Supporting Information for:

Scalable and super-stable exfoliation of graphitic carbon nitride in biomass-derived γ-valerolactone: Enhanced catalytic activity for alcohloysis and cycloaddition of epoxides with CO₂

Zhimin Xue,* Feijie Liu,b Jingyun Jiang,b Jinfang Wang,b and Tiancheng Mu*b

a Beijing Key Laboratory of Lignocellulosic Chemistry, College of Materials Science and Technology, Beijing Forestry University, Beijing 100083, China. E-mail: zmxue@bjfu.edu.cn.
b Department of Chemistry, Renmin University of China, Beijing 100872, China. E-mail: tcmu@ruc.edu.cn.

Experimental Section

Materials: 1,2-Epoxyhexane (96.0%) was obtained from Alfa Aesar. Glycidyl phenyl ether (>99.0%) and 1,2-butylene oxide (>99.0%) were provided by TCI (Shanghai) Development Co., Ltd. Styrene oxide (97.5%), γ-valerolactone (98%), anisole (99%), melamine (99%), and epichlorohydrin (99.0%), were purchased from J&K Scientific Ltd. Methanol, ethanol, ethyl acetate, 1-propanol, n-butanol, and ethyl ether were A. R. grade and were obtained from Sinopharm Chemical Reagent Beijing Co., Ltd. All chemicals were used as received. CO₂ was supplied by Beijing Analytical Instrument Factory with a purity of 99.99%.

Preparation of the bulk g-C₃N₄. The bulk g-C₃N₄ was synthesized according to a procedure reported in the literature with some modifications.[51] Briefly, melamine (6 g) was put into an alumina crucible with a cover, which was heated to 550 °C with a heat rate of 2 °C min⁻¹ in a muffle furnace and maintained at 550 °C for 4 h. All experiments were performed in a following nitrogen atmosphere.[52] The yellow product was collected and ground into powder for further use.

Exfoliation of bulk g-C₃N₄ to generate few-layer g-C₃N₄ nanosheets. The few-layer g-C₃N₄ nanosheets were obtained by liquid exfoliating of the as-prepared bulk g-C₃N₄ in γ-valerolactone. In detail, 150 mg of bulk g-C₃N₄ powder was dispersed in 50 mL GVL and then ultrasonicated in a KQ-100DB ultrasonic bath (100 W) at 40 kHz frequency for 24 h using water cooling coil and
an ice-bath to control the bath temperature below 30 °C during sonication. The initial formed suspension was then centrifuged at about 4000 rpm for 30 min to remove the residual un-exfoliated g-C$_3$N$_4$. Finally, the suspension of few-layer g-C$_3$N$_4$ nanosheets was used for further study. The solid few-layer g-C$_3$N$_4$ nanosheets was obtained by centrifuged at about 16000 rpm, washed by ethanol, and then was dried at 50 °C for 12 h under vacuum.

**Characterization of the g-C$_3$N$_4$-based materials.** The transmission electron microscopy (TEM) images were obtained using a TEM JeoL-1011 with an accelerating voltage of 120 kV. The sample was dispersed in ethanol with the aid of sonication and dropped on an amorphous carbon film, supported on a copper grid, for the TEM analysis. High resolution TEM (HRTEM) images were characterized using a TEM JEOL-2100F operated at 200 kV acceleration voltage. X-ray diffraction (XRD) measurements were conducted on an X-ray diffractometer (D/MAX-RC, Japan) operated at 40 kV and 200 mA with Cu Kα (λ=0.154 nm) radiation. FT-IR spectra were recorded on Bruker Tensor 27 IR spectrometer and the sample was prepared by the KBr pellet method. The XPS measurements were carried out on an ESCAL Lab 220i-XL spectrometer at a pressure of ~3×10$^{-9}$ mbar (1 mbar=100 Pa) using Al Kα as the excitation source (hv=1486.6 eV) and operated at 15 kV and 20 mA. AFM was taken on a Bruker Multimode 8 instrument under the AC mode (tapping mode).

**Alcoholysis of various epoxides.** In a typical experiment, epoxide (1 mmol), alcohol (4 g) and g-C$_3$N$_4$-based catalyst (0.1 g) were added into a stainless steel reactor of 20 ml equipped with a magnetic stirrer. After being sealed, the reaction mixture was stirred at 120 °C with a desired reaction time. After the reaction was finished, the products were analyzed using anisole as the internal standard by gas chromatography (GC, Agilent 6820) equipped with a flame-ionized detector (FID) and a HP-5MS capillary column (0.25 mm in diameter, 30 m in length), and identification of the products was done by GC-MS (Agilent 5977A).

**Reusability of few-layer g-C$_3$N$_4$ nanosheets.** In the experiments to test the reusability of few-layer g-C$_3$N$_4$ nanosheets, the catalyst was recovered by centrifugation, washed using ethanol and ethyl ether. After drying under vacuum at 80 °C for 12 h, the catalyst was reused for the next cycle. The
recovered few-layer \(g\text{-}C_3N_4\) nanosheets were also characterized by TEM and HR-TEM.

**Cycloadditions of various epoxides with \(CO_2\)** Epoxide (10 mmol) and \(g\text{-}C_3N_4\)-based catalyst (50 mg) were added in a stainless steel reactor of 20 ml equipped with a magnetic stirrer. After being sealed, the reactor was put into a constant-temperature air bath to reach the desired temperature. \(CO_2\) was then purged into the reactor until the desired pressure (2.5 MPa) was reached, and the stirrer was started. After a desired time, the reactor was then cooled in an ice-water bath, and the excess \(CO_2\) was released slowly passing through a cold trap with ethyl acetate as the absorbant. Then ethyl acetate in the cold trap and internal standard \(n\)-butanol were added into the reactor. After the catalyst was precipitated, the product was analyzed by GC (Agilent 7890) equipped with a flame-ionized detector (FID) and a HP-5MS capillary column (0.25 mm in diameter, 30 m in length), identification of the products was done by GC-MS (Agilent 5977A).

![Graph](image)

**Fig. S1.** Standard curve of absorbance per length of the cell \((A/l, \ l = 1 \text{ cm})\) at different concentrations of \(g\text{-}C_3N_4\) nanosheets for \(\lambda = 313 \text{ nm}\) in GVL.

The concentrations \((c)\) of \(g\text{-}C_3N_4\) nanosheets were calculated by using the Lambert-Beer law \((A/l=\alpha c)\), in which \(A/l\) is the absorbance per length of the cell and \(\alpha\) is the extinction coefficient. Figure S1 shows the standard curve of \(A/l\) at different concentrations of supernatants of \(g\text{-}C_3N_4\) nanosheets at the wavelength \(\lambda = 313 \text{ nm}\), indicating a perfect linear relationship with the concentration \((c)\). This behavior is consistent with the Lambert-Beer law, yielding an absorption
coefficient of $\alpha = 4522 \text{ mL mg}^{-1} \text{ m}^{-1}$. Such consistence suggests the good dispersion of $g$-$C_3N_4$ nanosheets in GVL. Based on this result, the concentration of the obtained $g$-$C_3N_4$ nanosheets in GVL could be calculated.

**Fig. S2.** The images for two samples of the dispersion of few-layer $g$-$C_3N_4$ nanosheets in GVL, (a) fresh prepared; (b) stored for twelve months. From Fig. S2, we cannot see precipitation or aggregation generated in twelve months later.

**Fig. S3.** FT-IR spectra for the few-layer $g$-$C_3N_4$ nanosheets stored in GVL for a period of 12 months and the bulk $g$-$C_3N_4$. 
The color of powder, as can be seen in Fig. S4, changed from yellow to white when the bulk g-C₃N₄ had been exfoliated into few-layer, indicating a change in light absorption.

Fig. S5. Large-scale exfoliation of g-C₃N₄.

Fig. S6. The TEM image of the bulk g-C₃N₄.
Fig. S7. XPS survey spectra (a), high-resolution C 1s XPS spectra (b), and high-resolution N 1s XPS spectra (c) for the bulk $g$-$C_3N_4$. 
Fig. S8. (a) Raman spectra for bulk $g$-C$_3$N$_4$ and the exfoliated few-layer $g$-C$_3$N$_4$ nanosheets. (b) The corresponding enlarged Raman spectra.
**Scheme S1.** Alcoholysis of epoxides and cycloaddition of epoxides with CO₂ over g-\(\text{C}_3\text{N}_4\)-based catalysts.

**Fig. S9.** Effect of reaction temperature on the alcoholysis of glycidyl phenyl ether over g-\(\text{C}_3\text{N}_4\) nanosheets. Reaction conditions: glycidyl phenyl ether, 1 mmol; methanol, 4 g; catalyst, 0.1 g; reaction time, 5 h.

From Fig. S8, we could see that the reaction temperature significantly affected the activity of the alcoholysis of glycidyl phenyl ether. The yield of the product increased with the rising reaction temperature, and a maximum could be achieved at 120 °C under our reaction conditions. Therefore, we selected 120 °C as the reaction temperature to study other reaction parameters.
Fig. S10. Reusability of the few-layer g-C₃N₄ nanosheets for alcoholysis of glycidyl phenyl ether.

Reaction conditions: glycidyl phenyl ether, 1 mmol; methanol, 4 g; catalyst, 0.1 g; reaction temperature, 120 °C; reaction time, 5 h.

Fig. S11. TEM (a) and HR-TEM (b) images for the recovered g-C₃N₄ nanosheets in the experiment of alcoholysis of glycidyl phenyl ether.
Table S1. Reusability of the few-layer g-C₃N₄ nanosheets for cycloaddition of glycidyl phenyl ether with CO₂.ᵃ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cycle</th>
<th>Yield (%)ᵇ</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>99.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>98.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>98.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>97.8</td>
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ᵃReaction conditions: epoxide, 10 mmol; few-layer g-C₃N₄ nanosheets, 50 mg; CO₂, 3 MPa; temperature, 120 °C; time, 4 h.ᵇThe yields were determined using ¹H NMR method.⁶³

Fig. S12. TEM (a) and HR-TEM (b) images for the recovered g-C₃N₄ nanosheets in the experiment of cycloaddition of glycidyl phenyl ether with CO₂.

References:

