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Sequence diversity of *Cherry leaf roll virus* makes a difference in infected birches in Finland

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Virus-related symptoms were increasingly found on birch leaves throughout northern Fennoscandia. Disease symptoms occurring on *Betula pubescens*, *B. pendula*, *B. nana*, *B. pubescens* var. *appressa*, *B. pubescens* ssp. *czerepanovii*, and *B. pendula* var. *carelica* in Finland could be associated with an infection of *Cherry leaf roll virus* (CLR.V). The plant virus (*Secoviridae* family, genus *Nepovirus*) is bipartite containing positive stranded RNA and infects primarily deciduous trees and shrubs. Disease symptoms in birch trees are spreading since their first record in 2002 and a countrywide incidence of CLR.V could be shown in affected-birch trees tested since 2006. Symptoms are observed in roadside and urban areas, but are also found in the countryside for instance the Urho Kekkonen national park in Lapland. However, the mode of virus dispersal in Fennoscandia is unclear. Symptoms observed in CLR.V infected birches in northern Europe differ from virus-affected birches from other European countries and it was not possible to obtain a CLR.V isolate from a Finnish site by rub inoculation or grafting so far. Additionally, sequences of the viral coat protein cistron and the 3' non-coding region indicate towards the presence of a unique sequence population of CLR.V variants in Finnish birches.