

STUDY ON THE CONTENT OF GENIPOSIDIC ACID IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF *EUCOMMIA ULMOIDES* ON KARST PLATEAU OF GUIZHOU PROVINCE, CHINA

QIAN, C. J.^{1,2} – OU, M. C.² – YU, L. F.^{1*} – YAN, L. B.¹ – HUANG, Z. S.¹ – FU, Y. H.²

¹Guizhou University, The Key laboratory of Plant Resource Conservation and Germplasm Innovation in Mountainous Region (Ministry of Education), Collaborative Innovation Center for Mountain Ecology & Agro-Bioengineering (CICMEAB) Guiyang 550025, Guizhou, China

²Guizhou Education University, Guiyang 550018, Guizhou, China

*Corresponding author
e-mail: gdyulifei@163.com

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Abstract. This study aims to explore the content of (geniposidic acid, GPA) in the leaves, trunk bark and root bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* on Xingyi karst plateau mountains of Guizhou Province, China. There was no significant difference in the content of GPA in *Eucommia ulmoides* planted in different directions on the same slope. The content of GPA in leaves, trunk bark and root bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* planted on the sunny slope varied significantly, where the GPA content in root bark was the highest (32.7851 mg/g), There was no significant difference in GPA content in leaves and root bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* planted on the shady slope, but the GPA content in trunk bark was significantly different from that in leaves and root bark, where the GPA content in trunk bark was the highest (30.3958 mg/g), There was no significant difference in GPA content in trunk bark and root bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* planted in different slope directions, and the GPA content in leaves of *Eucommia ulmoides* planted on shady slope was significantly (36.71%) higher than that on sunny slope. The GPA content in different parts of *Eucommia ulmoides* on both sunny or shade slope was GAP content in root bark was the largest followed by that in leaves, and that in trunk bark was the lowest. These results expand the source sites and provide new ideas for the comprehensive utilization and further research of *Eucommia ulmoides* resources.

Keywords: sunny slope and shady slope, different directions, root bark, trunk bark, leaves, high performance liquid chromatography

Introduction

The karst area in southwest China is the largest karst core area in the world (Wang et al., 2013). The exposed area of carbonate rocks in Guizhou is 12.8×10^4 km², accounting for 73% of the total area of the province, which makes Guizhou the province with the most developed karst landform in China. Of the province's 86 counties (cities), 68 have more than 50% karst area. Environmental degradation is prominent in karst areas (Cai, 1996), and problems such as soil-forming difficulties, lack of transition layer of limestone formed by carbonate rocks (Yang, 1990), thin soil, discontinuous soil cover and low ecological capacity also need to be addressed (Li et al., 2016). There are many factors restricting plant growth and development in karst environment. The central production areas of *Eucommia ulmoides* Oliver include Guizhou, Sichuan, Hubei, Hunan, Shaanxi and Henan (Li et al., 2001). The *Eucommia ulmoides* does not have strict requirements on environment and soil, and can grow on fertile hills, plains, barren red soil and harsh rock cliffs (Jiao, 2016). The *Eucommia ulmoides* is characterized by cold tolerance, drought resistance, poverty resistance, which can be

grown in a wide range of area (Liu, 2012) with soil pH ranging from 5.0 to 8.4 (Du, 2003). There are plantations of *Eucommia ulmoides* in the harsh environment of Guizhou karst plateau.

As a unique deciduous tree of single species and single genus in China, The *Eucommia ulmoides* is a rare medicinal material unique to China as well as a widely used plant tonic. *Eucommia ulmoides* tea is a popular beverage in Asia and a new dual-purpose food resource for blood pressure medicine (Bai et al., 2015; Zhu and Sun, 2018). The *Eucommia ulmoides* contain abundant chemical constituents such as cycloene ether terpenes, bphenylpropanoids, flavonoids and phenols, which have a variety of medicinal values (Hussain et al., 2016; Yan et al., 2018). The Medicinal components of *Eucommia ulmoides* have anti-diabetes, anti-inflammatory, blood pressure lowering and diuretic effects (Peng and Li, 2013; Sugawa et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2016), anti-obesity effect (Hirata et al., 2011), anti-virus effect (Sun et al., 2004), effect of liver protection and gallbladder protection (Lou et al., 2011), and effect of improving hyperuricemia (Fang et al., 2019). The total flavonoids of *Eucommia ulmoides* have inhibitory effects on cell proliferation, migration and invasion of glioblastoma, one of the malignant primary brain tumors (Wang et al., 2019). The trunk bark extract of *Eucommia ulmoides* can reduce the serum level in liver injury (Lee et al., 2014). The leaf extract of *Eucommia ulmoides* has the effect of treating non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (Lee et al., 2019), and can be used as a new drug for treating male erectile dysfunction caused by diabetes (Fu et al., 2019). The GPA, chlorogenic acid, ginipinidine, rosin diglucoside, rutin and quercetin are the main components of *Eucommia ulmoides* (He et al., 2014). The GPA as the representative ingredient of terpenoids has the functions of anticancer, lowering blood pressure (Du et al., 2011). The GPA can change bile composition and prevent the formation of cholesterol stones (Huang et al., 2002), with anti-mutation activity and antiviral effect (Ong and Tan, 2007). Therefore, the studies on *Eucommia ulmoides* mainly focus on the pharmacology and the medicinal components of the bark and leaves of *Eucommia ulmoides*. In this study, the high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) was used to determine the content of GPA in leaves, trunk bark and root bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* in karst plateau mountains. The influence of different slope directions on the content of GPA in three parts as well as the content of GPA in leaves of *Eucommia ulmoides* planted in different slope directions were analyzed, with the purpose of providing a new idea for expanding the source site of *Eucommia ulmoides*.

Materials and methods

The *Eucommia ulmoides* samples were collected from Pishanlin village, Jingnan town, Xingyi city, Guizhou province, China (Fig. 1), which is a typical karst plateau mountainous area with a subtropical humid monsoon climate, where the soil type is lime soil, the average annual temperature is 16.1 °C and the average annual rainfall is 1531.6 mm. The longitude of the sunny slope is 104°49'11" E, the latitude is 24°55'29" N, and the altitude is 1670 m; The longitude of the shady slope is 104°52'21" E, the latitude is 24°55' 20" N, and the altitude is 1610 m.

The *Eucommia ulmoides* was planted in 1996 as a pure forest, and the samples collection date was May 29, 2017. Three 20 m × 20 m quadrats were set on the sunny slope and the shady slope, respectively, with a total of 6 quadrats. According to the kraft grading principle, three dominant trees were selected from each quadrat, including a

total of 18 plants of *Eucommia ulmoides*, of which the leaves, trunk bark and root bark were collected. The *Eucommia ulmoides* leaves without pests and diseases were selected from the east, south, west and north of the tree canopy. The trunk bark samples of *Eucommia ulmoides* were collected by ring stripping. The ring was cut 130 cm from the ground, and the second incision was cut 30 cm upward from this point. All the openings were cut longitudinally between the two incisions to obtain the trunk bark. The root bark samples were collected from the rough root. After digging out all the *Eucommia ulmoides* roots, the root bark was peeled off after removing the soil (Fig. 2). There were 36 samples of *Eucommia ulmoides* leaves on the sunny slope and the shady slope, respectively; there were 9 samples of *Eucommia ulmoides* trunk bark on the sunny slope and on the shady slope, respectively; there were 9 samples of *Eucommia ulmoides* root bark on the sunny slope and on the shady slope, respectively. In total, there were 108 samples. The samples of leaf, trunk bark and root bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* were placed in the self-sealing bags, labeled with the corresponding sample name, and then dried in the lab before use.



Figure 1. The habitat of *Eucommia ulmoides*



Figure 2. Digging the root of *Eucommia ulmoides* dominant wood

The apparatuses used in the experiment include a single channel pipette (I53066G, R39656F; Eppendorf China Co., Ltd.), the circulating water type multipurpose vacuum pump (SHZ - D (III) (single; Shanghai to the China Instrument and Equipment Co., Ltd.), Agilent1260 high performance liquid chromatograph (Agilent Technology Co., Ltd.), chromatographic column (Agilent ZORBAX Eclipse Plus C18; Agilent Technology Co., Ltd.), electronic balance (Accuracy: Ten thousandth, ATY224; Shanghai Shengke Instrument Co., Ltd.), ultrasonic cleaner (SG8200HPT; Shanghai Guante Ultrasonic Instrument Co., Ltd.), electric blast drying oven (101-3A), high-speed universal pulverizer (FW80, Tianjin Taisite Instrument Co., Ltd.), low-speed multi-tube frame automatic balancing centrifuge (TDZ5-WS; Hunan Xiangyi Laboratory Instrument Development Co., Ltd.), ultra-pure water meter (Direct-Q8 UV system; Shanghai Merck Chemical Technology Co., Ltd.)

Research methods and data analysis

Chromatographic condition

The chromatographic column was ZORBAX Eclipse Plus C18 column (4.6 × 250 mm, 5 µm; Agilent); The column temperature was 30 °C. The mobile phase was acetonitrile (A) -0.1% phosphoric acid solution (B) (97:3). Injection quantity 5 µL, Volume flow rate 1.0 mL/min; Detection wavelength 235 nm (Lv et al., 2012; Jiang et al., 2013; Qing et al., 2018). Qualitative test was conducted according to the retention time of the reference solution, and GPA content was calculated according to the peak area.

Preparation of reference solution

The GPA reference sample was weighed and dried to constant weight (0.2200 mg) in a 120 °C oven and placed in a 10 mL brown volumetric bottle. Then, the solution was dissolved with addition of methanol, diluted, and shaken well to obtain a GPA 0.0220 mg/mL control solution, which was stored in a refrigerator at 4 °C for later use (Lv et al., 2012; Jiang et al., 2013; Qing et al., 2018).

Preparation of sample solution

The samples of dried leaves, trunk bark and root bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* (the weight of each sample was 1.0000 g) were placed in 250 mL conical flasks, and then 50 mL of 70% methanol were added for each flask. Ultrasonic treatment was performed for 30 min (30 °C, 300 W, 40 Hz) for extraction. The solution was transferred to a 100 mL centrifuge tube, centrifuged (4000 r/min) for 60 min, filtered and diluted to 50 mL, mixed well. After that, the solution was subjected to a 0.45 µm Millipore filter before collecting filter liquor and transferring it to a 2.5 mL injection bottle to obtain the sample solution (Lv et al., 2012; Jiang et al., 2013; Qing et al., 2018).

Data processing

After the experimental data were input into EXCEL2010 for preliminary sorting, SPSS24.0 statistical software was used for data analysis. The One-Way ANOVA and LSD method were used for pair-wise comparison between groups (Tamhane's T2 was used if the variances were not equal). The difference was considered statistically significant when $p < 0.05$.

Results and analysis

Effect of slope direction on GPA content in different parts of Eucommia ulmoides

The average GPA content in leaves, trunk bark and root bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* planted on sunny slope was 18.8755 mg/g, 9.8154 mg/g and 32.7851 mg/g, respectively, where the average GPA content in root bark was the highest, which was 1.73 times that in leaves and 3.34 times that in trunk bark. The average GPA content in leaves, trunk bark and root bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* planted on shady slope was 29.8228 mg/g, 12.4351 mg/g, 30.3958 mg/g, respectively, where the average GPA content in root bark was the highest, which was 1.02 times that in leaves and 2.44 times that in trunk bark. The average GPA content in leaves and trunk bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* planted on shady slope was 36.71% and 21.07% higher than that of *Eucommia ulmoides* planted on sunny slope. However, the average GPA content in root bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* planted on sunny slope was 7.29% higher than that planted on shady slope (Fig. 3).

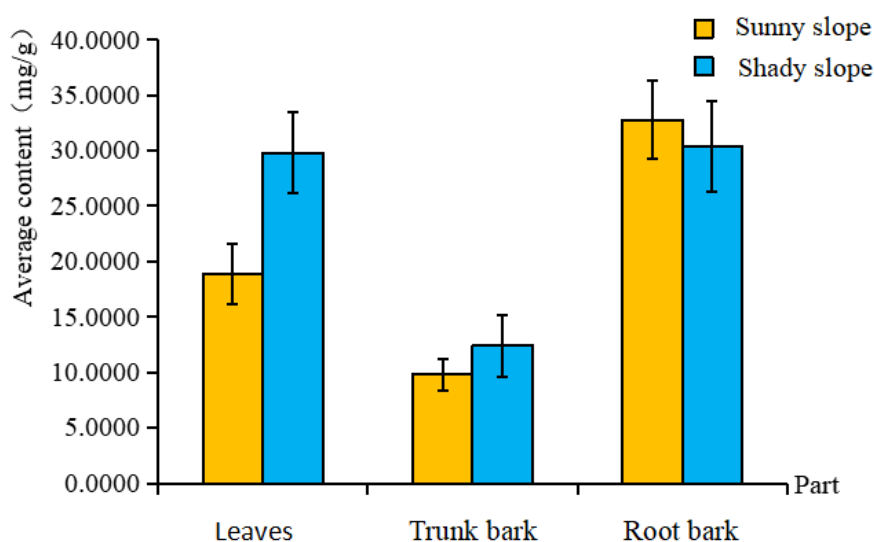


Figure 3. The Average GPA content in different parts of *Eucommia ulmoides*. The GPA content in different parts is an average value of 9 *Eucommia ulmoides* plants, GPA content in leaves is the average value of 36 samples in 4 directions of 9 plants; The error line in the figure is made by the standard deviation value obtained by SPSS software analysis, the following is the same

Of all *Eucommia ulmoides* plants planted on sunny slope of 3 quadrats, the east, south and west leaves of three *Eucommia ulmoides* plants planted on sunny slope of quadrat 2 had the largest average GPA contents, which was 32.8512 mg/g in the east, 24.8759 mg/g in the south and 22.7506 mg/g in the west, respectively (Table 1). Of all *Eucommia ulmoides* plants planted on shady slope of 3 quadrats, the east, north and west leaves of three *Eucommia ulmoides* plants planted on sunny slope of quadrat had the largest average GPA contents, which was 41.3838 mg/g in the east, 38.8765 mg/g in the north and 32.8861 mg/g in the west, respectively (Table 1). The GPA contents in the leaves in different directions of *Eucommia ulmoides* on the shady slope were generally higher than those on the sunny slope, 32.15% higher in the east direction, 31.98% higher in the south direction, 30.97% higher in the west direction, 51.27% higher in the north direction, and 36.71% higher on average (Fig. 4).

Table 1. The GPA contents of *Eucommia ulmoides* leaves in different directions (unit: mg/g)

| Sample name | East | | South | | West | | North | |
|-----------------|---------|-----------------|---------|-----------------|---------|-----------------|---------|-----------------|
| | Content | Average content | Content | Average content | Content | Average content | Content | Average content |
| Sunny slope 1-1 | 15.6373 | | 22.1938 | | 15.0186 | | 18.2852 | |
| Sunny slope 1-2 | 26.1185 | 20.8990 | 22.8177 | 23.4366 | 20.8589 | 22.2403 | 12.4141 | 16.4362 |
| Sunny slope 1-3 | 20.9413 | | 25.2982 | | 30.8435 | | 18.6092 | |
| Sunny slope 2-1 | 44.9994 | | 34.4299 | | 28.4599 | | 26.8174 | |
| Sunny slope 2-2 | 32.0135 | 32.8512 | 24.3969 | 24.8759 | 22.5436 | 22.7506 | 12.4932 | 14.3284 |
| Sunny slope 2-3 | 21.5406 | | 15.8008 | | 17.2484 | | 3.6747 | |
| Sunny slope 3-1 | 10.4001 | | 7.2360 | | 6.4477 | | 8.7534 | |
| Sunny slope 3-2 | 19.7992 | 11.4774 | 19.5079 | 11.6257 | 18.5480 | 11.9259 | 23.1472 | 13.6592 |
| Sunny slope 3-3 | 4.2329 | | 8.1332 | | 10.7820 | | 9.0769 | |
| Shady slope 1-1 | 37.1771 | | 27.0310 | | 30.1355 | | 24.9982 | |
| Shady slope 1-2 | 40.4021 | 41.3838 | 26.7918 | 30.9979 | 24.5900 | 32.8861 | 44.9588 | 38.8765 |
| Shady slope 1-3 | 46.5721 | | 39.1708 | | 43.9328 | | 46.6726 | |
| Shady slope 2-1 | 26.3005 | | 37.5194 | | 41.8741 | | 35.7397 | |
| Shady slope 2-2 | 11.6734 | 24.8509 | 7.3637 | 25.5007 | 11.2789 | 24.5347 | 13.6083 | 28.2587 |
| Shady slope 2-3 | 36.5787 | | 31.6190 | | 20.4510 | | 35.4281 | |
| Shady slope 3-1 | 46.4620 | | 41.4126 | | 35.5867 | | 39.1191 | |
| Shady slope 3-2 | 24.0767 | 29.8985 | 34.4809 | 31.6244 | 26.3403 | 25.0267 | 19.8311 | 24.0347 |
| Shady slope 3-3 | 19.1569 | | 18.9797 | | 13.1531 | | 13.1538 | |

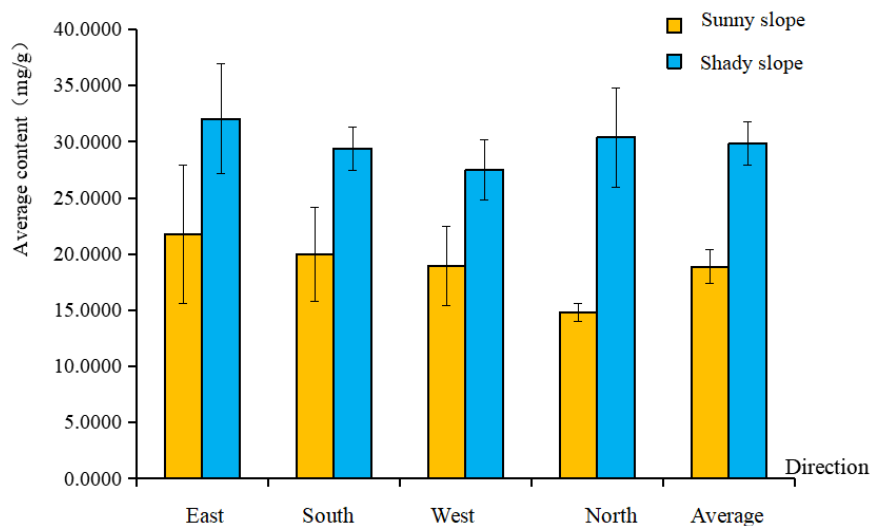


Figure 4. The average GPA contents of leaves in different directions of *Eucommia ulmoides* on sunny slope and shady slope. The GPA content of leaves in different directions of *Eucommia ulmoides* is the mean value of the content in corresponding directions of 9 plants (9 samples)

There was no significant difference in the GPA content of leaves of *Eucommia ulmoides* in different directions ($p > 0.05$). The GPA content of leaves in different directions on the sunny slope was 21.7425 mg/g in the east, 19.9794 mg/g in the south, 18.97234 mg/g in the west, 14.8079 mg/g in the north, respectively (Fig. 5). There was no significant difference in GPA content of leaves in different directions for *Eucommia ulmoides* planted on shady slope ($p > 0.05$). The GPA content of leaves in different directions on the shady slope was 32.0444 mg/g in the east, 29.3743 mg/g in the south,

27.4825 mg/g in the west, 30.3900 mg/g in the north, respectively, which is slightly different from the results of *Eucommia ulmoides* planted on sunny slope (Fig. 5).

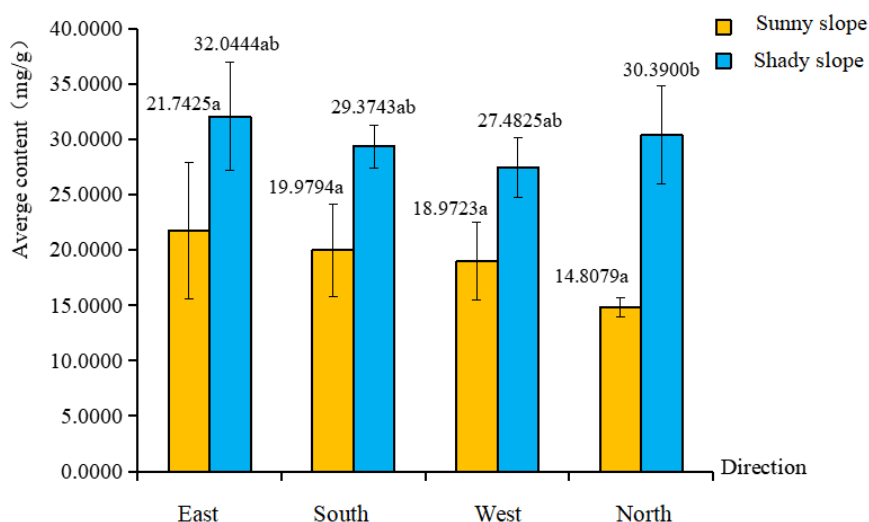


Figure 5. The difference analysis of GPA content in *Eucommia ulmoides* leaves in different directions on the sunny slope and the shady slope. The GPA content of *Eucommia ulmoides* leaves in each direction is the average value of 9 samples in the corresponding direction of 9 plants

There was a significant difference in GPA content in leaves, trunk bark and root bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* planted on sunny slope ($p < 0.05$), and the GPA in root bark was 42.43% higher than that in leaves and 70.06% higher than that in trunk bark ($p < 0.05$). The GPA content in leaves was significantly higher than that in trunk bark ($p < 0.05$) by 48.00% for of *Eucommia ulmoides* planted on sunny slope. The GPA content in root bark was the largest followed by that in leaves, and that in trunk bark was the lowest (Fig. 6).

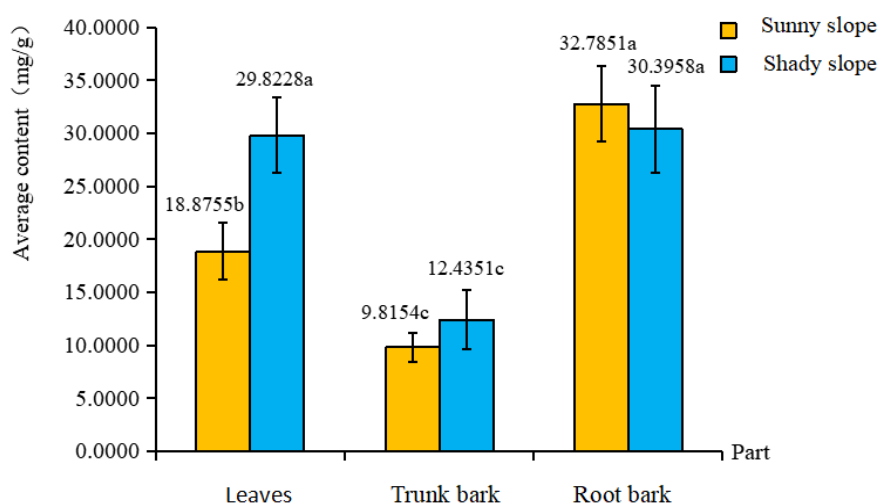


Figure 6. The difference analysis of GPA content in different parts of *Eucommia ulmoides* on the sunny slope and the shady slope. The GPA content in leaves was the mean value of 36 samples in 4 directions of 9 plants, while the GPA content in trunk bark and root bark content was the mean value of 9 plants

The GPA contents in leaves and root bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* on shady slope showed no significant difference ($p > 0.05$). The GPA contents in leaves and root bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* on shady slope were significantly higher than GPA content in trunk bark by 58.30% and 59.09%, respectively ($p < 0.05$). The GPA content in different parts of *Eucommia ulmoides* on the shady slope in root bark was the largest followed by that in leaves, and that in trunk bark was the lowest (Fig. 6).

Difference analysis of GPA contents in leaves of Eucommia ulmoides in different directions on sunny and shady slope

There was no significant difference in GPA content of *Eucommia ulmoides* leaves in different directions on both sunny slope and the shady slope ($p > 0.05$). In the east, south and west directions, there was no significant difference in GPA content in leaves of *Eucommia ulmoides* on both the sunny slope and the shady slope ($p > 0.05$). In the north, the GPA content of *Eucommia ulmoides* leaves on the shady slope was 51.27% higher than that on the sunny slope ($p < 0.05$). In the different directions, the GPA content in *Eucommia ulmoides* leaves on the shady slope was higher than that on the sunny slope, which was 32.15% higher in the east, 31.98% higher in the south, 30.97% higher in the west, and 51.27% higher in the north (Fig. 5).

Difference analysis of GPA content in different parts of Eucommia ulmoides on sunny slope and shady slope

There was a significant difference in GPA content in leaves, trunk bark and root bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* on the sunny slope ($p < 0.05$). For *Eucommia ulmoides* on shady slope, there was no significant difference between the GPA content in leaves and that in root bark ($p > 0.05$), while the GPA content in trunk bark was significantly different from that in leaves and that in root bark ($p < 0.05$). The GPA content in *Eucommia ulmoides* leaves on shady slope was 36.71% higher than that on sunny slope ($p < 0.05$). There was no significant difference between GPA content in trunk bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* on sunny slope and that on shady slope ($p > 0.05$). There was no significant difference between the GPA content in root bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* on sunny slope and that on shady slope ($p > 0.05$). There was a significant difference in GPA content in leaves between *Eucommia ulmoides* on shady slope and that on sunny slope, the GPA content in leaves and trunk bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* on shady slope was higher than that on sunny slope by 36.71% and 21.07%, respectively. The GPA content in root bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* on sunny slope was 7.29% higher than that on shady slope (Fig. 6).

Discussion

At present, the *Eucommia ulmoides*-related researches are mainly focused on the GPA contents in leaves and bark (Xu, 2007; Wei, 2016; Yan, 2018), the GPA content in seeds (Liu, 2013) and the GPA content in male flowers (He, 2010). However, there have been no systematic study on the GPA contents in leaves, trunk bark and root bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* in different directions on the sunny slope and the shady slope. In the karst plateau mountainous area studied, the GPA content in different parts of *Eucommia ulmoides* on both sunny or shade slope was GPA content in root bark was the largest followed by that in leaves, and that in trunk bark was the lowest. This is not consistent with the study (Jiang et al., 2013) which reports that the GPA content in the

bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* from the same origin is higher than that in the leaves of *Eucommia ulmoides*, and also not consistent with the study (Lv et al., 2012) which reports that the GPA content of GPA in the bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* is higher than that in the leaves in Hunan province. Such different may be related to differences in sampling time and habitats of *Eucommia ulmoides* in different areas. In this study, the GPA content of *Eucommia ulmoides* root bark was studied for the first time, and it was found that the GPA content of *Eucommia ulmoides* root bark is higher than that of trunk bark and leaves, which may have higher medicinal value of root bark. Currently, the root bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* has not been included in the 2015 edition of Chinese pharmacopoeia as the medicinal part. Further study on the GPA content of root bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* will have important guiding significance for making full use of *Eucommia ulmoides* resources.

Conclusion

In the karst plateau mountains where *Eucommia ulmoides* samples are collected, the GPA content in *Eucommia ulmoides* leaves in different directions on shady slope was generally 36.71% higher than that on sunny slope. There was no significant difference in the GPA content in leaves in different directions for *Eucommia ulmoides* on the same slope direction. Except that the GPA of *Eucommia ulmoides* leaves in the north on the shady slope was significantly higher (by 51.27%) than that in the north of the sunny slope, there was no significant difference in the GPA of *Eucommia ulmoides* leaves in the other three directions. Therefore, if GPA in the *Eucommia ulmoides* leaves is the target medicinal component, it is most suitable to collect *Eucommia ulmoides* leaves in the north on shady slope.

The GPA contents in different parts of *Eucommia ulmoides* on sunny are the GPA content in root bark (32.7851 mg/g), that in leaves (18.8755 mg/g) and that in trunk bark (9.8154 mg/g). In contrast, the results are GPA content in the root bark (30.3958 mg/g), that in the leaf (29.8228 mg/g), that in the trunk bark (12.4351 mg/g) for *Eucommia ulmoides* on shady slope.

The GPA content in different parts of *Eucommia ulmoides* on both sunny or shade slope was GAP content in root bark was the largest followed by that in leaves, and that in trunk bark was the lowest. If the GPA in *Eucommia ulmoides* is taken as the target component, the root bark is the best resource. This study expands the medicinal source part of *Eucommia ulmoides* and provides a new idea for the comprehensive utilization of *Eucommia ulmoides* resources. In the later stage, it will strengthen the research on the content of other medicinal components in the root bark, trunk bark and leaves of *Eucomia ulmoides* on the karst plateau mountain areas, further explore the influencing factors of the content of medicinal components in different parts of *Eucomia ulmoides* in the harsh karst environment, and explore the relationship between the biomass and the content of medicinal components in each part.

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