



I. Table of contents

II. List of tables	IV
III. List of figures	VI
IV. List of abbreviations	VIII
V. Summary	XI
VI. Zusammenfassung.....	XV
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Nitrogen nutrition	1
1.2 Nitrate transporters.....	4
1.2.1 Nitrate uptake system.....	4
1.2.2 NRT1/PTR.....	5
1.2.3 NRT2 and NRT3.....	6
1.3 Regulatory functions of <i>NRT</i> family genes in plant tolerance of stress	8
1.4 Nitrogen perception and signaling.....	9
1.5 Poplar as a model tree	10
1.6 Effects of nitrogen fertilization on poplar	12
1.7 Aims and objectives	14
2. Materials and methods	15
2.1 Preparation of plantlets	15
2.1.1 Plantlets of <i>P. trichocarpa</i> for the transcript analysis of <i>PtNRT</i> genes	15
2.1.2 Plantlets of <i>P. tremula</i> for the transcript analysis of <i>PtreNRT</i> genes	15
2.1.3 Seedlings of <i>P. tremula</i> from five demes.....	16
2.2 Whole plant harvesting routine	17



I. Table of contents

2.3	Gas exchange measurements	19
2.4	Analysis of nitrogen and carbon content	19
2.5	¹⁵ N - application	19
2.6	Anatomical analysis of wood.....	20
2.7	Bioinformatics and phylogenetic analysis of the <i>NRT</i> family in poplar	20
2.8	Identification of <i>cis</i> -regulatory elements of <i>NRT</i> genes in poplar and <i>Arabidopsis</i>	21
2.9	Transcript analysis using Affymetrix genechips	21
2.10	Primer design for the quantitative RT-PCR	22
2.11	RNA isolation and cDNA synthesis	25
2.12	Quantitative real-time PCR	26
2.12.1	qRT-PCR using LightCycler® 48.....	26
2.12.2	qRT-PCR using BioMark 48×48 Dynamic Array	26
2.12.3	Calculation of qRT-PCR.....	26
2.13	Statistical analysis	27
3.	Results	28
3.1	Identification and analysis of <i>NRT</i> family genes in poplar	28
3.1.1	Identification of <i>NRT</i> family genes in <i>P. trichocarpa</i>	28
3.1.2	<i>Cis</i> - regulatory elements of nitrate transporters in poplar and <i>Arabidopsis</i>	36
3.1.3	Differential expression of <i>NRT</i> genes in poplar	41
3.1.4	Evaluation the expression of poplar <i>NRT</i> genes in response to N fertilization and drought in <i>P. trichocarpa</i>	43
3.1.5	Tissue specific expression patterns of <i>NRT</i> genes in <i>P. tremula</i>	51
3.2	Intraspecific variation of physiological responses and <i>NRT</i> genes to N fertilization and drought in <i>P. tremula</i>	54
3.2.1	N fertilization increases elongation growth and biomass production in <i>P. tremula</i>	54
3.2.2	Drought influences total leaf areas of <i>P. tremula</i>	58

II



3.2.3	Growth related physiological traits perform intraspecifically by N fertilization and drought..	64
3.2.4	Plant biomass is positively correlated with N content	67
3.2.5	Plants of three demes have similar ¹⁵ N uptake, but diverse ¹⁵ N allocation	69
3.2.6	Plant biomass is positively correlated with C : N ratio	71
3.2.7	The intraspecific variation of <i>PtreNRT</i> genes in response to N fertilization and drought.....	74
3.2.8	PCA reveals links between <i>PtreNRT</i> gene expression and physiological traits.....	79
3.2.9	The expression level of distinct <i>PtreNRT</i> genes is correlated to N uptake.....	84
3.2.10	The expression of <i>PtreNRT1.1</i> gene in fine roots is positively correlated with plant height increment	86
4.	Discussion.....	87
4.1	Characterization of the <i>PtNRT</i> families	87
4.2	The presence of <i>cis</i> -regulatory elements of <i>NRT</i> genes in poplar	89
4.3	Tissue specific expression of <i>NRT</i> genes in poplar	92
4.4	Transcription profiles of <i>PtNRT</i> genes in response to N fertilization and drought stress.....	97
4.5	Physiological variation of <i>P. tremula</i> to N fertilization and drought.....	101
4.6	Intraspecies variation of <i>NRT</i> genes in response to N fertilization and drought	102
5.	Conclusion	108
6.	Reference	109
VII.	Appendix.....	123
VIII.	Acknowledgements	124
IX.	Declaration.....	125
	Curriculum Vitae.....	126