

1 **Taming the dragon: genetic variation in wild and domesticated *Antirrhinum majus***

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52 **Abstract**

53 Domesticated species and their wild relatives provide powerful case studies for examining the  
54 processes that shape rapid diversification. Here, we conduct a population genetic analysis of  
55 31 domesticated varieties and 33 natural populations of the common snapdragon, *Antirrhinum*  
56 *majus*, a species in which closely related flower colour varieties form hybrid zones and display  
57 extensive variation in floral colour and patterning. We find that domesticated snapdragons  
58 form a single genetic group, suggesting that these lines were derived from the same set of  
59 ancestral founders. Despite their strikingly diverse flowers, domesticated snapdragons show  
60 substantially lower genetic diversity compared to wild populations. Genetic markers strongly  
61 associated with known colour loci in wild populations show only weak associations across  
62 domesticated lines. This may be because recombination during selective breeding has  
63 weakened associations between casual mutations and linked markers, and/or because  
64 different mutations control colour variation in domesticated snapdragons.

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66 **Introduction**

67 Domesticated species and their wild relatives provide powerful case studies for examining the  
68 processes that shape rapid diversification (Ross-Ibarra et al., 2007). Domestication often  
69 causes strong reductions in genetic variation owing to strong founder effects and increased  
70 rates of drift and inbreeding over many generations of artificial selection. Yet, some  
71 domesticated species are characterised by high levels of phenotypic diversity, often exceeding  
72 levels of variation found in nature. While this diversity has been shaped by strong diversifying  
73 selection targeting heritable traits of human interest, its origins remain less certain: to what  
74 extent does it arise during domestication itself, and how much derives from standing variation  
75 present in ancestral populations?

76 Most insights into the genetics of domestication come from major crops and livestock,  
77 where selection has targeted traits related to yield, growth, and reproduction. Because these  
78 traits are often highly polygenic, the identification of the loci that underpin variation under  
79 domestication is exceedingly difficult (Rockman, 2012). In contrast, ornamental plants and  
80 animals have been shaped primarily through selection on conspicuous aesthetic traits like  
81 colouration, which often has a relatively simple genetic architecture consisting of relatively few  
82 loci of large effect (Cieslak et al., 2011; Yang et al., 2025). Despite their historical importance in  
83 the development of genetics, ornamental systems remain comparatively understudied from a  
84 population genetic perspective, especially in the context of variation present in their wild  
85 relatives.

86 The common snapdragon, *Antirrhinum majus*, provides an excellent system for studying  
87 variation both under domestication and in nature (Fig. 1). Native to the western Mediterranean,  
88 *A. majus* has a long history of association with humans, with evidence suggesting it was grown  
89 in ancient Roman gardens and subsequently cultivated across Europe from at least the  
90 eighteenth century (Hudson et al., 2008; Schwarz-Sommer et al., 2003). Early horticultural  
91 descriptions emphasise both the remarkable diversity within cultivated forms and the tendency  
92 of varieties not to reproduce true from seed, with novel phenotypes frequently arising following  
93 sowing and desirable forms maintained through cuttings (e.g. Vilmorin-Andrieux & Cie, 1885;  
94 Stubbe, 1966). Subsequent breeding by commercial and amateur horticulturists across  
95 Europe, North America, and Asia has produced modern domesticated snapdragons that  
96 together encompass substantial phenotypic diversity, including variation in flower colour and  
97 pattern, floral morphology, flowering time, and growth form, with distinct varieties adapted for  
98 dwarf habit or for tall, long-stemmed cut flower production. The domestication process has  
99 also resulted in the loss of self-incompatibility, which prevents self-pollination in wild  
100 populations (Li et al., 2019; Surendranadh et al., 2022). This has presumably been favoured in  
101 breeding programs as autonomous selfing reduces the need for controlled pollination and also  
102 eases the stabilisation of desirable phenotypes.



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**Figure 1. Floral diversity in wild and domesticated snapdragons.** (a & b) The two varieties of *A. majus*, subspecies *majus* show a striking difference in their flower colour. (c - i) Natural hybridization between the magenta-flowered *var. pseudomajus* and yellow-flowered *striatum* produces a wide range of colour phenotypes owing to the segregation and recombination of alleles at 7 loci that affect the expression of anthocyanin (magenta) and aurone (yellow) pigments in floral tissue. Colour variation in domesticated snapdragons is equally striking, with some lines exhibiting patterns and intensities not typical of the phenotypes found in either variety, or in natural hybrid zones (e.g., L11, L30) (see Fig. S1 for multiple photos of each line). Also note the variation in floral morphology in domesticated lines, including peloric flowers (L7 L10, L41), which are radially symmetric, and peloric double flowered mutants (L42, L46), contrasting with the bilaterally symmetrical wild-type morphology. Photo credits: a and b by Mitch Olsen, c by David Field, d to i by Daria Shipilina.

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In parallel, *A. majus* has served as an important model for understanding the genetic basis of phenotypic variation in both laboratory and natural populations (Hudson, Critchley, and Erasmus 2008). In the wild, closely related taxa within *A. majus* display striking polymorphism in floral colour and patterning (Fig. 1). In particular, *A. m. m. var. pseudomajus* and *var. striatum*, which are native to France and Spain, differ primarily in the distribution of magenta anthocyanin and yellow aurone pigments in the corolla tissue (Whibley et al., 2006). Detailed molecular genetic studies have shown that the colour differences between the varieties are caused by at least 7 loci of moderate to large effect, including *Rosea*, *Eluta*, and *Rubia*, which control anthocyanin production (Field et al., 2025; Tavares et al., 2018), and *Sulfurea*, *Cremona*, *Aurina*, and *Flavia*, which control aurone production (Bradley et al., 2017, 2025; Richardson et al., 2025). Detailed studies of hybrid zones between these taxa, primarily the hybrid zone in the Val de Ribes near the town Planoles, have shown that spatially varying

128 selection maintains sharp transitions in flower colour over short geographic distances, with  
129 strong differentiation at pigmentation loci but relatively low divergence across much of the  
130 genome (Pal et al., 2025; Surendranadh et al., 2025; Tavares et al., 2018; Whibley et al., 2006).  
131 However, frequent hybridization between the varieties leads to the shuffling of causal alleles,  
132 producing a diverse range of colour patterns, many of which are similar to those observed in  
133 domesticated varieties (Fig. 1). Together, these findings suggest that much of the colour  
134 variation in domesticated varieties could be underpinned by pre-existing genetic variation.

135 The combination of extensive variation in nature, the well-characterised genetic basis of  
136 flower colour, and large range of phenotypic variation in horticultural varieties make *A. majus*  
137 an attractive species for investigating the genetic changes that accompany domestication, and  
138 the relationship between variation in natural and domesticated plants. Here, we analyse  
139 patterns of genetic variation in 31 domesticated varieties of *A. majus* and 33 natural  
140 populations from France and Spain. Using a panel of genetic markers we ask: (i) is there  
141 evidence that horticultural varieties have multiple independent origins, or do they represent  
142 diversification from a single domestication event? (ii) How has the domestication history of *A.*  
143 *majus* shaped patterns of genetic diversity? and (iii) How much of the colour variation in  
144 domesticated varieties is controlled by loci that are known to affect colour in nature?  
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## 146 **Methods**

### 147 *Plant material*

148 We obtained leaf material from 289 individuals across 33 populations of *A. majus ssp. majus*  
149 from southern France and northern Spain with an emphasis on the Spanish Pyrenees where the  
150 geographic ranges of the varieties come into close proximity (See Fig. S2 for a map; Table S1).  
151 This included 17 populations of magenta-flowered var. *pseudomajus*, 15 populations of yellow-  
152 flowered var. *striatum*, and 1 population from the centre of a well-studied hybrid zone near the  
153 town of Planoles where flower colour is variable. A small amount of leaf tissue was taken from  
154 each plant, placed in paper envelopes and desiccated in a bag of silica gel to preserve DNA.

155 We sourced seeds for 31 domesticated *Antirrhinum majus* lines, representing broad  
156 phenotypic variation (Fig 1; Fig. S2; Table S2). Seeds were placed in a refrigerator at 4°C for two  
157 weeks to simulate winter dormancy. Plants were grown in a randomised block design,  
158 consisting of 10 trays, with each tray containing 1 individual of each line. Seeds were sown on  
159 the surface of 8cm pots containing 3:1 mix of Melcourt peat-free multi-purpose potting soil and  
160 Perlite. Following germination, seedlings were thinned to one individual per pot. Plants were  
161 grown in the University of Sussex greenhouse at 24°C under a 06:00-21:00 light cycle and  
162 bottom-watered as needed. Plants were fertilised every 2 weeks using a ¼ strength preparation  
163 of MiracleGrow All Purpose Soluble Plant Food. Leaf material was collected and stored as  
164 described above.  
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### 166 *Photography and scoring of flower colour*

167 We took photos of 1 flower from 5 individuals of each line under standard conditions using a  
168 Nikon Coolpix S7000 16.0MP set to 20x Optical Zoom and macro mode, with an exposure of -  
169 1.3. Photos were taken in a Lightdow Light Box (30 cm) on a black fabric background.

170 We also quantified the colouration of 1 flower from 5 plants per domesticated line using  
171 a quantitative scoring system, described in Surendranadh et al. (2025), to separately quantify  
172 the intensity of magenta anthocyanin pigment and yellow aurone pigment in the corolla tissue.  
173 In nature, the magenta score ranges from 0 (no magenta) to 5 (intense magenta) while the  
174 yellow score ranges from 0 (no yellow) to 3 (intense yellow). Because some domesticated  
175 plants show more intense pigmentation than wild ones, we increased the range up to 6 for  
176 magenta and 4 for yellow.  
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### 178 *SNP genotyping and preparation of genetic data*

179 Samples were genotyped at a panel of 103 biallelic SNP markers which were previously  
180 developed as described in Ringbauer et al. (2018). The panel included 30 SNP markers that  
181 were selected because their alternative alleles are in strong linkage disequilibrium with causal  
182 SNPs that contribute to colour differences in natural populations. Hereafter we refer to these as  
183 ‘colour associated SNPs’. This included 1 SNP in LD with the *Cremosa* locus, 11 SNPs  
184 associated with *Flavia* (spread over 2 centimorgans), 3 loci associated with *Sulfurea* (all at the  
185 same map position), and 14 SNPs associated with the linked loci *Rosea* and *Eluta* (spread over  
186 1 cM). The remaining 73 SNPs are not associated with flower colour and were instead selected  
187 for their high levels of within-population diversity. Dried leaf tissue was sent to LGC Genomics  
188 who performed DNA extractions and genotyping using Kompetitive Allele Specific PCR (KASP).  
189 Details of each marker and information needed to genotype them can be found on GitHub (see  
190 data accessibility statement).

191 Genotypes were initially encoded as 0 and 2 for the alternative homozygotes and 1 for  
192 the heterozygote. Alleles at each locus were then polarised based on whether allele 1 was more  
193 common in var. *pseudomajus* or var. *striatum*. This was done by pooling individuals from the 17  
194 *pseudomajus* (ps) populations and 15 *striatum* (st) populations, calculating the frequency of  
195 allele 1 in each variety, and then finding the difference in frequency as  $\Delta p = p_{ps} - p_{st}$ . For loci  
196 where  $\Delta p$  was negative, we flipped the identity of the alternative homozygotes so that the allele  
197 more common in *pseudomajus* is always encoded as homozygous state 2.

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#### 199 *Analysis of genetic divergence and diversity*

200 We used a combination of model-based and model-free methods to explore the  
201 relationships between the sequenced samples based on the 73 SNPs not causally associated  
202 with flower colour. For the model-based analysis, we used the program *Admixture* (Alexander et  
203 al., 2009) We tested a range of values of  $K$  between 2 and 30, with 10 replicate runs conducted  
204 for each  $K$  to ensure convergence.

205 We used 2 different model free approaches to study divergence. First, for the 73 SNPs  
206 not associated with flower colour, we calculated the pairwise genetic distance,  $\pi$ , between all  
207 pairs of individuals according to Nei (1987).  $\pi$  measures the expected probability of mismatch  
208 between alleles randomly drawn from samples  $x$  and  $y$  (here, pairs of individuals) so is  
209 analogous to  $\pi_w$  when calculated within populations and lines, and  $\pi_b$  (or  $d_{xy}$ ) when calculated  
210 between them. We then used the *R* package *ggtree* to build an unrooted neighbour-joining tree  
211 from the matrix of pairwise distances. Second, we conducted a principal components analysis  
212 (PCA) on the genotype matrix using the *prcomp* function in *R*. As PCA does not allow missing  
213 data, we imputed missing genotypes by sampling a genotype from another randomly selected  
214 individual from the same wild population or domesticated line.

215 To evaluate genetic diversity at the individual level, we calculated the per-sample  
216 heterozygosity ( $H_i$ ), which is the proportion of heterozygous sites across an individual's  
217 multilocus genotype. We used the *R* package *hierfstat* (Goudet, 2005) to calculate mean  
218 inbreeding coefficient,  $F_{IS}$ , for each population and line over all loci from the averaged observed  
219 heterozygosity ( $H_o$ ) and corrected expected heterozygosity ( $H_s$ ) for each wild population/line as  
220 described by Nei (1987). For these analyses, we used all 103 SNPs.

221

#### 222 *Genetic differentiation and genotype-phenotype associations at known colour loci*

223 We used *hierfstat* (Goudet, 2005) to calculate Weir and Cockerham  $F_{ST}$  for each of the 103 SNPs  
224 between the wild individuals of var. *pseudomajus* and var. *striatum*. This was done by pooling  
225 individuals across all populations of the same variety.

226 We used Spearman-rank correlation to test for associations between our magenta and  
227 yellow scores and the genotypes at the 30 markers that are linked to five of the known colour  
228 loci. This analysis was conducted separately for wild and domesticated individuals. For the wild  
229 samples, we obtained colour scores for a random sample of 289 wild individuals (i.e., the same

230 number of samples as in the domesticated set) from the hybrid zone in Planoles where the  
 231 colour loci segregate and recombine in hybrids.

232

233 **Results**

234 *Relationships between wild and domesticated plants*

235 All three analyses—including *Admixture*, PCA, and analyses of genetic distance revealed a clear,  
 236 consistent picture of the relationships between the wild and domesticated snapdragons. In the  
 237 *Admixture* analysis, wild and domesticated samples showed strong separation at  $K = 2$ , with  
 238 wild individuals being primarily assigned to  $K1$  and domesticated samples were assigned to  $K2$ .  
 239 The same patterns were observed in the PCA, where wild and domesticated lines showed clear  
 240 separation on PC1 (Fig. S5). Higher values of  $K$  revealed additional structure within the wild or  
 241 domesticated groups (Fig. 2A; Fig S3). Within the wild samples, we did not observe a clear  
 242 subdivision of plants by flower colour variety, with structure instead being driven primarily by  
 243 geography (Fig. S4). This finding is consistent with other recent work (Richardson et al. 2025; Pal  
 244 et al. 2025).

245 Wild and domesticated samples also formed distinct groups in a neighbour-joining tree  
 246 based on pairwise genetic distances ( $\pi$ ) (Figure 2B). Specifically, all domesticated individuals  
 247 formed a single group that was clearly separated from the wild samples. Within the  
 248 domesticated clade, individuals from the same line tended to cluster together, though the  
 249 degree of clustering varied among lines (Fig. S6). Distributions of pairwise  $\pi$ , clearly show that  
 250 the distances between domesticated and wild plants (mean  $\pi_b = 0.5$ ) are much greater than  
 251 distances between plants from different domesticated lines ( $\pi_b = 0.18$ ), yet similar to the  
 252 distances observed between plants from different wild populations ( $\pi_b = 0.44$ ) (Fig. 2C).  
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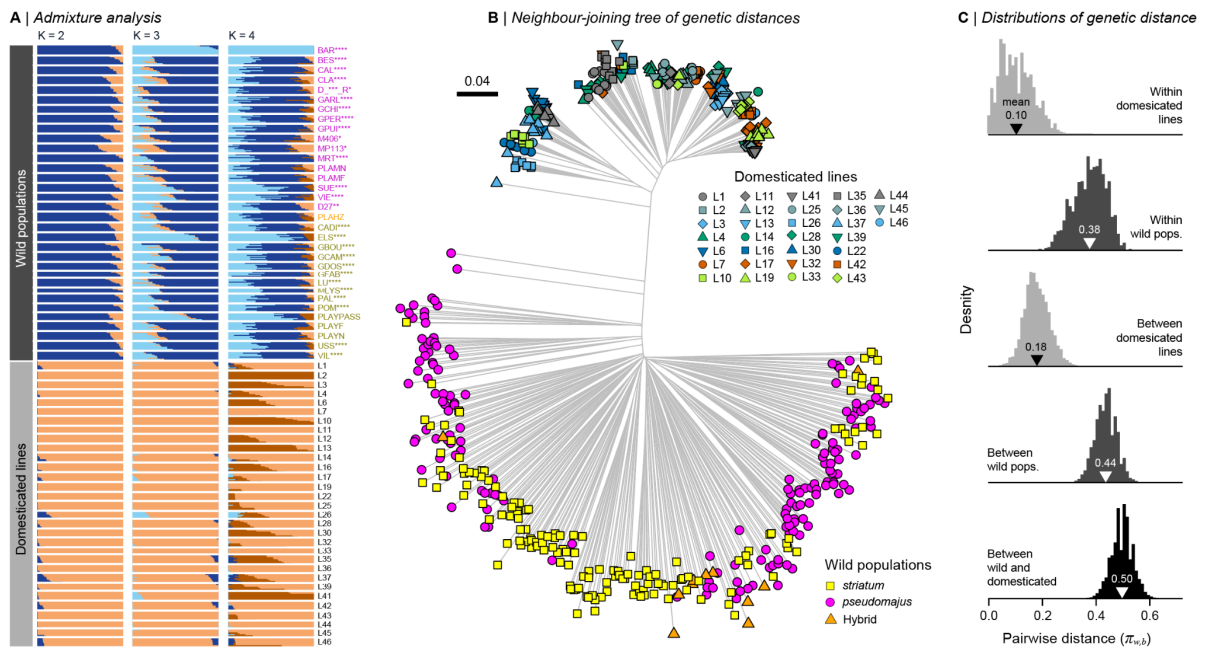
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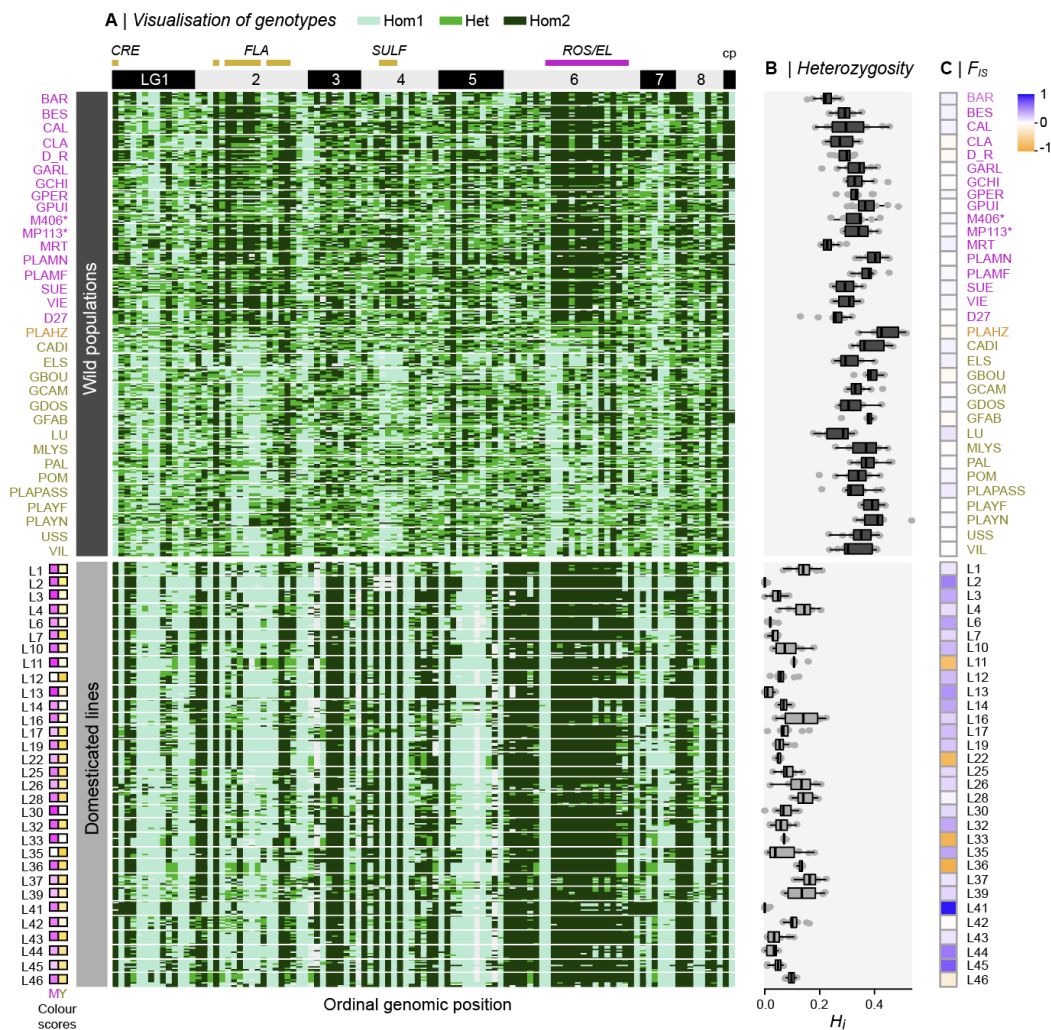


**Figure 2. Genetic divergence between wild and domesticated snapdragons.** (A) *Admixture* plots showing inferred structure assuming  $K = 2, 3$ , and  $4$  clusters. Each horizontal bar represents 1 individual, and the fraction of each colour indicates the proportion of its genome inferred to derive from each cluster. (B) Neighbour-joining tree based on estimates of genetic distance ( $\pi$ ) calculated between all pairs of individuals. Different symbol and colour combinations distinguish individuals from the domesticated lines, wild populations of *pseudomajus* and *striaum*, and the hybrid population. (C) Distributions of pairwise genetic distance ( $\pi$ ) between all pairs of individuals within each of the domesticated lines ( $n = 1213$ ), within each of the populations ( $n = 1396$ ), between individuals from different lines ( $n = 40,403$ ), between individuals from different populations ( $n = 49,325$ ), and between wild and domesticated individuals ( $n = 92,191$ ). The mean pairwise distance is shown on each plot. All analyses are based on the 73 SNPs not causally associated with flower colour.

266 *Diversity within natural populations and domesticated lines*  
 267 Diversity within wild populations was 3.8 times higher than in the domesticated lines (mean  
 268  $\pi_{w,wild} = 0.38$  v.s. mean  $\pi_{w,domesticated} = 0.1$ ) (Fig. 2c). This striking difference was especially  
 269 clear from the visual inspection of the genotype matrix (Fig. 3A) where many markers are near  
 270 fixation for a single allele across the domesticated samples.

271 Levels of per-sample heterozygosity  $H_i$ , calculated across all 103 markers, are also  
 272 lower in domesticated lines, ranging from near 0 (e.g., L2, L41) to 0.16 (mean 0.08) (Fig. 1B),  
 273 compared with 0.22 (BAR) to 0.44 (Planoles HZ) in wild populations (Fig. 3B; Table S3). On  
 274 average, populations of magenta *pseudomajus* tended to have slightly lower  $H_i$  than yellow  
 275 *striatum* populations, regardless of whether or not colour loci were included (mean  $H_{ips} = 0.36$   
 276 vs.  $H_{ist} 0.38$  without selected loci; mean  $H_{ips} = 0.31$  vs.  $H_{ist} 0.34$  with all loci) (Fig. 1B).  
 277 However, this difference was not statistically significant (Wilcoxon rank-sum tests  $p > 0.05$ ).

278 Across the wild populations,  $F_{IS}$  values were centred around 0 (mean =  $0.019 \pm 0.04$ ),  
 279 ranging from -0.07 (pop. GBOU) to 0.11 (pop. LU) (Fig. 3C; Table S4). In contrast,  $F_{IS}$  showed  
 280 strong deviations from 0 in many domesticated lines, with a mean absolute value of  $F_{IS}$  of  $0.37 \pm$   
 281  $0.27$ . Despite a tendency of values to be positive, consistent with a deficit of heterozygotes  
 282 within lines, 4 lines—all of which were documented  $F_1$  horticultural varieties—showed highly  
 283 negative  $F_{IS}$ , suggesting a strong excess of heterozygosity at polymorphic sites (L11, L22, L33 &  
 284 36). This can be seen in the plot of the genotype matrix (Fig. 3A) where some loci are  
 285 heterozygous in most or all individuals.  
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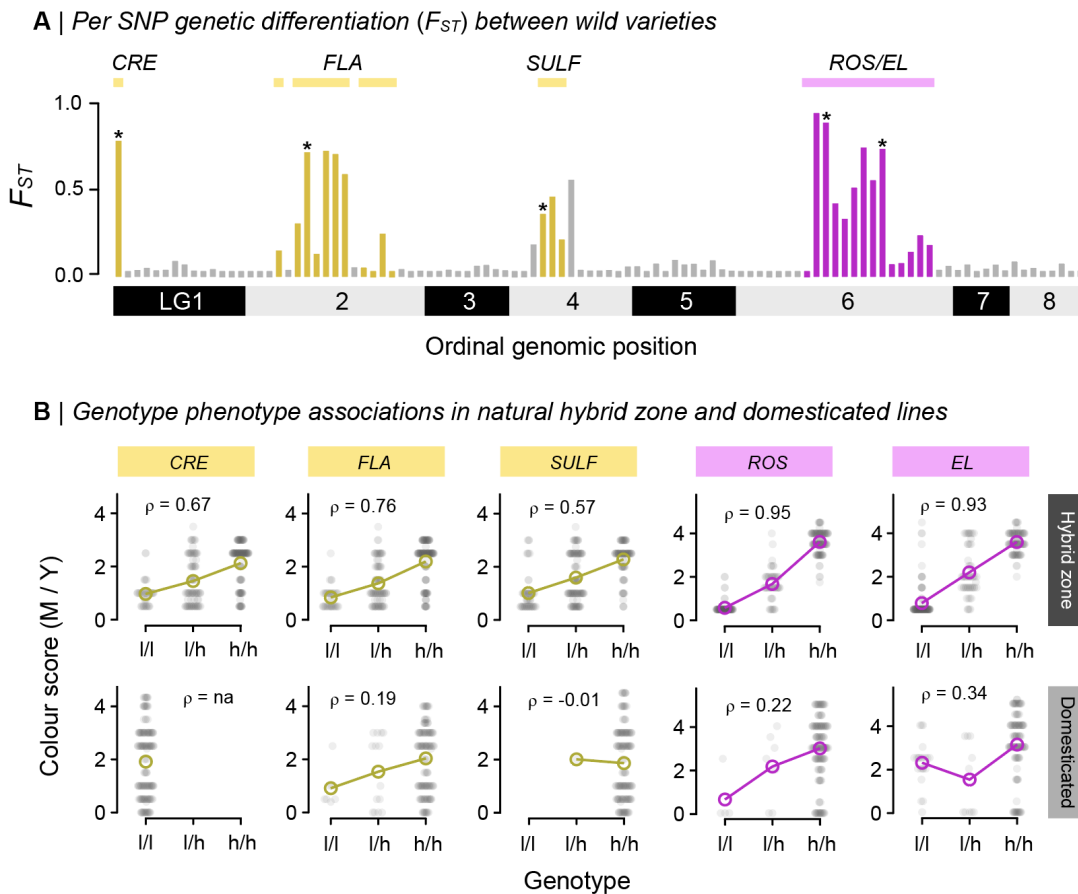


287 **Figure 3. Genetic diversity in wild and domesticated snapdragons.** (A) Visualisation of genotypes for 578  
 288 individuals across 33 natural populations and 39 domesticated lines. Each column represents one of the 103 SNP  
 289

290 markers, ordered by their position along the 8 linkage groups. The location of the 30 markers associated with the  
 291 known colour loci, *CRE*, *FLA*, *SULF*, *ROS* and *EL* are shown at the top of the plot. Each row represents the multilocus  
 292 genotype for one individual. The three shades of green represent the possible genotypes at each site (light grey  
 293 represents missing data). Alleles are polarised so that the allele more common in var. *pseudomajus* than in var.  
 294 *striatum* the dark green homozygote. White lines are boundaries between individuals from different  
 295 populations/lines. A visual representation of the mean flower colour scores for magenta (M) and yellow pigment (Y) is  
 296 shown next to the line ID. (B) Levels of per individual heterozygosity ( $H_i$ ) in wild and domesticated snapdragons. The  
 297 boxplots show the distribution of  $H_i$  for each population/line. (C) Mean  $F_{ST}$  over all loci for each wild population/line.  
 298 The colour of the box indicates the value of  $F_{ST}$ , but see Table S4 for values for each line.  
 299

300 *Genetic differentiation and genotype-phenotype associations at known colour loci*

301 As expected we found strong genetic differentiation at markers previously shown to be in strong  
 302 LD with known colour loci when wild *pseudomajus* and *striatum* were compared (Fig. 4A; also  
 303 see fig. 3A). The highest  $F_{ST}$  value was 0.93 near *ROS*, with substantial values observed at *CRE*  
 304 (0.76), *EL* (0.72), *FLA* (0.70), and *SULF* (0.44) as well (Fig. 4A; Table S5). In contrast, non-colour  
 305 loci generally showed very low  $F_{ST}$  (mean  $0.02 \pm$  s.d. 0.06), with the exception of one marker near  
 306 *SULF*, which showed a substantial  $F_{ST}$  of 0.53.  
 307



308 **Figure 4. Genetic differentiation between wild flower-colour varieties of *A. m. majus* and genotype-phenotype**  
 309 **associations for wild and domesticated plants at markers linked to 5 known flower colour loci.** (A) Weir and  
 310 Cockerham  $F_{ST}$  for each of the 103 SNPs. SNPs tightly linked to colour loci are coloured yellow or magenta. Asterisks  
 311 mark the SNPs shown in part B. (B) Each plot shows the relationship between the 3 genotypes and relevant colour  
 312 score for 5 of the colour-associated SNPs. The top row shows the relationship for 289 individuals from the natural  
 313 hybrid zone at planoles, while the bottom row shows the relationship for the 289 domesticated samples. The alleles  
 314 have been relabelled according to whether they are associated with low (l) or high (h) levels of pigmentation. The  
 315 spearman rank correlation ( $\rho$ ) between genotype and phenotype is indicated in each plot.  
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317  
 318 We did, however, find clear differences in the strength of genotype-phenotype  
 319 associations in wild and domesticated samples. For the samples from the hybrid zone near

320 Planoles, the 30 SNP markers linked to five of the known colour loci showed strong  
321 associations between genotype and their relevant colour score (Fig. 4; Table S5). For example,  
322 for the 14 markers within the region on LG6 containing the colour loci *ROS* and *EL*, the highest  
323 Spearman correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ) between genotype and magenta score was 0.95. Strong  
324 correlations were also observed for markers near the three loci that affect yellow colouration,  
325 including *CRE* ( $\rho = 0.68$ ), *FLA* ( $\rho = 0.77$ ), and *SULF* ( $\rho = 0.58$ ).

326 Within the domesticated samples, the relationships between genotype and phenotype  
327 were much weaker (Fig. 4; Table S5). Eight out of 30 colour linked markers were monomorphic  
328 in the domesticated samples. For other markers the relationships between genotype and  
329 phenotype were substantially lower compared with the wild populations. For example, within  
330 the *ROS/EL* region, the largest value of Spearman's  $\rho$  was 0.36, while the strongest relationship  
331 with the yellow score was for a marker in the *FLA* region, where the correlation was 0.34.

332

### 333 Discussion

#### 334 *Origins of domesticated the domesticated lines*

335 In our analyses, domesticated individuals from 31 lines, originating from different countries and  
336 breeding companies, formed a single genetic group, rather than multiple distinct clusters  
337 embedded within the wild samples. This pattern is consistent with these domesticated lines  
338 being derived from the same set of founding individuals, followed by further within-line  
339 divergence, rather than multiple, independent domestication events. However, more complex  
340 histories could also generate a similar pattern. For example, early horticultural varieties may  
341 have been independently derived from different sets of founders, and then subsequently mixed,  
342 eroding the signal of multiple origins (Meyer & Purugganan, 2013; Sang & Ge, 2007).

343 Our conclusions about origins of domesticated snapdragons are necessarily limited to  
344 the natural populations and domesticated lines included in this study. *Antirrhinum majus* spans  
345 a broader geographic and ecological range than is represented here, and we have examined a  
346 relatively small number of domesticated lines from a limited set of suppliers. Expanding  
347 sampling across both wild populations and cultivated material, along with whole-genome  
348 sequencing, will be important for testing the generality of these patterns. In addition, more  
349 detailed analysis of historical records could provide valuable context for reconstructing the  
350 origins and subsequent diversification of domesticated snapdragons.

351

#### 352 *Impact of domestication on neutral genetic diversity*

353 Our results suggest that the process of domestication has had a marked effect on levels of  
354 genetic diversity in domesticated snapdragons. The difference in diversity observed between  
355 wild and domesticated snapdragons is strong, and equates to an average reduction of more  
356 than 70% in domesticated lines. Many domesticated species show similar reductions in  
357 diversity relative to their wild progenitors, reflecting strong founder effects and increased rates  
358 of drift and inbreeding. However, the magnitude varies widely among species. For example,  
359 studies show that maize and barley retain ~70–80% of the diversity present in their wild  
360 progenitors (Morrell et al., 2014; Ross-Ibarra et al., 2007), whereas stronger reductions have  
361 been observed in rice, where domesticated populations retain ~20–40% of wild diversity (Zhu et  
362 al., 2007), and tomato, where some cultivated varieties retain less than 5% of the genetic  
363 diversity present in wild relatives (100 Tomato Genome Sequencing Consortium et al., 2014).

364 One factor that has almost certainly contributed to the reduced diversity in  
365 domesticated snapdragons is the loss of self-incompatibility, which promotes outcrossing,  
366 thereby maintaining high levels of heterozygosity in nature (Li et al., 2019; Surendranadh et al.,  
367 2022). By contrast, horticultural varieties readily produce selfed seed without the need for a  
368 pollinator, which would lead to high inbreeding. Consistent with this, many of our domesticated  
369 lines showed a deficit of heterozygotes, indicated by a positive  $F_{IS}$ , which provides direct  
370 evidence for recent inbreeding.

371 In interpreting our results, it is important to acknowledge that this marker panel was  
372 designed to include SNPs that show high diversity in nature which could bias our estimate for  
373 the reduction in diversity. A further caveat regarding the magnitude of the reduction is that the  
374 ancestral source population(s) of domesticated snapdragons remains unknown. If  
375 domestication began from a genetically depauperate population, the difference in diversity  
376 could partly reflect low standing variation in the founders rather than a reduction during  
377 domestication. However, this scenario seems unlikely given the broadly similar levels of  
378 diversity across natural populations, and the diversity of flower colour phenotypes present in  
379 domesticated lines, suggesting contributions from multiple source populations.

380

#### 381 *Relationships between colour variation in nature and under domestication*

382 Detailed studies of natural populations of *A. majus* have identified multiple loci underlying  
383 variation in flower colour, and molecular markers in linkage disequilibrium with these causal  
384 variants have allowed researchers to study their dynamics in natural populations (Bradley et al.,  
385 2017, 2025; Field et al., 2025; Richardson et al., 2025; Tavares et al., 2018). Consistent with  
386 this, we observed strong genetic differentiation at colour loci between the wild populations of  
387 vars. *pseudomajus* and *striatum*, and we also confirm that colour-linked SNPs strongly predict  
388 colour variation in samples from the hybrid zone at Planoles.

389 We were, however, surprised to find that the same loci explain very little of the variation  
390 in colour observed among domesticated snapdragons. There are two non-mutually exclusive  
391 explanations for this result. First, it is possible that extensive recombination during selective  
392 breeding has weakened the associations between marker loci and functional variants, meaning  
393 the marker genotypes are no longer informative about an individual's genotype at causal loci in  
394 domesticated varieties. The alternative explanation is that different mutations controlling  
395 colour variation have arisen in domesticated varieties. Some aspects of colouration—such as  
396 extremely high levels of anthocyanin pigmentation, peloric floral morphology, double flowers,  
397 and variegated colour patterns—are rare or absent in natural populations. This too might  
398 suggest that some new mutations have arisen and been targeted by selection during  
399 domestication. Both processes have likely contributed to this finding, and more work is needed  
400 to evaluate their relative importance.

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#### 402 *Conclusions*

403 Our comparative analysis of wild and domesticated *A. majus* provides a first step towards  
404 understanding the genetic consequences of domestication in *A. majus* and highlights its value  
405 as a model for additional studies in this area of research. Future work combining whole-  
406 genome sequencing, broader sampling across natural populations and domesticated lines, the  
407 inclusion of additional *Antirrhinum* species, and a focus on a wider range of traits will help to  
408 clarify the origins of domesticated snapdragons, the sources of genetic variation underlying  
409 phenotypic diversity.

410

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415 the Barton groups provided useful discussion and comments on an earlier version of the  
416 manuscript.

417

#### 418 **Data Accessibility**

419 Data and code used to create the manuscript are available on GitHub at  
420 <https://github.com/seanstankowski/snapdragonDomestication2026>

421

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511 *Supplementary information for*  
512 **Taming the dragon: genetic variation in wild and domesticated *Antirrhinum majus***

513

514 Tables:

515 Table S1. Information about each of the wild populations used in this study.

516 Table S2. Information about each of the domesticated lines used in this study.

517 Table S3. Mean and standard deviation of per-individual heterozygosity for each  
518 population/line.

519 Table S4. Mean expected heterozygosity ( $H_o$ ), observed heterozygosity ( $H_s$ ), and the inbreeding  
520 coefficient ( $F_{IS}$ ) over all loci and for non-colour loci.

521 Table S5. Genotype-phenotype associations for SNPs linked to known colour loci in the natural  
522 populations.

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524 Figures:

525 Figure S1. Map of wild populations of *A. majus* ssp. *majus* sampled in this study.

526 Fig. S2. Images of one flower from replicate plants for each of the domesticated lines.

527 Fig. S3. Results of Admixture analysis for different values of K.

528 Fig S4. Maps of admixture scores for the wild populations.

529 Figure S5. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) of the genotype matrix for the domesticated and  
530 wild samples

531 Figure S6. A radial view of the clade of domesticated samples.

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**Table S1. Information about each of the wild populations used in this study.**

Population ID	Latitude	Longitude	Sample size	Variety
BAR****	42.124	0.3216	10	<i>pseudomajus</i>
BES****	42.2114	2.667	10	<i>pseudomajus</i>
CAL****	42.1038	1.8318	10	<i>pseudomajus</i>
CLA****	43.17665	3.09585	10	<i>pseudomajus</i>
D_***_R*	43.3427	1.4925	10	<i>pseudomajus</i>
GARL****	42.4505	2.617	10	<i>pseudomajus</i>
GCHI****	42.77	1.86	9	<i>pseudomajus</i>
GPER****	42.47621	2.84878	10	<i>pseudomajus</i>
GPUJ****	42.522385	2.61729	10	<i>pseudomajus</i>
M406*	42.3543812	2.16898442	10	<i>pseudomajus</i>
MP113*	42.3308333	2.17	10	<i>pseudomajus</i>
MRT****	43.64537	3.8901	10	<i>pseudomajus</i>
PLAMN	42.3221454	2.0879949	10	<i>pseudomajus</i>
PLAMF	42.3204901	2.09630819	10	<i>pseudomajus</i>
SUE****	42.4153	0.7373	10	<i>pseudomajus</i>
VIE****	42.7377	0.7571	9	<i>pseudomajus</i>
D27**	42.5067	2.1218	10	<i>striatum</i>
CADJ****	42.2913825	1.86464051	10	<i>striatum</i>
ELS****	42.28883	1.36765	10	<i>striatum</i>
GBOU****	42.7203	2.2582	10	<i>striatum</i>
GCAM****	42.8	1.92	10	<i>striatum</i>
GDOS****	42.965	2.5258	9	<i>striatum</i>
GFAB****	42.59347	2.6152	7	<i>striatum</i>
LU****	42.97	2.26	10	<i>striatum</i>
MLYS****	42.83	2.2	6	<i>striatum</i>
PAL****	42.3073	1.8556	10	<i>striatum</i>
POM****	43.1122	2.2715	9	<i>striatum</i>
YP044*	42.360097	1.926686	9	<i>striatum</i>
PLAYF	42.3234887	2.04835431	10	<i>striatum</i>
PLAYN	42.3246171	2.06534717	10	<i>striatum</i>
USS****	42.7444	2.0858	10	<i>striatum</i>
VIL****	42.59	2.3649	10	<i>striatum</i>
PLAHZ	42.3226764	2.07446891	11	hybrid

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**Table S2. Information about each of the domesticated lines used in this study.**

Line	Line name	Supplier	Type
L1	Beautiful Mixture	Dehner	Mixed Height
L2	Mango Twist	Suttons	Tall Border
L3	Defiance	Chiltern Seeds	Cut Flowers
L4	High Mix	Dehner	Mixed Height
L6	Lucky Lips	Thompson And Morgan	Cut Flowers
L7	Sweet Duet F1	Thompson And Morgan	Cut Flowers
L10	Mini Cherry Cola	Thompson And Morgan	Short Border
L11	Purple Twist' F1 Hybrid	Chiltern Seeds	Tall Border
L12	Canary Bird	Chiltern Seeds	Cut Flowers
L13	Day And Night	Suttons	Tall Border
L14	Brighton Rock	Happy Green Shop Seeds	Cut Flowers
L16	Half-Height Mix	Dehner	Mixed Height
L17	Serenade F2	Kiepenkerl	Mixed Height
L19	Rembrandt	Thompson And Morgan	Cut Flowers
L22	Liberty Lavender	Chiltern Seeds	Cut Flowers
L25	Orange Wonder	Plant Gang	Cut-Flowers
L26	Trailing Mix	Thompson And Morgan	Mixed Height
L28	Dwarf Mix	Kiepenkerl	Dwarf
L30	Black Prince	Thompson And Morgan	Cut Flowers
L32	Mendel's Garden	NA	NA
L33	Potomac Royal F1	Plants Of Distinction	Cut Flowers
L35	Royal Bride	Thompson And Morgan	Cut Flowers
L36	Snaptastic Scarlet Orange	Chiltern Seeds	Cut Flowers
L37	Tetra Ruffled Giants	Chiltern Seeds	Cut Flowers
L39	Cut-Flower Mix	Kiepenkerl	Cut Flowers
L41	Antiquity Sunset Mix	Suttons	Dwarf
L42	Double Madame Butterfly Mixed F1	Thompson And Morgan	Cut Flowers
L43	Rembrandt Bicolour	Mr Fothergills	Tall Border
L44	Bizarre Hybrids	Sarah Raven	Cut Flowers
L45	Nanum Crown Mix	Flower Seeds UK	Mixed Height
L46	Madame Butterfly Bronze White F1	Chiltern Seeds	Cut Flowers

**Table S3. Mean and standard deviation of per-individual heterozygosity for each population/line.**

Group type	group	H <sub>i</sub> all loci	s.d. H <sub>i</sub> all loci	mean H <sub>i</sub> non-colour loci	s.d. H <sub>i</sub> non-colour loci	Variety
wild	BAR****	0.243	0.049	0.216	0.039	pseudomajus
wild	BES****	0.351	0.043	0.286	0.037	pseudomajus
wild	CAL****	0.359	0.102	0.309	0.087	pseudomajus
wild	CLA****	0.305	0.053	0.279	0.050	pseudomajus
wild	D ***_R*	0.326	0.037	0.289	0.031	pseudomajus
wild	GARL****	0.369	0.065	0.327	0.060	pseudomajus
wild	GCHI****	0.373	0.034	0.337	0.052	pseudomajus
wild	GPER****	0.383	0.056	0.330	0.038	pseudomajus
wild	GPUJ****	0.383	0.086	0.372	0.056	pseudomajus
wild	M406*	0.400	0.067	0.330	0.050	pseudomajus
wild	MP113*	0.404	0.063	0.335	0.046	pseudomajus
wild	MRT****	0.287	0.041	0.233	0.029	pseudomajus
wild	PLAMN	0.449	0.041	0.397	0.043	pseudomajus
wild	PLAMF	0.411	0.062	0.371	0.040	pseudomajus
wild	SUE****	0.334	0.048	0.292	0.038	pseudomajus
wild	VIE****	0.323	0.050	0.298	0.035	pseudomajus
wild	PLAHZ	0.445	0.066	0.441	0.051	hybrid
wild	D27**	0.300	0.070	0.249	0.053	striatum
wild	CADJ****	0.410	0.076	0.383	0.055	striatum
wild	ELS****	0.308	0.058	0.307	0.046	striatum
wild	GBOU****	0.426	0.033	0.388	0.032	striatum
wild	GCAM****	0.379	0.057	0.335	0.042	striatum
wild	GDOS****	0.345	0.076	0.318	0.052	striatum
wild	GFAB****	0.426	0.055	0.367	0.039	striatum
wild	LU****	0.280	0.045	0.262	0.052	striatum
wild	MLYS****	0.378	0.067	0.359	0.070	striatum
wild	PAL****	0.409	0.050	0.381	0.048	striatum
wild	POM****	0.354	0.070	0.329	0.067	striatum
wild	YP044*	0.358	0.083	0.326	0.062	striatum
wild	PLAYF	0.432	0.036	0.385	0.035	striatum
wild	PLAYN	0.453	0.054	0.405	0.056	striatum
wild	USS****	0.388	0.076	0.348	0.057	striatum
wild	VIL****	0.359	0.078	0.324	0.065	striatum
domesticated	L1	0.169	0.064	0.138	0.040	NA
domesticated	L2	0.003	0.006	0.002	0.004	NA
domesticated	L3	0.056	0.037	0.048	0.026	NA
domesticated	L4	0.152	0.051	0.133	0.047	NA
domesticated	L6	0.031	0.017	0.022	0.012	NA
domesticated	L7	0.045	0.019	0.034	0.014	NA
domesticated	L10	0.087	0.055	0.080	0.049	NA
domesticated	L11	0.088	0.024	0.105	0.021	NA
domesticated	L12	0.067	0.036	0.063	0.031	NA
domesticated	L13	0.008	0.010	0.014	0.015	NA
domesticated	L14	0.069	0.032	0.069	0.017	NA
domesticated	L16	0.126	0.066	0.130	0.067	NA
domesticated	L17	0.095	0.043	0.079	0.041	NA
domesticated	L19	0.071	0.032	0.060	0.024	NA
domesticated	L22	0.071	0.009	0.051	0.006	NA
domesticated	L25	0.093	0.029	0.079	0.026	NA
domesticated	L26	0.129	0.059	0.127	0.059	NA
domesticated	L28	0.170	0.040	0.147	0.031	NA
domesticated	L30	0.067	0.039	0.071	0.039	NA
domesticated	L32	0.061	0.031	0.061	0.031	NA
domesticated	L33	0.069	0.000	0.072	0.003	NA
domesticated	L35	0.077	0.072	0.063	0.061	NA
domesticated	L36	0.105	0.010	0.133	0.007	NA
domesticated	L37	0.177	0.040	0.161	0.035	NA
domesticated	L39	0.135	0.057	0.136	0.058	NA
domesticated	L41	0.004	0.009	0.003	0.007	NA
domesticated	L42	0.105	0.022	0.108	0.031	NA
domesticated	L43	0.057	0.048	0.041	0.034	NA
domesticated	L44	0.038	0.029	0.027	0.021	NA
domesticated	L45	0.050	0.027	0.043	0.021	NA
domesticated	L46	0.108	0.015	0.097	0.015	NA

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**Table S4. Mean expected heterozygosity ( $H_o$ ), observed heterozygosity ( $H_s$ ), and the inbreeding coefficient ( $F_{is}$ ) for each population/line over all loci and for non-colour loci.**

group	sample type	$H_o$ all loci	$H_s$ all loci	$F_{is}$ all loci	$H_o$ non-colour loci	$H_s$ non-colour loci	$F_{is}$ non-colour loci
BAR****	wild	0.220	0.235	0.065	0.245	0.255	0.041
BES****	wild	0.292	0.310	0.059	0.360	0.367	0.021
CADI****	wild	0.391	0.416	0.061	0.422	0.451	0.065
CAL****	wild	0.315	0.335	0.059	0.373	0.395	0.057
CLA****	wild	0.285	0.270	-0.058	0.313	0.303	-0.034
D27**	wild	0.256	0.253	-0.012	0.311	0.301	-0.033
D_***_R*	wild	0.294	0.278	-0.060	0.333	0.311	-0.073
ELS****	wild	0.314	0.335	0.064	0.315	0.347	0.093
GARL****	wild	0.334	0.338	0.013	0.377	0.382	0.014
GBOU****	wild	0.398	0.372	-0.068	0.439	0.412	-0.065
GCAM****	wild	0.341	0.349	0.022	0.381	0.398	0.042
GCHI****	wild	0.345	0.349	0.012	0.381	0.390	0.024
GDOS****	wild	0.325	0.339	0.042	0.354	0.367	0.033
GFAB****	wild	0.375	0.359	-0.045	0.437	0.403	-0.083
GPER****	wild	0.336	0.349	0.038	0.393	0.385	-0.020
GPUJ****	wild	0.381	0.383	0.007	0.391	0.408	0.043
LU****	wild	0.269	0.303	0.112	0.292	0.331	0.118
M406*	wild	0.336	0.349	0.038	0.407	0.426	0.044
MLYS****	wild	0.365	0.356	-0.025	0.386	0.382	-0.012
MP113*	wild	0.341	0.348	0.022	0.413	0.428	0.035
MRT****	wild	0.236	0.250	0.059	0.293	0.307	0.045
PAL****	wild	0.389	0.395	0.014	0.424	0.425	0.003
POM****	wild	0.336	0.354	0.050	0.366	0.382	0.043
YP044*	wild	0.332	0.364	0.088	0.367	0.392	0.064
PLAYF	wild	0.393	0.397	0.010	0.438	0.448	0.023
PLAYN	wild	0.410	0.422	0.030	0.462	0.459	-0.008
PLAHZ	wild	0.451	0.431	-0.047	0.459	0.457	-0.004
PLAMN	wild	0.405	0.400	-0.010	0.462	0.461	-0.002
PLAMF	wild	0.379	0.393	0.036	0.420	0.443	0.052
SUE****	wild	0.298	0.310	0.037	0.341	0.364	0.062
USS****	wild	0.354	0.355	0.005	0.399	0.400	0.001
VIE****	wild	0.304	0.315	0.036	0.331	0.353	0.061
VIL****	wild	0.330	0.324	-0.019	0.365	0.359	-0.015
L1	domesticated	0.139	0.157	0.113	0.168	0.176	0.043
L2	domesticated	0.002	0.004	0.561	0.003	0.006	0.561
L3	domesticated	0.048	0.078	0.375	0.057	0.083	0.310
L4	domesticated	0.132	0.155	0.149	0.149	0.158	0.055
L6	domesticated	0.022	0.038	0.417	0.031	0.054	0.417
L7	domesticated	0.034	0.040	0.170	0.046	0.056	0.179
L10	domesticated	0.081	0.117	0.310	0.085	0.117	0.271
L11	domesticated	0.114	0.066	-0.738	0.085	0.050	-0.690
L12	domesticated	0.065	0.092	0.299	0.066	0.089	0.256
L13	domesticated	0.014	0.027	0.480	0.008	0.023	0.667
L14	domesticated	0.069	0.112	0.383	0.067	0.119	0.438
L16	domesticated	0.131	0.162	0.194	0.125	0.167	0.253
L17	domesticated	0.080	0.113	0.291	0.096	0.134	0.278
L19	domesticated	0.061	0.081	0.251	0.073	0.102	0.282
L22	domesticated	0.052	0.028	-0.816	0.074	0.040	-0.816
L25	domesticated	0.080	0.097	0.174	0.090	0.112	0.196
L26	domesticated	0.127	0.156	0.184	0.129	0.164	0.209
L28	domesticated	0.148	0.155	0.047	0.173	0.180	0.041
L30	domesticated	0.077	0.093	0.172	0.069	0.094	0.265
L32	domesticated	0.061	0.099	0.383	0.063	0.111	0.438
L33	domesticated	0.076	0.040	-0.875	0.072	0.036	-1.000
L35	domesticated	0.064	0.105	0.393	0.073	0.117	0.375
L36	domesticated	0.135	0.071	-0.918	0.108	0.058	-0.859
L37	domesticated	0.163	0.185	0.120	0.179	0.190	0.059
L39	domesticated	0.137	0.168	0.183	0.134	0.175	0.233
L41	domesticated	0.003	0.072	0.959	0.004	0.042	0.899
L42	domesticated	0.110	0.107	-0.028	0.109	0.112	0.031
L43	domesticated	0.041	0.047	0.119	0.058	0.064	0.084
L44	domesticated	0.028	0.067	0.589	0.039	0.073	0.465
L45	domesticated	0.042	0.153	0.724	0.049	0.175	0.721
L46	domesticated	0.096	0.080	-0.198	0.108	0.078	-0.388

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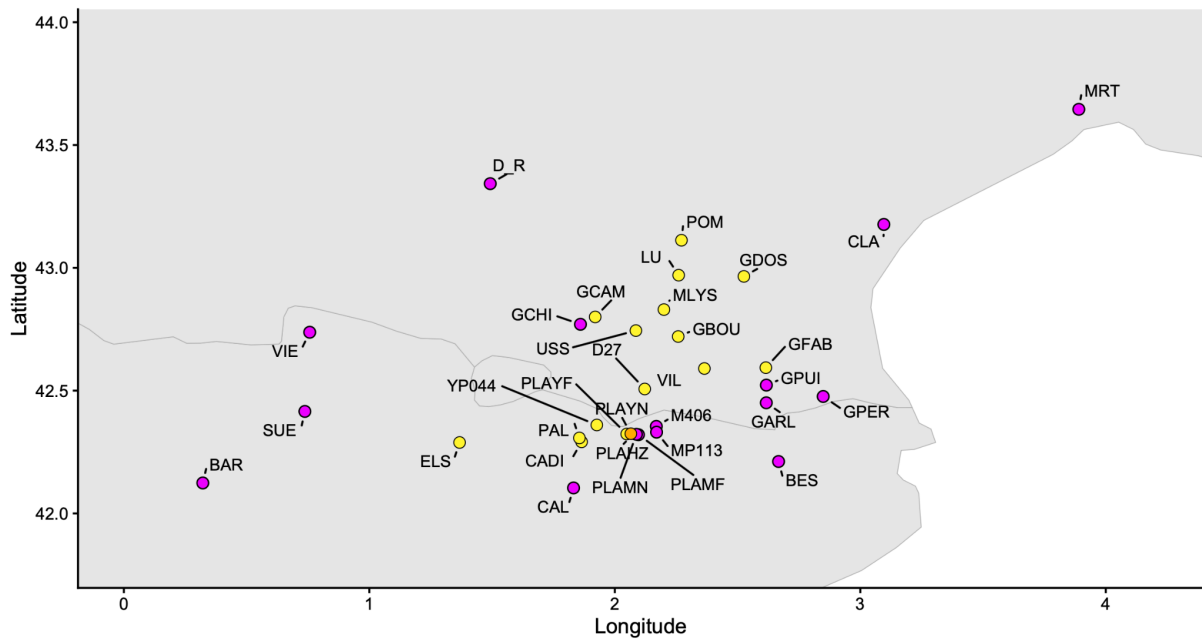
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**Table S5. Genotype-phenotype associations for SNPs linked to known colour loci in the natural populations.** The strength of the relationship between the colour scores and the genotypes at each SNP is indicated by the rho value estimated from the Spearman Rank correlation and the intensity of the coloured shading. Where the Rho value is 'NA' it could not be calculated because the locus was monomorphic.

Locus name	LG	Map pos (cM)	Colour locus	Rho wild	Rho domesticated	Pigment
ros_assembly_473914	6	49.06	ROS/EL	0.041	NA	Magenta
ros_assembly_543443	6	49.29	ROS/EL	0.907	NA	Magenta
ros_assembly_567004	6	49.37	ROS/EL	0.950	0.223	Magenta
ros_assembly_575837	6	49.40	ROS/EL	0.770	NA	Magenta
ros_assembly_576271	6	49.40	ROS/EL	0.275	0.079	Magenta
ros_assembly_620992	6	49.55	ROS/EL	0.732	0.045	Magenta
ros_assembly_653015	6	49.66	ROS/EL	0.868	0.115	Magenta
ros_assembly_670530	6	49.72	ROS/EL	0.752	0.102	Magenta
ros_assembly_715001	6	49.86	ROS/EL	0.936	0.339	Magenta
ros_assembly_737420	6	49.94	ROS/EL	0.268	NA	Magenta
ros_assembly_744403	6	49.96	ROS/EL	0.014	0.289	Magenta
ros_assembly_748981	6	49.98	ROS/EL	0.596	NA	Magenta
ros_assembly_758578	6	50.01	ROS/EL	0.522	0.369	Magenta
ros_assembly_849332	6	50.31	ROS/EL	0.091	0.191	Magenta
s1187_290152	1	2.17	CRE	0.678	NA	Yellow
s154_504353	2	41.99	FLA	0.100	NA	Yellow
s2338_45429	2	43.18	FLA	0.178	0.344	Yellow
s829_8371	2	43.18	FLA	0.764	0.219	Yellow
s829_204463	2	43.18	FLA	0.454	0.206	Yellow
s316_93292	2	43.18	FLA	0.768	0.200	Yellow
s316_257789	2	43.18	FLA	0.429	0.137	Yellow
s444_38909	2	43.18	FLA	0.399	0.157	Yellow
s992_223854	2	43.18	FLA	0.030	0.165	Yellow
s148_425797	2	44.31	FLA	0.212	0.216	Yellow
s1140_224946	2	44.91	FLA	0.136	NA	Yellow
s155_1201194	2	48.05	FLA	0.123	0.207	Yellow
s91_78256	4	9.36	SULF	0.577	0.068	Yellow
s91_122561	4	9.36	SULF	0.465	0.124	Yellow
s91_181717	4	9.36	SULF	0.533	0.003	Yellow

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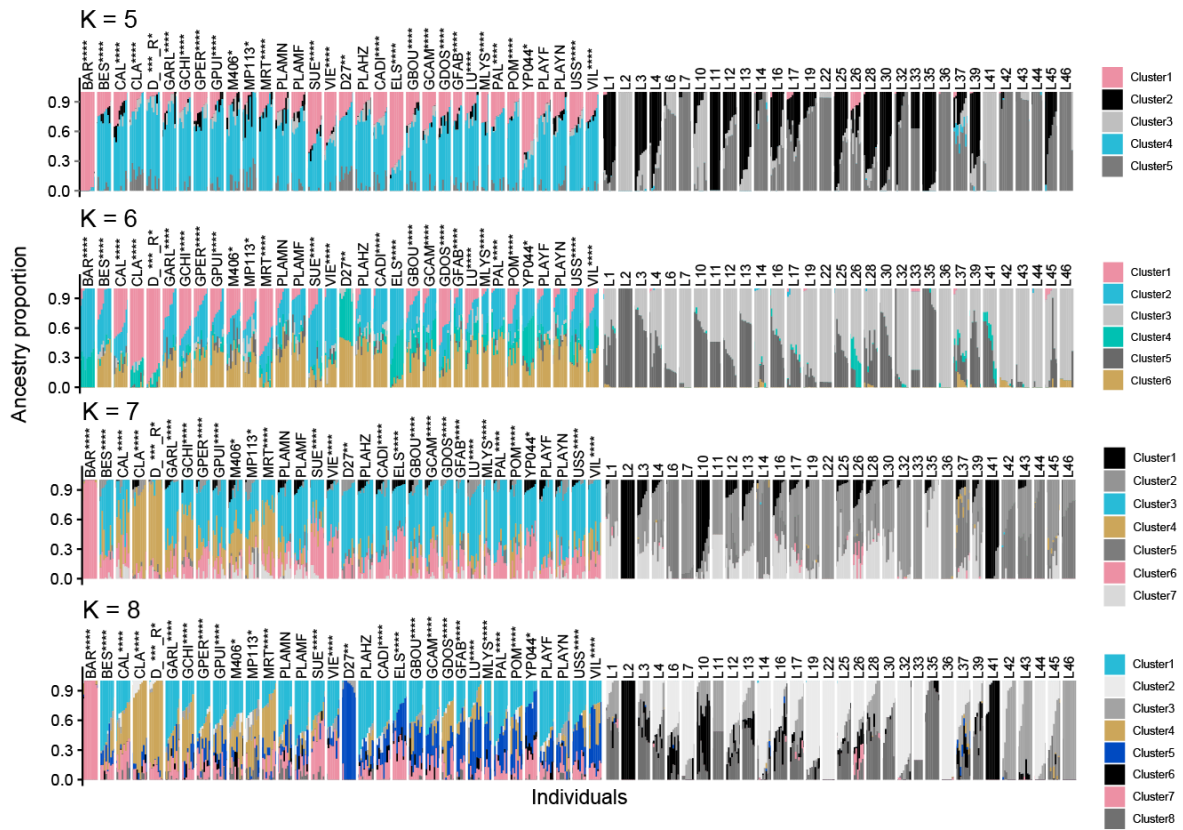
**Figure S1. Map of wild populations of *A. majus ssp. majus* sampled in this study.** The colour of the circles indicates whether the population was the magenta flowered var. *pseudomajus*, the yellow flowered var. *striatum*, or a hybrid population.



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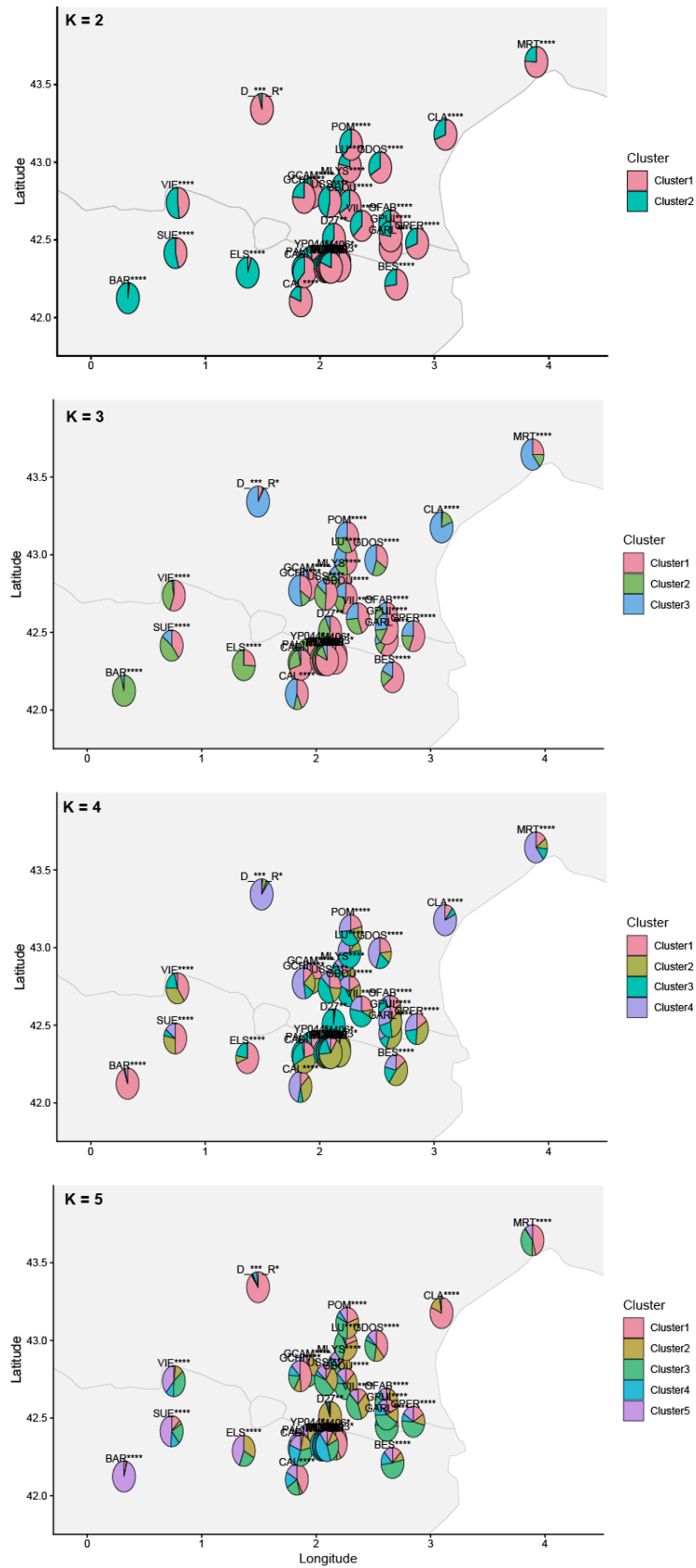
Fig. S2. Images of one flower from replicate plants for each of the domesticated lines.

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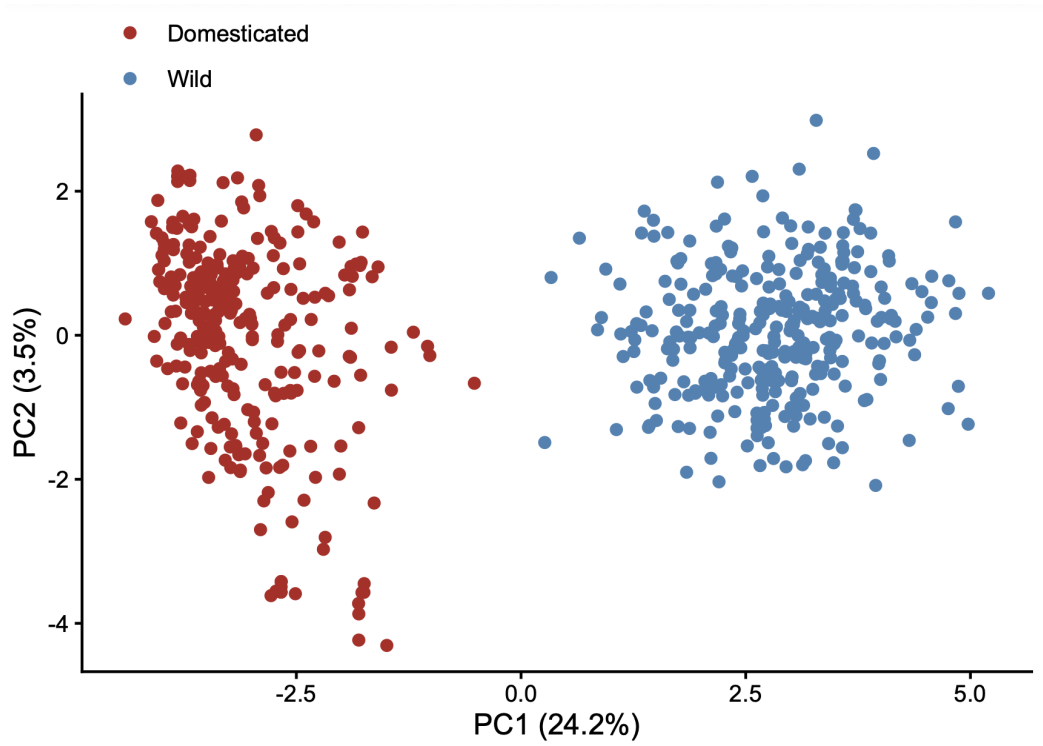
**Fig. S3. Results of Admixture analysis for different values of K.** Clusters primarily associated with the wild populations are shown as colours, while those primarily associated with domesticated samples are shown as shades of grey.



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**Fig S4. Maps of admixture scores for the wild populations.** The pie charts show the total proportion of genome assigned to each K across all individuals from within a population. For these analyses, *Admixture* was run only on the wild individuals.

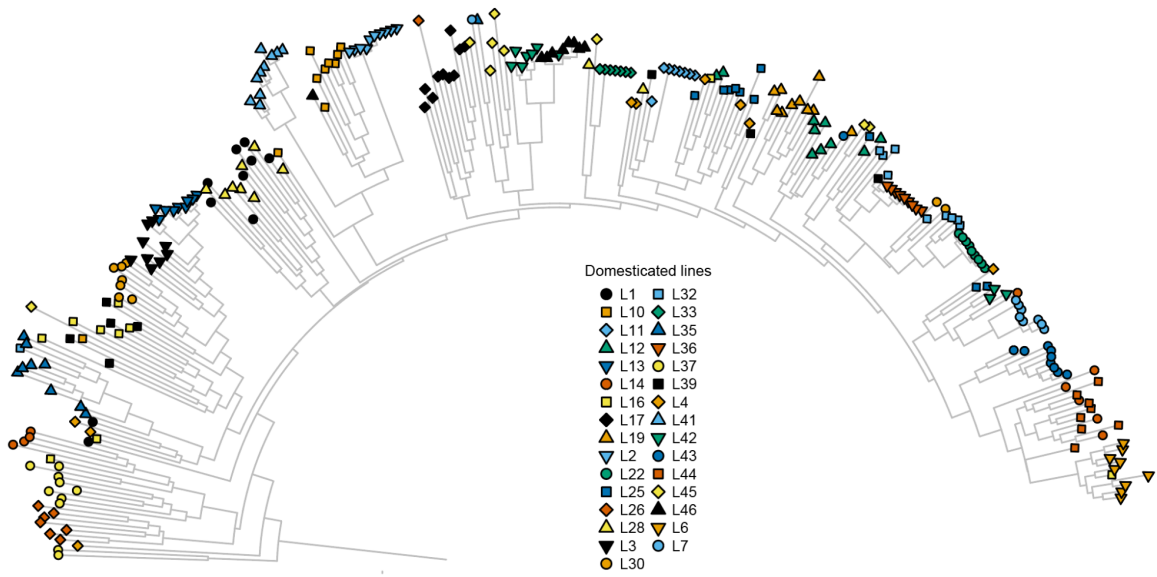
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**Figure S5. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) of the genotype matrix for the domesticated and wild samples.** The PCA is based on the 70 loci not associated with flower colour.

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**Figure S6. A radial view of the clade of domesticated samples.** The topology is identical to that shown in Fig. 1B.