

Table of contents

CHAPTER I.....	1
1. A brief overview of plant breeding techniques	1
2. Genome engineering and site-specific nucleases in plants.....	3
2.1. Genome engineering promoted by double-strand breaks	3
2.2. Democratizing genome engineering with CRISPR/Cas systems	5
2.2.1. Meganucleases	6
2.2.2. Zinc finger nucleases	6
2.2.3. Transcription activator-like effectors.....	6
2.2.4. CRISPR/Cas systems.....	7
2.3. Exploiting the naturally occurring diversity of CRISPR systems	7
3. Expanding the horizons of plant breeding through synthetic biology	11
3.1. A brief introduction to synthetic biology and plant synthetic biology	12
3.1.1. Synthetic biology facilitated by modular cloning.....	13
3.1.2. Synthetic biology hits the plant kingdom.....	15
3.2. Site-specific recombination	17
3.3. Uses of site-specific recombination in plant biotechnology	20
3.3.1. Transgene excision.....	20
3.3.2. Gene stacking	21
3.4. Gene switches	22
3.5. Memory switches in plant systems	23
4. References	26
OBJECTIVES.....	37
CHAPTER II.....	41
1. Introduction	43
2. Results	45
2.1. A GB-assisted cloning strategy for plant Cas12a constructs.....	45
2.2. Transient expression of CGEM provides efficient targeted mutagenesis in <i>N. benthamiana</i> leaves	48

2.3.	Modifications in the crRNA DR loop affect RGEN activity but cannot compensate low efficiency editing	50
2.4.	Cas12a as a genome editing tool in <i>N. benthamiana</i> , tomato and Arabidopsis.....	51
2.5.	A meta-analysis of Cas12a mutagenesis profile shows a high frequency of small-medium size deletions	57
2.6.	Whole genome sequencing of LbCas12a-mutated <i>A. thaliana</i> plants revealed no appreciable off-target effects	58
3.	Discussion.....	61
4.	Experimental procedures.....	66
4.1.	GBparts construction.....	66
4.2.	Guide RNA assembly on level 1.....	66
4.3.	Cloning in α and Ω -level destination vectors	67
4.4.	<i>Nicotiana benthamiana</i> transient assays.....	67
4.5.	<i>Nicotiana benthamiana</i> stable transformation.....	68
4.6.	<i>Solanum lycopersicum</i> stable transformation.....	68
4.7.	<i>Arabidopsis thaliana</i> stable transformation.....	68
4.8.	Mutagenesis detection of on-target sites	68
4.9.	Mutagenesis detection of off-target sites	69
5.	References.....	71
6.	Supplementary information	78
7.	Supplementary tables.....	89
CHAPTER III	97
1.	Introduction.....	99
2.	Results.....	103
2.1.	Design of a modular reversible genetic switch for plant systems	103
2.2.	Characterization of the register modules in stably transformed <i>N. benthamiana</i> plants	107
2.3.	Stable and reversible memory storage over a full SET/RESET cycle in whole plants	109
2.4.	Chemical induction of PhiC31 controls SET operation in <i>N. benthamiana</i> hairy roots	112

3.	Discussion	115
4.	Experimental procedures	120
4.1.	Construction and assembly of the GoldenBraid phytobricks	120
4.2.	Time-dependent characterization of reporter expression in transiently expressed and integrated register modules.....	121
4.3.	Confocal laser microscopy	122
4.4.	Firefly and renilla luciferase luminescence quantification.....	122
4.5.	Generation of <i>N. benthamiana</i> transgenic plants.....	122
4.6.	Generation of <i>N. benthamiana</i> transgenic hairy roots.....	123
4.7.	Estradiol induction experiments	124
4.8.	YFP quantification	124
4.9.	Genomic DNA extraction and PCR amplification	125
5.	References	126
6.	Supplementary figures.....	130
7.	Supplementary tables	136
CHAPTER IV.....		141
1.	Uses of CRISPR/Cas12a in precision plant breeding and beyond	143
1.1.	Targeting non-coding regulatory regions with Cas12a.....	143
1.2.	New multiplexing capacities with Cas12a	145
1.3.	Expanding the toolbox of transcriptional regulators	147
2.	Applications of the phage PhiC31-based toggle switch.....	149
2.1.	Control of the production of toxic or detrimental compounds.	149
2.2.	Regulation of transgene expression in field crops	150
2.3.	A DNA-based memory device for recording cellular events.....	151
3.	Combined uses of toggle switches and Cas12/Cas9-based transcriptional regulators	153
4.	References	157
CONCLUSIONS.....		161