

# Litter leachates have stronger impact than leaf litter on Folsomia candida fitness

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Desrochers

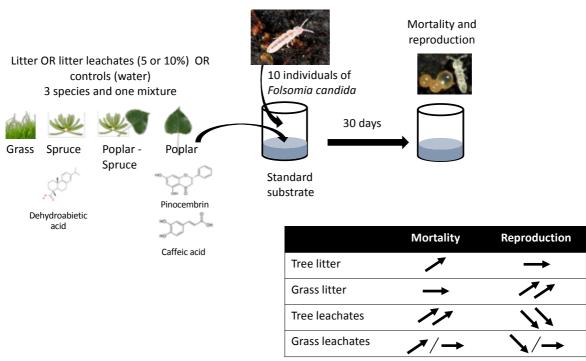
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Change of fitness of F. candida in comparison with controls

Tree litter leachates increased mortality of *Folsomia candida* in comparison with the litter treatment or the controls, probably due to the solubility of secondary metabolites contained in the leaves and released in a free form in leachates.

# Highlights

- Tree litter leachates have stronger influence than litter itself on *Folsomia candida* fitness
- Tree litter leachates have stronger effect on *F. candida* fitness than grass litter due to their content in secondary metabolites
- Soluble phenolic compounds released by litter leaching can drive *F. candida* fitness
- Litter compounds leaching appears to be an important process in abovegroundbelowground interactions

1	Litter leachates have stronger impact than leaf litter on Folsomia candida fitness
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#### 18 Abstract

19 It is well known that soil physico-chemical conditions and the nature of organic matter have 20 important effects on soil micro-arthropod communities, including collembolans. However, 21 mechanisms by which the physical or chemical quality of litter influence collembolan 22 communities remain unclear. Plant secondary metabolites are partially released in soils 23 through leaf and litter leaching and decomposition, and can have a strong influence on soil 24 communities and their activity. In order to disentangle effects of the water-soluble compounds 25 contained in the litter versus its physical effect, a microcosm experiment was set up exposing 26 the collembola species *Folsomia candida* to either litter or litter leachates mixed to the 27 substratum. Litter from three species with different chemical properties and one mixture 28 (hybrid poplar, white spruce, grass and a mixture of poplar - spruce litter) and two concentrations of litter leachates (at 5 % and 10 % concentration) were used in microcosm 29 30 experiments. After 30 days of incubation, reproduction and mortality rates of F. candida were 31 assessed. Results showed that the tree litter leachates had a stronger impact on collembolan 32 fitness compared to the litter itself, with a net reduction of survival and reproduction rates. 33 Between 78 and 100% of mortality was observed in microcosms that received tree leachates, 34 indicating a strong influence of the soluble compounds contained in tree leaves on 35 collembolan. In contrast, collembolan reproduction was positively affected by the grass litter 36 or 10% grass litter leachates compared to control (water). Our findings help to understand how chemical properties and leaf leaching may have important impacts on micro-arthropods 37 38 communities and litter decomposition processes.

## 39 **1. Introduction**

40 Physical and chemical characteristics of plant leaves exert an important control on litter41 decomposition processes, mainly through their impact on the activity of litter-feeding

42 invertebrates and microorganisms. For example, previous food choice experiments showed 43 that earthworms or isopods were sensitive to the quality of the litter (Hättenschwiler and 44 Bretscher, 2001; Joy and Joy, 1991; Rief et al., 2012). During the first stages of leaf litter 45 decomposition, an important amount of soluble compounds is lost through leaching, 46 representing up to 30% of total leaf litter carbon, and released into the soil (Berg and 47 McClaugherty, 2008). These water-soluble compounds are in a great proportion labile and 48 readily available, and are an important nutrient source for decomposers and microbial 49 communities (Joly et al., 2016; Marschner and Kalbitz, 2003). However, secondary 50 metabolites can also be leached out from green foliage and decomposing litter, and released 51 into the soil (Gallet and Pellissier, 1997; Rice, 1984). These compounds are defense 52 compounds to prevent herbivory or parasitism (i.e. terpenes and phenolic compounds), or to 53 resist against inter- and intraspecific competition in allelopathic mechanisms (Chomel et al., 54 2016; Fernandez et al., 2013, 2006). Once released in the environment through leaching or 55 litter decomposition they are in a free form that may resist degradation and can have strong 56 impacts on the growth and activity of decomposers, from macro-arthropods to micro-57 organisms (Chomel et al., 2016; Hättenschwiler and Vitousek, 2000; Kuiters, 1990). Some 58 studies showed that microbial activity is highly responsive to litter leachates input with a 59 change in the soil microbial community (Cleveland et al., 2007; Joly et al., 2016; Wieder et 60 al., 2008). However, little is known about their effect on soil fauna communities.

Collembolans are important members of the soil decomposer food web and have important direct or indirect roles on the decomposition process (Petersen and Luxton, 1982). Some species are microbivores and stimulate or regulate litter fungal colonization by grazing on the fungal hyphae, while others are detritivores and directly participate to organic matter transformation by fragmenting and ingesting the litter; in both cases they derive nutritional benefits from the decomposing litter source (Das and Joy, 2009). Collembolans are selective

with their food, and for example they can perceive chemical cues of fungi at a distance of 1 67 cm - 2.5 cm (Auclerc et al., 2010; Salmon and Ponge, 2001), prefer some fungal species over 68 69 others (Heděnec et al., 2013; Klironomos et al., 1992; Scheu and Simmerling, 2004), and can 70 suffer a reduction in fitness from the ingestion of specific fungal species (Klironomos et al., 71 1999; Scheu and Simmerling, 2004). Furthermore, collembolans raised on fungal-colonized 72 litter show grazing preferences and reproduction rates that are more affected by litter type than by fungal species (Heděnec et al., 2013), demonstrating the strong influence of litter 73 74 quality on collembolans activity (Das and Joy, 2009). However, few studies have addressed 75 the direct impact of the chemical composition of litter on the abundance and diversity of soil 76 mesofauna, the physical structure of the litter often being a confounding factor. Das and Joy 77 (2009) reported that a collembolan species (Cyphoderus javanus Börner) tended to avoid litter 78 with greater amounts of polyphenols and tannins. Furthermore, individuals that remained in 79 contact with litters containing greater quantities of these secondary metabolites exhibited 80 slower growth, lower fecundity and fewer moults (Das and Joy, 2009). Poinsot-Balaguer et al. 81 (1993) found that condensed and hydrolysable tannins extracted from oak leaves were highly 82 toxic for the collembolans (Poinsot-Balaguer et al., 1993). However, these studies related 83 collembolans fitness to the total content of secondary metabolites, but did not consider their 84 solubility in water and their bioavailability in natural environments. Some researchers assert 85 that allelopathic plant-plant interference is most likely due to water-soluble compounds (Vyvyan, 2002). Following the same idea, these water-soluble secondary metabolites leached 86 87 from the canopy or the litter could be of greater importance for the activity of soil organisms than the litter content itself. 88

Previous *in-situ* studies showed that mixing spruce and poplar in plantations could offer valuable ecosystem services, such as tree productivity and soil carbon storage compared to monospecific plantations (Chomel et al., 2014). Mixture of different litter species can enhance

92 their respective decomposition rate due to the transfer of nutrient between litter species, the 93 complementarity of diverse resources for the decomposers, or the dilution of secondary 94 metabolites (Gartner and Cardon, 2004; Gessner et al., 2010; Hättenschwiler et al., 2005). 95 Similar positive results were observed for mixtures of leachates, leading to a stimulation of 96 microbial activity (Zheng et al., 2014). In our *in-situ* studies, although we did not find higher 97 decomposition in a mixture of poplar and spruce litter, some differences with tree species 98 were observed in the mixed plantations and the collembolan abundance was (i) lower under 99 poplar trees than spruce trees (Chomel et al., 2015a), (ii) greater in grass litter compared to 100 poplar or spruce litter (Chomel et al., 2015b), and (iii) increased when grass litter was added 101 to poplar or spruce litterbags. To understand if these patterns were due to the leaf chemistry of 102 the different species, since poplar, spruce and grass litters have different qualities, controlled 103 experiments are necessary. In this study we used the model collembolan species *Folsomia* 104 *candida* Willem (Collembola: Isotomidae), which is among the most intensively studied of all 105 species of Collembola (Hopkin, 1997). This parthenogenetic species is widely distributed in 106 many environments, including forests (Fountain and Hopkin, 2005) and is commonly found in 107 the litter layer of coniferous and deciduous forests (Christiansen and Bellinger, 1980), even 108 under the boreal climate of Canada (Skidmore, 1995). Moreover, this species is frequently 109 used in microcosms experiments as it is easy to maintain in laboratory and have a short 110 reproductive cycle (Fountain and Hopkin, 2005).

The aim of this study was to disentangle the effects of litter water-soluble compounds (released by senescent leaves leaching) from the litter itself on the abundance and activity of the Collembola *F. candida*. For this purpose, we compared the effect of three litter species and one mixture (hybrid poplar, white spruce, grass and a mixture of poplar - spruce litter) and their respective leachates on *F. candida* fitness by using the modified ecotoxicological test 'Effects of pollutants on reproduction of *Folsomia candida*' proposed by the International 117 Standards Organization (ISO 11267, 1999). During the experiment, F. candida were fed with 118 yeast to tease apart nutrient effects associated to the treatments and focus on secondary 119 metabolites effects. We tested the following hypotheses: (i) following results from our *in-situ* 120 studies (*i.e* low abundance of collembola under poplar trees and high abundance in grass 121 litter), we expected to find a high concentration of phenolic compounds with allelopathic 122 activities in poplar litter and a low concentration in grass litter; (ii) A gradient of the effect of 123 litter and leachates on the fitness of F. candida should be observed in the following order 124 from positive to negative: grass > spruce > poplar; (iii) litter leachates have a more 125 pronounced impact on F. candida compared to litter since nutrients and secondary metabolites 126 would be directly bioavailable for collembolans; (iv) litter and leachate diversity from the 127 mixture is expected to stimulate F. candida fitness in comparison with monospecific litter and 128 leachates due to complementarity effects induced by mixed species.

#### 129 **2. Material and methods**

## 130 2.1 Litter sampling and leachates preparation

131 In late September 2010, three types of senescent leaves (poplar, spruce and grass) were 132 collected from experimental monospecific plantations of hybrid poplar (Populus 133 maximowiczii A. Henry x P. balsamifera L.) and white spruce (Picea glauca [Moench] Voss) located in Amos (48°36'N, 78°04'W) in the boreal region of Abitibi-Temiscamingue, 134 135 Quebec, Canada. Freshly fallen spruce needles and hybrid poplar leaves were collected by 136 placing a plastic sheet beneath the trees to prevent soil contamination. Aerial parts of grass 137 species (mainly grasses, *i.e. Poa* sp.) naturally present in the plantation were cut at ground 138 level during the same period. Collected leaf material was homogenized, air-dried and stored at 139 room temperature prior to the experiment. Leachates of each litter type (poplar, spruce, grass and poplar/spruce [50:50]) were prepared by soaking 100 g of litter (air-dried mass) in 1 L of 140

deionized water (10% dry mass) for 24 h in darkness. This concentration is the most
commonly used for *in vitro* allelopathy bioassays (Chen et al., 2013; Fernandez et al., 2013).
Although they can be more concentrated than in natural conditions, it allows studying the
potential allelopathic effect of a species (Kil, 1992). However, to be more representative to
actual field concentrations, a 50% diluted solution was also prepared, producing 5% dry mass
leachate.

## 147 2.2 Folsomia candida cultures

148 A population of a single clone of F. candida was reared in plastic boxes containing a mixture 149 of permanently water saturated plaster of Paris and activated charcoal in a ratio 9:1 and 150 maintained at 20°C with food (dry yeast pellets) available *ad libitum*. To synchronize age of 151 the organisms, oviposition was stimulated by imposing a cold period and then placing the 152 adults on a new breeding substrate (Fountain and Hopkin, 2005). After oviposition, adults 153 were removed and eggs hatched 3-4 days later. Individuals became sexually mature 16 days 154 after hatching, and to ensure a homogeneous cohort of juveniles, all the young individuals 155 were placed in a large container and fed for the first time at the same time.

# 156 2.3 Experimental design

157 To study the effects of litter or leachates on the fitness of F. candida, we set up a total of 65 158 microcosms. The microcosms were set-up according to 2 interacting factors: the litter form 159 (litter, 5% leachate and 10% leachate) and the litter species (poplar, spruce, grass and poplar -160 spruce mixture) and controls consisted of deionized water without litter. Each combination of 161 factors was replicated five times. The F. candida reproduction test was carried out according 162 to an adaptation of the ISO standard 11267 (ISO 11267, 1999). The microcosms consisted of 163 120 mL plastic bottles with pierced screw caps containing 32 g of wet artificial soil, made up 164 with 70% quartz sand, 20% kaolinite and 10% peat, ground, dried, and sieved to 0.5 mm with

165 the pH adjusted to  $6.0 \pm 0.5$  by the addition of CaCO<sub>3</sub>. It was moistened to 50% of water holding capacity with distilled water (7 mL). Chemicals to be tested in the ISO norm are 166 167 generally pollutants dissolved in water at range of concentrations that will give appropriate 168 reduction of reproduction levels (LOEC, CE 50). For this experiment, 7 mL of 5 or 10 % 169 leachates were directly mixed with the soil. For the litter species treatments, 7 mL of distilled 170 water were added to the substrate, and 1 g of coarsely chopped litter was re-humidified and 171 placed on the substrate (corresponding to the amount of litterfall per surface area in natural 172 plantations, Chomel et al. 2014). For each microcosm, ten 10/12-days-old juveniles were 173 introduced and the microcosms were randomly placed in a climate chamber at a constant 174 temperature of 20°C and continuous darkness for 30 days. They were opened twice a week for 175 aeration and fed with baker's yeast at the initial time and after 2 weeks. Following the ISO 176 guidelines, the pots were flooded with water and gently stirred to collect and count the 177 animals floating at the surface. The number of surviving adults and the juveniles were 178 recorded using a dissecting microscope.

# 179

#### 2.4 Chemical composition of litter and leachates

180 Litter initial content of major nutrients (C, N, P) and phenolics were estimated from 5 181 subsamples of each litter. The litter samples were finely ground with a ball mill (MM301, 182 Retsch Inc., Newtown, PA) prior to analysis. Carbon (C) and Nitrogen (N) concentrations 183 were analysed in a CHN elemental analyzer (Flash EA 1112 series, ThermoScientific, 184 U.S.A.). Phosphorus (P) was extracted with 20 mL of nitric acid from remaining dry ash after 185 combustion of 0.5 g of subsamples at 500 °C for 5 h in a muffle furnace. The pH was adjusted 186 to 8.5 with a 40 % NaOH solution. A volume of 1 mL of sample, 0.2 mL of mixed reagent 187 (emetic tartar and ammonium molybdate solution), 0.04 mL of ascorbic acid and 0.76 mL of 188 distilled water were placed directly in a microcuvette. After 150 min, the reaction was completed, and phosphorus concentration was measured at 780 nm with a UV/Vis 189

190 spectrophotometer (Thermo Scientific®, USA). Total phenolics content was measured by the 191 method of Folin-Ciocalteu (Folin and Denis, 1915): 1 g of ground litter was shaken with 20 192 mL of distilled water for 90 min. A volume of 0.25 mL of the filtered aqueous extract (or of 193 the leachate directly) was mixed with 0.25 mL of Folin-Ciocalteu reagent and 0.5 mL of 194 saturated aqueous Na<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub> to stabilize the colour reaction, after which 4 mL of distilled water 195 was added to dilute the extract. After 1 hour, the reaction was completed and measured at 765 196 nm on a UV/Vis spectrophotometer (Thermoscientific, U.S.A.). Quantitative results were 197 expressed with reference to gallic acid.

## 198 2.5. Litter metabolic fingerprints (untargeted metabolomics)

199 The metabolomic profile of the litter was analyzed following the method from Hashoum et al. 200 (2017). A dry mass of 200 mg of sample was suspended in 4 mL of methanol:water (50:50), 201 and subjected to ultrasonication for 5 min at room temperature. Extracts were then filtered 202 using a syringe filter (PTFE 13 mm, 0.22  $\mu$ m, Restek, USA). Analyses were performed with 203 an UHPLC instrument (Dionex Ultimate 3000 equipped with a RS Pump, an autosampler, a 204 thermostated column compartment and a UV diode array, Thermo Scientific®, USA) coupled 205 to an accurate mass spectrometer (qToF) equipped with an ESI source (qToF Impact II, 206 Bruker Daltonics®, Germany). UHPLC separation was done on an Acclaim C18 column (150 207 mm x 2.1 mm, 2.2  $\mu$ m, Thermo Scientific, USA). Because the negative mode gave a better 208 sensitivity, mass spectra were recorded in this ionization mode in full scan mode from 50 to 209 1200 amu at 2 Hz. After the dataset normalization (Hashoum et al., 2017), around 6000 210 features were kept before the filtering steps were applied to ensure data quality and remove 211 redundant signals using an in-house script on R (Hashoum et al., 2017). At the end, 3030 ions 212 were kept for data analyses.

213 2.6 Statistical analysis

214 For all the chemical data, ANOVA were performed to test differences between two 215 interacting factors: Litter species (poplar, spruce, grass and mixture poplar-spruce) and litter 216 form (control, litter, 5% leachate and 10% leachate). Data were In-transformed before 217 performing statistical tests if the conditions of normality and homoscedasticity of the residuals 218 were not met. After the analyses, multiple comparisons (Tukey contrasts) were done. To have 219 an estimation of the metabolomic diversity of each litter species, the Shannon diversity index 220 was calculated from all the metabolomic data including 3030 ions (Quinn et al., 2016; Ristok 221 et al., 2019). To detect compounds that were specific to each litter species we selected the 222 fifty most discriminating ions (Variable Importance in Projection, VIP) that differentiated the 223 three litter species using a PLS-DA analysis (Fig S1) with MetaboAnalystR (Chong and Xia, 224 2018). The features were annotated with constructor software (Bruker Compass DataAnalysis 5.0, Table S1). The most probable raw formulae and fragmentation patterns ( $MS^2$  spectrum in 225 226 negative mode) were compared with online databases (Metlin, Massbank of North America, 227 Pubchem using Metfrag, Table S1). Further, we constructed a heatmap with those VIPs to 228 visualise the relative intensities of each of these ions according to each litter type with R. A 229 binomial generalized linear model (GLM) was used to test the difference of collembolans 230 mortality rate in function of the different litter species (poplar, spruce, poplar/spruce mixture 231 and grass litters) and litter forms (control, litter, 5% leachate and 10% leachate). Binomial 232 GLMs are designed to fit proportions or percentages. A negative binomial GLM (i.e., a 233 specific version of a Poisson model that uses an additional parameter to correct for data over-234 dispersion) with a log link function was used to test the difference in reproduction with the 235 different litter species (poplar, spruce, poplar/spruce mixture and grass litters) and litter forms 236 (control, litter, 5% leachate and 10% leachate). Negative binomial GLMs are designed to fit 237 count data (data that usually lacks normality), as it is generally the case when sampling 238 invertebrate taxa. All statistical analyses were done with R v.3.1.0 (R Core Team, 2017),

using the package 'stats' for the ANOVA and binomial GLM and the package 'MASS' for thenegative binomial GLM.

**3. Results** 

### 242 3.1 Chemical composition of litters and leachates

243 Spruce litter presented greater C concentrations, while grass litter had greater N 244 concentrations compared to the two other litter types (P < 0.01 and P < 0.001 respectively, 245 Table 1). Consequently, grass litter had the lowest and spruce litter the greatest C/N ratios, 246 while poplar had intermediate values (P < 0.001). Phosphorus concentrations in the litters 247 were similar among the different litter species (Table 1). Concerning the total phenolics, grass 248 litter had more than four-fold lower phenolic concentrations compared to the three other litter 249 species (P < 0.001, Fig. 1). For the soluble compounds, however, we observed that grass and 250 spruce leachates contained lower amounts of phenolic compounds compared to poplar and 251 mixed litters leachates (P < 0.005, Fig. 1). The proportion of phenolics in the leachates 252 relative to the litters differed depending on the litter species; these proportions corresponded 253 to 36%, 7%, 31%, and 38% of the total litter concentrations respectively for grass, spruce, 254 poplar-spruce mixture and poplar leachates (Fig. 1). Metabolomic diversity, calculated by the 255 Shannon index of the whole dataset, was lower in spruce and higher in poplar litters, with an 256 intermediate diversity in grass litter (ANOVA, F = 52.9, P < 0.001, Table 1). Qualitative 257 analysis of the 50 most discriminant features of the three litter species is reported in Fig. 2 and 258 shows that the majority of the features were specific to the poplar litter, and were present in 259 greater abundance than in the two other litter species. Among them, we identified caffeic acid 260 derivatives, pinocembrin and several pinocembrin derivatives, salicinin, quercetin and 261 arthromerin A (Table S1). Six features, among which we identified dehydroabietic acid, were 262 specific to the spruce litter, while rare or absent in the poplar litter. Three compounds were found either in the poplar and the grass litter, among them we identified chlorogenic acid andferulic acid (Table S1).

265 3.2 Effects of litter and leachates on F. candida mortality

266 Mortality of *F. candida* differed across combinations of litter species ( $X^2 = 63.1$ , P < 0.001) and forms ( $X^2 = 259.7$ , P < 0.001) with a significant interaction term of the two factors ( $X^2 =$ 267 268 57.5, P < 0.001). While the mortality of F. candida with the grass litter or the 10% grass 269 leachate were similar to the mortality observed in the controls (P > 0.05, Fig. 3), a four-fold 270 increase in mortality was observed with the grass 5% leachate compared to the control (P <271 0.001, Fig. 3). For the spruce litter, we observed an increase in mortality with all the litter 272 forms compared to the control (Fig. 3). With the litter itself, mortality reached 62%, while it 273 reached 84% and 78% with the 5% and 10% leachates, respectively. Although the mortality 274 with the spruce litter leachates tended to be greater than with the litter, differences were only 275 marginally significant (P = 0.053 and P = 0.058 respectively). While the mortality of F. 276 candida with the mixed litter was similar to the mortality observed in the controls (P > 0.05, 277 Fig. 3), a three-fold increase in mortality was observed with the 5% leachate and the 10% 278 leachate compared to the litter, reaching mortality rates of 93% and 98%, respectively (P <279 0.001, Fig. 3). Lastly, for the poplar litter, we observed an increase in mortality with all the 280 litter forms compared to the controls (Fig. 3). Mortality reached 68% with the litter, while it 281 was 94 % and 100 % with the 5 % and 10 % leachates, respectively (P < 0.001, Fig. 3).

282 3.3 Effects of litter and leachates on F. candida reproduction

Reproduction of *F. candida* differed across combinations of litter species (negative Binomial GLM,  $X^2 = 39.4$ , *P* <0.001) and forms (Binomial GLM,  $X^2 = 70.5$ , *P* < 0.001) with a significant interaction term (Binomial GLM,  $X^2 = 75.7$ , *P* < 0.001). Leachates of spruce, mixed or poplar significantly reduced reproduction in comparison with the litter or the control

treatments (P < 0.05, Fig. 4). The grass litter and 10% leachate increased the reproduction of *F. candida* by 385 % and 70 %, compared to the control, respectively. However, the grass 5% leachate decreased the reproduction by 83% compared to the control (Fig. 4).

290 **4. Discussion** 

291 The aim of this study was to observe the fitness of F. candida in the presence of litter or 292 leachates of different litter species with diverse chemical characteristics. We observed that 293 leachates generally increased F. candida mortality compared to the litters. Additionally, we 294 observed greater mortality rates of collembolans with tree leachates, which contained a 295 greater quantity of phenolic compounds, compared to grass leachates. Our results also showed 296 reproduction rates four times greater with grass litter than for tree litters or controls, in line 297 with our previous *in-situ* litter decomposition study for which a greater abundance of 298 organisms was observed when grass litter was added to spruce or poplar litter (Chomel et al., 299 2015a).

300 4.1 Effects of litter species and its quality

301 While we expected an increase of collembolans fitness with the presence of grass litter, we 302 observed a considerable increase of their reproduction compared to the control and the other 303 litter species, partially confirming our first hypothesis. Nutritional quality of decomposing 304 litter depends on the chemical constituents of leaf tissues (Das and Joy, 2009; Heděnec et al., 305 2013). Grass litter had relatively low C/N ratios and phenolic compounds contents, indicating 306 greater concentrations of carbohydrates and proteins. This labile organic matter rich in N 307 provides a readily available energy source to decomposers (Aber et al., 1990; Aerts, 1997), 308 and induced better conditions for feeding and reproduction of collembolans (Das and Joy, 309 2009). While mortality rate with the grass litter was similar than the control, reproduction rate 310 was much higher. This result confirms the benefit of "high" litter quality to enhance F. 311 candida fecundity (Booth and Anderson, 1979; Scheu and Simmerling, 2004) and shorten the 312 period until oviposition starts (Scheu and Simmerling, 2004). Besides C/N ratios, litter 313 phenolic concentrations could also explain F. candida fitness. In comparison with the grass 314 litter, both poplar and spruce litters had more than four-fold greater concentrations of 315 phenolics. Within 'low' quality litters, poplar litter had lower C/N ratios but similar total 316 phenolic concentrations than spruce litter, and both litter types negatively affected the survival 317 and reproduction of F. candida. We observed an increase in mortality of 240 % and 210 % 318 and a decrease in reproduction of 29 % and 18 %, respectively for poplar and spruce litters, 319 compared to the control. We identified several specificities among the tree litter species: 320 spruce litter contained dehydroabietic acid, while pinocembrin and caffeic acid metabolites 321 were found in poplar litter. Pinocembrin is a flavonoid that has been recognized to have 322 antimicrobial activities (Rasul et al., 2013), and caffeic acid is also known to have strong 323 allelopathic and antimicrobial activities (Batish et al., 2008). The terpenoid dehydroabietic 324 acid is a defense metabolite abundant in resin, thus common in conifers (Phillips and Croteau, 325 1999). These three secondary metabolites potentially reduce the colonization of the litter by 326 microorganisms by their antimicrobial activities and can have repulsive effects on detritivores 327 (Chomel et al., 2016; Das and Joy, 2009). The presence of these secondary metabolites and 328 the high concentration of total phenolic compounds in tree litters compared to grass litter 329 could explain their strong and negative impact on F. candida survival and reproduction. 330 However, when these two species of litter were mixed, mortality rate was similar to the 331 control, confirming our fourth hypothesis. Mixed diets may significantly increase collembolan 332 fitness by providing a balanced nutrient intake from the different litters present in the mixture 333 or by a dilution of toxic compounds contained in one of the species (Hättenschwiler et al., 334 2005; Scheu and Simmerling, 2004). Conversely, although mixing the two litter types

increased survival compared to single species litter, it had no effect on the reproduction of *F*.*candida*.

## 337 4.2 Effects of leachates vs litter

338 In agreement with our third hypothesis, leachates had a greater impact on F. candida fitness 339 compared to the litters. Some of the leached compounds can act as easily-available nutrient 340 sources for decomposers. However secondary metabolites can be toxic and can also have a 341 greater impact on organisms once released in the environment by leaching or decomposition 342 (Chomel et al., 2016). It appears that phenolic compounds from the poplar litter were more 343 water-soluble compared to those from spruce litter, as their leachates contained 38 % of the 344 total phenolic compounds of the litter, while spruce leachates only contained 7 % of the total 345 phenolic compounds of the spruce litter. This can be explained by the fact that needles have a 346 thicker epidermis and hypodermis that reduce the leaching capacity of the inner leaf tissues 347 (Don and Kalbitz, 2005; Joly et al., 2016). Microcosms that received 10% leachates of poplar, 348 mixed poplar/spruce or spruce showed 100%, 94 % and 78% of mortality, respectively, 349 whereas grass leachates only induced 32% of mortality and was not different from the control, 350 indicating a strong influence of the compounds contained in the tree leaves on F. candida. 351 The greater diversity of poplar compounds and their higher solubility could explain why 352 poplar litter leachates induced stronger effects compared to spruce or grass litter leachates. 353 This result is in line with our findings in a previous field experiment where we observed a 354 lower abundance of soil fauna in poplar plantations compared to spruce or mixed plantations 355 (Chomel et al., 2015a). There is some evidence that soil microbial activity is highly dependent 356 on leachates. Indeed, soil respiration has been shown to be quickly responsive to litter 357 leachates input with a change in the soil microbial community (Cleveland et al., 2007; Joly et 358 al., 2016; Wieder et al., 2008) and soil respiration is significantly explained by the proportion 359 of water-soluble compounds contained in the leaf litter layer covering the soil (Fanin et al.,

360 2011). The differences in F. candida fitness observed with the different litter species could 361 also be an effect of the different microbial communities that are present in the leachates. 362 Several studies have shown that leachates can have strong allelopathic activity from one plant 363 species to another (Fernandez et al., 2013, 2006; Rice, 1984) and can have strong effects on 364 plant community diversity and composition (Ma et al., 2020); however, studies on the effect 365 of leachates on soil fauna communities are rare. Leaching of leaves and litter is an important process in ecosystems since a large quantity of compounds can quickly be released by a 366 367 rainfall event, or gradually released during the litter decomposition process. Nonetheless, 368 litter leachates are rarely considered in studies on aboveground and belowground interactions, 369 whereas this study showed that they may contain bioavailable compounds that can be 370 significant drivers of collembolan fitness.

### 371 **5. Conclusion**

372 Litter species significantly affected F. candida mortality and reproduction. Grass litter 373 increased survival and reproduction of collembolans, while tree litters reduced survival. This 374 study also showed that leachates had greater impacts on collembolans fitness compared to 375 litter, with stronger negative effects of tree leachates compared to grass leachates. These 376 results indicate a strong influence of the compounds contained in the trees leaves. Phenolic 377 compounds in poplar leaves were more leachable than in spruce leaves and presented a 378 greater diversity, with the presence of several allelopathic compounds as caffeic acid and 379 pinocembrin, which could explain the stronger negative effect of poplar leachates. This study 380 showed that the release of compounds through leaching of leaves or litter could be an 381 important factor for the activity of soil organisms and for aboveground-belowground 382 interactions in natural ecosystems. Other studies should be conducted with more species of 383 collembola to see if similar patterns are observed.

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# **Declaration of interests**

- 393 The authors declare to have no competing interests that could have appeared to influence the
- 394 work reported in this paper

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#### 554 **Figure captions**

Figure 1. Total phenolic concentration of litters (white bars) and 10% leachate (black bars)
expressed in gallic acid equivalent. Mean ± SE.

Figure 2. Heatmap of the fifty most discriminant ions (Variable Importance in Projection, VIP) from the LC-MS metabolomic fingerprints of the three litter species. These 50 ions are the discriminatory compounds between the three species. The colour in the heatmap indicates log transformed ratio of a given ion *vs* the average intensity of the ions in all samples. Negative and positive values are coded with blue and red colours, respectively, and they indicate under- or over-expression of the specific feature in one species compared to the others.

Figure 3. Mortality of *Folsomia candida* (mean  $\pm$  SE) growing in mesocosms with the

different litter species (grass, spruce, mixture poplar/spruce, poplar) and forms (control, litter,
5% leachates and 10% leachates). Different letters denote significant differences according to
Tukey contrasts.

Figure 4. Reproduction of *Folsomia candida* (mean ± SE) growing in mesocosms with the
different litter species (grass, spruce, mixture poplar/spruce, poplar) and forms (control, litter,
5% leachates and 10% leachates). Different letters denote significant differences according to
Tukey contrasts.

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# 575 Tables

576 Table 1. Initial concentrations of C and N, C/N ratio, P and metabolomic diversity of the

	Litter species			F value
	Poplar	Spruce	Grass	
C (% DM)	38.1 ± 1.2 (a)	$42.3 \pm 1.5$ (b)	36.9 ± 1.1 (a)	5.1 **
N (% DM)	$0.5 \pm 0.02$ (a)	$0.5 \pm 0.02$ (a)	$0.65 \pm 0.03$ (b)	14.9 ***
C/N	$76.7 \pm 4$ (b)	86.7 ± 3.5 (c)	$58.9 \pm 2.2$ (a)	20.6 ***
$P (mg g^{-1} DM)$	$0.49\pm0.01$	$0.53 \pm 0$	$0.48\pm0.01$	2.3 ns
Metabolomic diversity	$3.03 \pm 0.10$ (c)	$1.06 \pm 0.12$ (a)	$1.88 \pm 0.18$ (b)	52.9 ***

578 Results of ANOVAs are reported on the right side, with significant differences indicated with \*0.05, \*\*0.01,

579 \*\*\*0.001. Different letters within a row denote significant differences according to Tukey tests (a<b<c with 0.05

580 significance threshold)

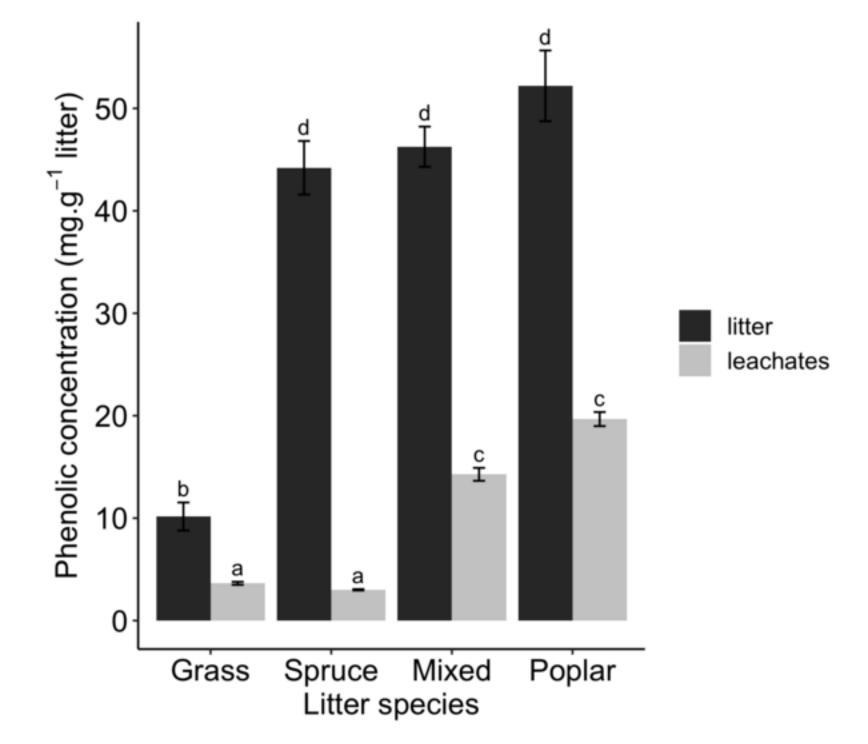
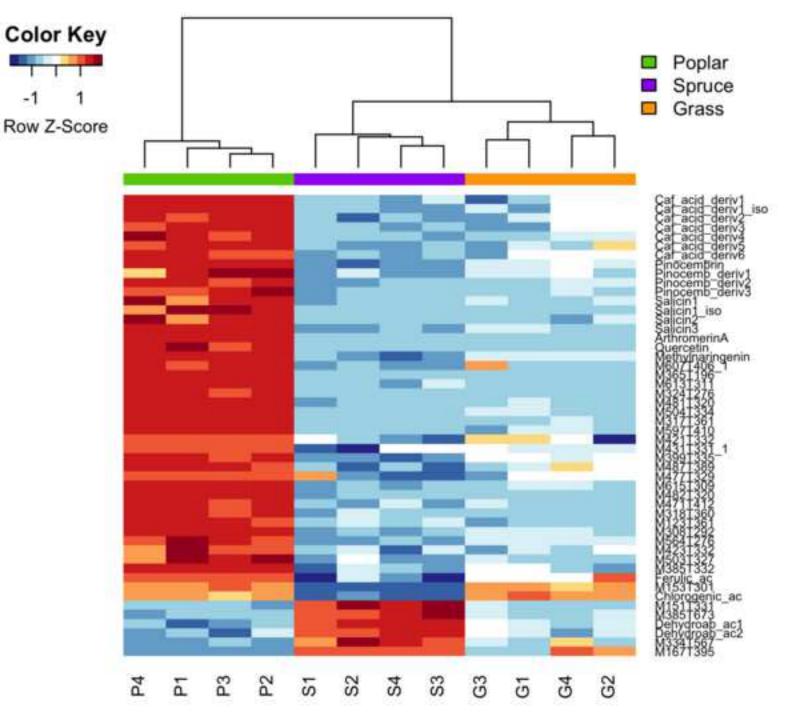
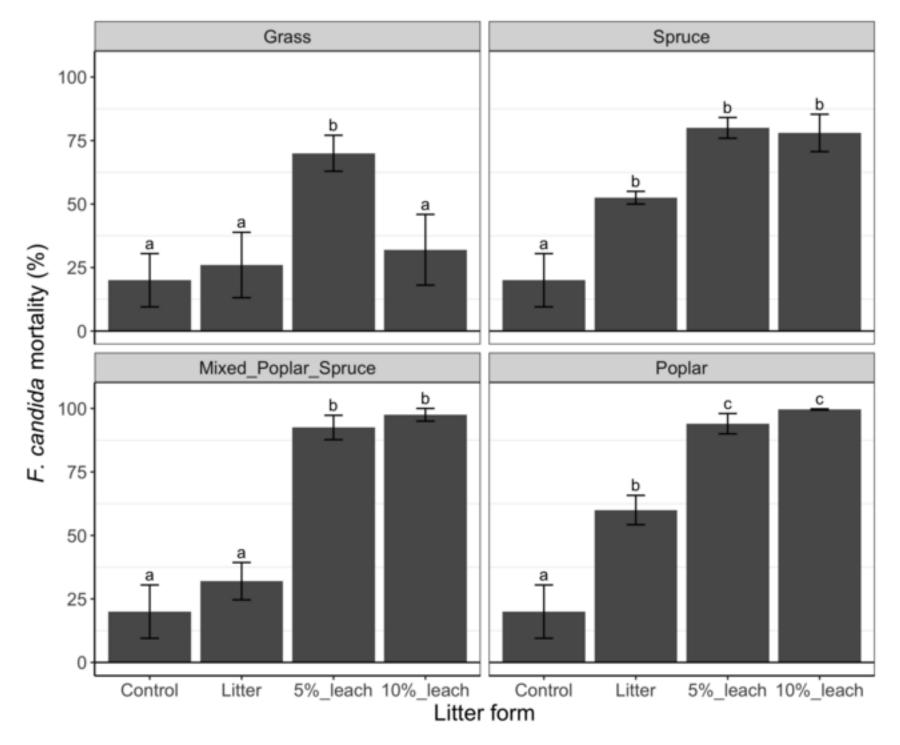
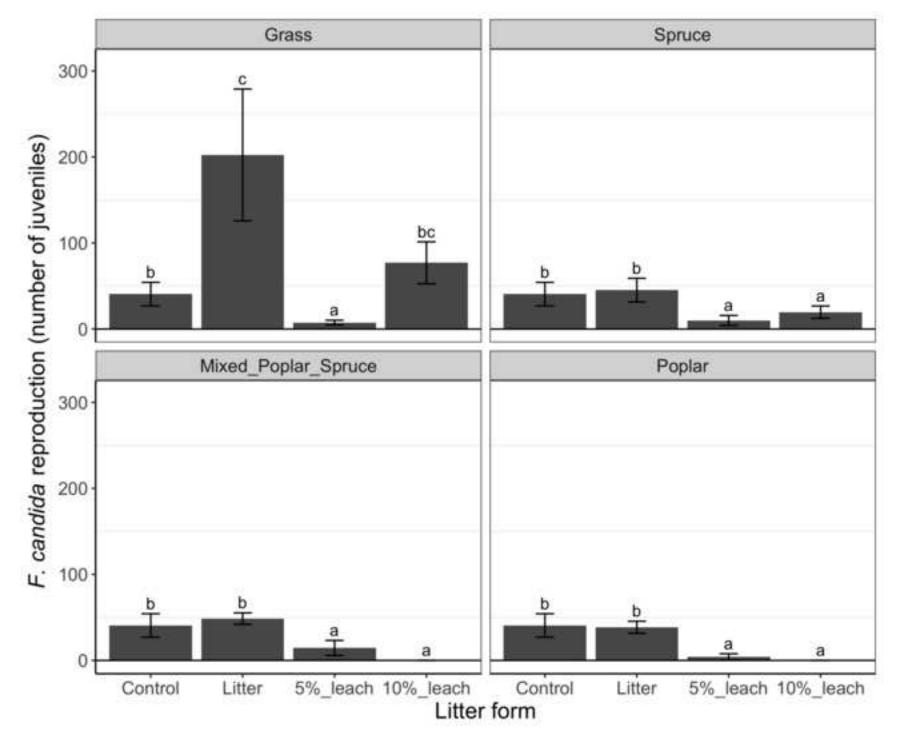


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