

## EXTRACTION AND BIOACTIVITY FROM *JATROPHA CURCAS* L. LEAVES BY STEAM DISTILLATION

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### Abstract

*Jatropha curcas* L. has biological activities that can contribute to find new products. In this study, steam distillation at laboratory scale was applied to *J. curcas* leaves to assess the yield of essential oil and the bioactivity of the hydrolate. The effect of steam flow and bed porosity on the extraction yield was also determined, where it was observed that residence time was one of the influential factors in the yield of essential oil. The extracts were analyzed by GC-MS. Dibutyl phthalate, phytol, and diisooctyl phthalate were the majoritarian components. Research reports indicate that these components have biological activity. The greatest yield obtained was 0.38% on a dry weight basis. The bioassays showed that the hydrolate of *J. curcas* possessed toxicity against *Spodoptera littoralis*, *Myzus persicae*, *Lactuca sativa*, and *Lolium perenne*. The bioactivity of these products should be further explored, they have a promising future as a biocontroller.

**Key words:** Steam distillation, Bioassay, *Jatropha curcas*, Yield, Antifeedant, Phytotoxic.

### Introduction

*Jatropha curcas* L., is a multi-purpose shrub, traditionally used as a medicinal plant and currently as a source of vegetable oil for biodiesel. Diverse studies report that the leaves extract present anti-diabetic and anthelmintic properties along with insecticide, antibacterial, and nematocidal activities (Pabón & Hernández, 2012). A phytochemical analysis identified the presence of flavonoids, steroids, saponins, alkaloids, tannins, triterpenoids, carbohydrates in the leaves, in ethanolic extracts  $\beta$ -stigmaterol and phytol were identified (Ahirrao *et al.*, 2011; Ma *et al.*, 2011a).  $\beta$ -stigmaterol has acaricidal activity while phytol has antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, anticancer, and diuretic activities (Rajeswari *et al.*, 2012).

Some studies reported that aqueous and methanolic extracts had insecticidal activity specifically against *Anopheles arabiensis*, *Culex quinquefasciatus* and avoid egg hatching from *Rhipicephalus annulatus*. Hexane extracts proved to be a potential biopesticide against *Musca domestica*. Methanolic and ethanolic extracts have allelopathic activity inhibiting the growth of wheat seeds (*Triticum aestivum*) (Kovendan *et al.*, 2011; Tomass *et al.*, 2011; Juliet *et al.*, 2012; Reichel *et al.*, 2013; Chauhan *et al.*, 2015; Khattak *et al.*, 2015).

*Spodoptera littoralis* and *Myzus persicae* are important pests for a wide range of crops, vectors of diseases that cause great economic losses. The phytotoxic effect of a certain product can be used as an indicator, in this study seeds of *Lactuca sativa* and *Lolium perenne* were used, these seeds were easily accessible and the results were obtained in short time, showing the effects of the extracts on root length and germination (Martín, 2012).

Essential oils are the final product of the synthesis of plants from their secondary metabolites and are produced in small quantities. Depending on the plant, yields can

vary from 0.5 to 6%, and these oils have a wide range of applications in three main sectors: food, pharmaceutical, and cosmetic industries. The functions of these oils are diverse ranging from the attraction of pollinators, defense against herbivores and pathogens, and inhibition of the growth of other plants around them (Stashenko, 2009; Ordaz *et al.*, 2011; Calvo, 2012).

During the steam distillation of medicinal and aromatic plants, an aqueous solution known as hydroaltes is obtained, which is composed of many bioactive hydrophilic compounds (Rabha *et al.*, 2012).

A high extraction yield and a high concentration of bioactive compounds (with antioxidant, antibacterial, or insecticide activities, etc), are the main characteristics of essential oils which determine their potential value for extraction and commercialization, produced and. (Calvo, 2012). The oils obtained from plants, due to their medicinal properties, low toxicity, and practically null side effects, are increasingly used in the food, pharmaceutical, and agro industries (Salomón *et al.*, 2009).

In this study, steam distillation at laboratory scale was applied to *J. curcas* leaves to assess the yield of essential oil and the bioactivity of the extract. The effect of steam flow and bed porosity on the extraction yield was also determined.

### Materials and Methods

**Plants materials:** Fresh leaves from a plantation located on marginal lands in Tizimín (Yucatán, Mexico) were provided by the Company Jatronergy (Lodemo corporate group) *J. curcas*. The leaves were taken from the November-to-June pruning season and dried in a vented and roof-covered room at ambient temperature for 3 weeks until reaching a moisture content of about 10%. The leaves were used without separation or ground.

**Experimental devices:** Steam distillation equipment at laboratory scale experiments were carried out in a 4.5 cm diameter and 0.334 L capacity glass (Fig. 1), located in the Faculty of Chemical Engineering of the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán (FIQ-UADY). In these experiments, 6.33 g (0.90 bed porosity) and 19.07 g (0.79 bed porosity) of fresh dried *J. curcas* leaves were packed and extracted with steam for 4 hours. This set is similar to one reported for *Jatropha gossypifolia* leaves extraction (Aboaba *et al.*, 2015). The extract obtained from the *J. curcas* leaves was collected and the essential oils were extracted from the hydrolate using dichloromethane (Hossain *et al.*, 2012). The essential oil was then dried with anhydrous sodium sulphate ( $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$ ) and stored at 4°C for further analysis.



Fig. 1. Steam distillation equipment at laboratory scale.

**Experimental design:** A total of 8 tests were established for *J. curcas* under a 2×4 factorial design (the two factors being bed porosity and steam flow). The bed porosity levels were 0.90 and 0.79, and the steam flow levels were 0.73, 1.78, 4.33 and 8.10  $\text{cm}^3\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ . The levels of bed porosity were chosen between loose and tight (Koul *et al.*, 2004), and the steam flow were fixed according to the minimum and maximum thermal load. The equipment was operated at atmospheric pressure and the steam flow was obtained by measuring the hydrolate through volumetric analysis (Cerpa *et al.*, 2008). The bed porosity ( $\epsilon$ ) was estimated as  $\epsilon = 1 - d_l/d_s$ , where  $d_l$  is the apparent density of the bed and  $d_s$  is the density of the vegetable matter, determined by helium pycnometer (Kotnik *et al.*, 2007; Cerpa *et al.*, 2008; Özek, 2012). The essential oil yield ( $Y$ ) was estimated as  $Y(\%) = M/M_0 \times 100$ , where  $M$  is the mass of essential oil obtained and  $M_0$  is the initial amount of vegetable matter introduced to the process (Cerpa *et al.*, 2008; Özek, 2012).

The results of each experimental design were analyzed using a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The statistical significance of the results were assessed with a Tukey test using STATGRAPHICS software.

**Essential oil analysis:** An Agilent Technologies chromatographer (model 6890N) coupled to an Agilent 5973N mass selective detector (MSD) with an electron impact ionization of 70 eV was used. The injection volume was 2  $\mu\text{L}$  (4% essential oil/ $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$  v/v) using a 100:1 split ratio. An HP-5MS (30 m x 250  $\mu\text{m}$  x 0.25  $\mu\text{m}$ ) column was used. The oven operating conditions were: initial temperature of 50°C for 3 min, then rising from 50°C to 250°C at 20°C/min and finally kept isothermal at 250°C for 10 min before post run (280°C for 5 min). Helium was used as the carrier gas at 1 mL/min. The injection and transfer line temperature were 150°C and 280°C respectively. The chemical compounds were tentatively identified by comparing their mass spectra with those compiled in the NIST 2011 library (Ma *et al.*, 2011a; Ma *et al.*, 2011 b).

**Antifeedant activity:** For determining the antifeedant activity, *Spodoptera littoralis* sixth instar larvae were used. Leaf disks of *Capsicum annuum* with an area of 1.0  $\text{cm}^2$  were treated on the upper surface with 10  $\mu\text{L}$  of the test substance. Two *S. littoralis* larvae were placed in a Petri dish with four 1.0  $\text{cm}^2$  leaf disks, two treated with the test substance and two were controls with solvent only; six Petri dishes were used for each extract tested. Each bioassay was terminated after consumption of about 75% of the control disks. Feeding inhibition was calculated as  $\% FI = [1 - (T/C) \times 100]$ , where  $T$  is the consumed leaf area of treated and  $C$  is the consumed leaf area, from the leaf disks. Also, for this bioassay 10 *Myzus persicae* adults were placed in an agar-coated box with 10  $\mu\text{L}$  of the test substance on the upper surface, obtaining a total of 20 boxes per compound tested. The bioassays were finished after 24 h. The bioassay data was noted based on the number of aphids settled on the treated and control disks. The results from both bioassays were statistically evaluated by the Wilcoxon signed rank test (Burgueño *et al.*, 2008).

For these bioassays it was necessary to use the organic phase of the hydrolate obtained in the steam distillation, which was extracted by a solid-phase extraction process (González *et al.*, 2013).

**Phytotoxic activity:** For the phytotoxic activity determination, experiments were conducted with *Lactuca sativa* and *Lolium perenne* seeds on 12-well microplates with 500  $\mu\text{l}$  from pure hydrolate. Germination was monitored daily during 7 days. Radicle length was measured at the end of the bioassay. Twenty-five digitalized radicles were randomly selected for each test with the software Image J Version 1.37r. Results were evaluated using a Mann-Whitney U Test (Julio *et al.*, 2016; Martín *et al.*, 2011).

## Results and Discussion

**Essential oil yield:** Table 1 shows the average yields of essential oil on a dry weight basis obtained at the end of the extraction processes performed at laboratory scale. The highest yield (0.389%) was achieved with a steam flow of 4.33  $\text{cm}^3\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$  and the lowest bed porosity level (0.79). The ANOVA indicates that steam flow, bed porosity, and their interaction are significant factors.

No previous reports regarding the yield of essential oil from *J. curcas* leaves were found. Therefore, the results obtained in this work were compared against another species of *Jatropha*, *Jatropha gossypifolia*, for which another study obtained a 0.87% extraction yield (Aboaba *et al.*, 2015). Malekydozzadeh *et al.*, (2012) used three different steam flow (4000, 7000 and 9000  $\text{cm}^3\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) applied to leaves of *Rosmarinus officinalis*, where the results indicated that the highest extraction yield of essential oil was obtained under the lowest assessed steam flow (4000  $\text{cm}^3\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) with the lowest superficial velocity and the highest residence time. The same authors also mention that decreases in the steam flow and the compaction of the sample lead to an increase in the extraction yield of essential oil. In the same way, Cerpa 2007, used three steam flows (9, 16 and 24  $\text{cm}^3\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) on leaves and flowers of *Rosmarinus officinalis*, where the highest yield was obtained with the middle steam flow rate of 16  $\text{cm}^3\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ . Masango *et al.*, 2005 also utilized three values of steam flow (2.5, 5 and 20  $\text{cm}^3\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ ) on leaves of *Artemisia annua*, where the extraction yield of essential oil was increased by reducing the steam flow.

Residence time is inversely proportional to steam flow, where residence time is the result of dividing the volume of a cylinder of matter by the steam flow; a high steam flow tends to reduce the residence time of the steam flow in the column, leading to a poor extraction of essential oils (Richter *et al.*, 1999; Acedo-Sánchez, 2006). Thus, a balance must exist between steam flow and residence time. However, a high residence time obtained with a very low steam flow rate not provide sufficient energy for extraction of the essential oil. There may be an optimum steam flow rate, with good superficial velocity and appropriate residence time allowing good separation of substances and reducing thermal degradation of the compounds, as flows higher than required will cause steam waste, while flows lower than required will result in low yields of extraction of essential oils (Isbell & Cermak *et al.*, 2004; Cerpa, 2007; Padilla *et al.*, 2007).

Some studies concluded that the highest essential oil transfer took place when the apparent bed density was high (Cerpa, 2007; Malekydozzadeh *et al.*, 2012). If the

vegetable matter is not correctly compacted, canalization may cause steam to drift sideways, decreasing the contact surface (Arango *et al.*, 2012). Also, a low bed density makes steam flow through more open channels with lower resistance, leading to inappropriate contact with the vegetable matter and, therefore, results in a lower extraction yield of essential oil (Özek, 2012).

**Chemical profile of essential oil isolated from *J. curcas*:** Table 2 shows the preliminary analysis on essential oil composition of *J. curcas* leaves. The essential oil extracted at laboratory-scale had 15 compounds, and the majoritarian components were dibutyl phthalate, phytol, and diisooctyl phthalate.

Phytol has been reported to possess antimicrobial activities, toxicity on mouse skin cells and a high repellent activity against *Anopheles gambiae* (Nerio *et al.*, 2012; Ghaneian *et al.*, 2015).

Research indicates that dibutyl phthalate has antimicrobial and algicidal activities (Bie *et al.*, 2012). In recent years there has been much controversy about phthalates in plants, Ruikar *et al.*, (2011) and Khatiwora *et al.*, (2012) mentioned that phthalates belongs to the secondary metabolites of as *Mimusops elengi* and *Ipomoea carnea* respectively. One of the fraction isolated from *Oreosyce africana* Hook. Leaves was the most important compound was dibutyl phthalate (Bekele *et al.*, 2016). More specifically for *J. curcas* presence of phthalates in toxic and non-toxic leaves were detected (Pereira *et al.*, 2017; Khan *et al.*, 2009). However, it was possible that the plant had accumulated phthalates that were exposed to polluted wastewater (Manayi *et al.*, 2014). The resulting table makes it easy to see that the composition of the profile was kept constant. Values above 800 to match and R. match indicate that the mass spectrum corresponds to a good match factor with the library spectrum, which gives reliability to the assignment made (Baharum *et al.*, 2010; Sparkman *et al.*, 2011) All the samples reported in Table 2, had values of the match factor greater than 800, leading to high confidence intervals based on their probabilities and spectral match scores.

**Table 1. Yields (%) and statistics at laboratory scale and pilot scale applied to *Jatropha curcas*.**

Experiment	$Q$ ( $\text{cm}^3\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ )	$\varepsilon$ (%)	$U$ ( $\text{cm}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$ )	$R_t$ (min)	$Y_{exp}$ (SD) (%)
EJ1	0.73	0.90	0.05	457.5	0.202 (0.008) <sup>d</sup>
EJ2	1.78	0.90	0.11	187.6	0.109 (0.002) <sup>bc</sup>
EJ3	4.33	0.90	0.27	77.1	0.128 (0.004) <sup>c</sup>
EJ4	8.10	0.90	0.51	41.2	0.031 (0.001) <sup>a</sup>
EJ5	0.73	0.79	0.05	457.5	0.089 (0.001) <sup>b</sup>
EJ6	1.78	0.79	0.11	187.6	0.102 (0.001) <sup>b</sup>
E7	4.33	0.79	0.27	77.1	0.389 (0.009) <sup>c</sup>
EJ8	8.10	0.79	0.51	41.2	0.010 (0.001) <sup>a</sup>

$Q$ : Steam flow  $\text{cm}^3\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$

$\varepsilon$ : Bed porosity

$U$ : Superficial velocity  $\text{cm}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}$

$R_t$ : Residence time min

$Y_{exp}$ : Experimental yield obtained at the end of process (% mean)

SD: Standard deviation

aMeans followed by the same letter showed no significant difference with Tukey's Test ( $p < 0.05$ )

**Table 2. Tentative identification of the essential oils of *Jatropha curcas* obtained at laboratory scale.**

Peak	RT	Compound	Match	R. Match	Area%
1	9.7	Thymol	913	929	1.46
2	9.8	Carvacrol	940	940	15.44
3	10.2	Decanoic acid	826	906	1.31
4	11.2	Phenol, 3-(1,1-dimethylethyl)-4-methoxy-	827	856	3.63
5	11.7	Dihydroactinidioliden	843	870	3.55
6	12.7	Blumenol C	841	894	5.19
7	13.3	2-Cyclohexen-1-one, 4-hydroxy-3, 5, 5-trimethyl-4-(3-oxo-1-butenyl)-	803	844	3.87
8	13.4	2-Pentadecanone, 6, 10, 14-trimethyl-	852	928	6.67
9	14.2	Dibutyl phthalate	958	962	22.19
10	15.2	Phytol	891	914	19.2
11	21.0	Diisooctyl phthalate	914	944	17.57

R. T: Retention time (min)

Area %: Area of each compounds are expressed as means. Means were obtained in duplicate

**Table 3. Antifeedant activity against *Spodoptera littoralis* and *Myzus persicae*.**

Test substance	Population	
	<i>S. littoralis</i> <sup>a</sup>	<i>M. persicae</i> <sup>c</sup>
EJ7	71.31 (27.662) <sup>b*</sup>	79.17 (26.494) <sup>d*</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Percent settling inhibition

<sup>b</sup>The values are the mean (SD) of six replicates

<sup>c</sup>Percent feeding inhibition (%FI/%SI = [(1 - (T/C)) × 100] where T, consumption in settling on treated disk, and C, consumption in settling on control disk

<sup>d</sup>The values are the mean ± SD of twenty two replicates

\* p<0.05, Wilcoxon paired rank test

**Antifeedant bioassay:** Due to the low essential oil quantities the organic phase of the EJ7 hydrolate (the experiment with the highest yield) was used in all the bioassays.

Table 3 shows the bioactivity of the hydrolate, where a value greater than 75% is considered an active extract (Burillo & González, 2009). In this case, the extract was active only against *M. persicae*.

In another study, the methanolic leaf extract of *J. curcas* with 5% concentration achieved the highest mortality at 60% against third instar larvae of *Spodoptera litura*, which belonged to the genus *Spodoptera* (Ingle et al., 2017), while in this study an inhibition of sixth instar larvae of *Spodoptera littoralis* was observed with 71.31%, from essential oil of *J. curcas*.

It had been reported that *J. curcas* seed oil and petroleum ether extracts from *J. curcas* leaves were effective against *M. persicae* (Holtz et al., 2016; Devi et al., 2008). In this work *J. curcas* essential oil was effective against *M. persicae* with 79.17%, while Devi et al., (2008), mentioned a bioactivity with 60%.

**Phytotoxic activity:** Table 4 shows the results of the phytotoxic effects of the hydrolate of *J. curcas*. It was observed that the hydrolate had allelopathic effects on seed germination, nevertheless *L. perenne* was more sensitive than *L. sativa*. The extracts had the greatest allelopathic effect on the roots, as the allelopathic compounds induced the development of abnormal seedlings (Reichel et al., 2013; Syed & Shinwari, 2016).

Another study showed that aqueous extracts of *J. curcas* leaves and roots inhibited the growth of *Zea mays* and *Nicotiana tabacum*. It has been shown that ethanolic and methanolic extract of dried jatropha leaves affected the seedling growth of wheat (*Triticum aestivum*), being the ethanolic extract the most phytotoxic (Reichel et al., 2013). Antonelli et al., (2015), show that aqueous extract of *J. curcas* leaf was allelopathic effect against *Brassica oleracea*. Allelopathic effects of *Jatropha* leaves on wheat seedlings has also been demonstrated (Tomar et al., 2015). However, aqueous extracts at lower concentrations promoted the germination and growth of wheat seeds, due to the phenolic compounds present in the extract, which possibly act as a bioregulator (Khattak et al., 2015).

**Table 4. Phytotoxic effects against *Lactuca sativa* and *Lolium perenne*.**

Test substance	Population				
	<i>L. sativa</i>		<i>L. perenne</i>		
	Germination <sup>a</sup>	Growth <sup>b</sup>	Germination <sup>a</sup>	Growth <sup>b</sup>	Growth <sup>b</sup>
EJ7	168 h	root	168 h	root	leaf
	95.00 (5.77) <sup>b</sup>	34.84 (0.24) <sup>b*</sup>	64.10 (28.72) <sup>b*</sup>	30.60 (1.07) <sup>b*</sup>	59.88 (1.64) <sup>b*</sup>
Control <sup>c</sup>	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
	(0.00) <sup>b</sup>	(0.00) <sup>b</sup>	(5.00) <sup>b</sup>	(0.90) <sup>b</sup>	(0.51)

<sup>a</sup>Percent control

<sup>b</sup>The values are the mean (SD) of four replicates

<sup>c</sup>Positive control

\*p< 0.05, Mann-Whitney U-test

## Conclusions

No previous studies regarding the extraction of essential oil from *J. curcas* leaves were found by steam distillation, this implies that this is the first report on the chemical composition of this essential oil.

To obtain higher yields, an adequate steam flow must be obtained, maintaining a sufficient *residence* time to extract all the available oil from the glandular trichomes, in addition to compacting the sample for achieving a greater transfer of oil to the steam.

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