



# Hydrogen Peroxide

Signaling Mechanisms and Crosstalk in  
Plant Development and Stress Responses

Edited by Mohd Tanveer Alam Khan,  
Taiba Saeed, Aqeel Ahmad, Qazi Fariduddin,  
and Mohammad Yusuf

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**CRC Press**

Taylor & Francis Group

Boca Raton London New York

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CRC Press is an imprint of the  
Taylor & Francis Group, an **Informa** business

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Designed cover image: Shutterstock

First edition published 2025  
by CRC Press

2385 NW Executive Center Drive, Suite 320, Boca Raton FL 33431

and by CRC Press

4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

CRC Press is an imprint of Taylor & Francis Group, LLC

© 2025 Taylor & Francis Group, LLC

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*Trademark notice:* Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Names: Khan, Tanveer Alam, editor. | Saeed, Taiba, editor. | Ahmad, Aqeel, editor. | Fariduddin, Qazi, editor. | Yusuf, Mohammad (Lecturer in biology) editor.

Title: Hydrogen peroxide : signalling mechanisms and crosstalk in plant development and stress responses / edited by Tanveer Alam Khan, Taiba Saeed, Aqeel Ahmad, Qazi Fariduddin, and Mohammad Yusuf.

Description: First edition. | Boca Raton, FL : CRC Press, 2025. |

Includes bibliographical references and index. |

Identifiers: LCCN 2024043153 (print) | LCCN 2024043154 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781032610443 (hardback) | ISBN 9781032647678 (paperback) |

ISBN 9781032647692 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Plant cellular signal transduction. | Hydrogen peroxide. |

Plants—Effect of stress on. | Plant defenses.

Classification: LCC QK754 .H94 2025 (print) | LCC QK754 (ebook) |

DDC 571.7/42—dc23/eng/20250111

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024043153>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024043154>

ISBN: 9781032610443 (hbk)

ISBN: 9781032647678 (pbk)

ISBN: 9781032647692 (ebk)

DOI: 10.1201/9781032647692

Typeset in Times  
by codeMantra

# 1 Occurrence, Chemical Structure, and Biosynthesis of Hydrogen Peroxide in Plants

*Durdana Yasin, Taiba Saeed, Neha Sami,  
Tasneem Fatma, and Shahida Hamid*

## INTRODUCTION

Hydrogen peroxide ( $H_2O_2$ ) has emerged as a critical molecule in plant biology, garnering significant attention for its diverse roles in cellular function and stress responses. As a reactive oxygen species (ROS),  $H_2O_2$  stands out due to its relatively stable nature, allowing it to act effectively as both a signaling molecule and a mediator of oxidative stress. Understanding the intricacies of  $H_2O_2$  in plant systems is essential, not only for advancing fundamental plant science but also for its practical applications in agriculture and biotechnology.

$H_2O_2$  is a simple molecule composed of two hydrogen atoms and two oxygen atoms, but its simplicity belies its multifaceted roles in biological systems. In plants,  $H_2O_2$  is involved in various physiological processes, including growth, development, and defense mechanisms (Quan et al., 2008). Unlike other ROS, which are often highly reactive and short-lived,  $H_2O_2$  has a longer half-life and can diffuse across membranes, making it an ideal candidate for intracellular and intercellular signaling. It is involved in the regulation of numerous pathways that govern plant responses to both biotic and abiotic stresses. For instance, during pathogen attack,  $H_2O_2$  levels can increase, leading to the activation of defense genes and the reinforcement of cell walls to prevent pathogen entry. Similarly, in response to environmental stresses such as drought, salinity, and extreme temperatures,  $H_2O_2$  acts as a signal to trigger protective mechanisms, helping plants to cope with adverse conditions (Rajput et al., 2021).

Moreover,  $H_2O_2$  plays a crucial role in cellular homeostasis and metabolism. It is produced as a by-product of various metabolic processes, including photosynthesis and respiration, primarily in chloroplasts and mitochondria. The controlled production and scavenging of  $H_2O_2$  are vital for maintaining cellular redox balance. Enzymes such as catalases and peroxidases are responsible for regulating  $H_2O_2$  levels, ensuring that its concentration remains within a range that is beneficial rather than harmful to the cell (Bhattacharjee 2005). The importance of  $H_2O_2$  extends to its role in programmed cell death (PCD), a process crucial for plant development and defense. During PCD, precise regulation of  $H_2O_2$  levels is necessary to ensure the orderly dismantling of cellular components without causing undue damage to surrounding tissues. This controlled cell death is essential for processes such as leaf senescence, root hair development, and the hypersensitive response to pathogens (Mondal et al., 2021).

Given the central role of  $H_2O_2$  in plant physiology, understanding its biosynthetic pathway, metabolism, signaling pathways, and mechanisms of action is imperative. Advances in this field can lead to the development of crops that are more resilient to environmental stresses and have enhanced growth and productivity. For instance, by manipulating  $H_2O_2$  signaling pathways, it may be possible to improve plant resistance to diseases or to enhance their tolerance to drought and salinity. In this chapter, we delve into the structure, localization, and a comprehensive overview of the mechanisms underlying  $H_2O_2$  biosynthesis in plants and highlight its functional significance.