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Pre-and/or Post-harvest application of methyl jasmonate, methyl salicylate and salicylic acid to maintain post-harvest quality of horticultural crops: A review

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Abstract

Methyl jasmonate (MeJA), methyl salicylate (MeSA) and salicylic acid (SA) are the signaling molecules enhance the levels of bioactive compounds and maintain the post-harvest life of numerous horticultural crops with their pre- and/or post-harvest applications. This review focuses on as how the pre- and/or post-harvest application of MeJA, MeSA and SA extend the post-harvest life and maintain the quality of numerous fruits, vegetables and ornamentals.

Keywords: Pre-harvest, post-harvest, MeSA, MeJA, SA, fruit quality

1. Introduction

Fruit ripening and senescence are the physiological process mediated by ethylene, a plant hormone which diffuses into and out of plant tissues from both endogenous and exogenous sources (Saltveit, 1999) [62]. The influence of ethylene on post-harvest quality of horticultural crops could be beneficial or deleterious depending on the type of fruit and its ripening stage (Baswal & Ramezani, 2020) [12]. Various approaches such as application of edible coatings and packaging have been tried by various researches to retard the post-harvest ripening and senescence during storage (Baswal *et al.*, 2020a, 2020b; Khorram *et al.*, 2017) [9, 10]. Anti-senescence compounds such as MeJA, MeSA and SA have been registered by U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and considered as safe for human-health and environment (Ashghari & Hasanloo, 2015) [6].

MeJA is a volatile compound and was firstly discovered in the blooms of *Jasminum grandiflorum* and has since been found across the plant kingdom. Because of its flammability, MeJA plays an important role in plant cellular responses, plant defence mechanisms in response to insect-induced wounds, infections, and environmental challenges such drought, low temperature, and salinity plant-herbivore interactions, and plant-plant interactions (Cheong & Choi, 2003) [17]. Exogenous application of MeJA has been shown to prevent stress-induced lesions in intact and fresh-cut fruits and vegetables throughout their post-harvest period (Gonzalez-Aguilar *et al.*, 2007) [24].

MeSA is a plant molecule derived from salicylic acid that plays an important role in plant growth and development, defence mechanisms, plant responses to various abiotic stressors and fruit ripening (Kumar, 2014) [38].

SA is an endogenous signal molecule that regulates stress responses and plant developmental processes including heat production, photosynthesis, stomatal conductance, transpiration, ion-uptake and transport, disease resistance, seed germination, sex polarization and crop yield (Klessig & Malamy, 1994) [35]. SA is a promising compound retards the post-harvest ripening and spoilage of stored fruits and vegetables (Asghari & Aghdam, 2010) [5].

2. Effect of pre-harvest application of MeJA on post-harvest quality of horticultural crops:

Pre-harvest application of MeJA successfully investigated on several horticultural crops such as pomegranate, pineapple, raspberries, sweet cherry, plum and cauliflower (Table 1). Pre-harvest application of MeJA significantly maintained higher levels of bioactive compounds and delayed the softening of plums (Ozturk *et al.*, 2014) [52]. Likewise, the pre-harvest application of MeJA significantly enhanced the storage life of Japanese plum (Karaman *et al.*, 2013) [33].

In cauliflower, the pre-harvest application of MeJA considerably enhanced the quinone reductase activity (Ku *et al.*, 2013).

3. Effect of postharvest application of MeJA on selected horticultural crops

The post-harvest application of MeJA has been successfully investigated in numerous horticultural crops such as apples, blueberries, citrus, loquat, strawberries, tomatoes and broccoli (Table 2).

3.1 Fruits

3.1.1 Apple

The post-harvest application of MeJA significantly induced the expression of genes involved in ethylene production and signaling system and enhanced the de-greening with minimal losses in fruit quality of stored apple (Fan *et al.*, 1998; Lv *et al.*, 2018).

3.1.2 Blueberry

The post-harvest application of MeJA significantly stimulated the production of H₂O₂, improved the antioxidant potential (Wang *et al.*, 2009)^[14], promoted disease resistance against mold growth and modulated phenyl propanoid pathway in blueberry fruit (Wang *et al.*, 2020)^[73].

3.1.3 Citrus

The post-harvest dipping of 'Kinnow' mandarin fruit in MeJA significantly extended the storage life, retarded the activities of fruit softening enzymes and maintained the fruit quality (Baswal *et al.*, 2021; Baswal *et al.*, 2020c)^[11, 8]. The post-harvest dipping in MeJA successfully degreened the mandarin cv. 'Arayana' (Gomez *et al.*, 2017)^[20].

3.1.4 Strawberry

The post-harvest application of MeJA showed higher resistance to water stress (Wang, 1999)^[76], accumulated higher levels of volatile compounds i.e. anthocyanins and total phenols and maintained overall fruit quality of strawberry fruit (Ayala-Zavala *et al.*, 2005)^[7].

3.1.5 Other fruits

It has been shown that the post-harvest application of MeJA significantly enhanced the levels of total phenols, total sugars and phenyl alanine (PAL) and lipoxygenase (LOX) activities in guava fruit (Gonzalez-Aguilar *et al.*, 2004)^[23]. MeJA significantly extended the storage life of papaya and avocado fruit (Gonzalez-Aguilar *et al.*, 2003; Glowacz *et al.*, 2017)^[22]. Mango fruit treated with MeJA showed significantly reduced chilling injury (CI) symptoms during storage (Gonzalez-Aguilar *et al.*, 2001)^[21]. In peaches, the post-harvest application of MeJA significantly alleviated CI (Meng *et al.*, 2009)^[50]. Likewise, the post-harvest application of MeJA significantly enhanced the levels of betacyanin and antioxidant activity in dragon fruit (Mustafa *et al.*, 2018)^[51]. Fruits of loquat treated with MeJA significantly improved chilling tolerance, enhanced anti-oxidative enzymatic activity and unsaturated/saturated fatty acid ratio (Cao *et al.*, 2009)^[14].

3.2 Vegetables

3.2.1 Tomato

The post-harvest application of MeJA significantly elevated

the levels of primary health-promoting components and alleviated CI in tomato fruit (Ding *et al.*, 2001; Liu *et al.*, 2018)^[30].

3.2.2 Bell Pepper

The post-harvest application of MeJA alleviated CI and minimized the seed browning of bell pepper (Wang *et al.*, 2019; Seo *et al.*, 2020)^[77].

3.2.3 Broccoli

The post-harvest application of MeJA significantly enhanced the levels of health-promoting compounds such as phenolic content and antioxidant capacity of broccoli (Ku *et al.*, 2013; Guan *et al.*, 2019)^[25].

3.2.4 Other Vegetables

In celery the post-harvest dipping of MeJA delayed spoilage and lowered the microbial growth (Buta & Moline, 1998)^[13]. Likewise, combination of MeJA + MAP extended the storage life of garlic cloves garlic (Akan *et al.*, 2019)^[3].

3.3 Ornamentals

Pulsing with MeJA significantly showed higher resistance against mold and prevented the carotenoid degradation in cut roses (Meir *et al.*, 1998; Glick *et al.*, 2007)^[49]. In gerbera, the post-harvest application of MeJA significantly improved the anthocyanin concentration, membrane stability index and catalase and peroxidase activities (Raviz, 2016)^[59]. The post-harvest application of MeJA significantly delayed the senescence and lowered the wilt rate in cut freesia (Darras *et al.*, 2005). In peony flower, the application of MeJA resulted in significantly reduced disease symptoms (Gast, 2001).

4. Effect of pre-harvest application of MeSA on post-harvest quality of horticultural crops

Pre-harvest application of MeSA significantly extended the storage life of crops such as apple, plum, cherries and vegetables like tomato (Table 3). In apples, the pre-harvest application of MeSA significantly enhanced the levels of phenolic compounds such as flavonols, chlorogenic acid, and cyaniding-3-glucoside (Gacnik *et al.*, 2021) anti-oxidative compounds in plum (Serrano *et al.*, 2018)^[67] increased the fruit size with superior quality attributes in cherry (Gimenez *et al.*, 2019).

5. Effect of post-harvest application of MeSA on post-harvest quality of selected horticultural crops

The post-harvest application of MeSA has been successfully investigated in several horticultural crops such as bananas, cherries, pears and tomatoes (Table 4).

5.1 Fruits

5.1.1 Banana

The post-harvest application of MeSA significantly increased the antioxidant defence mechanism, reduced the spoilage and delayed the post-harvest ripening in banana fruit (Cholmaitri *et al.*, 2020; Chotikakham *et al.*, 2020)^[18].

5.1.2 Cherry

In cherries, the post-harvest application of MeSA significantly enhanced the antioxidant activity, maintained higher levels of bioactive compounds and maintained fruit quality (Castillo *et al.*, 2015; Gimenez *et al.*, 2016)^[15].

5.1.3 Pear

Vapor application of MeSA significantly minimized the rate of chlorophyll degradation and delayed the fruit ripening (Zhang *et al.*, 2020; 2019)^[81].

5.1.4 Other fruits

In kiwifruits, the post-harvest application of MeSA significantly inhibited lignin synthesis (Suo *et al.* 2018)^[71] lowered the electrolyte leakage, malondialdehyde (MDA), hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂) concentrations and greater proline content in blood orange (Habibi *et al.*, 2019)^[26] and enhanced the resistance to low-temperature stress in mango fruit during storage (Han *et al.*, 2006).

5.2 Vegetables

In tomato, the post-harvest application of MeSA significantly delayed the spoilage losses (Zhang *et al.*, 2017)^[40] and up-regulated the ethylene production (Ding & Wang, 2003)^[22] and alleviated the CI in bell pepper (Rehman *et al.*, 2021)^[58].

6. Effect of pre-harvest application of SA on post-harvest life of horticultural crops

The pre-harvest application of SA has been successfully investigated in lemon, mango and grapes (Table 5). Pre-harvest application of SA significantly enhanced the physico-chemical attributes, reduced the incidence of mold colonization, improved phenolic compounds and biogenic amines and delayed the fruit ripening in grapes (Gomes *et al.*, 2021; Garcia-Pastor *et al.*, 2020; Lo'oy, 2017; Champa *et al.*, 2014)^[19, 66, 16] and extended the post-harvest life of lemon (Serna-Esacolino *et al.*, 2021) mango (Reddy *et al.*, 2016)^[57] and gladiolus (Saeed *et al.*, 2016)^[60].

7. Effect of post-harvest application of SA on selected horticultural crops

Till date, the post-harvest application of SA has been successfully investigated in different horticultural crops such as apples, citrus, strawberries, peaches and ornamentals (Table 6).

7.1 Fruits

7.1.1 Apple

The post-harvest application of SA significantly minimized

browning, induced disease resistance and extended the storage life of cold-stored apples (Zhao & Wang, 2015; Hadian-Deljou & Sarikhani 2013)^[75, 27].

7.1.2 Citrus

The post-harvest application of SA significantly maintained higher levels of total phenols, total antioxidant activity, flavonoids, protein, and total free amino acids in cold-stored 'Kinnow' mandarin fruit (Baswal *et al.*, 2021)^[11] and maintained the quality attributes in cold-stored blood oranges cv. Moro (Aminifard *et al.*, 2013)^[4].

7.1.3 Strawberry

In strawberries, the post-harvest application of SA significantly delayed weight loss and spoilage and maintained higher contents of TA, ascorbic acid and anthocyanin (Kumar and Kaur, 2019)^[39]; (Geransayeh *et al.*, 2015).

7.1.4 Peach

In peaches, the post-harvest application of SA significantly maintained the higher levels of ascorbic acid, soluble solids concentration, total phenolics and total antioxidant activity (Tareen *et al.*, 2012; Khademi and Ershadi, 2013)^[72, 34].

7.1.5 Other Fruits

In pomegranate, the post-harvest application of SA significantly minimized CI, electrolyte leakage and loss in ascorbic acid content during storage (Sayyari *et al.*, 2009)^[64] delayed the post-harvest ripening in mango (Zheng *et al.*, 2006)^[14] and maintained the quality attributes in papaya (Hanif *et al.*, 2020)^[31].

7.3 Ornamentals

The post-harvest application of SA significantly delayed the senescence (Zamani *et al.*, 2011)^[78] and boosted total chlorophyll content in roses (Jahanbazi *et al.*, 2014)^[3] enhanced the levels of total phenols, proline content, lowered the electrolyte leakage and MDA concentration and improved the detoxification of ROS compounds in anthurium (Aghdam *et al.*, 2016; Promyou *et al.*, 2012)^[2, 55], reduced lipid peroxidation (Mansouri, 2012)^[45] and modulated anti-oxidative system in chrysanthemum (Rahmani *et al.*, 2015)^[56].

Table1. Effect of pre-harvest application of MeJA on post-harvest quality of selected horticultural crops

Crop	Applied concentration	Stage of application	Effect on post-harvest quality	Reference(s)
Apple (<i>Malus domestica</i> Borkh cv. 'Cripps Pink')	10 (mmol L ⁻¹)	169 days after full bloom	Enhanced the red flush and fruit quality for export	Shafiq <i>et al.</i> (2012) ^[68]
Avocado (<i>Persea americana</i> cv. 'Hass')	100 (μmol L ⁻¹)	14 days before harvest	Prevented the incidence of anthracnose	Glowacz <i>et al.</i> (2017)
Cherry (<i>Prunus avium</i> L. cvs. '0900 Ziraat', 'Regina' and 'Sweetheart')	2240 (mg L ⁻¹)	3 weeks before Harvest	Maintained the flesh stiffness of fruit	Saracoglu <i>et al.</i> (2017) ^[63]
Japanese plum (<i>Prunus salicina</i> Lindell cv. 'Fortune' and 'Friar')	2240 (mg L ⁻¹)	2 weeks before harvest	Increased the phenolic content of plum fruits to increase their firmness at harvest and boost their antioxidant capacity.	Ozturk <i>et al.</i> (2014) ^[52]
Cauliflower (<i>Brassica oleracea</i> var. botrytis cv. 'Candid Charm')	500 (μM)	4 days before Harvest	Health promoting compounds were improved without affecting the post-harvest quality	Ku <i>et al.</i> (2013)

Table 2: Effect of post-harvest application of MeJA on post-harvest quality of selected horticultural crop

Crop	Applied concentration of MeJA	Dipping time	Temperature (°C)	Effect on post-harvest quality	Reference(s)
Dragonfruit (<i>Hylocereus polyrhizus</i> L.)	0.01 and 0.1 (mM)	16 h	20	Increased antioxidant and betacyanin activity	Mustafa <i>et al.</i> (2018) [51]
Guava (<i>Psidium guajava</i> L.)	10 ⁴ and 10 ⁵ M	8h	20	Minimized the ion leakage and CI index	Gonzalez-Aguilar <i>et al.</i> (2003) [22]
Kiwifruit (<i>Actinidia deliciosa</i> cv. 'Jinkui')	0.1 (mmol L ⁻¹)	24h	20	Reduced post-harvest softening during storage	Pan <i>et al.</i> (2020) [53]
Loquat (<i>Eriobotrya japonica</i> cv. 'Fuyang')	10 (µmol L ⁻¹)	24h	20	Alleviated the incidence of CI	Cao <i>et al.</i> (2009) [14]
Bell pepper (<i>Capsicum annuum</i> L. cv. 'Champion')	10 (mmol L ⁻¹)	10 min	13	Minimized the risk of frostbite	Wang <i>et al.</i> (2019) [77]
Cut gerbera (<i>Gerbera jamesonii</i> cv. 'Pink Elegance')	0.2 (µL L ⁻¹)	24 h	20±2	Increased the anthocyanin content and extended the vase life	Raviz (2016) [59]

Table 3: Effect of pre-harvest application of MeSA on post-harvest quality of selected horticultural crops

Crop	Applied MeSA concentration	Stage of application	Effect on post-harvest quality	Reference(s)
Plum (<i>Prunus salicina</i> Lindl. cv. 'Black Splendor')	0.5 (mM)	61, 91 and 94 days after full bloom	Plum quality features were significantly improved and maintained	Martínez-Espla <i>et al.</i> (2017) [11]
Cherry (<i>Prunus avium</i> L. cv. 'Sweet Heart')	1.0 (mM)	At three different stages of fruit growth	Increased fruit size and maintained fruit quality	Gimenez <i>et al.</i> (2019)
Apple (<i>Malus domestica</i> cv. 'Topaz')	2 (mM)	At different intervals before harvest	Significantly increased the levels of polyphenols	Gacnik <i>et al.</i> (2021)
Plum (<i>Prunus salicina</i> Lindl. cv. 'Black Splendor', BS, and 'Royal Rosa', RR)	0.5 (mM)	At 63, 77 and 98 days after full bloom	Fruit quality attributes such as antioxidant compounds were retained during storage	Martinez-Espla <i>et al.</i> (2017) [67]

Table 4: Effect of post-harvest application of MeSA on post-harvest quality of selected horticultural crops

Crop	Applied concentration	Time	Temperature	Effect on postharvest quality	Reference (s)
Banana (<i>Musa acuminata</i> cv. 'Sucrier')	2 (mM)	30 min	25 ± 1	Delayed the senescence	Chotikakham <i>et al.</i> (2020)
Sweet orange (<i>Citrus sinensis</i> L. Osbeck cv. 'Moro')	50 (µM) and 100 (µM)	18 h	20	Enhanced chilling tolerance during storage	Habibi <i>et al.</i> (2019) [26]
Cherry (<i>Prunus avium</i> L. cv. 'Early Lory')	0.1 (mM)	16 h	20	Maintained the fruit quality and increased the levels of bioactive compounds and antioxidant activity during storage.	Gimenez <i>et al.</i> (2016)
Mango (<i>Mangifera indica</i> L. cv. 'Zill')	0.1 (mM)	12 h	20	Enhanced resistance to low -temperature stress	Han <i>et al.</i> (2006)
Pear (<i>Pyrus bretschneideri</i> cv. 'Zaosu')	0.05 (mmol L ⁻¹)	24h	25 ± 2	Retarded ripening and senescence	Zhang <i>et al.</i> (2020) [81]
Sweet pepper (<i>Capsicum annuum</i> L. cv. 'Winner')	0.05 mmol L ⁻¹)	12 h	20 ± 1	Alleviated CI and maintained the fruit quality	Rehman <i>et al.</i> (2021) [58]
Cherry tomato (<i>Solanum lycopersicum</i> var. <i>cerasiforme</i> cv. Messina)	0.05 (mM)	12h	20	Alleviated CI by stimulating arginine catabolism during storage	Zhang <i>et al.</i> (2011) [83]

Table 5: Effect of pre-harvest application of SA on post-harvest quality of selected horticultural crops

Crop	Applied concentration	Stage of application	Effect on postharvest quality	Reference (s)
Plum (<i>Prunus salicina</i> Lindl. cv. 'Royal Rosa' and 'President')	1 (mM)	63, 77 and 98 days after full bloom	Enhanced the levels of bioactive compounds such as total phenolics, total carotenoids and antioxidant activity during storage	Serrano <i>et al.</i> (2018) [67]
Grapes (<i>Vitis vinifera</i> L. cv. 'Superior Seedless')	0, 1, 2, and 4 (mM)	After fruit set, during berry variation and 14 days before harvests	Fruit ripening was delayed	Lo'ay (2017)
Cherry (<i>Prunus avium</i> L. cv. 'Sweet Heart' and 'Sweet Late')	0.5, 1.0 and 2.0 (mM)	98, 112 and 126 days after full bloom	Maintained overall fruit quality	Gimenez <i>et al.</i> (2014)
Mango (<i>Mangifera indica</i> cv. 'Amarpali')	75, 150 and 200 ppm	7 days before harvest	Delayed ripening and senescence and maintained fruit quality attributes	Reddy <i>et al.</i> (2016) [57]
Lilium (<i>Lilium longiflorum</i> L. cv. 'Tressor')	0, 50, 100 and 200 ppm	At bud stage initiation	Morphological traits were improved.	Hajizadeh and Aliloo (2013)

Table 6: Effect of post-harvest application of SA on post-harvest quality of selected horticultural crops

Crop	Applied concentration	Time	Temperature	Effect on post-harvest quality	Reference(s)
Mango (<i>Mangifera indica</i> L. cv. 'Matisu')	1 (mmol L ⁻¹)	2 min	20°C	Enhanced disease resistance	Zeng <i>et al.</i> (2006)
Banana (<i>Musa acuminata</i> cv 'Hari chhal')	500 (µM) and 1000 (µM)	6h	20°C	Delayed fruit ripening	Srivastava and Dwivedi (2000)
Pomegranates (<i>Punica granatum</i> cv. 'Malas Saveh')	2 (mM)	10 min	20°C	Alleviated CI and electrolyte leakage was reduced in husk	Sayyari <i>et al.</i> (2011) [64]
Peach (<i>Prunus persica</i> cv. 'Elberta')	2 (mM)	5 min.	20°C	Enhanced the storability of fruits	Khademi and Ershadi (2013) [34]
Plum (<i>Prunus salicina</i> Lindl. cv 'Qingnai')	1.5 (mM)	10 min	1°C	Alleviated CI	Luo <i>et al.</i> (2011)
Tomato (<i>Lycopersicon esculentum</i> cv. 'Newton')	1 (mM) and 2 (mM)	5 min	1°C	Enhanced chilling tolerance and minimized CI	Aghdam <i>et al.</i> (2012) [11]

8. Conclusion

Overall, it can be summarized that pre- and post-harvest application of MeJA, MeSA and SA are potential treatments to extend the postharvest life and to maintain the quality of miscellaneous horticultural crops. Furthermore, more researches are required to understand the diverse responses of MeJA, MeSA and SA on storage life and fruit quality of different horticultural crops.

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