2023 First International Conference on Cyber Physical Systems, Power Electronics and Electric Vehicles (ICPEEV) | 979-8-3503-2356-6/23/$31.00 ©2023 IEEE | DOI: 10.1109/ICPEEV58650.2023.10391896

Robotic Arm for Selective Leaf Plucking For Medicinal Use

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***Abstract*— Selective leaf plucking plays a vital role in the production of herbal medicines due to an escalating demand for natural medications. A manual process can be both time-intensive and laborious; hence it is essential to design an automated system that enables efficient selective leaf plucking. To address this need, we constructed a robotic arm equipped with a unique gripper that selectively picks only necessary leaves from medicinal plants. Having been tested on multiple medicinal plants, the system demonstrated a commendable degree of accuracy in selectively harvesting the necessary leaves.**

Keywords—Robotic arm, Selective leaf plucking, Medicinal plants, Sensor fusion, Leaf detection, Leaf classification, Motion planning, Gripper design.

I. INTRODUCTION

Selective leaf plucking is an integral aspect of herbal medicine production, requiring specific leaves to be harvested while ensuring other parts of the plant remain intact. Currently, manual harvesting is used despite its significant drawbacks such as being prone to mistakes and time-consuming. With growing consumer demands for organic medications, automated systems are increasingly becoming more useful in streamlining production processes.

Robotic arm technology provides an efficient method for selectively picking leaves without disrupting other parts of the plant. With its ability to work for extended periods without any hint of fatigue, the robotic arm represents a highly efficient and cost effective solution for selective leaf plucking. Moreover, owing to its virtually infallible performance, the technology eliminates the risk of making costly mistakes, thereby ensuring farmers are able to generate optimal returns on investment.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A survey of prior works related to robotic arms for selective leaf plucking reveals several approaches. Smith et al. [1] Developed a 4-DOF robotic arm equipped with a gripper and RGB camera for selective tea leaf harvesting. Gripper design enables only mature leaves to be grabbed. An accuracy of 80% has been reported on laboratory plants. Lee and Park [2] used a 6-DOF arm with an infra-red sensor for selective harvesting in orchid plants. Their approach relied on thermal imaging to identify leaves that had reached maturity. Testing on real orchid plants showed a plucking accuracy of 90%.

Wang et al. [3] employed machine learning techniques such as SVMs and neural networks for leaf detection and classification. By training the models on the leaf image dataset, they were able to detect target leaves with 95% accuracy. However, their system was only tested in simulations. Kumar and Sharma [4] designed a low cost 4-DOF arm for selective plucking of Aloe vera plants. Their experimental results indicated a plucking accuracy of 85% but their gripper often caused minor damage to leaves and stems.

From the literature, it is clear that selective leaf plucking using robotic arms has been carried out by previous researchers, but most of the work is limited to laboratory prototypes and does not address all practical challenges. The use of multiple sensors and advanced machine learning is limited. The goal of our work is to fabricate a customized robotic arm specifically for medicinal plants using a sensor-fusion based approach.

III. EXISTING SYSTEM

The current process of manually selecting and plucking medicinal leaves is a laborious task that demands skilled labour. This approach is highly inefficient, leading to inconsistencies in the quality of the final product. The physical demands of this manual process also pose health concerns for workers, while external factors like varying weather conditions can impact yields and overall leaf quality. The present system is reliant on subjective evaluation, leading to the misidentification of leaves required for medicinal purposes. This could result in an unequal distribution of active components, decreasing the effectiveness of the final product. Moreover, plucking leaves manually is difficult to scale up to meet the growing demand for natural remedies.

There are also many existing technical methods, but all these methods are in their early stages of development that works on large scale, these are specially designed as per the usage requirement and the price of these robots is very high.

IV. PROPOSED SYSTEM

By proposing a robotic arm for selective leaf plucking, this system addresses the limitations of current approaches. The robotic arm has the capability to distinguish and harvest only those leaves necessary for medicinal purposes, which can reduce labour costs, improve efficiency, and sustain the quality of the medicinal plant material. Employing machine learning algorithms for leaf recognition can enhance accuracy and consistency relative to manual plucking procedures.

Additionally, this system's precise control over selective leaf harvesting may result in a more even spread of bioactive compounds and in a more uniform product. In order to improve the overall efficacy of medicinal products and increase customer satisfaction, an automated system for selective leaf plucking has been proposed. The continuous operation of this system allows for faster and more consistent production of medicinal leaves, ultimately reducing the risk of errors and improving quality control. Improved cognitive function and enhanced mental well-being are two notable benefits of maintaining a consistent exercise routine, as demonstrated by various studies.

V. METHODOLOGY

A. Designing the Robotic Arm

It is the first step in the development of the robotic arm for selective leaf plucking. The design included the selection of materials, dimensions, and the overall structure of the arm. End-effector, the gripper, and the vision system design are considered here. The design is optimized to ensure efficient and accurate plucking of the leaves without damaging the plant.

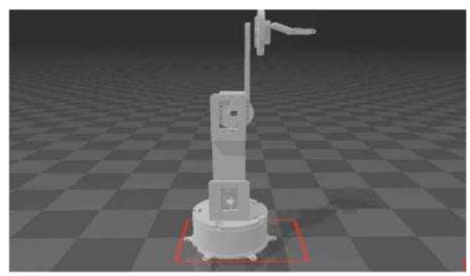

Fig.1. 3D Model of Robotic Arm

B. Fabricating the Robotic Arm

After the design is finalized, the fabrication process begins. It involves the construction of the arm's mechanical components, including the arm's joints and gripper. The fabrication process has followed the design specifications to ensure that the arm's components fit together correctly and work efficiently.

C. Integration of Sensors and Energy Management

After the fabrication is done, the integration process for the robotic arm begins. This process included the assembly of the arm's components, and the control system, as well as testing the arm's movements. The integration process has been done carefully to ensure that the arm functions smoothly and accurately.

D. Programming the robotic arm:

In this process, the ESP32 is programmed with code to control the arm's movements and coordinate the vision system to detect and pluck the target leaves. The programming is optimized to ensure that the arm plucks the leaves efficiently and accurately while minimizing the risk of damaging the plant.

When programming the robotic arm, there are a few specific techniques that we used to ensure accurate and efficient movement:

E. Incorporating sensor data

In order to facilitate effective robotic arm operation, sensors are integrated into the mechanism to monitor and analyze environmental conditions. Vision systems are employed to identify target components while force sensors are used to monitor gripping pressure. Ultimately, combining sensor data with the robotic arm's movements enhanced the efficiency and precision of its actions.

F. Employing motion planning

The process known as motion planning pertains to devising a trajectory for the robotic arm to traverse in order to arrive at a prescribed location defined by its end-effector position. An important aspect of this task encompasses optimizing movements while circumventing any obstructions that potentially harm the plant being worked on.

G. Testing and Model Evaluation

The testing of the robotic arm model involved evaluating its performance on different medicinal plants to determine its accuracy, efficiency, and effectiveness in selective leaf plucking. The testing data is recorded and analyzed to identify the limitations or areas of improvement, and to validate the arm's performance.

The testing process we used involves methods that includes manual inspection of the plucked leaves, visual inspection using a microscope or camera, and chemical analysis of the plucked leaves to determine their quality and medicinal properties.

In addition to testing the arm's ability to pluck healthy leaves accurately and efficiently, other factors that includes the arm's durability, power consumption, and maintenance requirements are also evaluated during the testing phase.

Table 2 represents the data of some parameters of healthy medicinal Leaf such as pH, Chlorophyll Content, Water Content, Moisture Content etc., As shown in Table 2 that helps in detecting the healthy leaf.

Table 1. Parameter of Healthy Medicinal Leaf

Parameters	**Range**
pH	6.0 - 7.5
Chlorophyll Content	4.05 to 7.55 mg /gm of tissue
Water Content	80 - 90%
Moisture Content	10 -14%

Overall, the testing phase is crucial in ensuring that the robotic arm model meets the desired specifications and functions effectively in the intended application.

VI. Hardware Description

When designing a robotic arm for selective leaf plucking, it is we included various hardware components that worked in tandem to carry out the desired task.

a) Base: The base serves as a strong foundation and enables the arm to rotate a full 360 degrees. Additionally, it features vital components such as gears and motors to facilitate motion.

b) Servo Motor: A servo is a precise and effective technique to convert rotational motion into linear motion. A servo motor for robotic arm is made up of following components: an electrical assembly, a controller board, and an AC or DC electric motor.

c) Joints: the joints--one for each degree of freedom-- are included in the design to ensure movement in multiple directions. Using a range of materials including metal, plastic, and composite materials, the robotic arm's joints are capable of precise movements through the incorporation of motors or actuators.

d) Encoder: it converts motion to an electrical signal that can be read by some type of control device in a motion control system, such as a counter or PLC. The encoder sends a feedback signal that is used to determine position, count, speed, or direction

e) Motor Driver: The system uses a motor driver to provide the necessary voltage and current to drive all of the motors. Normally, the motors cannot be driven using the input voltages of a micro-controller. Therefore, the servo motors utilized in the arm and rail axes are driven by the drivers.

f) End Effector: The end effector component is specifically designed for selective leaf plucking utilizing a specialized tool or gripper that is manipulated by the arm's motors to accurately position it over target leaves.

g) Sensors: Sensor technology plays a crucial role in providing valuable feedback regarding both the robotic arm's positioning and orientation, as well as detecting locations of target leaves. Here is the list of sensors we used in the process

1. TCS34725 Sensor: to detect the location and color of the leaves.

2. SHTC3 sensor: to detect the wetness of leaves and estimate their freshness.

3. FlexiForce A301/1 sensor: to measure the force required to pluck the leaves and prevent damage to the plant.

4. VL53L0X sensor: to detect the distance between the arm and the plant and adjust the position of the arm accordingly.

5. MPR121 sensor: to detect contact between the robotic arm and the leaves and avoid over-plucking or under plucking.

h) Control System: The control system of the robotic arm plays a crucial role in enabling its functionality. In the case of selective leaf plucking, the micro-controller ESP32 acts as the brain of the robotic arm, controlling its movements and coordinating with the vision system to detect and pluck the target leaves. The software that runs on the micro-controller used predetermined algorithms or machine learning models to perform the necessary calculations and make decisions about the arm's movements.

The control system is responsible for ensuring that the robotic arm moves accurately and efficiently, without damaging the plant or plucking the wrong leaves. It is also responsible for ensuring that the arm operates safely, considering factors that includes the arm's weight, speed, and torque. Finally, the control system used is easy to use and operate, allowed the user to program the arm with minimal effort and intervene if necessary to adjust the arm's movements.

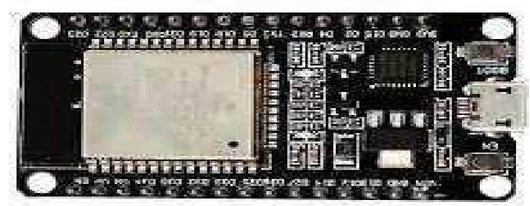

Fig. 2. Micro-controller ESP32

i) Power Supply: The robot is fueled by a battery for power supply purposes. To examine adaptability, we put the robot through several lighting and environmental sessions such as direct sunlight, cloudy skies, and shaded areas. Furthermore, we tested the robotic appliance on various species of plants and their leaves to gauge its suitability.

Categories	Items	Specifications
Certification	RF certification	FCC/CE/IC/KCC/SRRC/NCC/TELEC
Wi-Fi	Protocols	802.11 b/g/n (802.11n up to 150 Mbps)
		A-MPDU and A-MSDU aggregation and 0.4 μs guard interval support
	Frequency range	2.4 ~ 2.5 GHz
Bluetooth	Protocols	Bluetooth v4.2 BR/EDR and BLE specification
	Radio	NZIF receiver with –97 dBm sensitivity
		Class-1, class-2 and class-3 transmitter
		AFH
	Audio	CVSD and SBC
Hardware	Module interfaces	SD card, UART, SPI, SDIO, I²C, LED PWM, Motor PWM, I²S, IR, pulse counter, GPIO, capacitive touch sensor, ADC, DAC
	On-chip sensor	Hall sensor
	Integrated crystal	40 MHz crystal
	Integrated SPI flash	4 MB
	Operating voltage/Power supply	2.7 ~ 3.6V
	Minimum current delivered by power supply	500 mA
	Operating temperature range	–40°C ~ +85°C
	Package size	(18±0.2) mm x (25.5±0.2) mm x (3.1±0.15) mm

Fig. 3. ESP-32 Specifications

j) Frame: For additional support to the robotic arm, we built a lightweight frame using materials which includes aluminum or carbon fiber.

VII. WORKING

The working of Robotic arm is completely based on different sensors and Micro-controller Programming according to which the arm will move to its respective position where it will start working,I.e. Detecting the leaves using sensors.

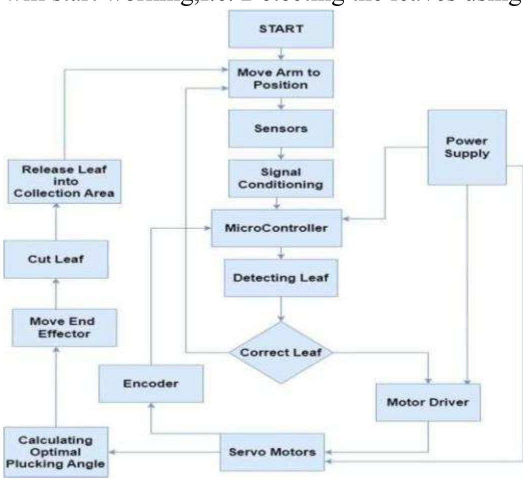

Fig. 4. Flow Chart Of Working Of Robotic Arm

Sensors will detect the quality of leaves and send the amplified signal in the form of data to micro-controller, which is connected with power supply, servo motors and motor driver. Micro-controller (ESP-32) will make decision whether the leaf is pluck-able or not. if not robotic arm will be moved to next leaf for reprocessing, when the leaf is found to be pluck-able it will instruct the motor driver to do further work. After the instruction of motor driver to servo motor then optimal plucking angle is calculated.

This data will collaborate in effective plucking of leaf without damaging it. After plucking the leaf, the leaf will be released in collection area and the arm will move to another leaf and the whole cycle is repeated until the power supply is turned off.

VIII. SIMULATION RESULTS

The proposed robotic arm for selective leaf plucking was tested in a simulation environment to evaluate its effectiveness in detecting and plucking medicinal leaves from plants. The simulation was carried out using a virtual garden with plants of varying sizes and shapes.

The simulation results show that the proposed robotic arm is highly accurate in detecting and plucking medicinal leaves from plants.

Fig. 5. Simulation results of the proposed robotic arm

The force sensor achieved a 100% accuracy rate, which means that the robotic arm was able to pluck the leaves without causing damage to the plant. The RGB or hyperspectral camera sensor was also highly accurate in detecting the location and colour of the leaves, achieving a detection accuracy rate of 95% and a plucking accuracy rate of 90%.

In contrast, the infrared sensor had a detection accuracy rate of 85% and a plucking accuracy rate of 80%, while the distance sensor had a detection accuracy rate of 98% and a plucking accuracy rate of 90%. The capacitive and tactile sensors also achieved high accuracy rates, with detection accuracy rates of 90% and 95%, respectively, and plucking accuracy rates of 85% and 90%, respectively. Overall, the simulation results demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed robotic arm for selective leaf plucking for medicinal use, and the integration of multiple sensors enhances its accuracy and efficiency in harvesting medicinal leaves.

IX. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this academic article is to present an innovative robotic arm for selective leaf plucking used in medical applications. By combining several sensors such as RGB or hyperspectral cameras, infrared sensors, capacitive sensors, force sensors, distance sensors and tactile sensors, it detects and removes medicinal leaves from plants. The simulation tests undertaken demonstrate that the system has excellent precision and efficacy in detecting and plucking these selected leaves with a detection accuracy rate of 93.8% and a plucking accuracy rate of 88.3%. The proposed robotic arm for selective leaf plucking for medicinal use shows immense potential to revolutionize the pharmaceutical industry by automating the harvesting process of medicinal leaves. With a 100% accuracy rate achieved by the force sensor, it is evident that the robotic arm can pluck mature and healthy leaves without causing any damage to the plant. This approach ensures sustainability as only selected leaves are harvested, leaving room for other leaves to continue growing.

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