

SCIENTIFIC REPORTS



OPEN

Deciphering the bacterial composition in the rhizosphere of *Baphicacanthus cusia* (NeeS) Bremek

Meijuan Zeng^{1,2}, Yongjia Zhong^{3,4}, Shijie Cai⁵ & Yong Diao¹

Rhizobacteria is an important ingredient for growth and health of medicinal herbs, and synthesis of pharmacological effective substances from it. In this study, we investigated the community structure and composition of rhizobacteria in *Baphicacanthus cusia* (NeeS) Bremek via 16S rRNA amplicon sequencing. We obtained an average of 3,371 and 3,730 OTUs for bulk soil and rhizosphere soil samples respectively. Beta diversity analysis suggested that the bacterial community in the rhizosphere was distinctive from that in the bulk soil, which indicates that *B. cusia* can specifically recruit microbes from bulk soil and host in the rhizosphere. *Burkholderia* was significantly enriched in the rhizosphere. *Burkholderia* is a potentially beneficial bacteria that has been reported to play a major role in the synthesis of indigo, which was a major effective substances in *B. cusia*. In addition, we found that *Bacilli* were depleted in the rhizosphere, which are useful for biocontrol of soil-borne diseases, and this may explain the continuous cropping obstacles in *B. cusia*. Our results revealed the structure and composition of bacterial diversity in *B. cusia* rhizosphere, and provided clues for improving the medicinal value of *B. cusia* in the future.

Plant roots grow into the soil and are continuously in contact with the microbes living in the soil. Rhizosphere is a narrow interface between plant roots and soils for energy and material exchange. Rhizosphere microbes are affected by root exudation. This area contains up to 10^{11} microbial cells per gram root¹. The microbes living in this narrow play a vital role in plant growth and health. Microbes help to increase the bioavailability of important mineral nutrients such as N, P and K². Another beneficial function of rhizobacteria is to suppress soil-borne diseases^{3,4}. In terms of medicinal herb research, the rhizosphere bacteria also influence the synthesis of effective substances⁵. The plants in turn feed the microbes in the rhizosphere with carbohydrates derived from photosynthesis in the form of rhizodeposition⁶. It has been reported that about 17% of photoassimilates are released into the rhizosphere in the form of rhizodeposition⁷, which results in the recruitment and enrichment of beneficial or detrimental soil bacteria from bulk soil⁸. Hence, the microbes living in the rhizosphere of the plant can be divided into beneficial microbes, neutral microbes and detrimental microbes. The neutral microbes are harmless to plants. Beneficial microbes can dissolve some insoluble minerals, and promote plant growth or provide phytohormones such as IAA, while the detrimental microbes can cause plant diseases by producing toxic substances. The rhizosphere bacteria are dominated by bacteria, fungi, actinomycetes, algae, protozoa, etc⁹. Bacteria are the most abundant microorganisms in the soil¹⁰. The analysis of abundance of microbes in the rhizosphere of Paris polyphylla var. yunnanensis showed the following relationship¹¹: bacteria > actinomycetes > fungi. The classification and identification of bacteria are developed from phenotypic characteristics identification to genetic characteristics classification. In addition, the composition of rhizosphere community is determined by the soil type and plant genotype¹². Hence, understanding the composition of bacterial community in the nature is important for the utilization of beneficial bacteria to improve the production and quality of medicinal herbs.

¹School of Biomedical Sciences, Huaqiao University, 362021, Quanzhou, China. ²Zhangzhou Health Vocational College, 363000, Zhangzhou, China. ³Root Biology Center, Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University, 350002, Fuzhou, China. ⁴Institute of Genetics and Developmental Biology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, 100101, Beijing, China. ⁵Nuffield Division of Clinical Laboratory Sciences, University of Oxford, John Radcliffe Hospital, Headington, Oxford, OX3 9DS, UK. Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to Y.D. (email: diaoyong@hqu.edu.cn)

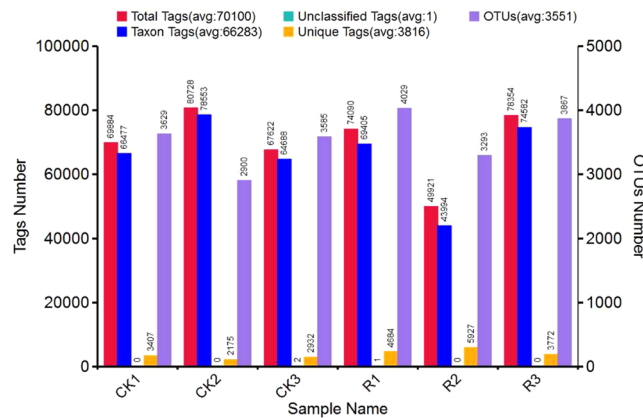


Figure 1. Operational Taxonomic Units (OTUs) analysis of *B. cusia* rhizosphere soil and bulk soil. The horizontal axis presents the sample name, the first vertical axis presents tags number, and the second vertical axis presents the OTUs number. R: rhizosphere soil, CK: bulk soil.

The rhizosphere is one of the most complex ecological niches in the nature¹³, which makes it difficult to investigate the composition and function of the bacteria in it. High-throughput sequencing has facilitated major advances in the understanding of microbial ecology. The 16S rRNA gene of bacteria and archaea are frequently used to characterize the taxonomic composition, phylogenetic diversity and microbial community composition¹⁴. 16S rRNA is located in prokaryotic small subunit ribosome, and includes ten conserved regions and nine hypervariable regions¹⁵. This technology has been used to investigate the microbial composition in different plants, such as *Arabidopsis* accessions^{16–18}, maize¹⁹, *Populus deltoides*^{20,21} and rice²². However, there are very few reports on the bacterial community in medicinal herb roots or rhizosphere.

Baphicacanthus cusia (Nees) Bremek (Figure S1) is a common medicinal herb in China, which is usually used in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Its underground roots are often used as raw materials to produce radix isatidis that has been listed in the Chinese Pharmacopoeia²³. As an important medicinal herb, it is widely cultivated in Southern and Eastern China^{24,25}. *B. cusia*, with its antibacterial and antiviral properties²⁶, is often used to treat colds, fever, meningitis, and other symptoms²⁷. Its leaves and stems are important source of Qing Dai, which is useful to treat diseases such as ulcerative colitis²⁸, leukemia²⁹, and psoriasis³⁰. Indigo, indirubin and tryptanthrin are reported to be the major effective substances of *B. cusia* responsible for its anti-inflammatory and anti-tumor effects^{31–36}. Tryptanthrin can inhibit multi-drug resistance gene expression, and exhibits anti-inflammatory effect by inhibiting nitric oxide (NO) synthesis³⁷. However, due to continuous cropping obstacle, *B. cusia* has to be transplanted after every three years or else has the risk of poor growth^{38–40}. Many plants have various degrees of continuous cropping obstacles. Related researches have focused on the cause of continuous cropping obstacle in the deterioration of physicochemical properties, microbial community structure and diversity imbalances and the changes in enzyme activity of continuous cropping soil⁴¹. The problem of continuous cropping obstacle is very common in medicinal plants, especially in rhizomatous medicinal plants, such as *Pseudostellaria heterophylla* (Miq.) Pax., *Angelica sinensis* (Oliv.) Diels., *Ligularia aduciformis* (C. Winkl.) Hand.-Mazz., *Coptischinensis* Franch. and *Panax ginseng* C. A. Mey.⁴². *B. cusia*, it is less likely to be attacked by pathogens and pests, but is susceptible to root rot⁴³. Root rot is closely related to rhizomatic pathogenic bacteria⁴⁴, which is usually caused by breaking the homeostasis of rhizobacterial community. Therefore, revealing the bacterial community composition of *B. cusia* is essential for understanding the underlying mechanism. In this study, we investigated the structure and composition of *B. cusia* rhizosphere soil and bulk soil by employing an Illumina-based sequencing approach targeting the V4 hypervariable regions of the 16S rRNA gene. This research provided the theoretical basis for exploring the relationship between *B. cusia* and rhizobacteria, which can uncover the relationship between continuous cropping obstacle and rhizobacteria in *B. cusia*. All these can lead to finding a new way to improve the yield and quality of *B. cusia*.

Results

Overall analysis of bacterial community in bulk soil and *B. cusia* rhizosphere. Through 16S rRNA sequencing of all bulk soil and rhizosphere soil samples, we obtained a total of 420,599 total tags. After quality control, a total of 397,699 taxon tags were obtained. We picked the operational taxonomic units (OTUs) to create an OTUs table. Sequences with 97% similarity were assigned to the same OTU. We obtained an average of 3,371 OTUs for bulk soil and 3,730 OTUs for rhizosphere soil samples (Fig. 1). The rarefaction curve of observed species showed that the sequencing depth was sufficient to cover detectable species in both bulk soil and rhizosphere soil samples, since the curve had almost plateaued (Fig. 2a). In addition, the rarefaction curve of Shannon index was consistent with the observed species (Fig. 2b). We also analyzed the bacterial composition at the phylum taxonomic level, which showed that *B. cusia* rhizosphere and bulk soils were dominated by *Proteobacteria*, *Acidobacteria*, *Chloroflexi*, *Actinobacteria*, *Firmicutes*, *Planctomycetes*, *Verrucomicrobia*, *Gemmatimonadetes*, *Bacteroidetes* and *Cyanobacteria* (Fig. 2c). The Venn map showed that 3463 OTUs existed in bulk soil and *B. cusia* rhizosphere, while 642 OTUs were only enriched in bulk soil and 976 OTUs in rhizosphere (Fig. 2d). As shown in Table 1, these indices showed that the diversities of bacterial communities in rhizosphere soil were higher than

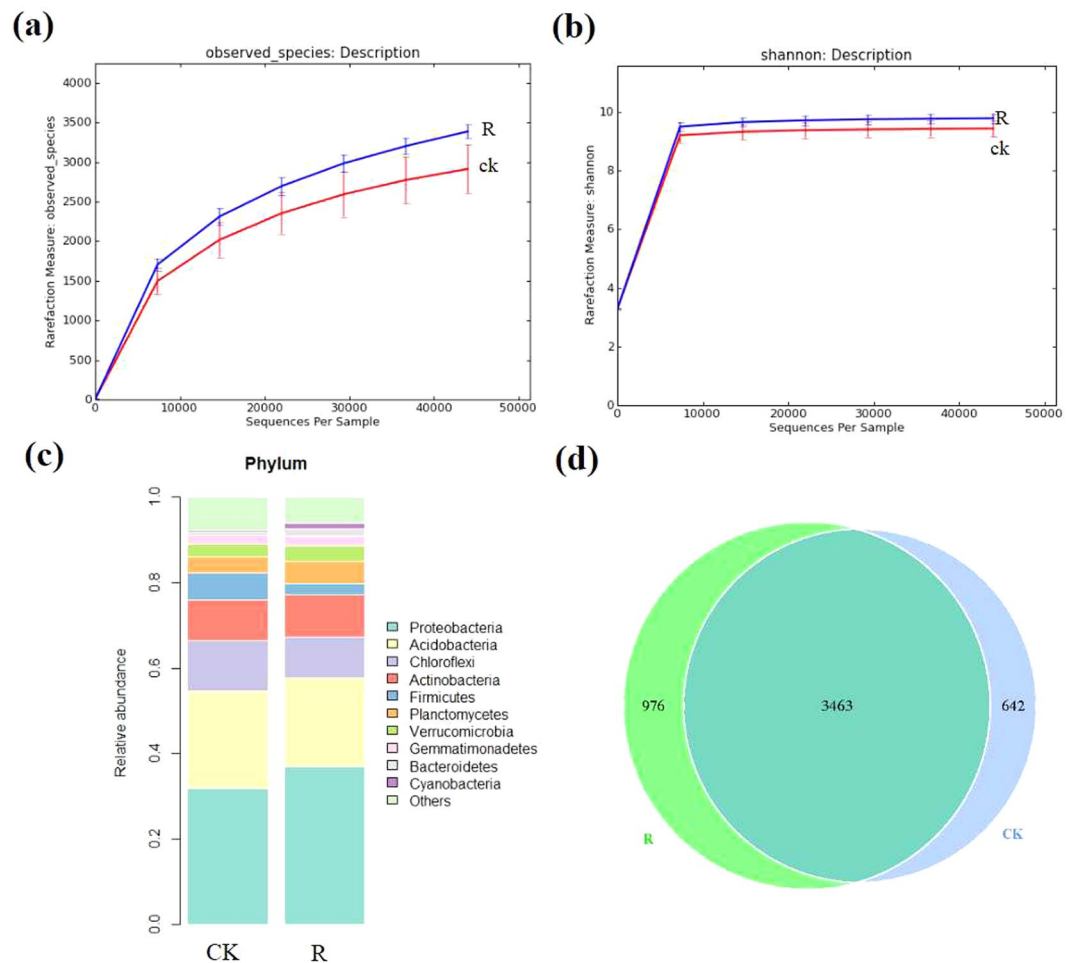


Figure 2. Overall analysis of bacterial communities in *B. cusia* rhizosphere soil and bulk soil. (a) Rarefaction curve of observed species between *B. cusia* rhizosphere soil and bulk soil. (b) Rarefaction curve of Shannon index between *B. cusia* rhizosphere soil and bulk soil. (c) The bacterial composition of *B. cusia* rhizosphere soil and bulk soil at the phylum taxonomic level. (d) The Venn map of bacterial communities in *B. cusia* rhizosphere soil and bulk soil. There were 3463 OTUs both shown in bulk soil and *B. cusia* rhizosphere, and 642 OTUs were only in bulk soil and 976 OTUs were only shown in the rhizosphere samples. R: rhizosphere soil, CK: bulk soil.

Index	Rhizosphere (n = 3)	Bulk soil (n = 3)	P-value
Observed species	3387 ± 61.67	2912 ± 215.7	0.1507
ACE	4388 ± 156.4	3547 ± 200.8	0.0325
Chao1 index	5211 ± 950.6	3452 ± 211.9	0.2013
Shannon index	9.783 ± 0.113	9.434 ± 0.1976	0.2174
Simpson's index	0.9967 ± 0.0003	0.9963 ± 0.0007	0.6856

Table 1. Bacterial diversity index in rhizosphere soil and bulk soil of *B. cusia*. Notes: P-value indicated were significant difference between R and CK using *t*-test.

in bulk soil. Among the Observed species, ACE, Chao1 index, Shannon index and Simpson's index, only ACE showed significant difference between the rhizosphere soil and bulk soil, but no significant difference were found in other indices.

Bacterial diversity in *B. cusia* rhizosphere. To analyze the bacterial structure and composition, we examined the bacterial relative abundance in rhizosphere soil at different taxonomic levels. We mainly presented the top 30 relative abundance of bacteria. At the class taxonomic level, the top five bacteria with relative high abundance were: *Alphaproteobacteria*, *Betaproteobacteria*, *Deltaproteobacteria*, *Ktedonobacteria* and *Gammaproteobacteria*. *Anerolineae*, *Chloroplast*, *Sphingobacteriia* and *Gammaproteobacteria* were significantly enriched in rhizosphere soil. In contrast, the *TK10*, *Deltaproteobacteria*, *Nitrospira* and *Clostridia* were significantly depleted in the rhizosphere as compared to the bulk soil. *Bacilli* were also depleted in the rhizosphere as

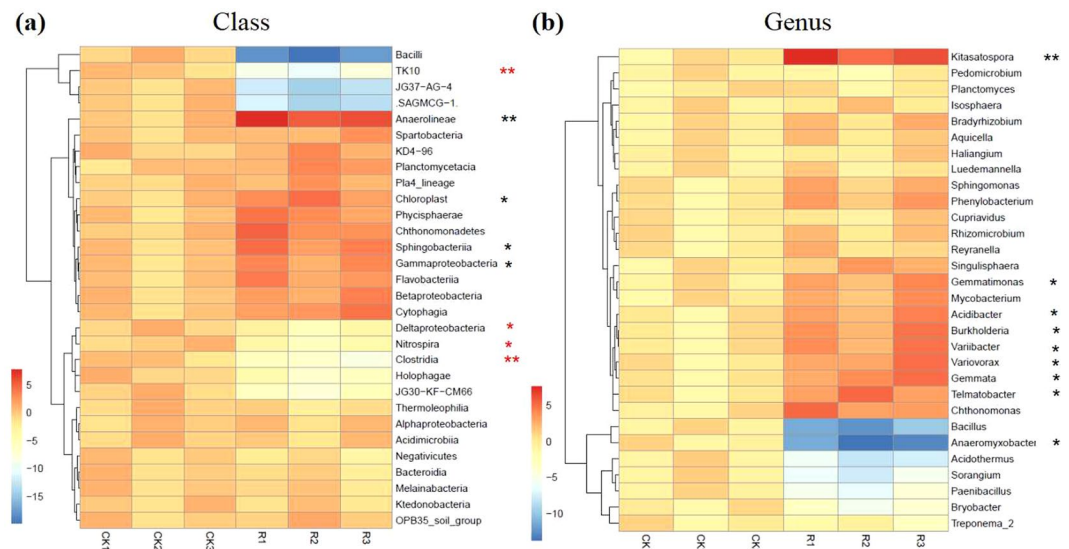


Figure 3. The top 30 relative abundance of bacteria in *B. cusia* rhizosphere soil and bulk soil at different taxonomic level. **(a)** The top 30 relative abundance of bacteria at the class taxonomic level. **(b)** The top 30 relative abundance of bacteria at the genus taxonomic level. R: rhizosphere soil, CK: bulk soil (** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$).

compared to the bulk soil, but was not significant (Fig. 3a). At the genus taxonomic level, the top five bacteria with relative high abundance were *Acidotherrmus*, *Acidibacter*, *Bacillus*, *Bradyrhizobium* and *Bryobacter*. In addition, *Kitasatospora*, *Anaeromyxobacter*, *Gemmatimonas*, *Acidibacter*, *Burkholderia*, *Variibacter*, *Variovorax*, *Gemmata* and *Telmatobacter* were significantly enriched in the rhizosphere. *Bacillus* was also depleted in the rhizosphere as compared to the bulk soil, but the difference was not significant (Fig. 3b).

***B. cusia* recruits special microbes from bulk soil and hosts a distinctive bacterial community in the rhizosphere.**

In order to analyze the differences in bacterial communities between rhizosphere soil and bulk soil, we performed Principal Coordinates Analysis (PCoA) and Nonmetric Multidimensional Scaling (NMDS). The results of the unweighed and weighed PCoA showed that bulk soil samples were clearly separated from rhizosphere soil samples by PC1 (unweighed PC1 = 41.04%, weighed PC1 = 50.48%). The NMDS analysis showed similar result as PCoA, which indicated that the bacterial communities in the rhizosphere were significantly different from that of bulk soil (Fig. 4). In addition, both bray_Curtis distance matrix and UPGMA clustering analysis based on weighted and unweighted unifracs distance showed that the bacterial communities in the rhizosphere were different from that of bulk soil based on their cluster pattern (Fig. 5). To further identify the microbes that were significantly enriched or depleted in rhizosphere, we analyzed the significant microbes between rhizosphere soil and bulk soil at both the family and genus levels. At the family taxonomic level, *Burkholderiaceae*, *Comamonadaceae*, *Xanthomonadaceae*, *Anaerolineaceae*, *Chitinophagaceae*, *Cytophagaceae*, *Intrasporangiaceae*, *Pseudonocardiaceae*, *Chthoniobacteraceae*, *Micrococcaceae*, *Methylobacteriaceae*, *Alcaligenaceae*, *Catenulisporaceae*, *Gaiellaceae*, *Actinospicaceae*, *SubsectionIII*f and *Lactobacillaceae* were significantly enriched in the rhizosphere (Fig. 6a). At the genus taxonomic level, *Acidibacter*, *Burkholderia*, *Gemmatimonas*, *Variovorax*, *Telmatobacter*, *Variibacter*, *Phenylobacterium*, *Kitasatospora*, *Gemmata*, *Chthoniobacter*, *Aquicola*, *Labrys*, *Intrasporangium*, *Catenulispora*, *Rhizobium*, *Gaiella*, *Pseudonocardia*, *Granulicella*, *Actinospica*, *Ralstonia*, *Ktedonobacter* and *Lactobacillus* were significantly enriched in the rhizosphere (Fig. 6b). The LEfSe analysis showed that the biomarkers of bulk soil were *Firmicutes*, *Deltaproteobacteria*, *Bacillales*, *Bacilli*, *DA111*, and the biomarkers for *B. cusia* rhizosphere were *Betaproteobacteria*, *Burkholderiales*, *Xanthomonadales* and *Gammaproteobacteria*. The result of LEfSe analysis was consistent with the previous results indicating that *Burkholderia* was significantly enriched in the rhizosphere of *B. cusia*, while *Bacilli* exhibited low abundance in the rhizosphere as compared to the bulk soil, although not significant (Fig. 7). Taken together, these results suggested that the bacterial community in the rhizosphere of *B. cusia* was distinctive from the bulk soil and the *Burkholderia* was significantly enriched in the rhizosphere indicating that it is an important biomarker for the rhizosphere.

Discussion

Soil has known to be one of the environments with the most diverse microbes⁴⁵. Soil biodiversity is a key determinant of the ecological and evolutionary responses of terrestrial ecosystems to current and future environmental changes⁴⁶. The function of soil is mainly dependent on the diversity of microbes living in it. These microbes are essential for plant nutrition and health. Rhizosphere is an important exchange interface of material and energy between plants and microbes. The rhizosphere of medicinal herbs is similar to other crops, since it is a nutrient-rich zone, where soil bacteria compete for the limited nutrients derived from plants. Furthermore, the plant-associated microbial community, which is also referred to as the second genome of the plant is crucial for

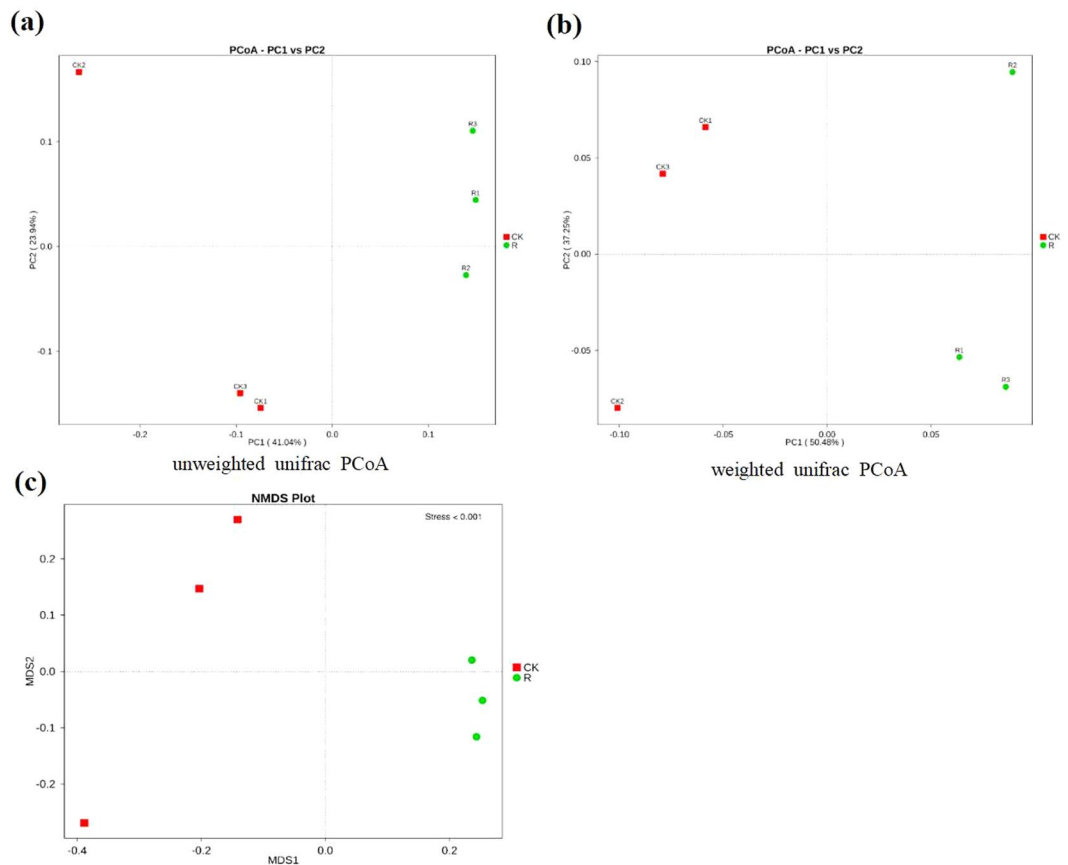


Figure 4. Principal Coordinates Analysis (PCoA) and Nonmetric Multidimensional Scaling (NMDS) of bacterial communities in *B. cusia* rhizosphere soil and bulk soil. (a) Unweighted unifrac PCoA of bacterial communities in *B. cusia* rhizosphere soil and bulk soil. PC1 explained 41.04% of the variation while PC2 explained 23.94%. (b) Weighted unifrac PCoA of bacterial communities in *B. cusia* rhizosphere soil and bulk soil. PC1 explained 50.48% of the variation while PC2 explained 37.25%. (c) NMDS of bacterial communities in *B. cusia* rhizosphere soil and bulk soil. R: rhizosphere soil, CK: bulk soil.

plant health and growth⁴⁷. Previous studies have shown about 75×10^5 CFU of cultivable microbes per gram rhizosphere soil in burdock⁴⁸. Zhang *et al.*⁴⁹ also found 1549 OTUs in rhizosphere soil of *Cypripedium macranthum*. In this study, we obtained an average of 3,730 OTUs for *B. cusia* rhizosphere using 16S rRNA sequencing. This suggested that there were numerous bacteria in the rhizosphere of *B. cusia*, and investigation of their function requires extensive work in the future.

Taxonomic identification based molecular methods, which are independent of microbial cultivation, are widely used to investigate the composition of soil bacterial community. The basic structure of bacteria includes a cell wall that can maintain inherent shape a cell membrane that underlines the cell wall cytoplasm that plays a major role in determining its size and structural integrity⁵⁰ and karyoplasm that controls the various bacterial genetic traits. There are three ribosomal RNAs in the bacterial cytoplasm: 16S rRNA, 23S rRNA, and 5S rRNA that they participate in bacterial protein synthesis. 16S rRNA sequence is used for microbial taxonomic identification. Recently, molecular identification methods combined with high-throughput sequencing have been widely applied in the study of bacterial community composition⁵¹. The application of high-throughput sequencing in the study of microbial community is based on culture independent method. For 16S rRNA amplicon sequencing, total microbial DNA was extracted to study the low abundance of microbes. To a certain extent, the relative abundance and diversity of sequence reflect relative microbial abundance and diversity in the sample⁵². Several plant microbes have been studied, including those in rice^{53,54}, soybean⁵⁵, cotton⁵⁶ and many other plants. There are very few reports on medicinal herb microbes using high-throughput sequencing. However, there are some studies on the rhizosphere microbes of medicinal herbs. In this study, we examined a common and important medicinal herb *B. cusia* by the 16S rRNA amplicon sequencing method, and found that the diversity of bacterial community in the rhizosphere is higher than in bulk soil. However, this was only shown to be significant in the ACE index ($p = 0.0325$), but not in Observed species, Chao1 index, Shannon index and Simpson's index. This result was similar to a previous study⁵⁷ on poplar plantation which found that the bacterial community diversity of rhizosphere soil was higher than that of bulk soil, but the difference was not significant.

Plants can determine the composition of the roots, and rhizosphere microbial community secretion of root exudates can specifically stimulate or repress the microbes⁵⁸. This phenomenon is known as the rhizosphere effect. The microbes can release soil enzymes⁵⁹, degrade pollutants and catalyze oxidation reduction. Therefore,

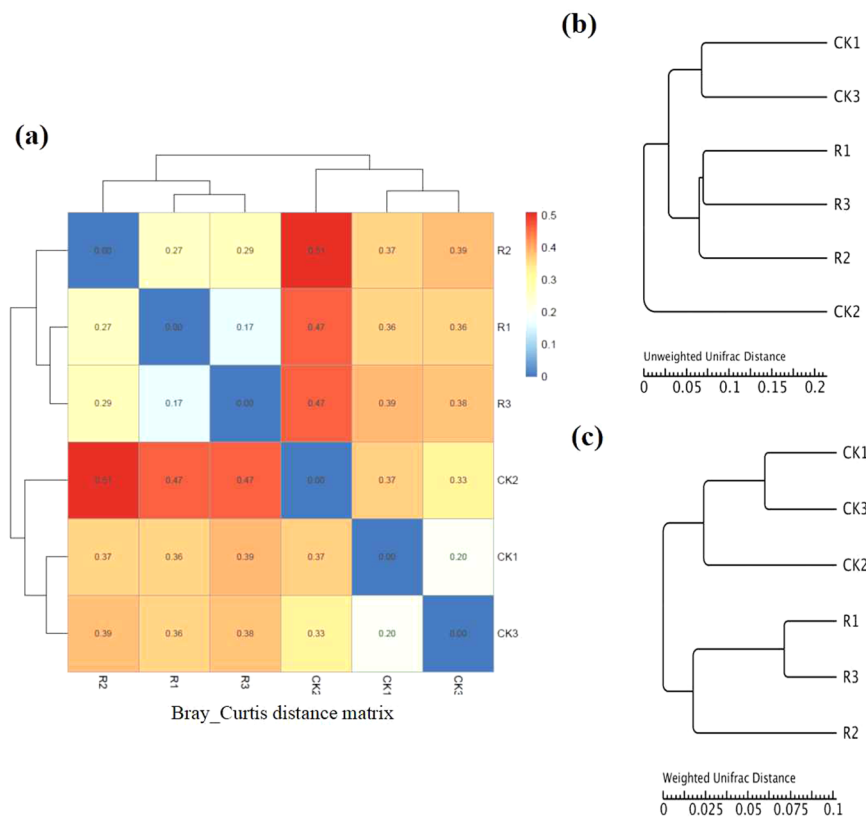


Figure 5. Correlation of bacterial communities between *B. cusia* rhizosphere soil and bulk soil. **(a)** Bray-Curtis distance matrix of bacterial communities in *B. cusia* rhizosphere soil and bulk soil. **(b)** UPGMA clustering analysis using unweighted unifracs distances of bacterial communities between *B. cusia* rhizosphere soil and bulk soil at the phylum taxonomic level. **(c)** UPGMA clustering analysis using weighted unifracs distances of bacterial communities between *B. cusia* rhizosphere soil and bulk soil at the phylum taxonomic level. R: rhizosphere soil, CK: bulk soil.

microbes are beneficial for nutrient cycling in soil^{60,61}. Soil microbial structural stability and functional diversity played an important role in maintaining soil system health^{62,63}. Rhizosphere microbes in turn exert strong effect on plant growth and development by nitrogen fixation^{64,65}, phosphate solubilization^{66,67}, hormone production^{68,69}, and forming a plant-rhizosphere microbe interaction environment. Studies showed that roots with selectivity for rhizosphere microbes^{57,70} can attract both beneficial and detrimental microbes⁸. In this study, at the class taxonomic level, *Bacilli* were depleted in the rhizosphere as compared to the bulk soil. At the genus taxonomic level, *Burkholderia* was significantly enriched in the rhizosphere. *Bacillus* was also depleted in the rhizosphere as compared to the bulk soil. The results were similar to the LEfSe analysis. This suggests that *B. cusia* recruits special microbes from bulk soil and hosts a distinctive bacterial community in the rhizosphere. A previous study demonstrated that *Burkholderia* can present resistances to multiple heavy metals and antibiotics. It can also produce indole-3-acetic acid, 1-aminocyclopropane-1-carboxylic acid deaminase and siderophores. Inoculation with *Burkholderia* improved germination of seeds of the investigated vegetable plants in the presence of Cu, promoted elongation of roots and hypocotyledonary axes, enhanced the dry weights of the plants grown in the soils polluted with Cu and/or Pb, and increased activity of the soil urease and the rhizobacteria diversity⁷¹. Indigo-producing gene from *Burkholderia sp.* was cloned⁷². Indigo is the primary effective substances in *B. cusia*. Multiple *Bacillus* species are known to promote plant growth, in addition to the beneficial N²-fixing activity, which can promote drought resistance in various plant models, including *Arabi-dopsis*⁷³, *Brachypodium*⁷⁴, pepper⁷⁵ and rice⁷⁶. *Burkholderia* may be related to effective substances in *B. cusia*, and the decrease of *Bacillus* may be related to the continuous cropping obstacle of *B. cusia*. Further studies are needed to confirm this hypothesis. We can potentially design a management approach to control the presence of bacterial species in the soil and improve production and quality of *B. cusia* based on detrimental or beneficial species.

Materials and Methods

Sampling and Material Processing. Rhizosphere soil samples of *B. cusia* were collected from Shufeng domination Farm in Fujian, China (25°25'N 118°39'E). Sampling site: *B. cusia* field management measures were consistent. Bulk soil samples (CK) were collected from fifteen different sites away from *B. cusia* cultivation in the same field, and five sites were combined to form one biological replicate⁷⁷. At each sampling site, soil samples were collected from five points within the 0–30 cm topsoil layer after the litter layer was removed. For rhizosphere sampling (R), *B. cusia* was dug out, and the roots with attached soils were gently shaken to remove loose soil until only

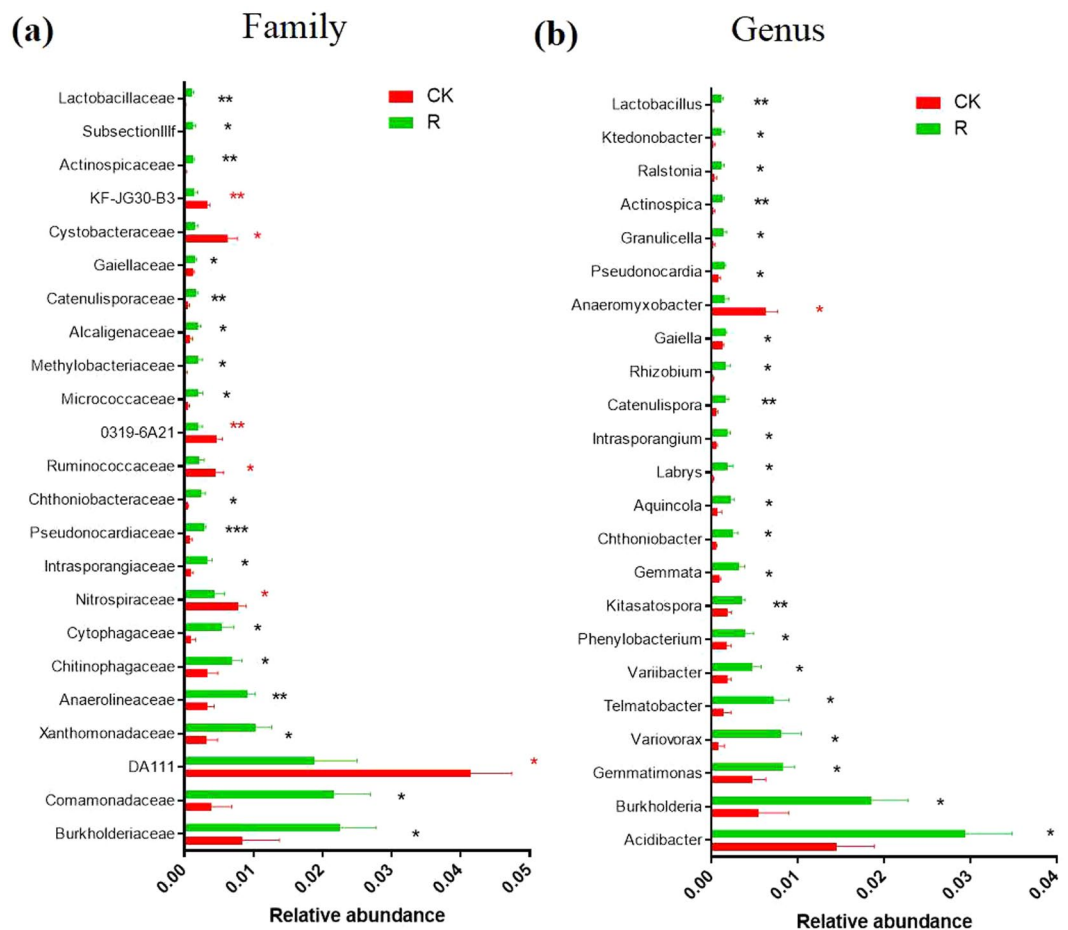


Figure 6. Comparison of the significant microbes between rhizosphere soil and bulk soil at different taxonomic levels. **(a)** The histogram of significant microbes between rhizosphere soil and bulk soil at the family taxonomic level. **(b)** The histogram of significant microbes between rhizosphere soil and bulk soil at the genus taxonomic level. R: rhizosphere soil, CK: bulk soil (** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$).

firmly attached soil remained. This attached soil was collected as the rhizosphere soil using sterilized brushes. Rhizosphere soils from five strains of *B. cusia* were mixed to form one biological replicate⁷⁷. In total, three biological bulk soil samples and three biological rhizosphere soil samples were analyzed. In addition, the rhizosphere soil samples were subjected to a more precise method for collecting rhizosphere soils through centrifugation of root washings according to Bulgarelli *et al.*^{16,78}.

DNA Extraction and PCR Amplification. Total genomic DNA from samples was extracted using CTAB method^{79,80}, with minor modification. DNA concentration and purity were monitored on 1% agarose gels. V4 region of the 16S rRNA gene was amplified using 515-F (5'-GTGCCAGCMGCCGCGGTAA-3') and 806-R (5'-GGACTACHVGGGTW TCTAAT-3') primers⁸¹. PCR reactions (30 μ L) included 15 μ L of Phusion Master Mix (2x), 3 μ L of primer (2 μ M), 10 μ L of gDNA (1 ng/ μ L), 2 μ L of H₂O. The PCR cycling program consisted of an initial denaturation step at 98 °C for 1 min, followed by 30 cycles of 98 °C for 10 s, 50 °C for 30 s, and 72 °C for 30 s, and a final 5 min extension at 72 °C.

PCR Products Mixing and Purification. The PCR products were detected with 2% agarose gels electrophoresis⁸². PCR products with bright band between 300 and 400 bp were mixed in equal density ratios. Then, the mixture of PCR products was purified with gel extraction kit (Qiagen, Germany).

Library Preparation and Sequencing. Sequencing libraries were generated using TruSeq[®] DNA PCR-free sample preparation kit (Illumina, USA) as per manufacturer's recommendations and index codes were added. The library quality was assessed on the Qubit@ 2.0 Fluorometer (Thermo Scientific) and Agilent Bioanalyzer 2100 system. Finally, the library was sequenced on an Illumina HiSeq. 2500 platform and 250 bp paired-end reads were generated (completed by Beijing Novogene Science and Technology Co., Ltd)

Data Analysis. Paired-end reads were merged using FLASH⁸³. Quality filtering on the raw tags were performed under specific filtering conditions to obtain the high-quality clean tags⁸⁴ according to the QIIME⁸⁵ (<http://qiime.org/index.html>) quality controlled process. The tags were compared with the reference database using

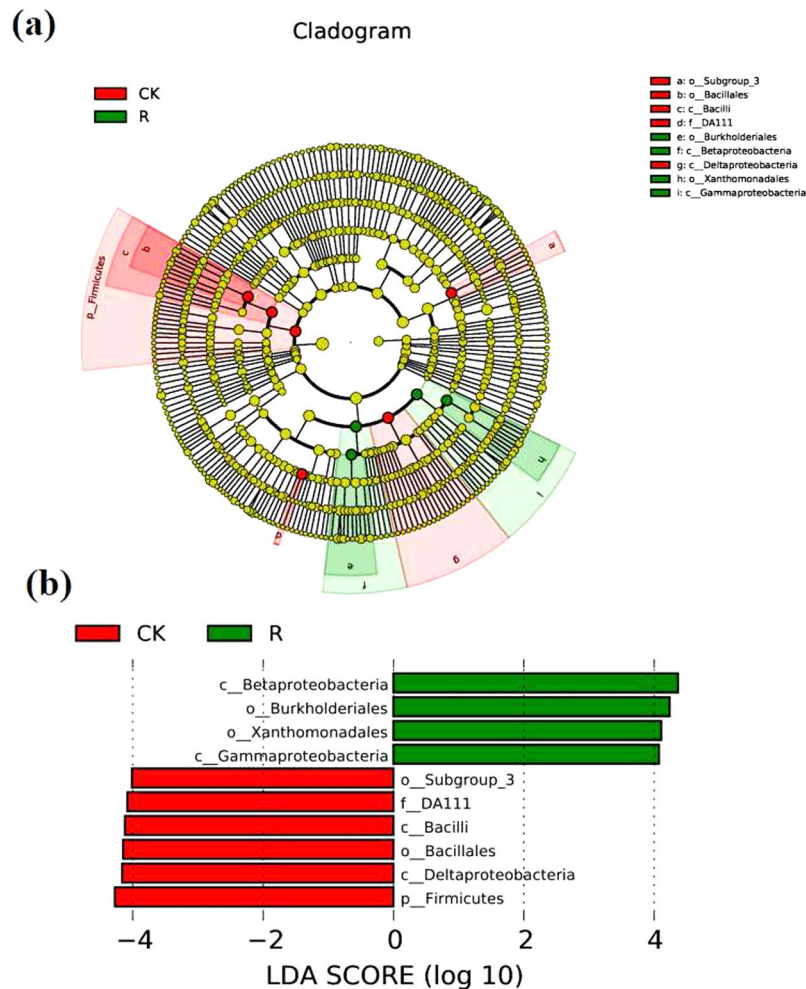


Figure 7. The LEfSe analysis of bacterial communities in *B. cusia* rhizosphere soil and bulk soil. **(a)** Cladogram of bacterial communities in *B. cusia* rhizosphere soil and bulk soil. **(b)** LDA scores of biomarker bacteria. LDA scores are shown as horizontal bars for the biomarker bacteria with an LDA score >4. R: rhizosphere soil, CK: bulk soil.

UCHIME algorithm⁸⁶ (http://www.drive5.com/usearch/manual/uchime_algo.html) to detect chimera sequences, and then the chimera sequences were removed⁸⁷. Then, we used `pick_de_novo_otus.py` to pick OTUs by creating an OTU table. Sequences with $\geq 97\%$ similarity were assigned to the same OTUs. Representative sequence for each OTU was screened for further annotation. For each representative sequence, the Green Gene Database⁸⁸ (<http://greengenes.lbl.gov/cgi-bin/nph-index.cgi>) was used based on RDP classifier⁸⁹ algorithm to annotate taxonomic information. Observed-species, ACE, Chao1, Shannon, Simpson were calculated with QIIME. ACE and Chao1 were selected to identify community richness. Shannon and Simpson were used to identify community diversity. Principal coordinates analysis (PCoA), Nonmetric Multidimensional Scaling (NMDS) and Unweighted Pair Group Method with Arithmetic mean (UPGMA) clustering were conducted by QIIME software. Linear discriminant analysis effect size (LEfSe) was performed using the online LEfSe program (<http://huttenhower.sph.harvard.edu/galaxy/root/index>)⁹⁰. The significant difference was calculated using *t*-test.

References

- Egamberdieva, D. *et al.* High incidence of plant growth stimulating bacteria associated with the rhizosphere of wheat grown on salinated soil in Uzbekistan. *Environmenta Microbiology* **10**, 1–9 (2008).
- Atkinson, D. & Watson, C. A. The beneficial rhizosphere: a dynamic entity. *Applied Soil Ecology* **15**, 99–104 (2000).
- Nihorimbere, V. *et al.* Impact of rhizosphere factors on cyclic lipopeptide signature from the plant beneficial strain *Bacillus amyloliquefaciens* S499. *Fems Microbiology Ecology* **79**, 176–191 (2012).
- Haney, C. H., Samuel, B. S., Bush, J. & Ausubel, F. M. Associations with rhizosphere bacteria can confer an adaptive advantage to plants. *Nature Plants* **1**, 1–9 (2015).
- Guo, F. X., Liu, Y., Tang, L., Chen, C. C. & Pei, D. N. Research status and prospect on rhizosphere microbiome of medicinal plants. *Journal of Agricultural Science and Technology* **19**, 12–21 (2017).
- Hirsch, A. M. *et al.* Complete genome sequence of *micromonospora* strain L5, a potential plant-growth-regulating actinomycete, originally isolated from *casuarina equisetifolia* root nodules. *Genome Announcements* **5**, e00759 (2013).
- Jones, D. L., Nguyen, C. & Finlay, D. Carbon flow in the rhizosphere: carbon trading at the soil-root interface. *Plant and Soil* **321**, 5–33 (2009).

8. Dohrmann, A. B. *et al.* Importance of rare taxa for bacterial diversity in the rhizosphere of Bt- and conventional maize varieties. *The ISME Journal* **7**, 37–49 (2013).
9. Hao, D. C., Chen, S. L. & Xiao, P. G. Study of rhizosphere microbe based on molecular biology and genomics. *Microbiology* **36**, 892–899 (2009).
10. Han, W. Y., Wang, W. M., Guo, Y., Yang, M. Z. & Jia, Z. J. Bacterial abundance of tea garden soils and its influencing factors. *Journal of Tea Science* **33**, 147–154 (2013).
11. Zhou, N. *et al.* Correlation between distribution of rhizospheric microorganisms and contents of steroidal saponins of *Paris polyphylla var. yunnanensis*. *China Journal of Chinese Materia Medica* **40**, 1055–1060 (2015).
12. Garbeva, P., Elsas, J. D. V. & Veen, J. A. V. Rhizosphere microbial community and its response to plant species and soil history. *Plant Soil* **302**, 19–32 (2008).
13. Zeng, M. J., Zhong, Y. J. & Diao, Y. Promoting mechanism of plant growth-promoting rhizobacteria in medicinal plants. *Biotechnology Bulletin* **33**, 13–18 (2017).
14. Langille, M. G. *et al.* Predictive functional profiling of microbial communities using 16S rRNA marker gene sequences. *Nature Biotechnology* **31**, 814–821 (2013).
15. Yang, X., Chen, L. & Wang, C. Q. Advance in application of 16S rRNA gene in bacteriology. *Journal of Northwest A & F University (Natural Science Edition)* **36**, 55–60 (2008).
16. Bulgarelli, D. *et al.* Revealing structure and assembly cues for *Arabidopsis* root inhabiting bacterial microbiota. *Nature* **488**, 91–95 (2012).
17. Lundberg, D. S. *et al.* Defining the core *Arabidopsis thaliana* root microbiome. *Nature* **488**, 86–9 (2012).
18. Bai, Y. *et al.* Functional overlap of the Arabidopsis leaf and root microbiota. *Nature* **528**, 364–369 (2015).
19. Peiffer, J. A. *et al.* Diversity and heritability of the maize rhizosphere microbiome under field conditions. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA* **110**, 6548–6553 (2013).
20. Gottel, N. R. *et al.* Distinct microbial communities within the endosphere and rhizosphere of *Populus deltoides* roots across contrasting soil types. *Applied and Environmental Microbiology* **77**, 5934–5944 (2011).
21. Shakya, M. *et al.* A multifactor analysis of fungal and bacterial community structure in the root microbiome of mature *Populus deltoides* trees. *PLoS ONE* **8**, e76382 (2013).
22. Edwards, J. *et al.* Structure, variation, and assembly of the root-associated microbiomes of rice. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA* **112**, 911–920 (2015).
23. National Pharmacopoeia Committee. Pharmacopoeia of the People's Republic of China Vol 1. National Pharmacopoeia Committee, Beijing, 2015.
24. Hu S. L. Original color figures of Chinese typical medicine materials. 86, 498, 16 (Shandong Scientific Technology Press, Jinan, 1998).
25. Flora of Fujian Editors. Flora of Fujian (Volume 5). 132–133 (Fuzhou Scientific Technology Press, Fuzhou, 1993).
26. Sun, X. B., Sheng, J. R. & Wang, D. P. Research progress of chemical constituents and pharmacological activities for *Baphicacanthus cusia* (Nees) Bremek. *Journal of Guangxi Teachers Education University* **25**, 66–69 (2008).
27. Zhen, Z. H., Dong, Z. H. & Yu, J. Morden research and application of Chinese traditional patent medicine. 3166 (The Academy Press, Beijing, 1993).
28. Fan, H. *et al.* Intervention effects of QRZSLXF, a Chinese medicinal herb recipe, on the DOR- β -arrestin1-Bcl2 signal transduction pathway in a rat model of ulcerative colitis. *Journal of ethnopharmacology* **154**, 88–97 (2014).
29. Hu, X. M. *et al.* Arsenic disulfide induced apoptosis and concurrently promoted erythroid differentiation in cytokine-dependent myelodysplastic syndrome-progressed leukemia cell line F-36p with complex karyotype including monosomy 7. *Chinese Journal of Integrative Medicine* **20**, 387–393 (2014).
30. Lin, Y. K. *et al.* Comparison of refined and crude indigo naturalis ointment in treating psoriasis: randomized, observer-blind, controlled, inpatient trial. *Archives of Dermatology* **148**, 397–400 (2012).
31. Zeng, M. J. & Diao, Y. Secondary metabolites of *Baphicacanthus cusia* (Nees) Bremek. *Chineses Agricultural Science Bulletin* **32**, 30–34 (2016).
32. Ma, Q., Qu, Y. Y., Zhang, X. W., Xu, B. W. & Zhou, J. T. Recent advances in microbial synthesis of indigo. *Chinese Journal of Applied & Environmental Biology* **18**, 344–350 (2012).
33. Yang, M., Liu, Z. Y., Su, T. T. & Zhou, W. Q. Study on mechanism of precursors transforming into indigo and indirubin in blue-genera plants. *China Journal of Chinese Materia Medica* **35**, 928–931 (2010).
34. Spink, B. C., Hussain, M. M., Katz, B. H., Eisele, L. & Spink, D. C. Transient induction of cytochromes P450 1A1 and 1B1 in MCF-7 human breast cancer cells by indirubin. *Biochemical Pharmacology* **66**, 2313–2321 (2003).
35. Mak, N. K. *et al.* Inhibition of RANTES expression by influenza virus-infected human bronchial epithelial cell. *Biochemical Pharmacology* **67**, 167–174 (2004).
36. Wu, X. X. *et al.* Characterization of anti-leukemia components from indigo naturalis using comprehensive two-dimensional K562/cell membrane chromatography and in silico target identification. *Scientific Reports* **6**, 30103 (2016).
37. Miao, S., Sun, J. Y., Xie, Y. H., Wang, J. B. & Wang, S. W. Research progress of tryptanthrin. *Chinese Pharmacological Bulletin* **24**, 152–155 (2008).
38. Wang, S. M., Pan, D. R. & Zhu, Q. Q. Contents of medicinal ingredients of *Baphicacanthus cusia* (Nees) Bremek in different planting-age. *Guizhou Agricultural Sciences* **42**, 184–186 (2014).
39. Zhang, Y. Q. & Gao, J. M. The cultivation technique of *Strobilanthes cusia* planted in paddy fields and its processing technology. *Guizhou Agricultural Sciences* **37**, 66–67 (2009).
40. Li, Q. J. The planting technology of *Baphicacanthus cusia* (Nees) Bremek. *China Agricultural Information* **9**, 28 (2007).
41. Liu, L. *et al.* Relationship between soil microbial quantity, enzyme activity and soil fertility in hot pepper greenhouse soils of different continuous cropping years. *Soil and Fertilizer Sciences in China* **2**, 5–10 (2013).
42. Chen, H., Yang, Z. L., Yuan, Z. L., Yuan, X. & Liu, X. F. Changes of physicochemical property and microflora in rhizosphere soil of continuous cropping of *Atractylodes macrocephala*. *Journal of Plant Resources and Environment* **23**, 24–29 (2014).
43. Li, Q. J. Cultivation techniques of *Baphicacanthus cusia* (Nees) Bremek. *China Agricultural Information* **9**, 28–29 (2007).
44. Gao, F., Ren, X. X., Wang, M. L. & Qin, X. M. Research progress in root rot diseases of Chinese herbal medicine and control strategy by antagonistic microorganisms. *China Journal of Chinese Materia Medica* **40**, 4122–4126 (2015).
45. Fierer, N. & Lennon, J. T. The generation and maintenance of diversity in microbial communities. *American Journal of Botany* **98**, 439–448 (2011).
46. Bardgett, R. D. & Putten, W. H. V. D. Belowground biodiversity and ecosystem functioning. *Nature* **515**, 505–511 (2014).
47. Berendsen, R. L., Pieterse, C. M. & Bakker, P. A. The rhizosphere microbiome and plant health. *Trends in Plant Science* **17**, 478–486 (2012).
48. Hou, J. H., Fan, J. Q., Wang, F. W., Cai, K. & Kong, W. G. Preliminary analysis of cultivable bacteria diversity and Cd²⁺ resistance in burdock rhizosphere. *Biotechnology Bulletin* **28**, 158–162 (2012).
49. Zhang, J., Hou, X. Q. & Fu, Y. J. Rhizospheric Bacteria Diversity of *Cyrtopodium macranthum* Estimated via High Throughput Sequencing. *Southwest China Journal of Agricultural Sciences* **30**, 811–816 (2017).
50. Wong, K. K. L. Three-dimensional discrete element method for the prediction of protoplasmic seepage through membrane in a biological cell. *Journal of Biomechanics* **65**, 115–124 (2017).

51. Akinsanya, M. A., Goh, J. K., Lim, S. P. & Ting, A. S. Metagenomics study of endophytic bacteria in Aloe vera using next-generation technology. *Genomics Data* **6**, 159–163 (2015).
52. Huang, J. Y. & Zhou, W. Ecological effect on soil microbes on the basis of 16S rRNA/DNA analyses. *Chinese Agricultural Science Bulletin* **22**, 291–294 (2006).
53. Liu, B., Hu, G. P., Zheng, X. F., Zhang, J. F. & Xie, H. A. Analysis on microbial diversity in the rhizosphere of rice by phospholipid fatty acids biomarkers. *Chinese Journal of Rice Science* **24**, 278–288 (2010).
54. Björn, B., Judith, P. & Dumont, M. G. Microbial community structure in the rhizosphere of rice plants. *Frontiers in Microbiology* **6**, 1537 (2015).
55. Zhang, J. F. *et al.* Effects of saline alkali stress on diversity of bacterial community in rhizosphere soil of soybean. *Journal of Jilin Agricultural University* **39**, 262–269 (2017).
56. Gu, M. Y. *et al.* Microbial community diversity of rhizosphere soil in continuous cotton cropping system in Xinjiang. *Acta Ecologica Sinica* **32**, 3031–3040 (2012).
57. Wang, Q. T. *et al.* Comparison on bacterial community of rhizosphere and bulk soil of poplar plantation based on pyrosequencing. *Chinese Journal of Applied & Environmental Biology* **21**, 967–973 (2015).
58. Doornbos, R. F., Loon, L. C. V. & Bakker, P. A. H. M. Impact of root exudates and plant defense signaling on bacterial communities in the rhizosphere. A review. *Agronomy for Sustainable Development* **32**, 227–243 (2012).
59. Liu, E. K. *et al.* Biological properties and enzymatic activity of arable soils affected by long-term different fertilization systems. *Journal of Plant Ecology* **32**, 176–182 (2008).
60. Jiao, Y. J. *et al.* Effects of continuous tobacco on soil microbial diversity and enzyme activities. *Soil and Crop* **3**, 56–62 (2014).
61. Dai, Y. T. *et al.* Soil bacteria diversity in rhizosphere under two types of vegetation restoration based on high throughput sequencing. *Acta Pedologica Sinica* **54**, 735–748 (2017).
62. Jacobsen, C. S. & Hjelms, M. H. Agricultural soils, pesticides and microbial diversity. *Current Opinion in Biotechnology* **27**, 15–20 (2014).
63. Rutigliano, F. A. *et al.* Soil activities related to nitrogen cycle under three plant cover types in Mediterranean environment. *Applied Soil Ecology* **43**, 40–46 (2009).
64. Zhang, Q. L., Lin, M. & Ping, S. Z. Biological nitrogen fixation and its application in sustainable agriculture. *Biotechnology Bulletin* **18**, 1–4 (2008).
65. Hayat, R., Ali, S., Amara, U., Khalid, R. & Ahmed, I. Soil beneficial bacteria and their role in plant growth promotion: a review. *Annals of Microbiology* **60**, 579–598 (2010).
66. Bhattacharyya, P. N. & Jha, D. K. Plant growth promoting rhizobacteria (PGPR): emergence in agriculture. *World journal of microbiology & biotechnology* **28**, 1327–1350 (2012).
67. Ma, C. Y., Zhang, Y., Ma, W. B., Li, J. H. & Yao, T. Identification of plant growth promoting rhizobacteria *Astragalus membranaceus* and their effectiveness. *Acta Prataculturae Sinica* **26**, 149–159 (2017).
68. Li, X. Q. Studies and prospection plant growth-promoting rhizobacteria of tea rhizosphere (*camellia sinensis*). *Journal of Shandong Agricultural University* **40**, 301–303 (2009).
69. Rodriguez, M. T. F., Valverde, N. B., Lagurara, P., Revale, S. & Vilaro, M. D. R. Soil and rhizosphere bacterial diversity in maize agroecosystem. *Sustainable Agriculture Research* **6**, 35–51 (2017).
70. Hartmann, A., Schmid, M., Tuinen, D. V. & Berg, G. Plant-driven selection of microbes. *Plant Soil* **321**(1–2), 235–257 (2009).
71. Huang, G. H. *et al.* Characterization of plant-growth-promoting effects and concurrent promotion of heavy metal accumulation in the tissues of the plants grown in the polluted soil by Burkholderia strain LD-11. *International Journal of Phytoremediation* **15**, 991–1009 (2013).
72. Liu, Z. Y. *et al.* Cloning, expression and application of an indigo-producing gene from Burkholderia sp. IDO3. *Microbiology China* **44**, 2634–2643 (2017).
73. Zhou, C. *et al.* Rhizobacterial strain *Bacillus megaterium* BOFC15 induces cellular polyamine changes that improve plant growth and drought resistance. *International Journal of Molecular Sciences* **17**, 976 (2016).
74. Gagné-Bourque, F. *et al.* Accelerated growth rate and increased drought stress resilience of the model grass *Brachypodium distachyon* colonized by *Bacillus subtilis* B26. *PLoS One* **10**, e0130456 (2015).
75. Marasco, R. *et al.* A drought resistance-promoting microbiome is selected by root system under desert farming. *PLoS One* **7**, e48479 (2012).
76. Kakat, K. U. *et al.* A consortium of rhizobacterial strains and biochemical growth elicitors improve cold and drought stress tolerance in rice (*Oryza sativa* L.). *Plant Biology* **18**, 471–483 (2016).
77. Inceoglu, O., Salles, J. F., van Overbeek, L. & Elsas, J. D. Effects of plant genotype and growth stage on the *betaproteobacterial* communities associated with different potato cultivars in two fields. *Applied and Environmental Microbiology* **76**, 3675–3684 (2010).
78. Bulgarelli, D. *et al.* Structure and function of the bacterial root microbiota in wild and domesticated barley. *Cell Host & Microbe* **17**, 392–403 (2015).
79. Xu, P., Li, W. J., Xu, L. H. & Cheng, L. A microwave-based method for genomic DNA extraction from actinomycetes. *Microbiology* **30**, 82–84 (2003).
80. Wang, A. F. & Hong, K. CTAB method for genomic DNA extraction from *Nonomuraea*. *Microbiology* **37**, 1211–1215 (2010).
81. Qin, S. J. *et al.* Analysis of the bacterial community structures diversity in rhizosphere of *Cerasus sachalinensis* Kom. *Journal of Jilin Agricultural University*. **33**, 643–648 (2011).
82. Yang, J. H. & Kong, W. Q. Rhizosphere bacteria diversity of *Morus mongolica* revealed based on 16S rRNA sequencing. *Genomics and Applied Biology* **34**, 2161–2168 (2015).
83. Magoč, T. & Salzberg, S. L. FLASH: fast length adjustment of short reads to improve genome assemblies. *Bioinformatics* **27**, 2957–2963 (2011).
84. Nicholas, A. B. *et al.* Quality-filtering vastly improves diversity estimates from Illumina amplicon sequencing. *Nature methods* **10**, 57–59 (2013).
85. Caporaso, J. G. *et al.* QIIME allows analysis of high-throughput community sequencing data. *Nature methods* **7**, 335–336 (2010).
86. Edgar, R. C., Haas, B. J., Clemente, J. C., Quince, C. & Knight, R. UCHIME improves sensitivity and speed of chimera detection. *Bioinformatics* **27**, 2194–2200 (2011).
87. Haas, B. J. *et al.* Chimeric 16S rRNA sequence formation and detection in Sanger and 454-pyrosequenced PCR amplicons. *Genome research* **21**, 494–504 (2011).
88. DeSantis, T. Z. *et al.* Greengenes, a chimera-checked 16S rRNA gene database and workbench compatible with ARB. *Applied and environmental microbiology* **72**, 5069–5072 (2006).
89. Wang, Q., Garrity, G. M., Tiedje, J. M. & Cole, J. R. Naive Bayesian classifier for rapid assignment of rRNA sequences into the new bacterial taxonomy. *Applied and environmental microbiology* **73**, 5261–5267 (2007).
90. Zettler, E. R., Mincer, T. J. & Amaral-Zettler, L. A. Life in the plastisphere: microbial communities on plastic marine debris. *Environmental Science & Technology* **47**, 7137–7146 (2013).

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Natural Science Foundation of China (Association of Science and technology cooperation across the Taiwan straits, Project No. U1405215).

Author Contributions

M.J.Z., Y.J.Z. and Y.D. conceived and designed the study. M.J.Z. and Y.J.Z. performed the experiments. M.J.Z. and Y.J.Z. performed data analysis. M.J.Z. wrote the manuscript. M.J.Z., Y.J.Z., S.J.C. and Y.D. revised the paper. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Additional Information

Supplementary information accompanies this paper at <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-018-34177-1>.

Competing Interests: The authors declare no competing interests.

Publisher's note: Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Open Access This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

© The Author(s) 2018