of tissue, bud, shoot tip, embryo or meristem. This is very helpful for plants that may not produce enough seed, may have a poor germination rate, may not grow quickly enough, or may not be able to grow naturally. In vitro propagation techniques can be used to conserve many of the endangered medicinal plants and forest plants. The tissue culture also can be used for ex situ conservation (conservation of plants outside their natural habitat). This approach involves keeping the plant materials in labs, botanical gardens, tissue culture banks or germplasm centers. The plants grown by tissue culture can be planted elsewhere or further studies conducted. This helps in restoring plant populations and protecting biodiversity.

Cryopreservation is another important tissue culture technique. Cryopreservation is the storage of plant cells, tissues, embryos, seeds or shoot tips at very low temperatures, typically in liquid nitrogen. This means that the genetic material of the plants can be preserved without losing its viability for an extremely long time. The cryopreservation process is particularly beneficial in the preservation of rare and endangered species' valuable germplasm. It is also useful for plants which cannot be stored by normal seed banking procedures. Importance of plant tissue culture in conserving medicinal plants is also significant. The excessive collection of many medicinal

plants from forests has been observed due to their traditional medicinal use and their application in pharmaceuticals. They suffer from over harvesting and their natural population is reduced. These plants can be reproduced in tissue culture, thus minimizing pressure on wild populations. It is also beneficial for uniform plant material having beneficial medicinal properties. Therefore, plant tissue culture plays a significant role in conservation of biodiversity, ecological balance and sustainable utilization of plant resources.

- **Production of Disease-Free Plants**

  Another significance of plant tissue culture in modern botany is the production of disease-free plants. A variety of plant diseases are caused by viruses, bacteria, fungi and other pathogens. These diseases cause losses in size, yield, quality and marketability of plants. With vegetatively propagated crops, diseases are frequently spread from generation to generation by contaminated planting material. This can be a significant issue in crops including potato, banana, sugarcane, strawberry, citrus and many ornamental crops. In plant culture, culture is used to produce disease-free plants and involves growing healthy or pathogen-free plant tissues in a sterile environment. The meristem culture technique is one of the most successful methods for this application. The meristem is the area of active growth at the ends of shoots or roots. Viral and other infection causing organisms are not present or in small numbers in meristem because the cells in this region divide rapidly and communicate with infected parts of the plant via few vascular strands. The meristem culture method can be used to obtain virus-free plants. For agriculture and horticulture, disease-free plant production is crucial due to the fact that disease-free plants grow better, yield more and are of better quality. Virus-free potato plants have better tubers, tissue-cultured banana plant have uniform growth and disease-free sugarcane plants have better yield, for instance. For ornamental plants, the quality of flowers, plant appearance and market value is enhanced by disease-free propagation. One more benefit of tissue culture is that it is performed in sterile lab atmosphere. To avoid contamination, the nutrient medium, instruments, culture vessels and explants are sterilised. This controlled environment minimizes the risk of infection when multiplying plants. Production of disease-free plants can be used to produce large quantities of plants through micropropagation and provide plants to farmers, nurseries and commercial growers.

  The production of disease-free plants is also a criterion of importance for plant trade internationally. A number of countries have imposed restrictions on the import or export of planting material which must be free from certain diseases. Clean, high quality planting material is produced with tissue culture. It also includes certified plant production programs, which involve testing and multiplication of plants in controlled environments to maintain disease-free status. This use is important in modern botany both scientifically and practically. It is useful in the study of plant-pathogen relationships, to enhance plant health, to boost agricultural production and to preserve the genetic value of valuable plant varieties. Hence, use of plant tissue culture has become one of the most reliable ways of obtaining healthy, uniform and disease-free plants for research, agriculture, horticulture, forestry and commercial plant production.

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Plant Tissue Culture and Plant Conservation

Plant tissue culture has emerged as an important scientific tool for plant conservation, since rare, endangered, threatened and economically important plant species can be preserved and multiplied in controlled conditions in the laboratory. Currently, deforestation, habitat destruction, overgrazing, climate change, pollution, urbanization, collection for medicinal purposes and unsustainable agriculture are threatening the survival of many species of plants. The loss of plant species means the loss of their genetic diversity. This loss has impacts on biodiversity, ecological equilibrium, medicine, food security and future plant-breeding efforts. Plant tissue culture offers a solution to this problem by conserving plants by in vitro techniques which involves the growth of plant cells, tissues, organs, embryos, meristems or shoot tips in sterile nutrient media.

One of the major applications of plant tissue culture in conservation is its ability to produce plants from a small amount of plant tissue. A fragment of leaf, stem, bud, embryo or meristem can be used to make large numbers of complete plants under appropriate conditions. Very beneficial for rare plants or those that have very few seeds. There are endangered plants that are slow to reproduce, slow to grow, have poor germination or are difficult to natural propagate. In such a situation, the traditional methods of conservation may be inadequate. Tissue culture is used to overcome these limitations because it creates many plants in a short time, relying on the process of plant propagation rather than on natural seed production, or seasonal conditions. Ex situ conservation – conservation of plants out of their natural habitat through plant tissue culture. The approach in this case is to preserve valuable plant species in laboratories, tissue culture banks, botanical gardens, research institutions, or germplasm centres. Tissue cultured plants can then be planted in soil and re-introduced into the environment. This process contributes to the ecological rehabilitation and the restoration of the population of plants. Especially when the natural habitat of a plant has been damaged or destroyed, and immediate protection is needed, ex situ conservation through tissue culture is particularly important.

Another important role of plant tissue culture in plant conservation is germplasm conservation. Germplasm: seeds, tissues, cells, embryos, pollen and other reproductive parts of plants. Germplasm conservation is required because it is important to retain the hereditary characters of plants for future use. These genetic resources are useful for crop improvement, disease resistance, drought resistance, medicinal research and biodiversity conservation. Germplasm can be preserved in small area under controlled environment by tissue culture. This method can be used for saving plants that cannot be readily stored as seed, particularly plants having recalcitrant seeds that deteriorate rapidly. One of the most advanced techniques that are related to plant tissue culture and conservation is cryopreservation. Cryopreservation involves storing cells, tissues, embryos, shoot tips, meristems and seeds at very low temperatures, typically in liquid nitrogen. All metabolic activities slow nearly to a standstill at such low temperatures, yet the plant substance will stay alive for a very long time. This method is very useful to preserve useful and endangered plants for long-term use. The preserved material can be revived and cultured again and regenerated to complete plants as required. Cryopreservation is particularly crucial for the conservation of rare medicinal plants, forest species, fruit crops and

plant varieties with special genetic characters. In addition, plant tissue culture has proved to be very fruitful for conserving medicinal plants. Forests are the sources of many medicinal plants from which large quantities are collected due to their importance in traditional medicine, the herbal industries, in the production of medicines and health care. When they're collected too much, their population can decline and they may even be driven to extinction. In tissue culture these medicinal plants can be cultured in laboratories on large scale. This decreases pressure on wild populations while plant material is continuously available for medicinal purposes. It also supports the uniformity in the chemical properties of plants of high medicinal value.

Another significant method of conservation is in vitro storage, using plant tissue culture. This technique is used to culture plant tissues or plantlets under slow growth conditions. Growth is slowed by decreasing temperature, light, nutrient medium or growth retardants. The method enables plants to be stored for months or years with little subculturing. In vitro storage can be used to conserve plant species which require continuous maintenance and are not easily storable in seed banks. It also saves space, labor and maintenance cost as compared to field gene banks. Plant tissue culture also helps in conserving disease-free plant material. Viral, bacterial and fungal diseases are common for many species and infected plant material should not be safely used for conservation or propagation. Disease-free plants can be produced by meristem culture and shoot tip culture because meristematic tissues are usually virus free and other disease-causing organisms are absent. The healthy plants can then be multiplied and grown as clean germplasm. This is particularly true for crops that are vegetatively propagated and valued plant species that are easily spread from generation to generation. Being able to conserve plants that are difficult to propagate using traditional methods is another important benefit of plant tissue culture. Some plants lack viable seed and other plants may have a long seed dormancy or slow growth rate. Certain species require special environmental conditions to germinate that cannot be achieved in the natural environment. The conditions in tissue culture are artificial and favorable for germination, growth and regeneration. Weak embryos can be rescued using embryo culture, seed culture and organ culture, and dormancy can be broken to produce plants that would not grow otherwise.

Genetic diversity conservation is also provided by plant tissue culture. Genetic diversity is important because it enables plant species to cope with the changing environmental conditions, like drought, high temperature, disease, pest stress and soil stress. Genetic diversity narrows and species become more susceptible to extinction when there are only a few individuals of a species left. To maintain a large genetic base, different genotypes of a species can be preserved in tissue culture. This is not only for conservation but also future breeding of plants and biotechnology. The conservation of plants by tissue culture is becoming a significant aspect of modern botany, particularly in the context of climate change. Natural vegetation is being impacted by increased temperatures, irregular rainfall, drought and flooding and changes in habitat. Some plants species might not be able to adjust to these changes in a fast time. Tissue culture keeps such species alive till the time they are lost from nature. It also contributes to the creation of climate-resilient plant material for research and restoration efforts. Therefore, plant tissue culture is of a great significance in plant conservation. It is useful for the quick

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propagation of rare plants, conservation of endangered plant species, germplasm collection, propagation with disease-free plants, long-term storage (cryopreservation), maintaining the population of damaged plants and protection of medicinal plants. It brings together the latest in biotechnology and biodiversity conservation and offers an efficient way to conserve plant resources for future generations. Hence, plant tissue culture in addition to its significance in plant propagation and research is also significant for the survival, protection and sustainable use of plant biodiversity.

Plant Tissue Culture in Genetic Engineering

Plant tissue culture is of great importance in genetic engineering as it serves as the foundation for creating genetically modified plants, producing more and researching them in the laboratory environment. Genetic engineering is the direct manipulation of an organism's genetic material to acquire beneficial traits, such as disease or pest resistance, drought tolerance, nutritional improvement, herbicide tolerance, or productivity. Genetic engineering is not possible in plants without tissue culture because after the desired gene is introduced into plant cells, the modified cells must be regenerated to whole plants. This regeneration is possible with plant tissue culture. In the genetic engineering process, a tiny part of a plant, like a leaf fragment, stem piece, embryo, callus, meristem or protoplast, is chosen as an explant. This explant is cultured in a sterile nutrient medium that has minerals, vitamins, sugar and plant growth regulators. The cells of the explant start to divide and callus or shoots are formed. The scientists now transfer a desired gene into the plant cells. This gene could be used to impart a beneficial trait such as resistance against insects, drought or viral diseases or enhancement of fruit quality. The transformed cells are selected and grown into whole plants using tissue culture.

Table 2: ***Role of Plant Tissue Culture in Genetic Engineering***

S. No.	Role of Plant Tissue Culture in Genetic Engineering	Explanation	Value
1	Gene Transfer Support	Plant tissue culture helps in introducing useful genes into plant cells through methods like Agrobacterium-mediated transformation and gene gun technique.	90
2	Regeneration of Transgenic Plants	After gene transfer, modified plant cells are regenerated into complete plants using tissue culture techniques.	88
3	Selection of Transformed Cells	Tissue culture helps in selecting only those cells that successfully receive the desired gene.	84
4	Production of Disease-Resistant Plants	Genetically modified plants can be developed with resistance against viruses, bacteria, fungi and pests.	86

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5	Development of Stress-Tolerant Plants	Tissue culture supports the development of plants tolerant to drought, salinity, heat, cold and other environmental stresses.	82
6	Somatic Hybridization	Protoplast culture helps in fusing cells of different plant species to develop improved hybrid plants.	78
7	Improvement of Crop Quality	Genetic engineering with tissue culture helps improve nutritional value, yield, fruit quality and storage life of crops.	85
8	Production of Useful Compounds	Callus and suspension cultures help in producing valuable secondary metabolites used in medicine and biotechnology.	80

Figure 1: ***Role of Plant Tissue Culture in Genetic Engineering***

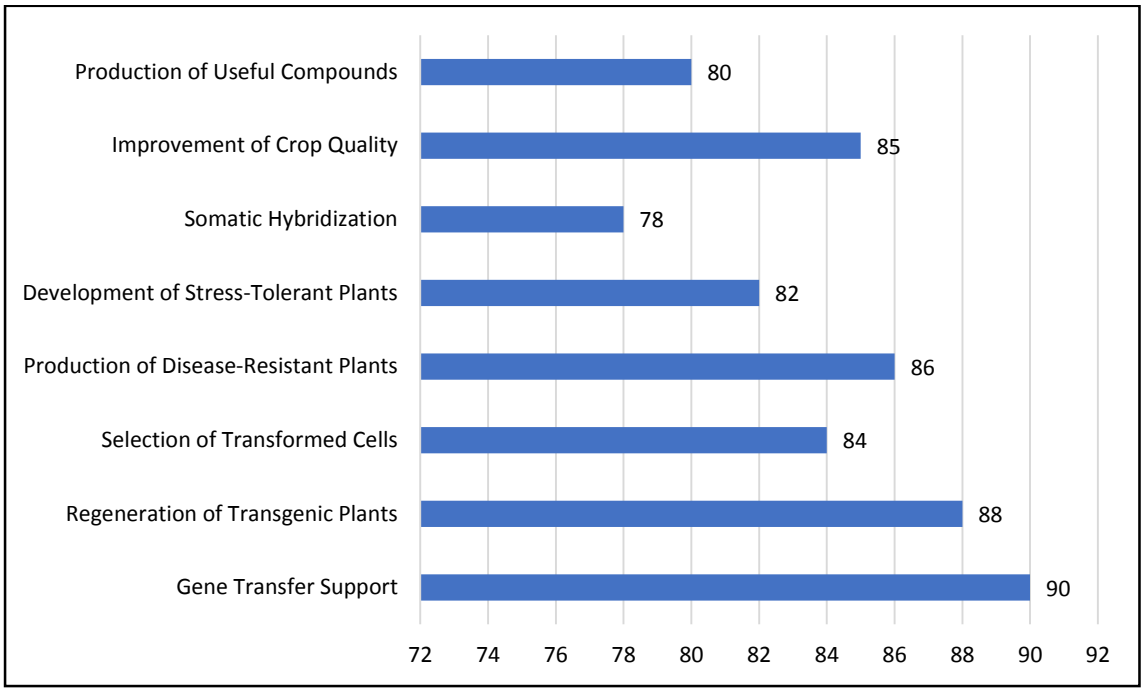

Table 2 indicates that the genetic engineering is used enormously via plant tissue culture. It is useful for introducing useful genes into plant cells, for selection of transformed cells and for the regeneration of transgenic plants. The highest value is allotted for the gene transfer support, indicating that transferring support of desirable gene to tissue is of great importance, which is done by means of techniques such as Agrobacterium-mediated transformation and gene gun method. The value of 88 is assigned for regeneration of transgenic plants as the modified cells have to be transformed to whole plants following gene transfer. The value of tissue culture in the production of disease-resistant plant is also high at 86. Crop quality improvement has value of 85 in the sense that genetic engineering can enhance the yield, nutrition and fruit quality and storage life. The value of 84 for selection of transformed cells is because only those cells that

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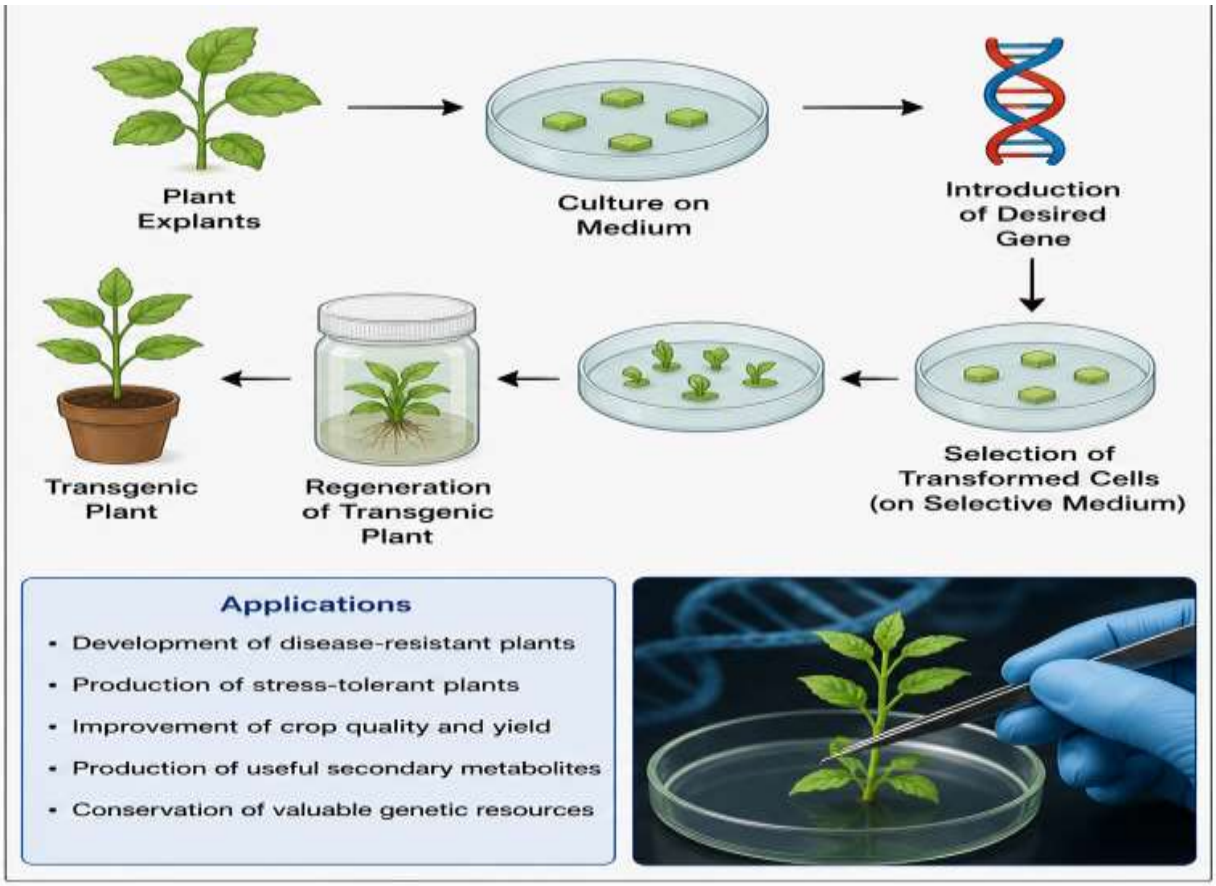
were successfully transformed are selected for further growth. Stress-tolerant plant development was valued at 82, indicating its significance in the production of plants which are resistant to drought, salinity, heat and cold. The production of useful compounds has a value of 80, and the somatic hybridization is of 78, indicating their role in biotechnology and plant improvement. Plant tissue culture is the backbone of genetic engineering as it is useful in transfer of genes, regeneration of plants, disease resistance, stress tolerance, crop improvement and production of useful compounds.

Image 2: Role of Plant Tissue Culture in Genetic Engineering



One of the most common methods used in plant genetic engineering is Agrobacterium-mediated gene transfer. Agrobacterium tumefaciens is a soil bacterium that naturally has the ability to transfer a part of its DNA into plant cells. This natural ability is harnessed by scientists and replaced with useful genes in the bacterium. The bacterium infects the plant tissue in culture and introduces the desired gene into the plant genome. The modified plant cells are subsequently grown on a selective medium and regenerated into whole plant genetically modified plants. It is a technique that is popular due to its efficiency and stability in many plant species. The other important method is gene gun or biolistic method. The method involves firing small metal particles containing DNA of interest into plant cells at high velocity covered with desired DNA. The DNA is taken up into the cells and can be incorporated into the DNA of the plant. This technique can be used in plants that are not transformable by Agrobacterium. Following the delivery of DNA, the cells will need to undergo tissue culture again to regenerate

whole plants from the transformed cells. If the changed cells were not in tissue culture, they would only be single cells and would not form into an engineered, mature plant.

Prototoplast transformation also relies on plant tissue culture. Protoplasts are plant cells – cell walls have been removed with enzymes. Foreign DNA can be introduced more easily into them because they do not have cell walls. The protoplasts, after transformation, are carefully cultured in which they regenerate cell walls, divide and form callus and eventually grow into whole plants. The culture of protoplasts is employed in the fields of genetic engineering, somatic hybridization and cell biology of plants. The production of transgenic plants is one of the major contributions of tissue culture to genetic engineering. Transgenic plants are plants containing one or more gene(s) from another plant species or another plant variety. Improved characteristics that are hard to obtain by traditional breeding may be observed in these plants. Plants can be genetically engineered for resistance against insects, disease, delayed ripening, better oil quality, more vitamins, or resistance to environmental stress, for instance. Tissue culture enables the selection of transformed cells and the multiplication of these transformed cells to make complete plants with the desired traits. Plant tissue culture can also be employed in the production of plants with resistance to diseases through genetic engineering. Viruses, fungi, bacteria and other pathogens cause diseases in many crops. Through the use of tissue culture, scientists can insert resistance genes into plant cells and regenerate plants which are resistant to specific diseases. This will minimize crop losses and the need for chemical pesticides. It is particularly useful with diseases of high economic impact and with crops that are particularly susceptible to disease.

Another crucial area of plant tissue culture in genetic engineering is the production of stress resistant plants. Climate change, drought, salinity, heat, cold and soils degradation are significant constraints to agriculture. Genes can be transferred to plants via genetic engineering to enable them to withstand stressful conditions. Tissue culture can be used to regenerate these genetically altered cells into plants, and to see if they will survive in hard conditions. Thus, tissue culture helps in developing climate-resilient crops and sustainable agriculture. Tissue culture also helps in the selection of transformed plants. Not all plant cells receive the desired gene after gene transfer. Scientists thus employ selective media that contain special chemicals or antibodies. This medium will only support growing transformed cells that have the desired gene and marker gene. The remaining cells are cultured and regenerated into whole plants. This screening and growth in the tissue culture is possible because it offers a controlled environment.

Other techniques of importance related to genetic improvement include plant tissue culture, which is also linked to somatic hybridization. Somatic hybridization involves the fusion of two different plant species or varieties of plant to form a hybrid cell. This cell has hybrid properties, that is, it can have desirable features of both parent species. Later, the hybrid cell is cultured into a whole plant. This technique can be used when normal sexual hybridization is not possible or difficult because of genetic barriers. It aids in the development of new plant types having desirable traits.

Tissue culture also plays a role in modern biotechnology as an aid to genetic engineering for uniform plant material for experiments. Genetically alike plants are required for a proper

evaluation of the effect of introduced genes in the plant. Experimental results are more reliable with tissue culture which produces identical plantlets. It is also useful in maintaining and expanding successful GM lines for additional research, testing and commercialization. The production of improved medicinal plants as a result of genetic engineering using plant tissue culture is also an important contribution. A few medicinal plants are rich in secondary metabolites like alkaloids, flavonoids, essential oils etc. which are important to be developed. These compounds can be genetically engineered to be produced in greater quantities. These useful compounds can be generated and investigated in a controlled fashion using tissue culture methods such as callus culture and suspension culture. This is important for pharmaceutical industries and medicinal plant research. Therefore, plant tissue culture is one of the basis in plant genetic engineering. Aids in gene transfer, screening of transformed cells, complete plant regeneration, generation of transgenic crops, somatic cell hybridization, disease resistance, stress resistance and plant quality. If genetic engineering were not possible in plants, then tissue culture would not exist to be able to produce modified cells into whole plants. Thus, plant tissue culture and genetic engineering are closely related and both are important in the field of modern botany, agriculture, biotechnology, crop improvement and food security.

Conclusion

Plant tissue culture plays a significant role in modern botany because it provides scientific methods for plant propagation, conservation, improvement and research. It helps in producing a large number of uniform and healthy plants within a short time through micropropagation. It is also useful in conserving rare, endangered and medicinal plants by multiplying them under laboratory conditions and preserving their genetic material. Through meristem culture, disease-free plants can be produced, which improves crop quality and productivity. In genetic engineering, plant tissue culture is essential because transformed cells must be regenerated into complete plants after gene transfer. It supports the development of disease-resistant, stress-tolerant and high-quality crop varieties. Overall, plant tissue culture connects botany with biotechnology, agriculture, plant breeding, medicine and environmental conservation. Thus, it is an important technique for sustainable agriculture, biodiversity protection, crop improvement and future food security.

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