

Supporting Information

Nickel-Catalysed Novel β,γ -Unsaturated Nitriles Synthesis

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General information

All reactions were isolated from moisture and oxygen by a nitrogen atmosphere with a balloon fitted on a Schlenk tube. All glassware was oven dried at 110 °C for hours and cooled down under vacuum. Toluene and mesitylene was purified by distillation with sodium. Unless otherwise noted, materials were obtained from commercial suppliers and used without further purification. Ni(PPh₃)₄¹ was prepared following literature procedures. Thin layer chromatography (TLC) employed glass 0.25 mm silica gel plates. Flash chromatography columns were packed with 200-300 mesh silica gel in petroleum (bp. 60-90 °C). Gas chromatographic analyses were performed on Varian GC 2000 gas chromatography instrument with a FID detector and biphenyl was added as internal standard. GC-MS spectra were recorded on a Varian GC-MS 3900-2100T. ¹H and ¹³C NMR data were recorded with Varian Mercury (300 MHz) spectrometers with tetramethylsilane as an internal standard. All chemical shifts (δ) are reported in ppm and coupling constants (*J*) in Hz. All chemical shifts are reported relative to tetramethylsilane and d-solvent peaks (77.00 ppm, chloroform), respectively. EPR spectra were recorded on a Bruker A200 spectrometer.

General procedure for the Nickel-catalysed Heck-type alkenylation of α-bromide nitriles

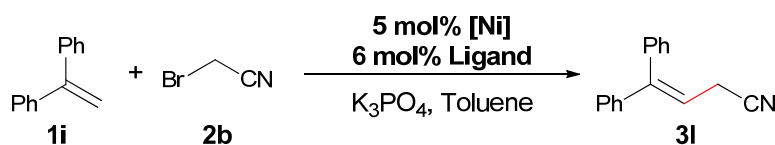
Method A: In a glove box, Ni(PPh₃)₄ (27.7 mg, 0.025 mmol), dppp (12.4 mg, 0.030 mmol) and K₃PO₄ (212.3 mg, 1.0 mmol) were added in a Schlenk tube. The tube was then sealed with septa and taken out of the glove box. Mesitylene (2 mL) was injected in the tube via a syringe. The reaction was then heated up to 160 °C with stirring. Then, alkyl bromide (0.75 mmol) and alkene (0.50 mmol) were consequently injected in the reaction tube. After stirring for 3 hours, it was quenched by diluted HCl solution and

extracted with ethyl ether (3 x 10 mL). The organic layers were combined and the pure product was obtained by flash column chromatography on silica gel (petroleum: ethyl acetate = 50:1).

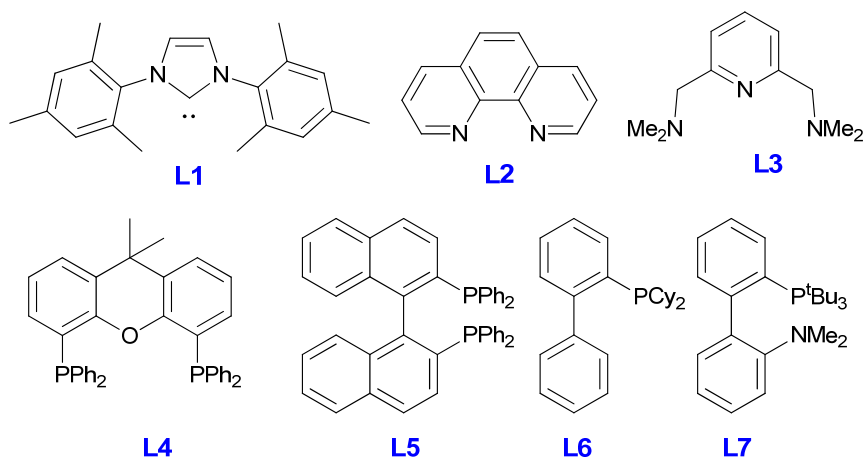
Method B: In a glove box, Ni(PPh₃)₄ (27.7 mg, 0.025 mmol), dppp (12.4 mg, 0.030 mmol) and K₃PO₄ (212.3 mg, 1.0 mmol) were added in a Schlenk tube. The tube was then sealed with septa and taken out of the glove box. Toluene (2 mL) was injected in the tube via a syringe. After stirring for 5 min, alkyl bromide (0.75 mmol) and alkene (0.50 mmol) were consequently injected in the reaction tube. The reaction was then heated up to 100 °C and kept stirring for 10 hours. After the completion of the reaction, it was quenched by diluted HCl solution and extracted with ethyl ether (3 x 10 mL). The organic layers were combined and the pure product was obtained by flash column chromatography on silica gel.

Method C: In a glove box, Ni(acac)₂ (6.4 mg, 0.025 mmol), dppf (16.6 mg, 0.030 mmol) and K₃PO₄ (212.3 mg, 1.0 mmol) were added in a Schlenk tube. The tube was then sealed with septa and taken out of the glove box. Toluene (2 mL) was injected in the tube via a syringe. After stirring for 5 min, DIBAL-H (40 µL, 1.5 M, 0.060 mmol) was added dropwise under ice bath. Then alkyl bromide (0.75 mmol) and alkene (0.50 mmol) were consequently injected in the reaction tube. The reaction was then heated up to 100 °C and kept stirring for 10 hours. After the completion of the reaction, it was quenched by diluted HCl solution and extracted with ethyl ether (3 x 10 mL). The organic layers were combined and the pure product was obtained by flash column chromatography on silica gel.

Ligand optimization for primary α -cyano alkyl bromides by using Ni(acac)₂ as the catalyst precursor ^a



Entry	Catalyst precursor	Ligand	Yield(%) ^b
1	Ni(PPh ₃) ₄	dppp	28
2	Ni(acac) ₂ / DIBAL-H	dppp	57
3	Ni(acac)₂ / DIBAL-H	dppf	69
4	Ni(acac) ₂ / DIBAL-H	L1	13
5	Ni(acac) ₂ / DIBAL-H	L2	<i>n.d.</i>
6	Ni(acac) ₂ / DIBAL-H	L3	2
7	Ni(acac) ₂ / DIBAL-H	L4	46
8	Ni(acac) ₂ / DIBAL-H	L5	10
9 ^c	Ni(acac) ₂ / DIBAL-H	L6	14
10 ^c	Ni(acac) ₂ / DIBAL-H	L7	33



^aThe reactions were carried out with **1i** (0.50 mmol), **2b** (0.75 mmol), [Ni] (5 mol%), Ligand (6 mol%), K₃PO₄ (1.0 mmol), toluene (2 mL), 100 °C, 12 h. ^bThe yield was determined by GC analysis with biphenyl as the internal standard. *n.d.* = no desired product. ^cLigand (10 mol%)

EPR experiments

Method for the EPR detection of different nickel species: In a glove box, nickel catalyst (0.05 mmol) was added to a texting tube. The tube was then sealed with septa and taken out of the glove box. Toluene (0.5 mL) was injected in the tube via a syringe. EPR detection was conducted at 150 K on a Bruker A-200 spectrometer operating at 9.435 GHz.

Method for detecting the reaction between Ni(PPh₃)₄ and α-cyano alkyl bromides: In a glove box, Ni(PPh₃)₄ (27.7 mg, 0.025 mmol), dppp (12.4 mg, 0.030 mmol) was added to a texting tube. The tube was then sealed with septa and taken out of the glove box. Toluene (0.5 mL) and 2-bromopentanenitrile (16.2 mg, 0.10 mmol) was consequently injected in the tube. Immediately, EPR detection was conducted at 170 K on a Bruker A-200 spectrometer operating at 9.435 GHz.

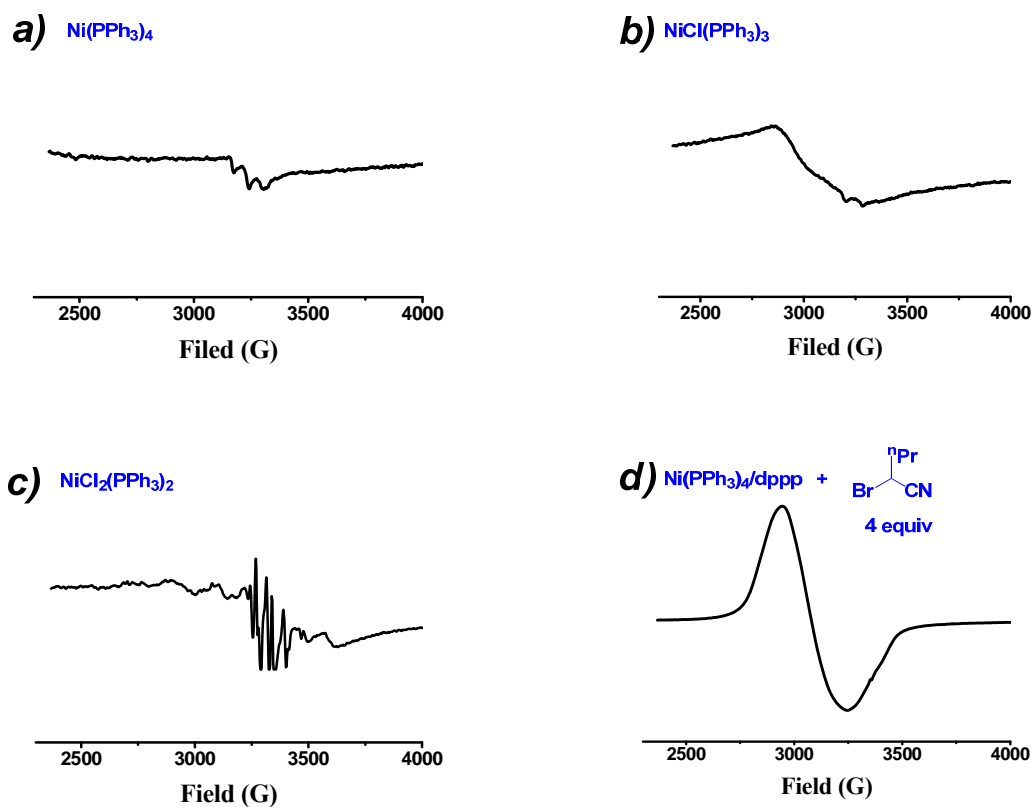
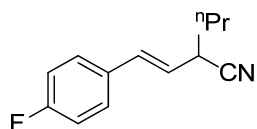


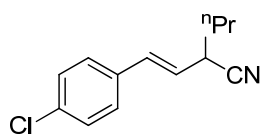
Figure S1. Experimental spectra of nickel species

EPR experiments shown in Figure S1 indicated that Ni⁰, Ni^I and Ni^{II} complexes have their characteristic peaks that differ from each other (Figures S1, a, b and c). When the mixture of Ni(PPh₃)₄/dppp and excess amount of 2-bromopentanenitrile were taken to do EPR detection immediately, the resulting spectrum obviously showed a rather strong signal of Ni^I species (Figures S1, d). This result clearly proved that Ni(0) initiated the reaction via a single electron transfer process.

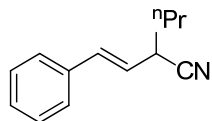
Detail descriptions for products



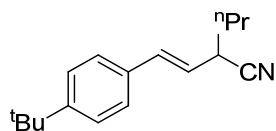
(*E*)-2-(4-Fluorostyryl)pentanenitrile (**3a**): ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 7.50-7.25 (m, 2H), 7.20-6.85 (m, 2H), 6.68 (d, $J = 15.8$ Hz, 1H), 5.96 (dd, $J = 15.7, 6.0$ Hz, 1H), 3.55-3.30 (m, 1H), 1.85-1.70 (m, 2H), 1.65-1.50 (m, 2H), 0.99 (t, $J = 6.7$ Hz, 3H). ^{13}C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 164.4, 161.1, 132.1, 129.9, 128.4, 128.3, 123.2, 120.3, 116.0, 115.7, 35.4, 34.3, 20.3, 13.7. HRMS (EI) calcd for $\text{C}_{13}\text{H}_{14}\text{FN}$ [M] $^+$: 203.1111; found: 203.1110



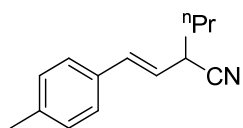
(*E*)-2-(4-Chlorostyryl)pentanenitrile (**3b**): ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 7.40-7.25 (m, 4H), 6.66 (d, $J = 15.9$, 1H), 6.01 (dd, $J = 15.8, 6.4$ Hz, 1H), 3.50-3.35 (m, 1H), 1.80-1.69 (m, 2H), 1.61-1.46 (m, 2H), 0.98 (t, $J = 7.2$ Hz, 3H). ^{13}C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 134.1, 133.7, 131.7, 128.7, 127.6, 123.8, 119.9, 35.0, 34.0, 20.0, 13.4. HRMS (ESI) calcd for $\text{C}_{13}\text{H}_{14}\text{ClN}$ [$\text{M}+\text{H}$] $^+$: 219.0893; found: 219.0891.



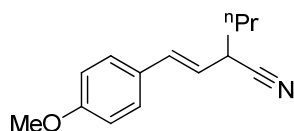
(*E*)-2-Styrylpentanenitrile (**3c**): ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 7.28-7.10 (m, 5H), 6.63 (d, $J = 15.3$, 1H), 5.94 (dd, $J = 15.6, 6.6$ Hz, 1H), 3.40-3.25 (m, 1H), 1.72-1.58 (m, 2H), 1.56-1.46 (m, 2H), 0.89 (t, $J = 7.5$ Hz, 3H). ^{13}C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 137.0, 134.3, 131.7, 129.5, 127.8, 124.5, 121.5, 36.5, 35.4, 21.3, 14.8.



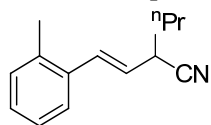
(*E*)-2-(4-(*tert*-Butyl)styryl)pentanenitrile (**3d**): ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 7.45-7.25 (m, 4H), 6.68 (d, $J = 15.8$ Hz, 1H), 5.98 (dd, $J = 16.6, 7.2$ Hz, 1H), 3.55-3.27 (m, 1H), 1.77-1.63 (m, 2H), 1.62-1.45 (m, 2H), 1.31 (s, 9H), 0.96 (t, $J = 7.2$ Hz, 3H). ^{13}C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 151.6, 133.3, 133.1, 126.5, 125.9, 122.7, 120.6, 35.6, 34.9, 34.4, 31.5, 20.3, 13.8. HRMS (ESI) calcd for $\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_{23}\text{N}$ [$\text{M}+\text{H}$] $^+$: 242.1909; found: 242.1906.



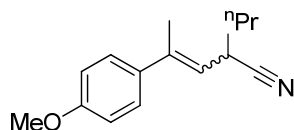
(*E*)-2-(4-Methylstyryl)pentanenitrile (**3e**): ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 7.26 (d, $J = 8.0$ Hz, 2H), 7.13 (d, $J = 8.0$ Hz, 2H), 6.67 (d, $J = 15.8$ Hz, 1H), 5.97 (dd, $J = 15.8, 6.5$ Hz, 1H), 3.39 (q, $J = 6.5$ Hz, 1H), 2.33 (s, 3H), 1.78-1.68 (m, 2H), 1.61-1.45 (m, 2H), 0.97 (t, $J = 7.3$ Hz, 3H). ^{13}C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 138.3, 133.2, 129.6, 128.5, 126.6, 122.4, 120.5, 35.5, 34.4, 21.4, 20.3, 13.7. HRMS (ESI) calcd for $\text{C}_{14}\text{H}_{17}\text{N}$ $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$: 200.1439; found: 200.1436.



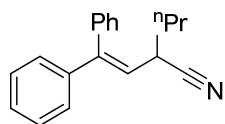
(*E*)-2-(4-Methoxystyryl)pentanenitrile (**3f**): ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 7.30 (d, $J = 8.7$ Hz, 2H), 6.86 (d, $J = 8.7$ Hz, 2H), 6.63 (d, $J = 15.8$ Hz, 1H), 5.88 (dd, $J = 15.8, 6.5$ Hz, 1H), 3.79 (s, 3H), 3.38 (q, $J = 6.5$ Hz, 1H), 1.82-1.66 (m, 2H), 1.61-1.43 (m, 2H), 0.97 (t, $J = 7.2$ Hz, 3H). ^{13}C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 159.5, 132.4, 128.4, 127.6, 120.8, 120.3, 113.9, 55.2, 35.3, 34.0, 20.0, 13.4. HRMS (ESI) calcd for $\text{C}_{14}\text{H}_{17}\text{NO}$ $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$: 216.1388; found: 216.1388.



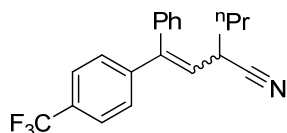
(*E*)-2-(2-Methylstyryl)pentanenitrile (**3g**): ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 7.45-7.31 (m, 1H), 7.27 - 7.03 (m, 3H), 6.92 (d, $J = 15.7$ Hz, 1H), 5.90 (dd, $J = 15.7, 6.4$ Hz, 1H), 3.50-3.30 (m, 1H), 2.35 (s, 3H), 1.67-1.82 (m, 2H), 1.45-1.64 (m, 2H), 0.98 (t, $J = 7.2$ Hz, 3H). ^{13}C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 135.8, 135.1, 131.3, 130.5, 128.2, 126.3, 125.9, 124.8, 120.4, 35.4, 34.5, 20.2, 19.9, 13.6. HRMS (ESI) calcd for $\text{C}_{14}\text{H}_{17}\text{N}$ $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$: 200.1439; found: 200.1435.



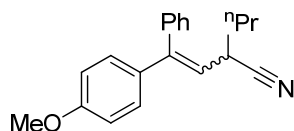
(*Z, E*)-4-Methoxyphenyl-2-propylpent-3-enenitrile (**3h**): ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) (one isomer presented) δ 7.24 (d, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 2H), 6.79 (d, $J = 7.5$ Hz, 2H), 5.48 (d, $J = 8.3$ Hz, 1H), 3.73 (s, 3H), 3.50-3.30 (m, 1H), 1.99 (s, 3H), 1.77-1.39 (m, 4H), 0.98-0.80 (m, 3H). ^{13}C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 159.2, 139.1, 134.4, 126.9, 121.0, 120.0, 113.6, 55.2, 35.3, 30.0, 20.1, 16.4, 13.5. HRMS (ESI) calcd for $\text{C}_{15}\text{H}_{19}\text{NO}$ $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$: 230.1545; found: 230.1545.



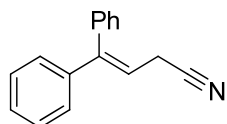
2-(2-(2-Diphenylvinyl)pentanenitrile (**3i**): ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 7.48-7.09 (m, 10H), 5.94 (d, J = 10.0 Hz, 1H), 3.29 (dt, J = 9.9, 7.4 Hz, 1H), 1.82-1.54 (m, 2H), 1.49-1.32 (m, 2H), 0.84 (t, J = 7.3 Hz, 3H). ^{13}C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 146.1, 140.7, 138.3, 129.3, 128.7, 128.3, 128.1, 128.0, 127.4, 122.3, 120.9, 35.5, 31.1, 20.0, 13.4. HRMS (ESI) calcd for $\text{C}_{19}\text{H}_{19}\text{N}$ $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$: 262.1596; found: 262.1593.



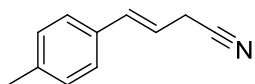
(*Z, E*)-2-(2-Phenyl-2-(4-(trifluoromethyl)phenyl)vinyl)pentanenitrile (**3j**): ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 7.60 (d, J = 7.9 Hz, 1.3H), 7.44 (d, J = 8.2 Hz, 0.8H), 7.38 - 7.29 (d, J = 7.7 Hz, 1H), 7.29 - 7.16 (m, 4H), 7.16 - 7.01 (m, 2H), 5.96 5.89 (m, 1H), 3.24 (dt, J = 10.0, 7.6 Hz, 0.4H), 3.12 (dt, J = 10.0, 7.4 Hz, 0.7H), 1.77 - 1.47 (m, 2H), 1.43 - 1.28 (m, 2H), 0.85 - 0.72 (m, 4H). ^{13}C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 145.0, 144.9, 144.1, 142.1, 139.8, 137.4, 130.4, 130.0, 129.7, 129.2, 128.9, 128.4, 128.3, 127.6, 127.3, 125.7, 125.7, 125.2, 125.2, 124.3, 123.2, 120.5, 120.4, 35.4, 35.3, 31.0, 20.0, 13.3. HRMS (ESI) calcd for $\text{C}_{20}\text{H}_{19}\text{F}_3\text{N}$ $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$: 330.1470; found: 330.1471.



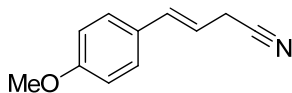
(*Z, E*)-2-(2-(4-Methoxyphenyl)-2-phenylvinyl)pentanenitrile (**3k**): ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 7.46 - 7.34 (m, 2H), 7.33 - 7.06 (m, 5H), 6.94 (d, J = 8.5 Hz, 0.7H), 6.81 (d, J = 8.6 Hz, 1.3H), 5.96 - 5.80 (m, 1H), 3.82 (s, 1.1H), 3.76 (s, 1.8H), 3.43 - 3.31 (m, 0.4H), 3.31 - 3.20 (m, 0.6H), 1.83 - 1.55 (m, 2H), 1.53 - 1.34 (m, 2H), 0.91 - 0.81 (q, J = 7.0 Hz, 3H). ^{13}C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 159.4, 159.1, 145.7, 145.4, 141.0, 138.4, 133.0, 130.4, 129.1, 128.5, 128.4, 128.1, 127.9, 127.7, 127.3, 121.9, 120.9, 120.3, 113.9, 113.5, 55.0, 35.4, 30.9, 19.9, 13.2. HRMS (ESI) calcd for $\text{C}_{20}\text{H}_{21}\text{NO}$ $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$: 292.1701; found: 292.1697.



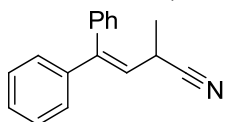
4,4-Diphenylbut-3-enenitrile (**3l**)²: ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 7.44-7.34 (m, 3H), 7.30-7.13 (m, 7H), 6.02 (t, J = 7.3 Hz, 1H), 3.12 (d, J = 7.3 Hz, 2H). ^{13}C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 147.4, 140.6, 137.9, 129.3, 128.7, 128.3, 128.1, 128.0, 127.4, 118.1, 115.4, 18.3.



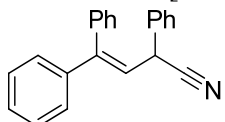
(*E*)-4-(*p*-tolyl)but-3-enenitrile (**3m**)³: ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.25 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.13 (d, *J* = 7.9 Hz, 2H), 6.68 (d, *J* = 15.8 Hz, 1H), 5.97 (dt, *J* = 15.8, 5.7 Hz, 1H), 3.24 (dd, *J* = 5.5, 1.3 Hz, 2H), 2.33 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 138.1, 134.3, 132.8, 129.3, 126.2, 117.4, 115.5, 21.1, 20.6.



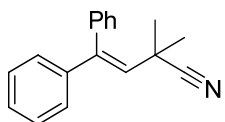
(*E*)-4-(4-Methoxyphenyl)but-3-enenitrile (**3n**)³: ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.29 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 6.86 (d, *J* = 8.3 Hz, 2H), 6.65 (d, *J* = 15.7 Hz, 1H), 5.89 (dt, *J* = 15.7, 5.7 Hz, 1H), 3.80 (s, 3H), 3.24 (d, *J* = 5.6 Hz, 2H). ¹³C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 159.6, 134.0, 128.4, 127.6, 117.5, 114.3, 114.0, 55.2, 20.7.



2-Methyl-4,4-diphenylbut-3-enenitrile (**3o**): ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.50-7.05 (m, 10H), 5.96 (d, *J* = 9.9 Hz, 1H), 3.39 (dq, *J* = 9.7, 7.1 Hz, 1H), 1.40 (d, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 3H). ¹³C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 145.5, 140.5, 138.1, 129.2, 128.7, 128.2, 128.1, 128.0, 127.3, 123.3, 121.5, 25.7, 19.3. HRMS (ESI) calcd for C₁₇H₁₅N [M+H]⁺: 234.1283; found: 234.1281.



2,4,4-Triphenylbut-3-enenitrile (**3p**): ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.43-7.00 (m, 15H), 6.02 (d, *J* = 10.2 Hz, 1H), 3.39 (d, *J* = 9.9 Hz, 1H). ¹³C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 145.0, 140.2, 137.9, 134.9, 129.3, 129.1, 128.8, 128.2, 128.0, 127.4, 127.0, 121.9, 119.4, 36.8. HRMS (ESI) calcd for C₂₂H₁₇N [M+H]⁺: 296.1439; found: 296.1433.



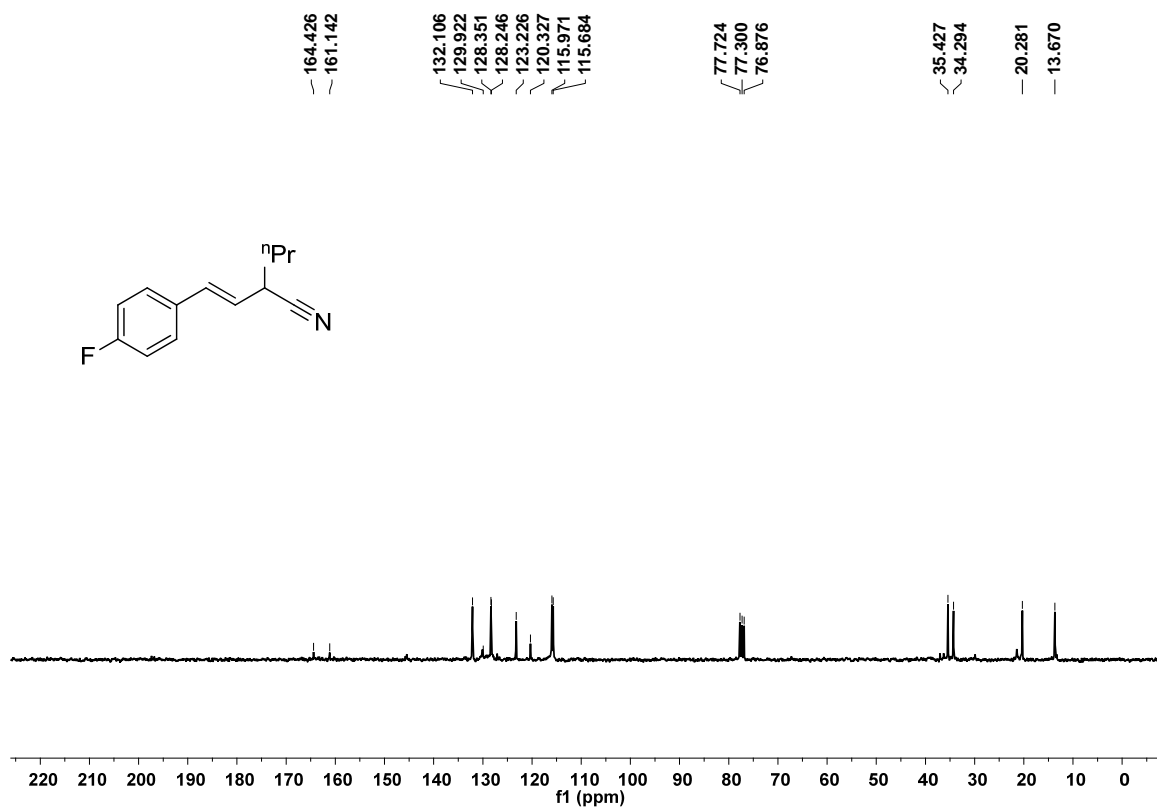
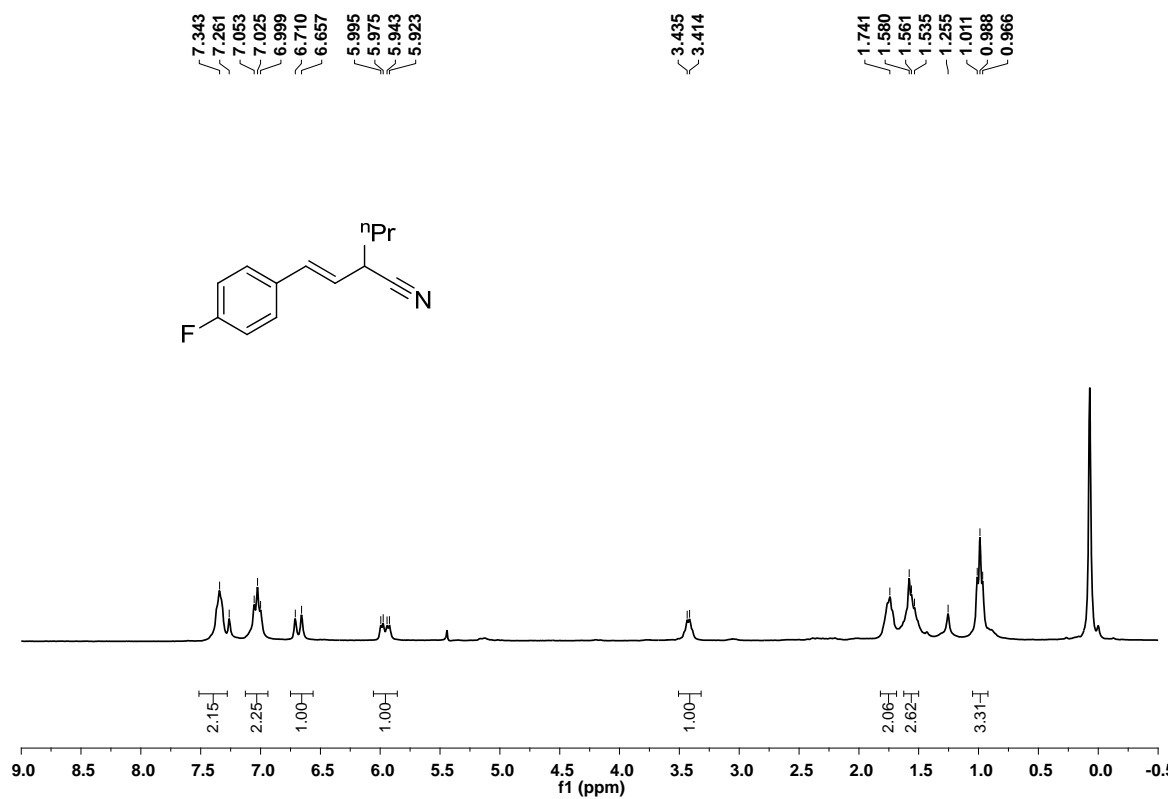
2,2-Dimethyl-4,4-diphenylbut-3-enenitrile (**3q**)⁴: ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.48 - 7.36 (m, 3H), 7.34 - 7.15 (m, 7H), 5.86 (s, 1H), 1.49 (s, 6H). ¹³C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 142.3, 138.2, 130.2, 129.2, 128.5, 128.4, 128.1, 127.4, 125.2, 123.6, 32.7, 29.8.

References

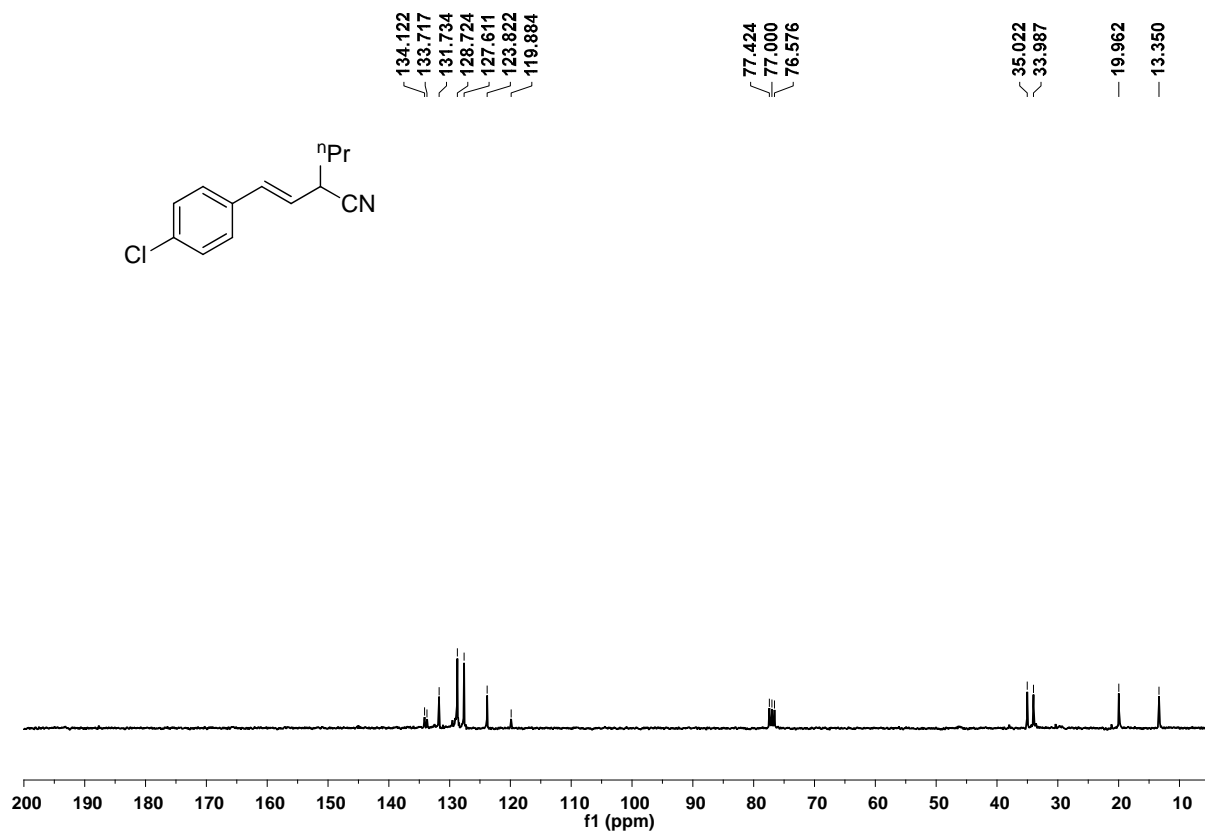
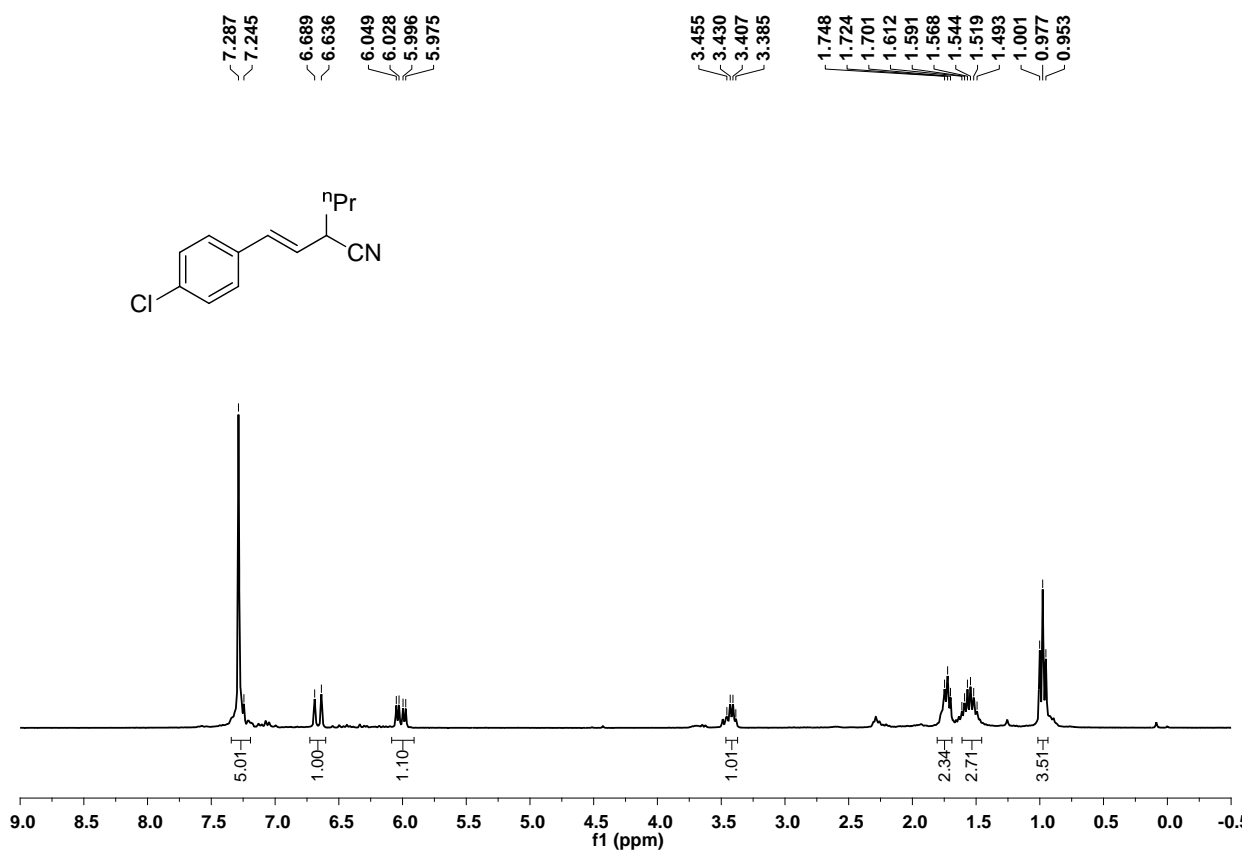
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Copies of product ^1H NMR and ^{13}C NMR

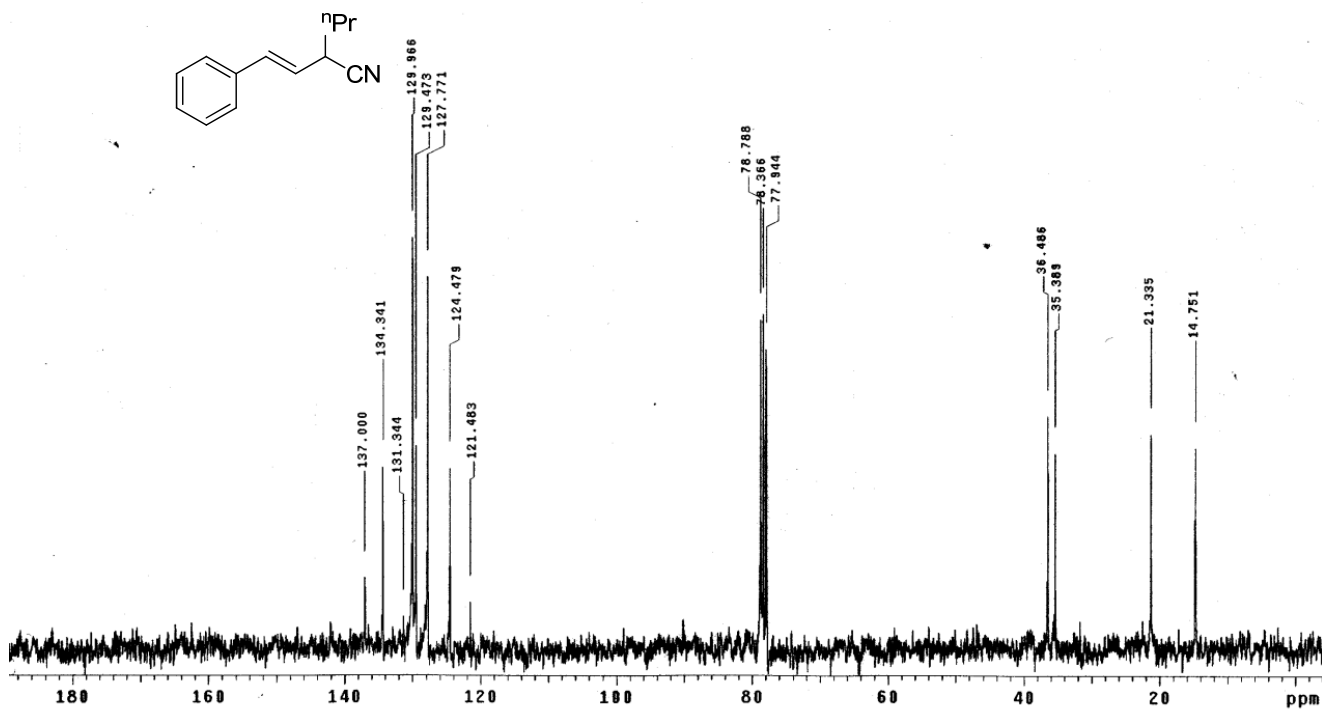
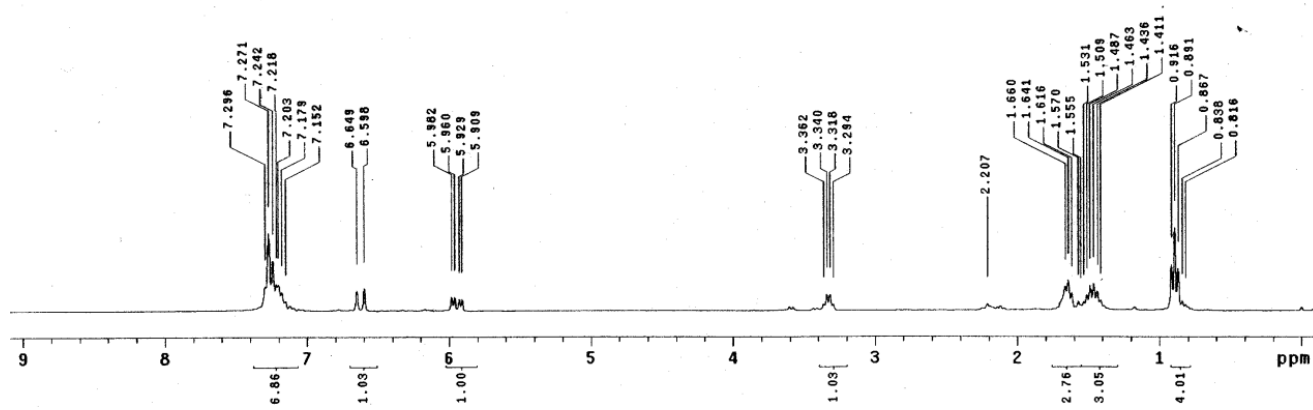
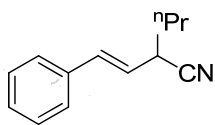
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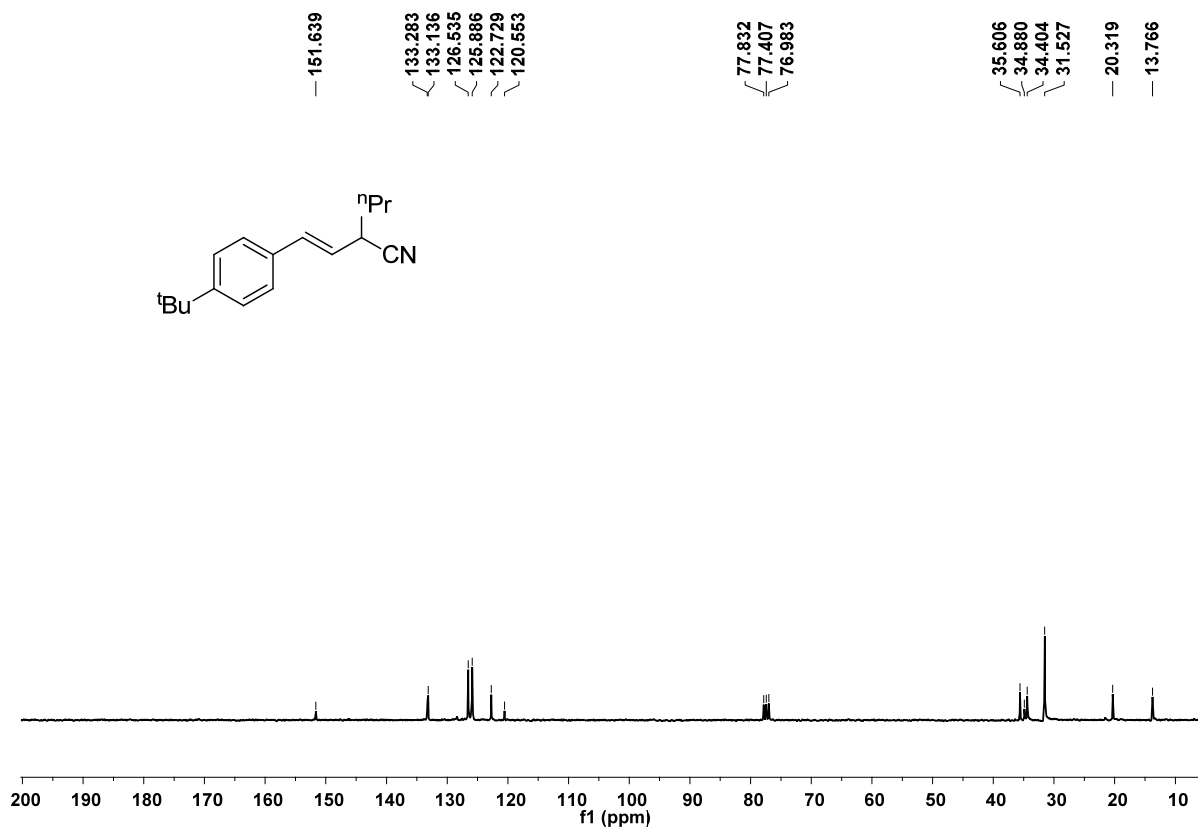
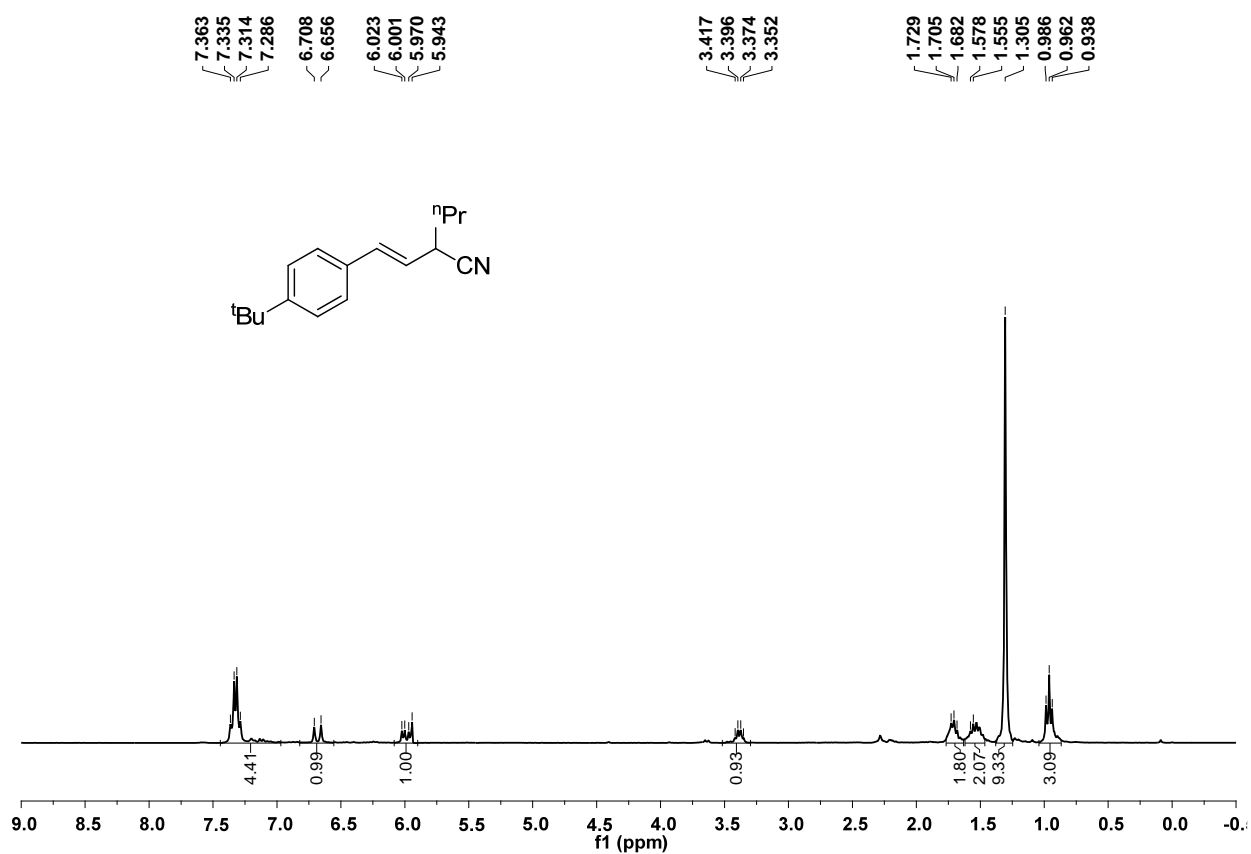
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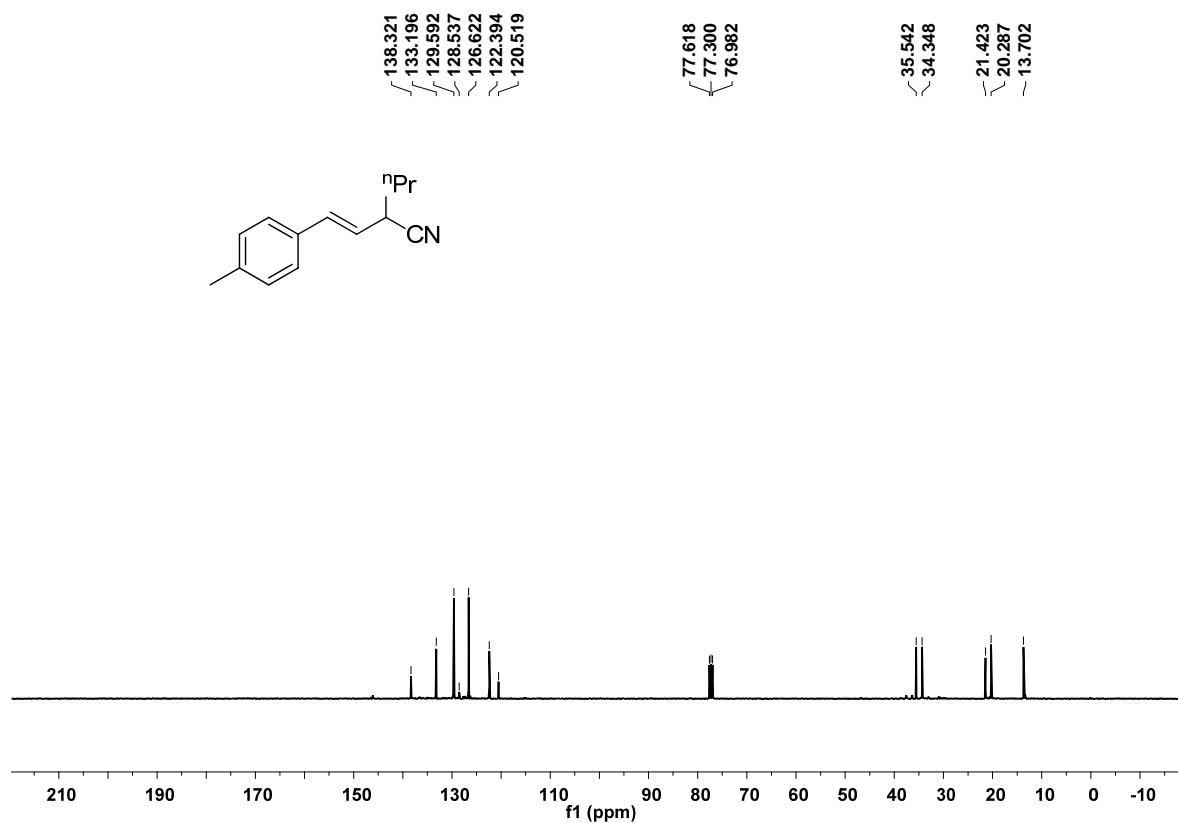
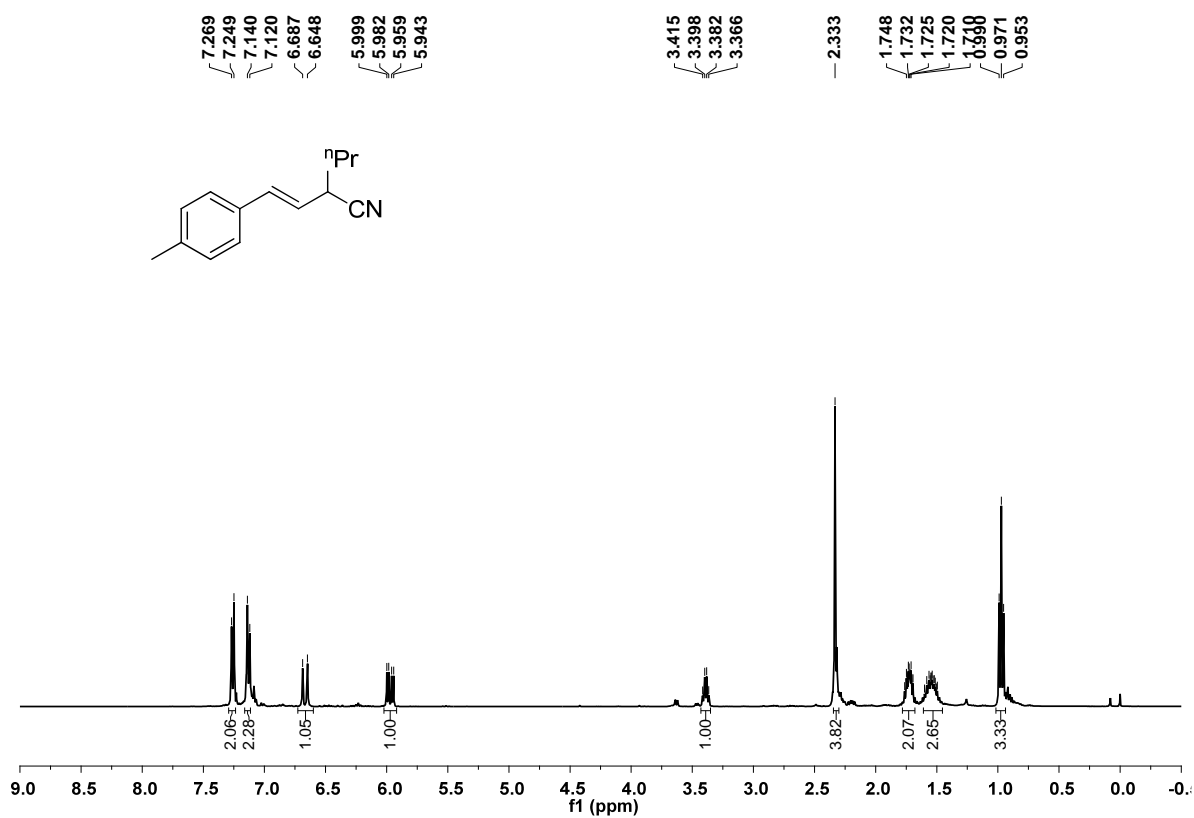
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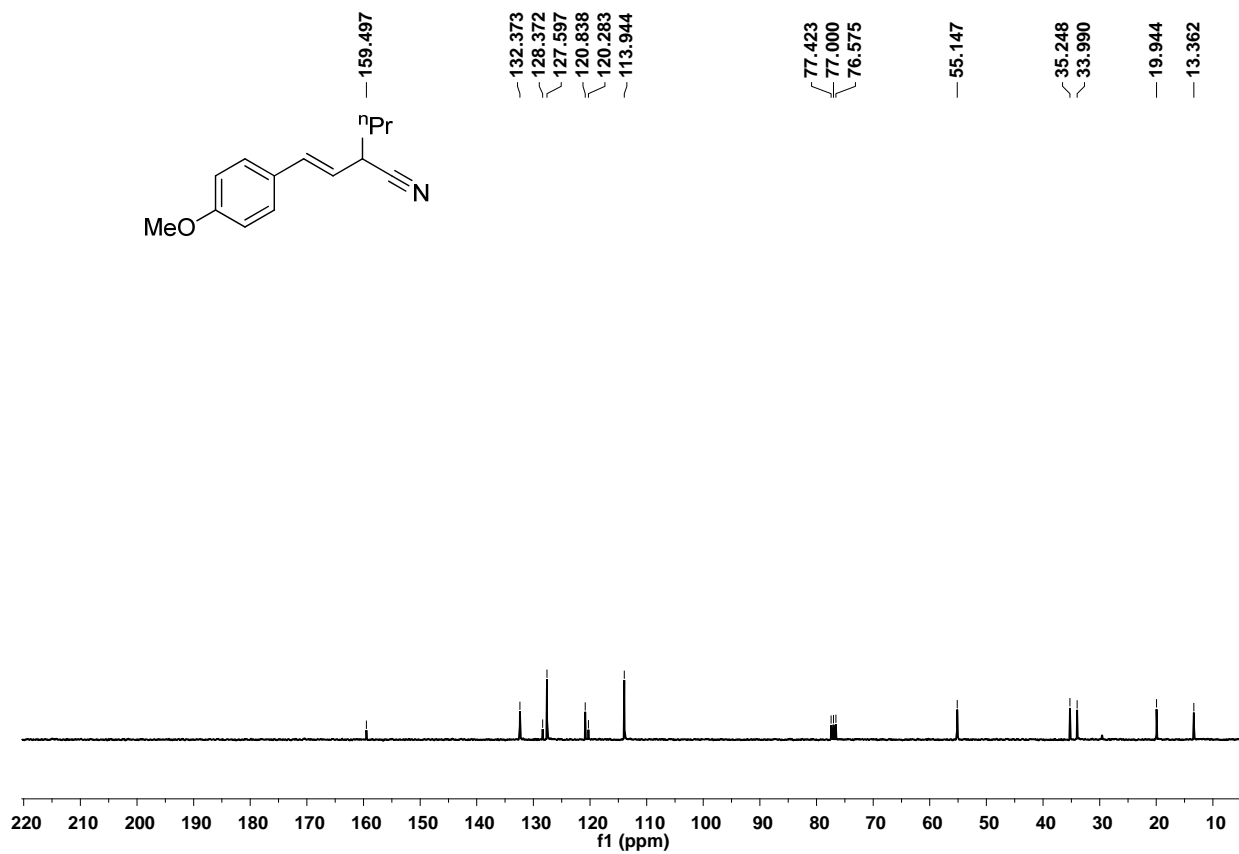
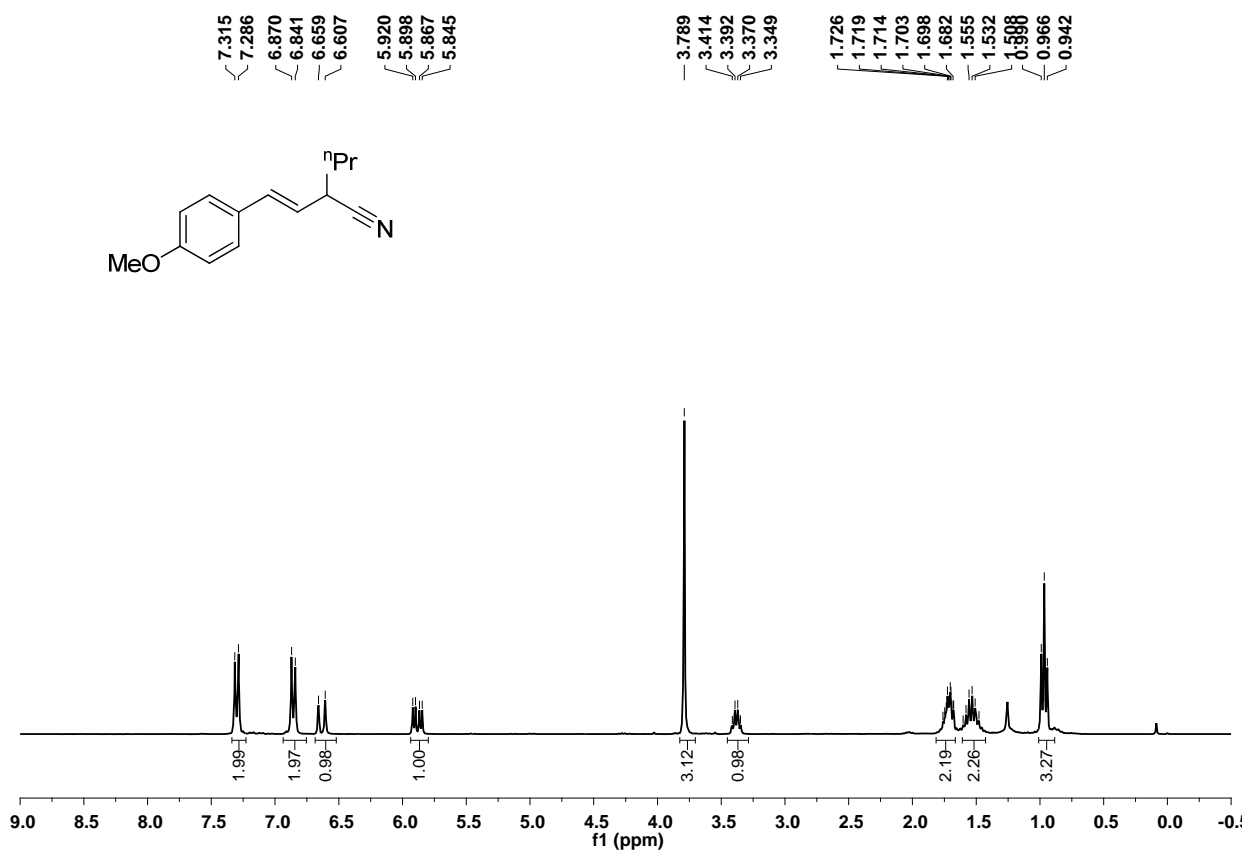
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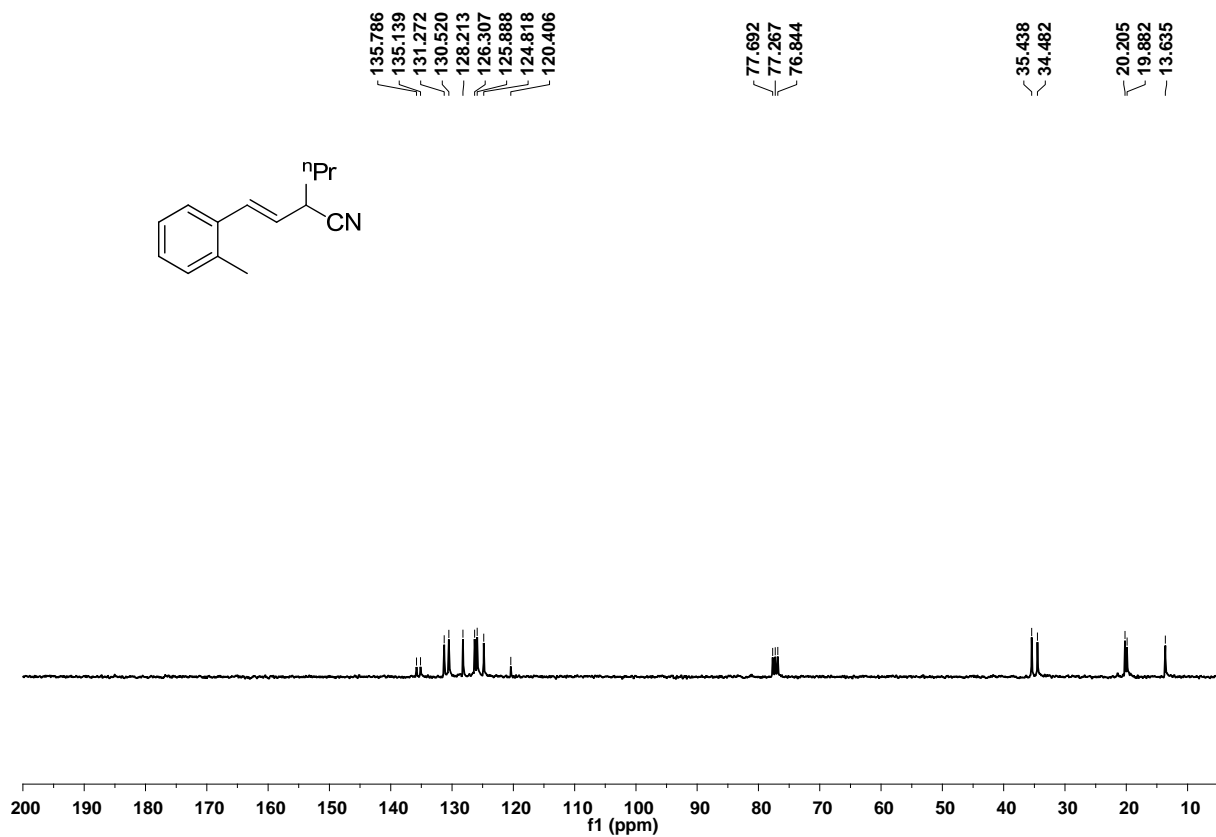
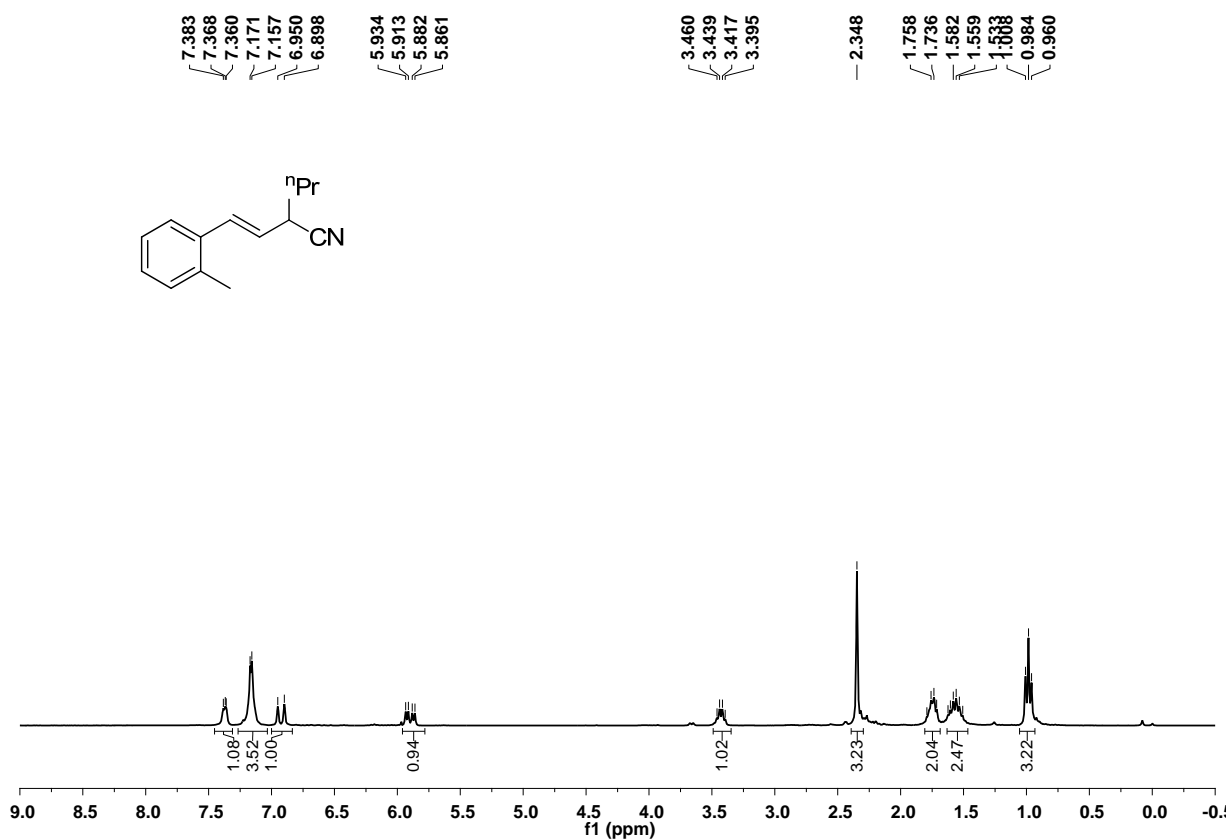
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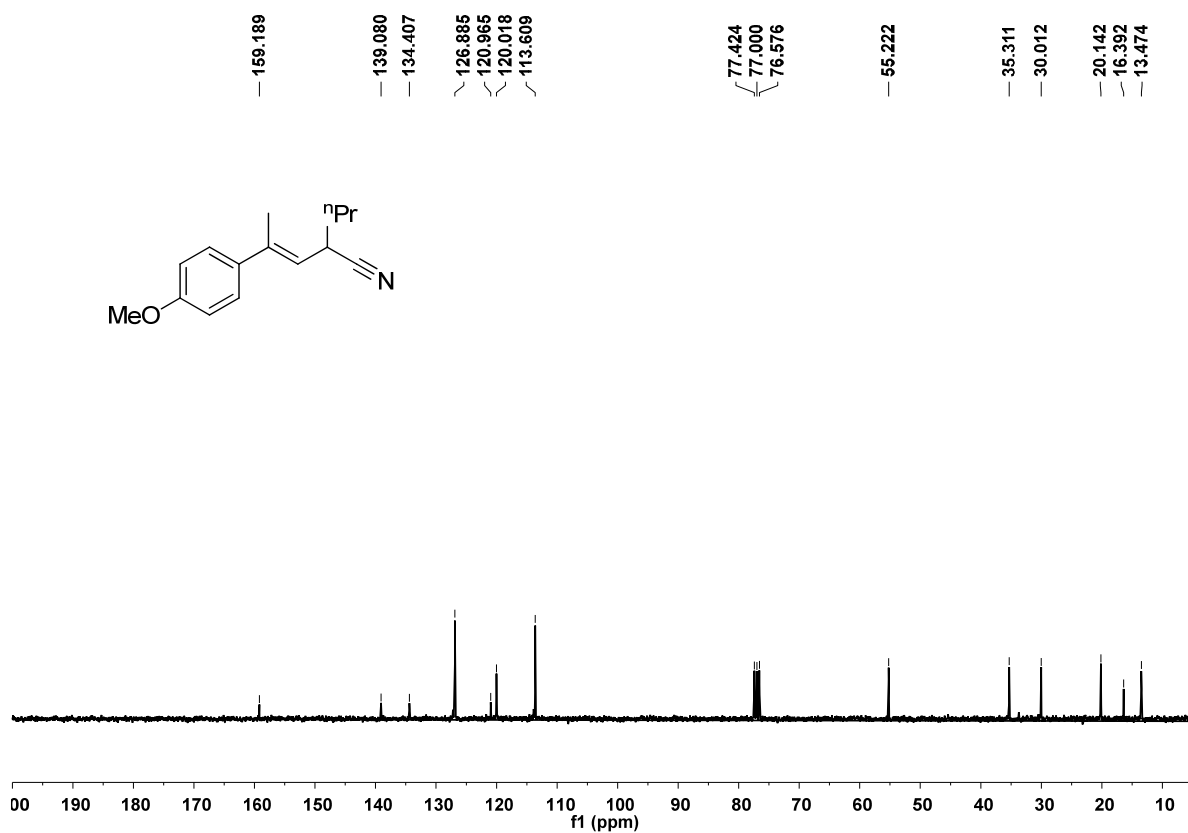
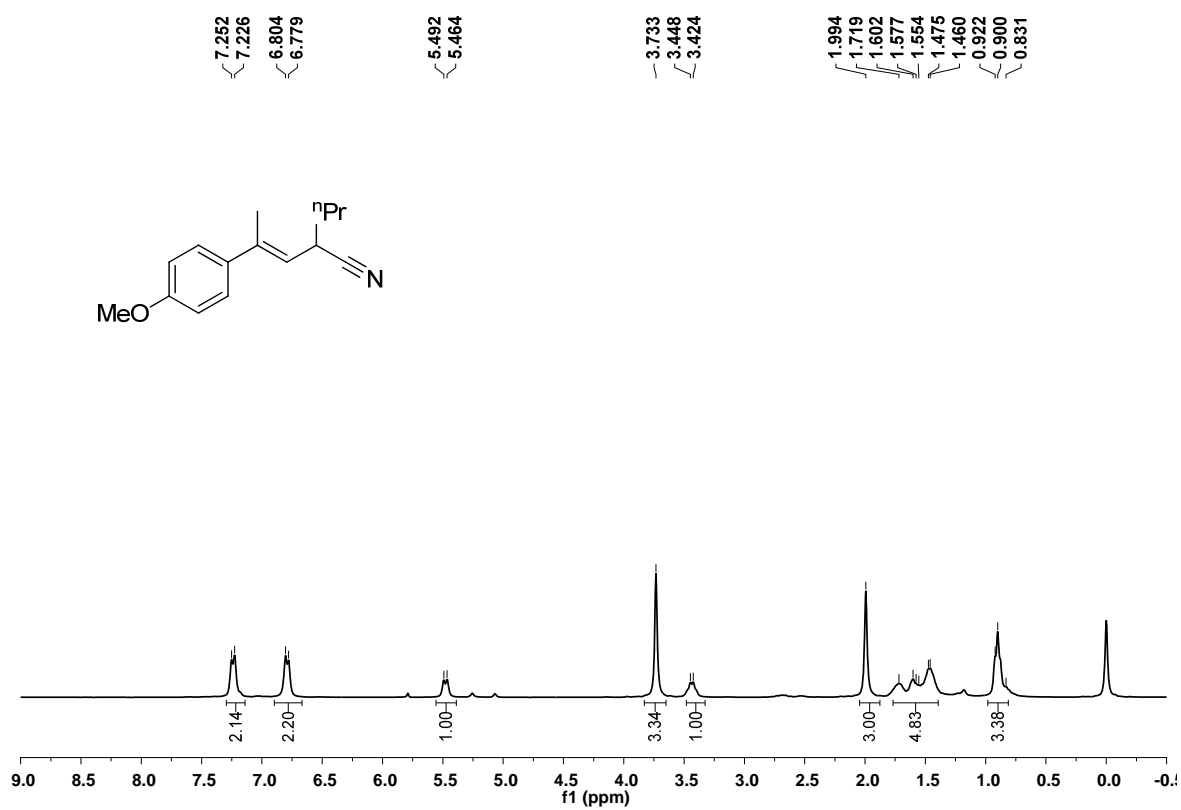
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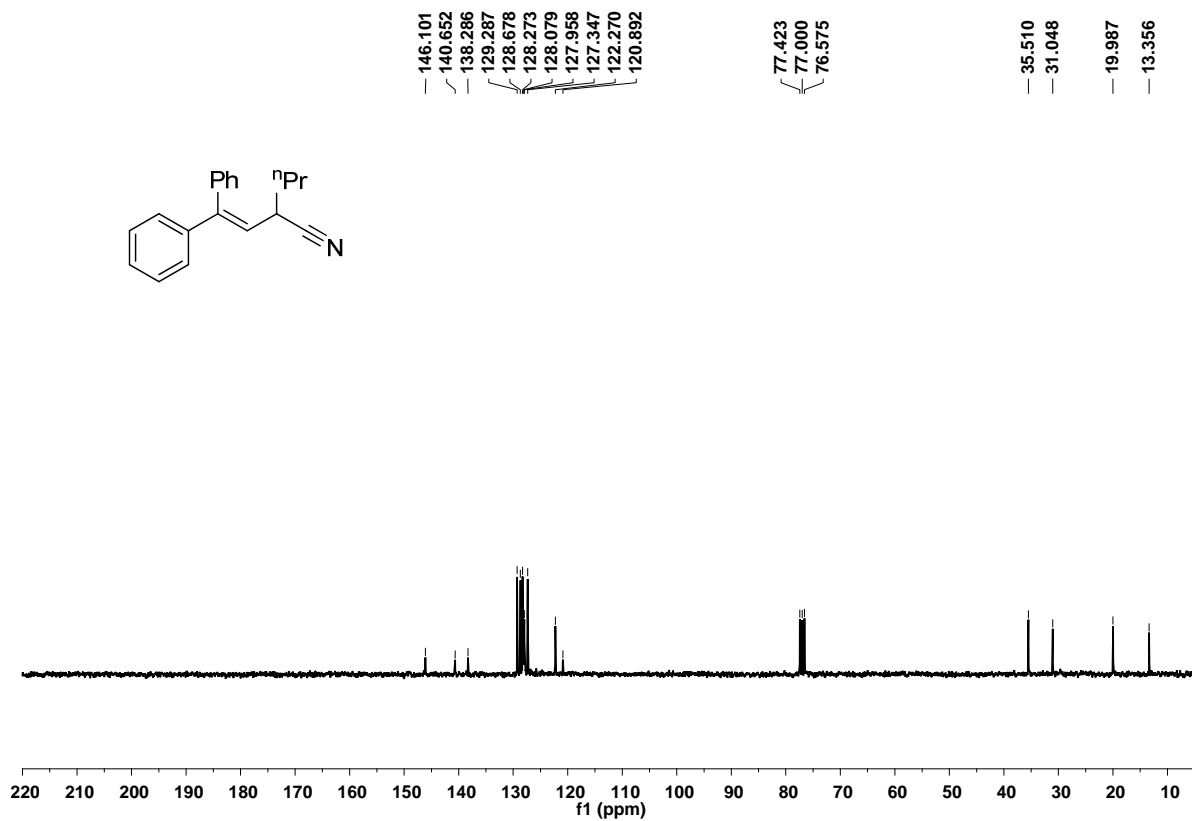
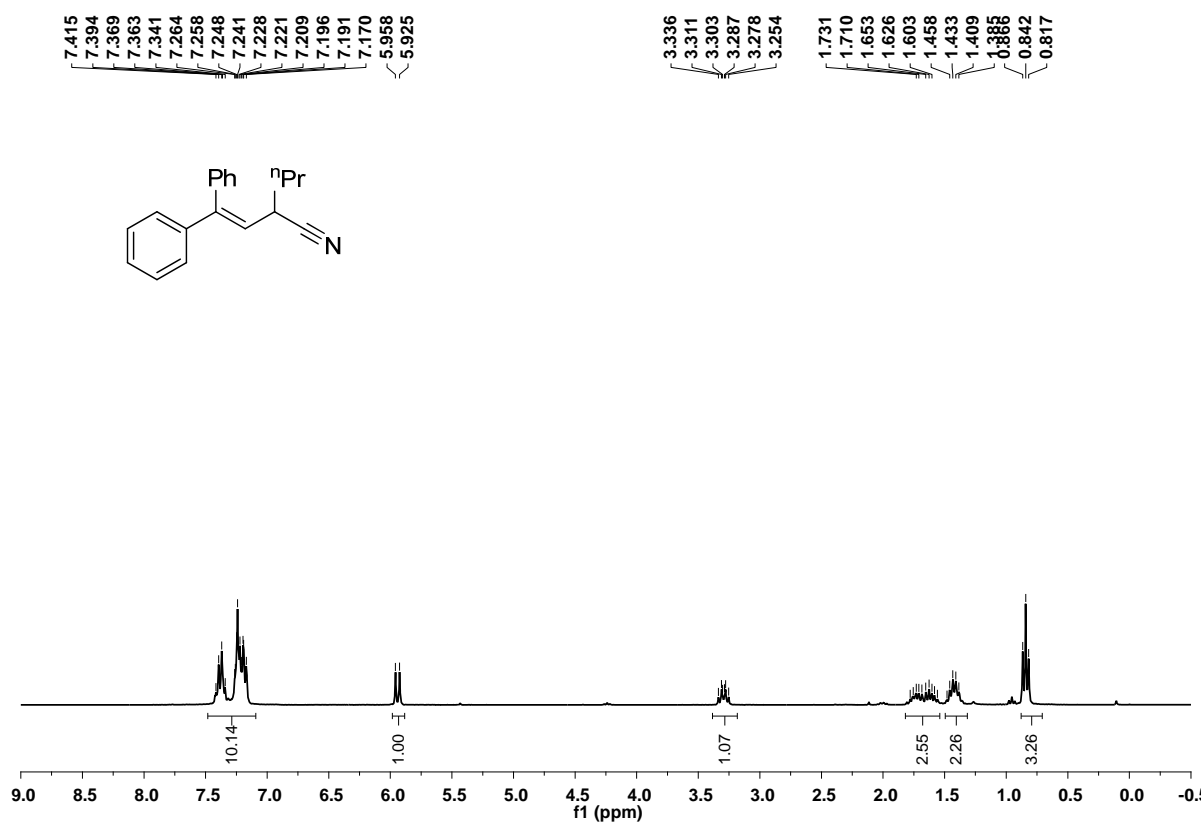
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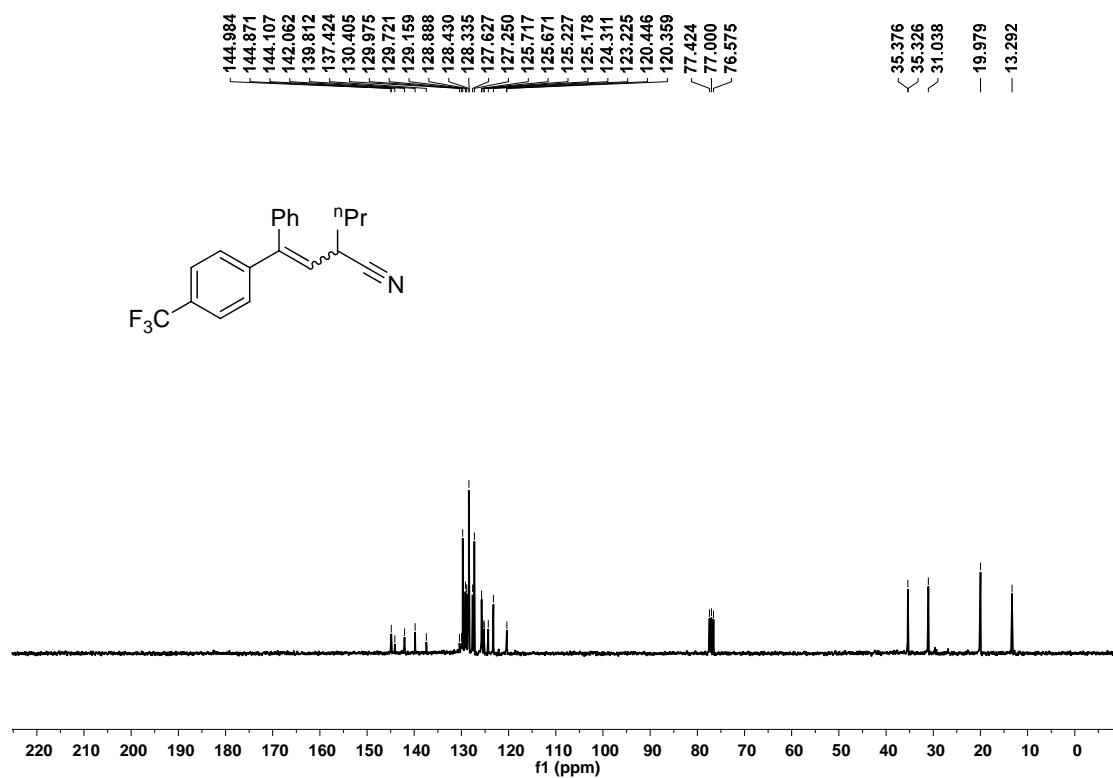
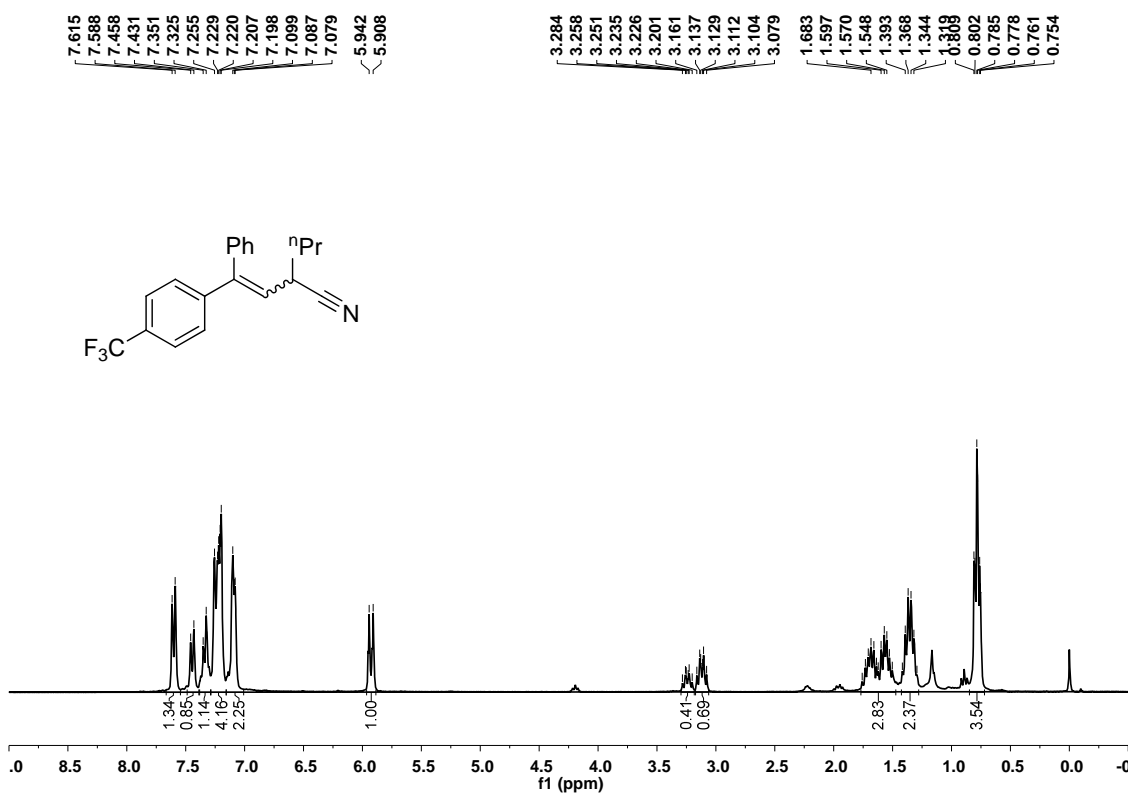
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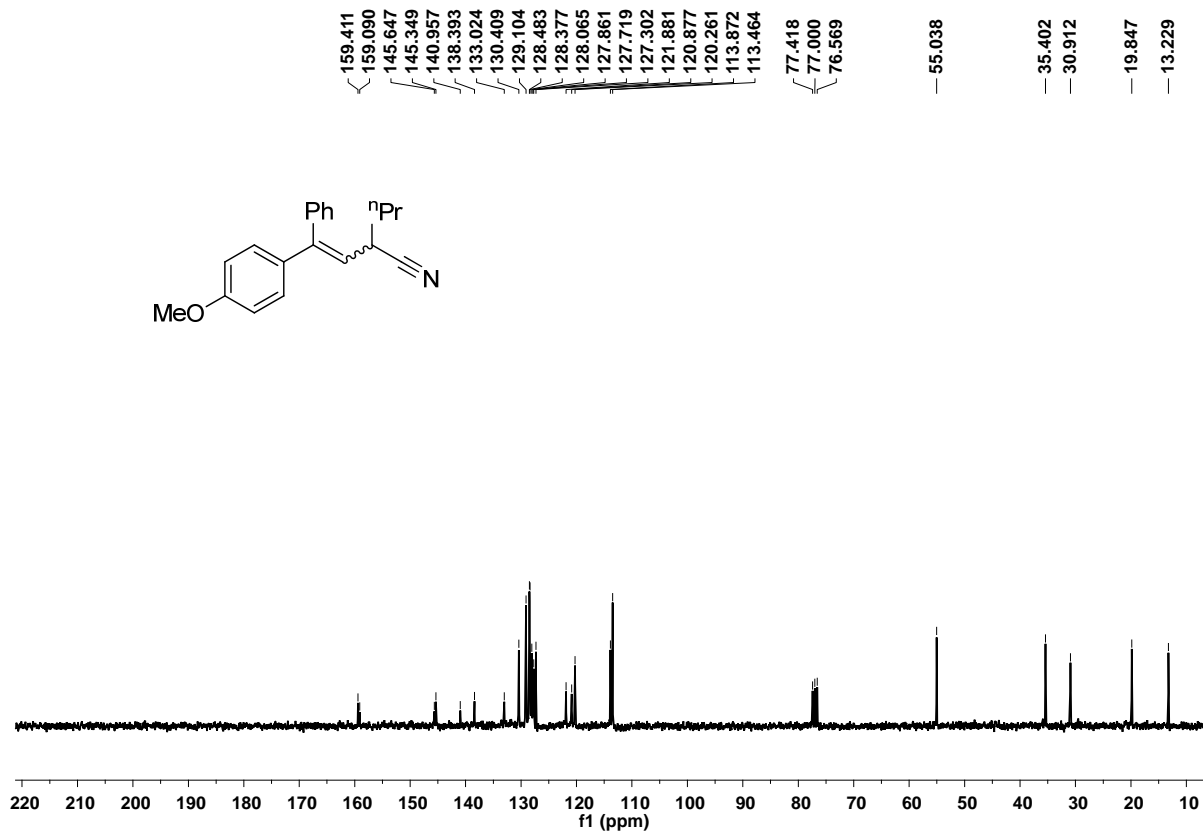
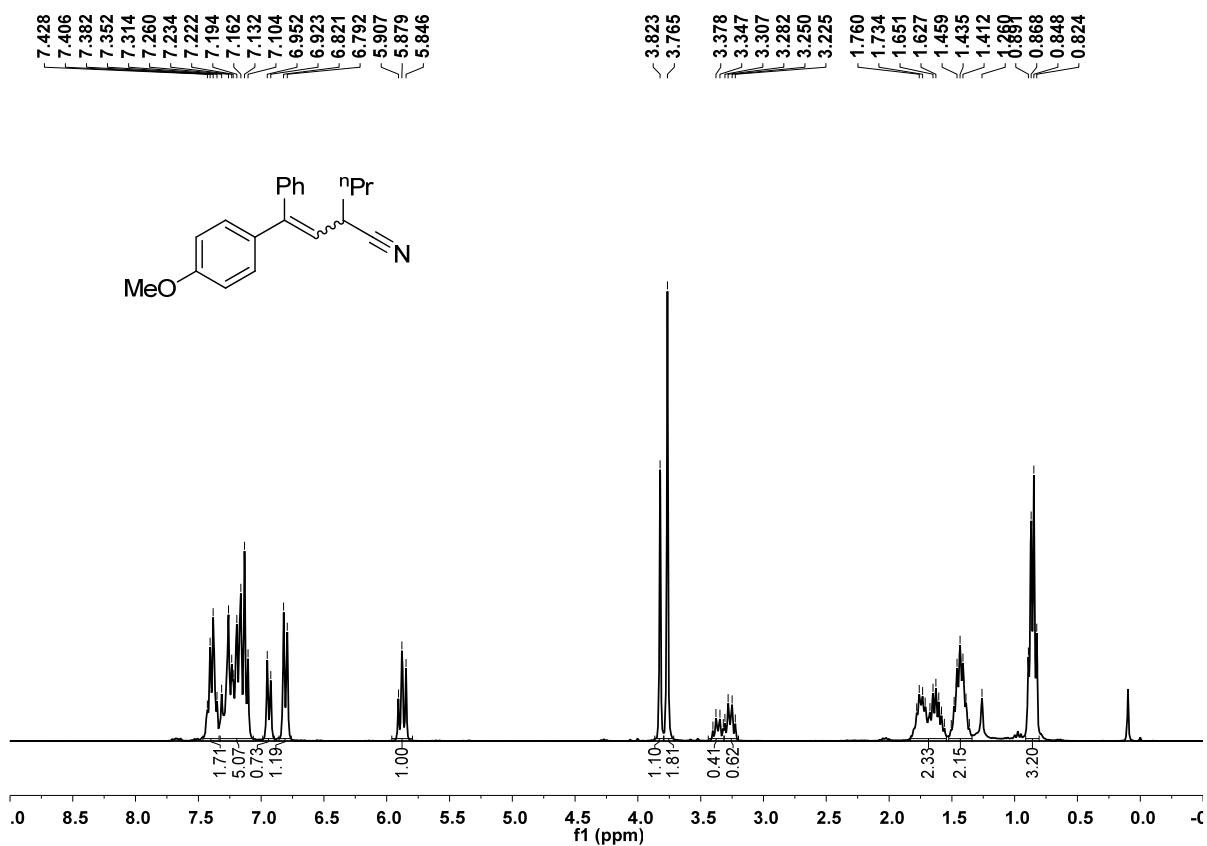
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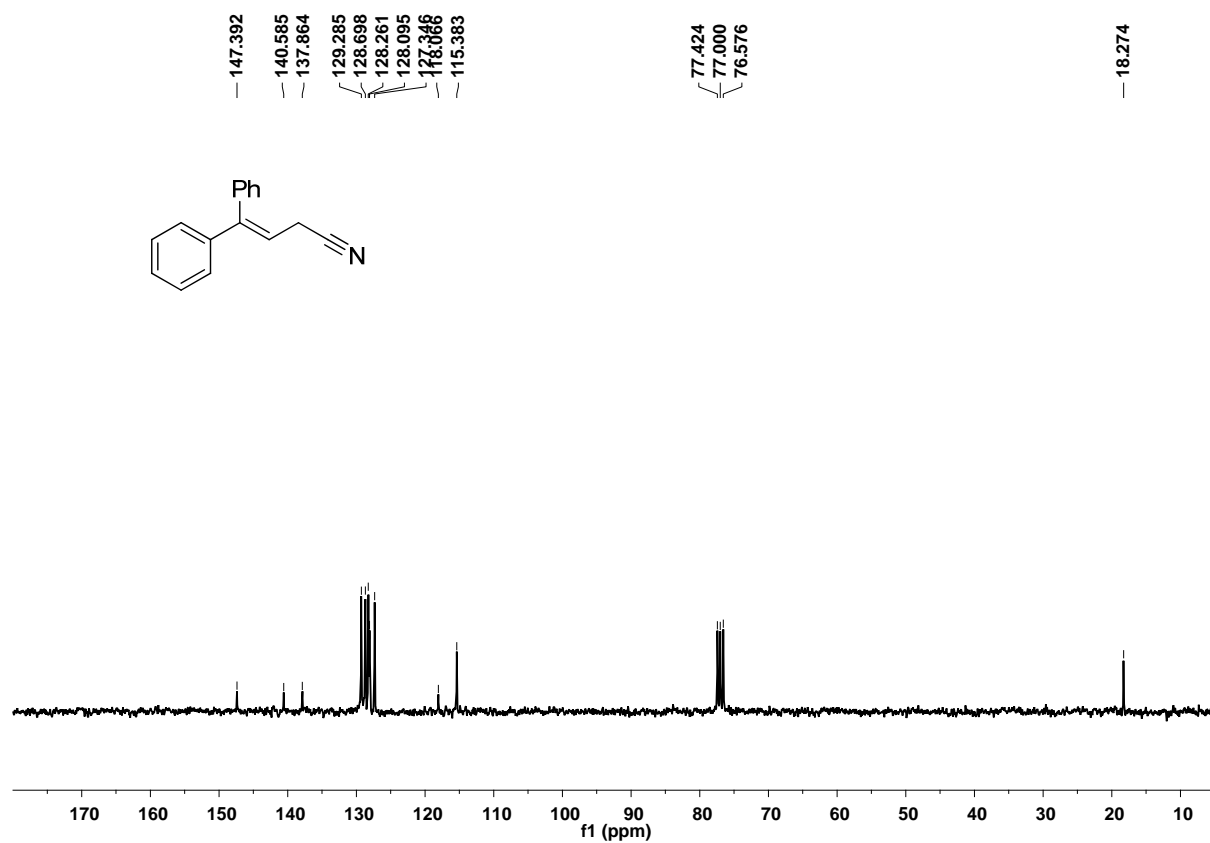
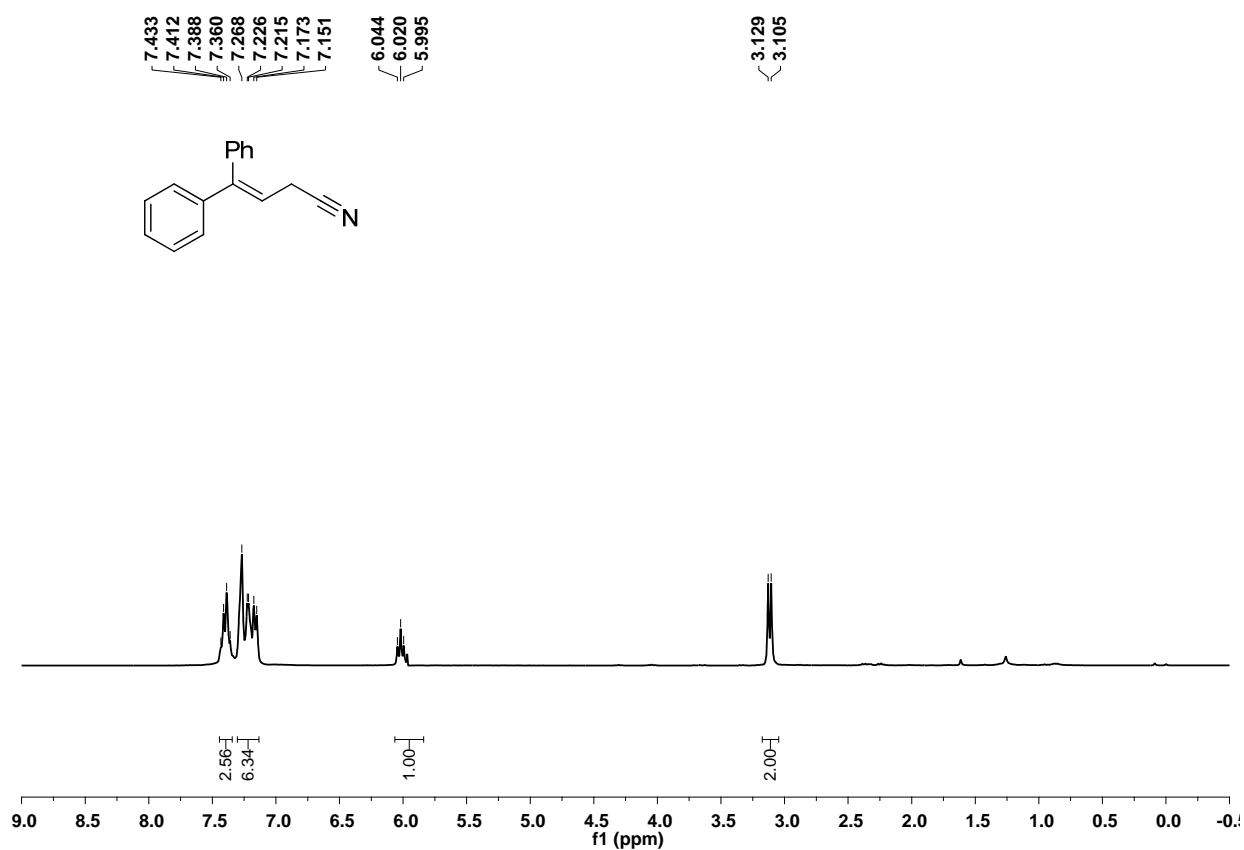
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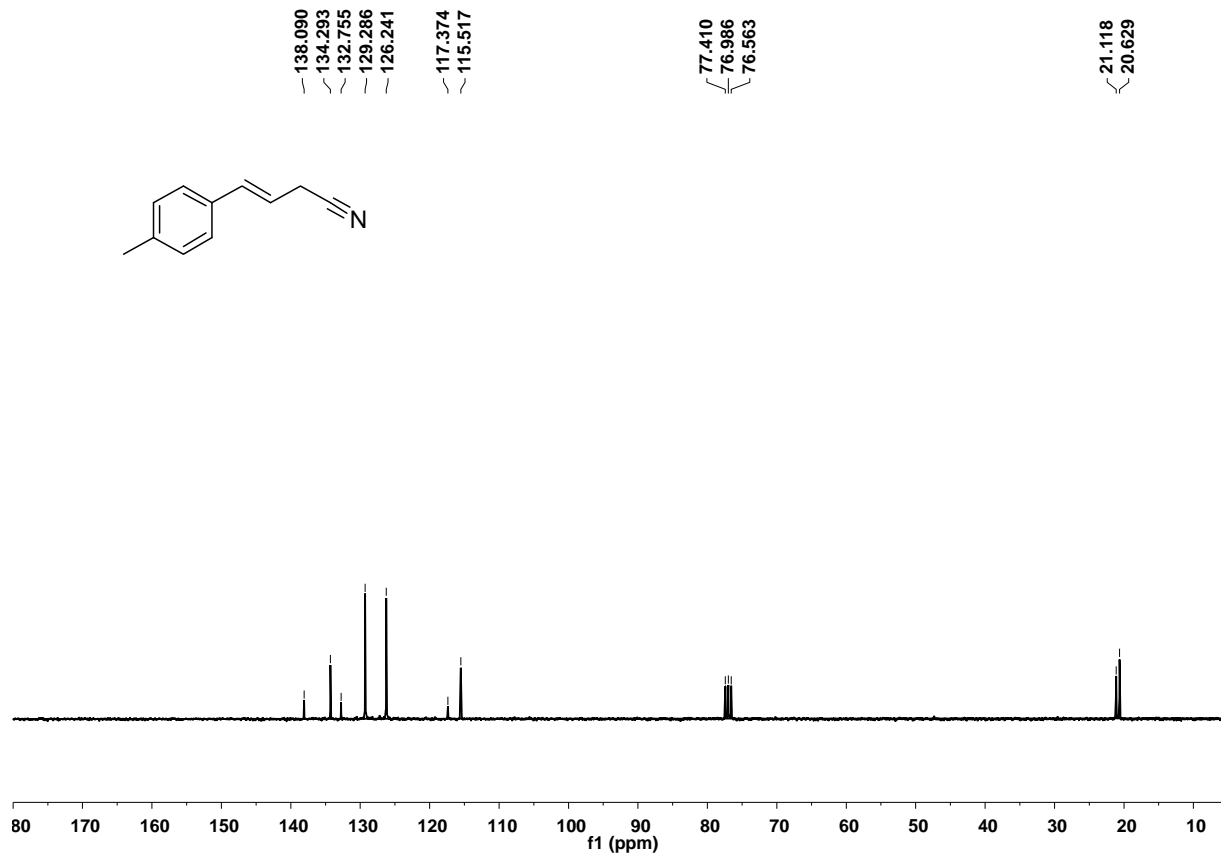
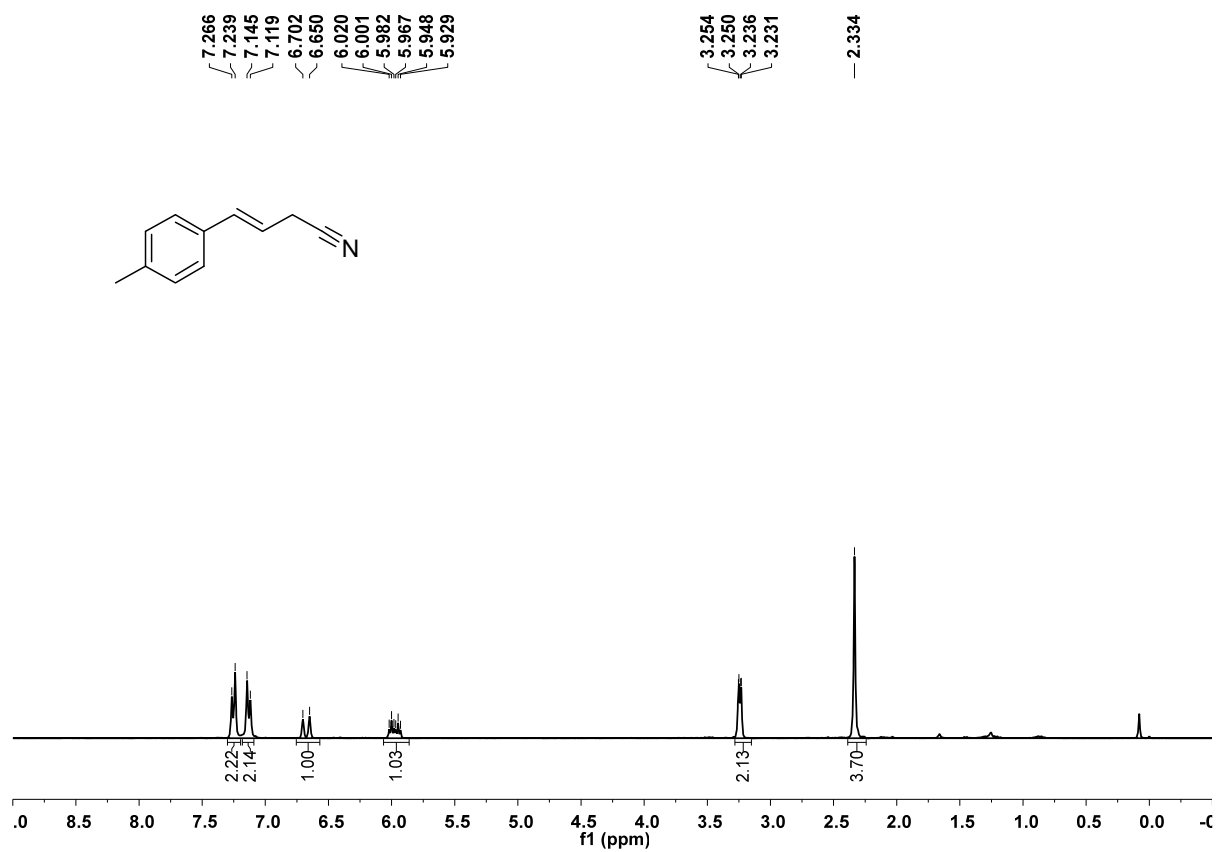
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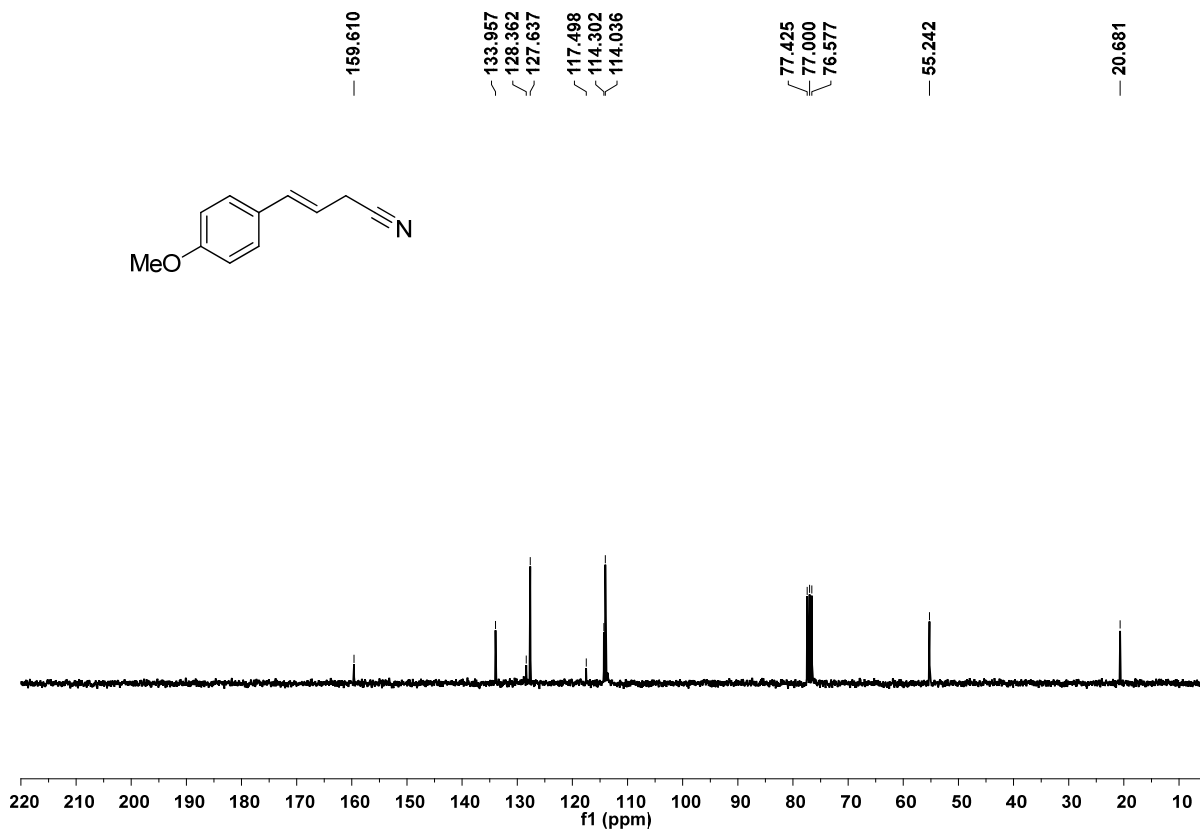
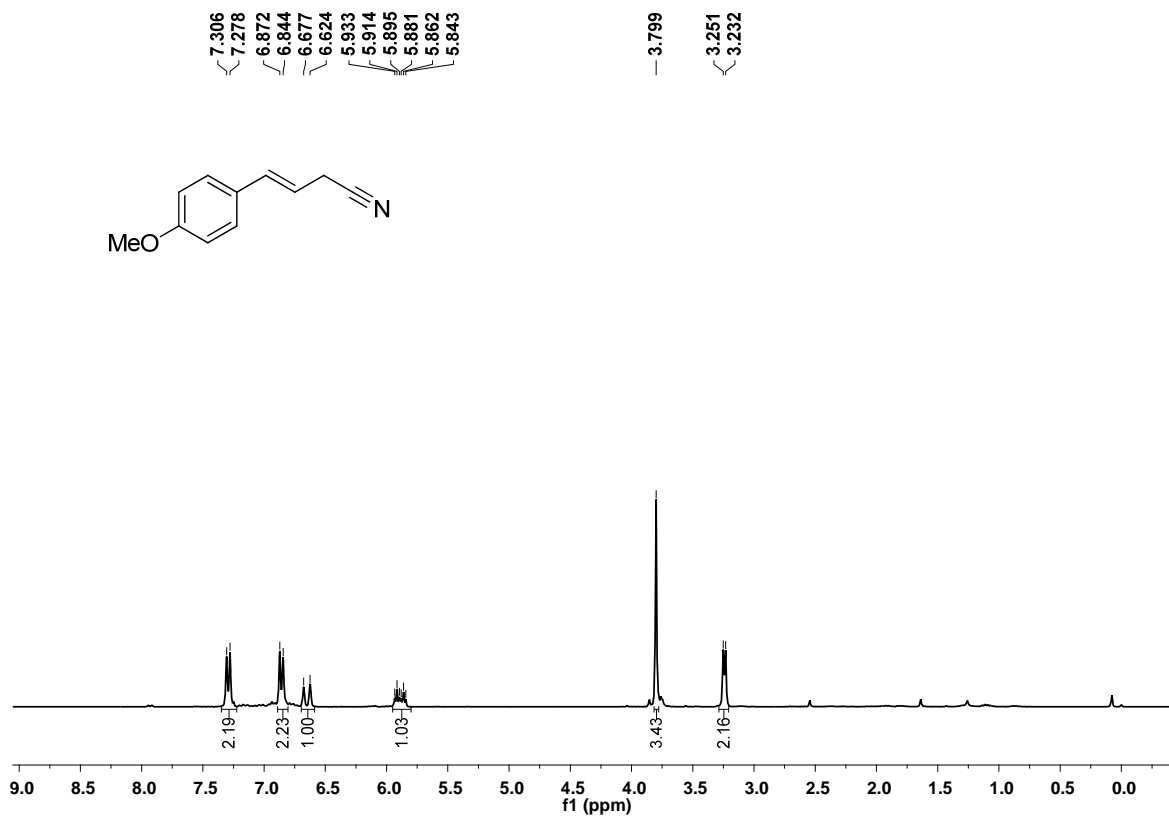
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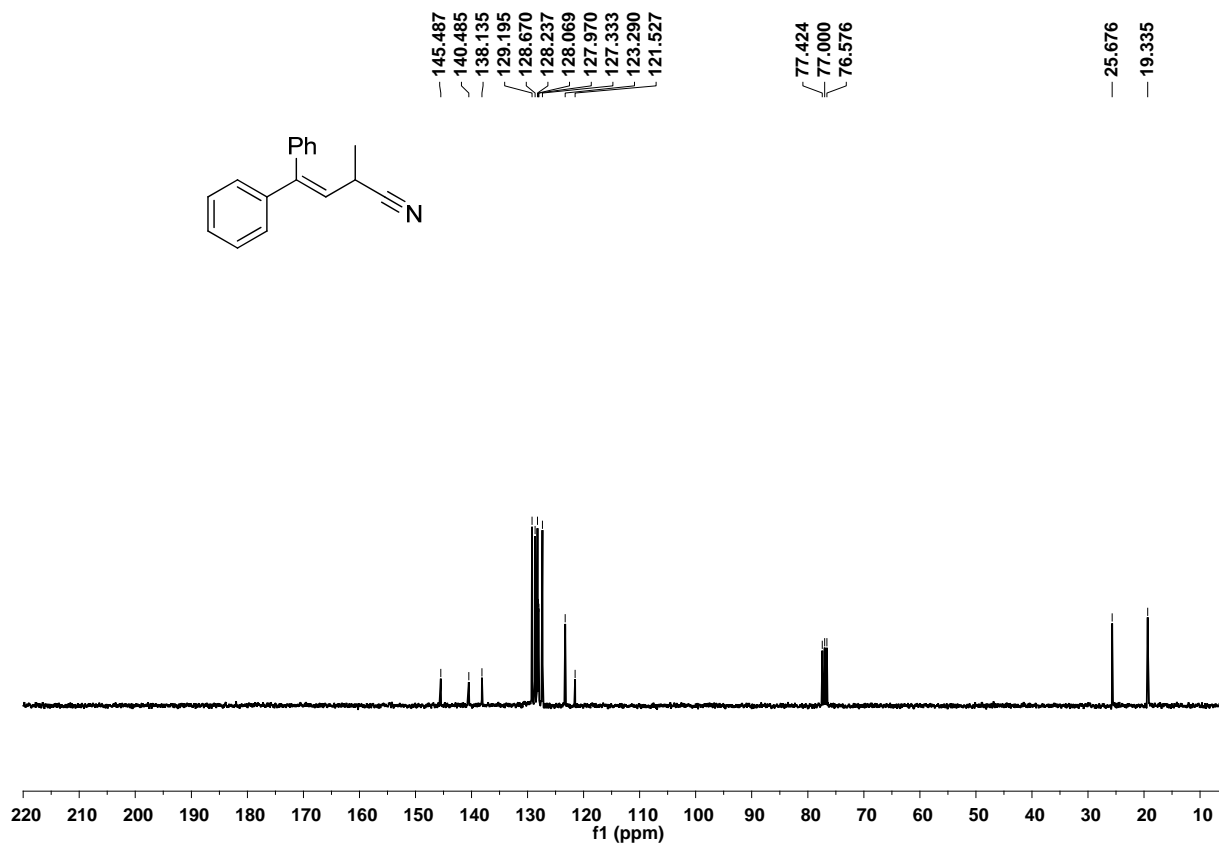
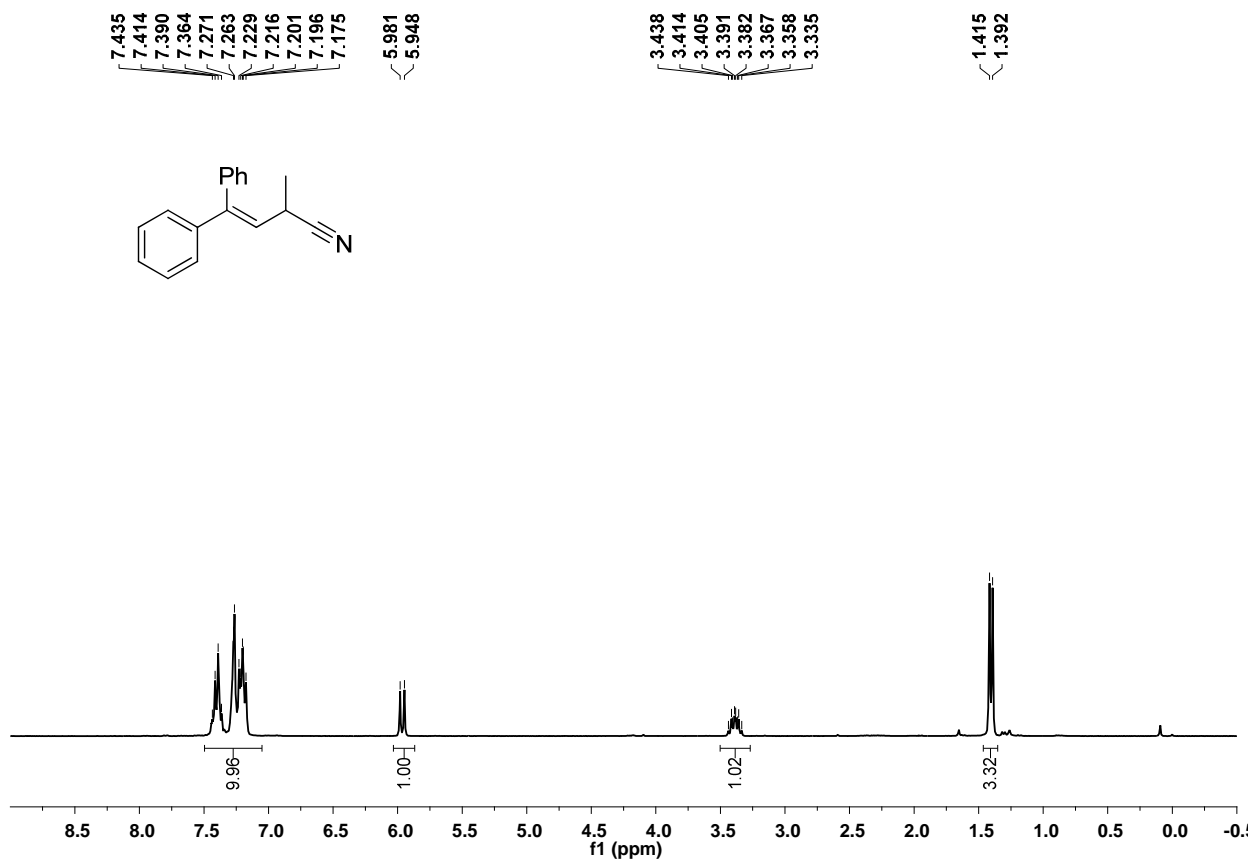
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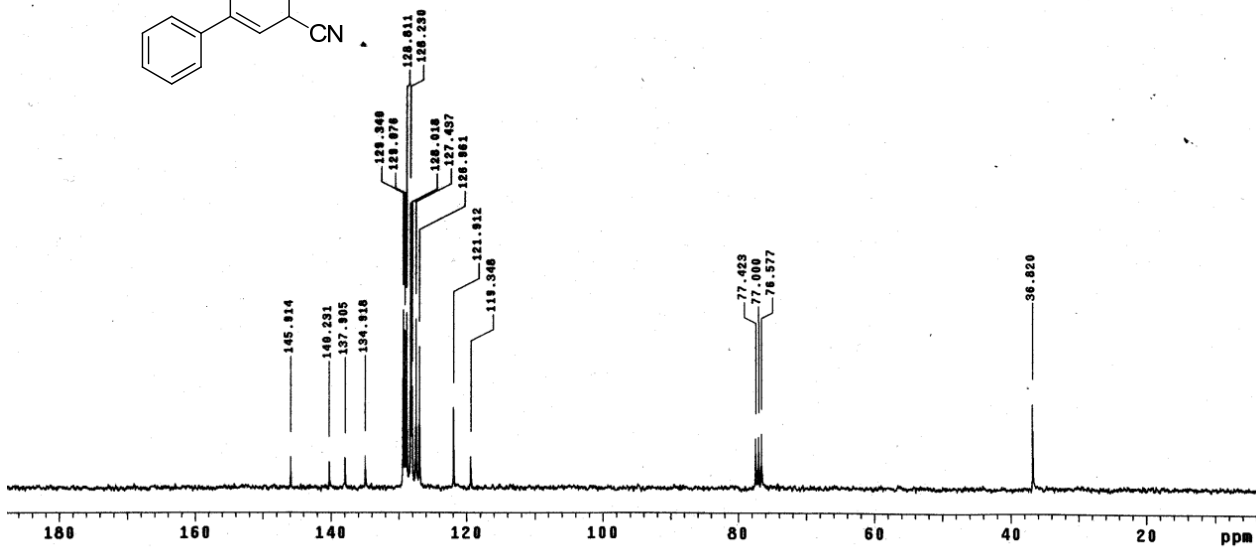
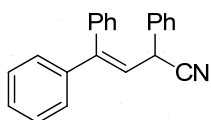
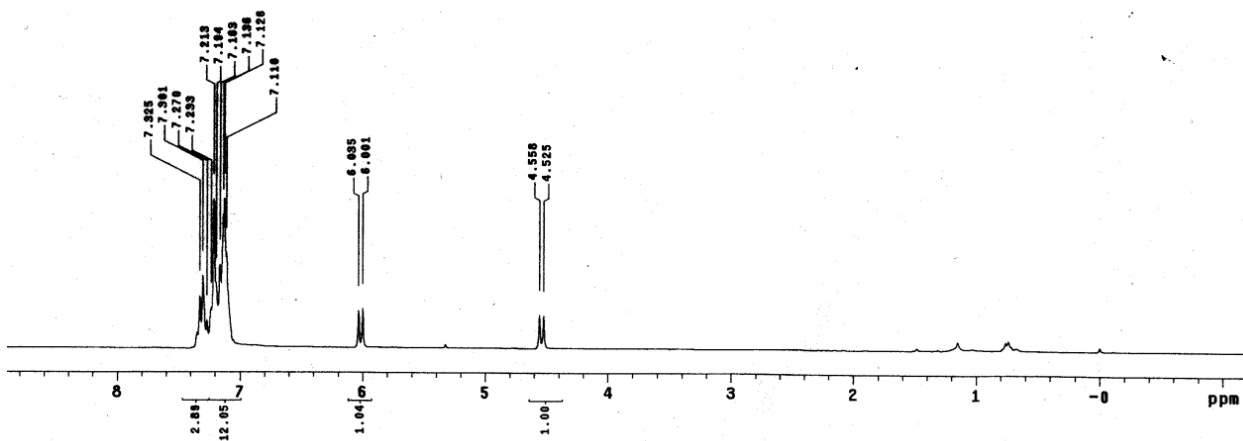
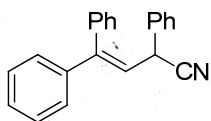
3n



30



3p



3q

