

Abstract

The roots of ericaceous plants provide an environment to many fungal endophytes and mycorrhizal fungi. We can observe at least four mycorrhizal types in the family, of which the ericoid mycorrhiza (ErM) is spread the most. The Ericaceae are able to survive in many different and often harsh habitats all over the world thanks to this symbiosis (from the tropical cloud forests, to the arctic tundra heathlands). The group of fungi, forming this relationship, used to be seen as a few very well circumscribed ascomycetes, namely *Rhizoscyphus ericae* (Read) Zhang & Zhuang and *Oidiodendron maius* Barron species. With the development of molecular methods, it was expanded of many other species, some of which belonging to Basidiomycota, particularly the order Sebaciniales. The diversity of ErM fungal community varies at different geographic locations and it can be influenced by factors such as altitude or the surrounding ecosystem. However, due to lack of further information, we still know quite little about the species distribution. Although they are primarily symbionts of the Ericaceae, some ErM fungi can colonize wider spectrum of plant hosts. Their effect on these hosts is not yet fully understood. Most importantly, they increase the vitality of ericaceous plants and favor them in competition with adjacent vegetation.