Supplementary Method 1 (Surface sterilization)

The cut branches (45-50 cm long and 0.2-0.5 cm diameter) were treated with one drop of dishwashing liquid and washed under running tap water for 5 min. To remove surface contamination and residual phenols, the stem segments were washed thoroughly under running tap water for about 2 h. The stem segments were cut into smaller pieces containing a node and a petiole and surface-sterilized for 6 min in a 20% commercial bleach solution (containing sodium hypochlorite with 5% active chlorine) and 30 seconds with 0.1% (w/v) mercuric chloride ($HgCl_2$) (Merck, Germany) followed by the treatment with 70% ethanol for 30 seconds. Finally, the stem segments were rinsed three times with sterilized distilled deionized water for 5 min.

Supplementary Method 2 (Fixation, embedding, and sectioning for LM microscopy analysis)

The samples were fixed in formaldehyde: acetic acid: alcohol 96% solution in the ratio of 10%: 5%: 5% v/v at room temperature for 48 h. After washing the tissue segments with deionized distilled water, they were dehydrated in a graded series of 50%, 60%, 70%, 80%, 90%, 100%, and 100% ethanol for 30 min each. Then, the ethanol was replaced by a graded series of ethanol: xylene solutions with ratios of 75%:25%, 50%:50%, 25%:75%, and 0.0%:100% at room temperature for 1 h each. The fixed tissues were soaked in paraffin wax (melting point 53–58 °C (ASTM D87): CAS No. 8002-74-2; Sigma-Aldrich, USA) at a temperature of 60 °C for 16 hr. Both dehydration and waxing processes were performed using an automatic tissue processor (DS-2080/H, Did Sabz Co., Tehran, Iran). A heated paraffin embedding station (Paraffin Dispenser Plus, DS 4LM, Did Sabz Co., Tehran, Iran) was used for paraffin embedding. The 8-µm-thick sections were cut with a rotary microtome (DS 8402, Did Sabz Co., Tehran, Iran). The sections were floated in a water bath at 40 °C to be mounted onto New Silane II-coated microscope slides and heated at 50 °C for 10 seconds. The sections were deparaffinized in xylene and rehydrated in a series of 100%, 90%, 70%, and 50% ethanol and running tap water (5 min each). The dewaxed sections were stained with methylene blue 1.5% (w/v) in 96% ethanol for 10 seconds.