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Practical and Sustainable Preparation of Pyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indoles by Cu/Fe Catalyzed Intramolecular C(sp²)-H Amination

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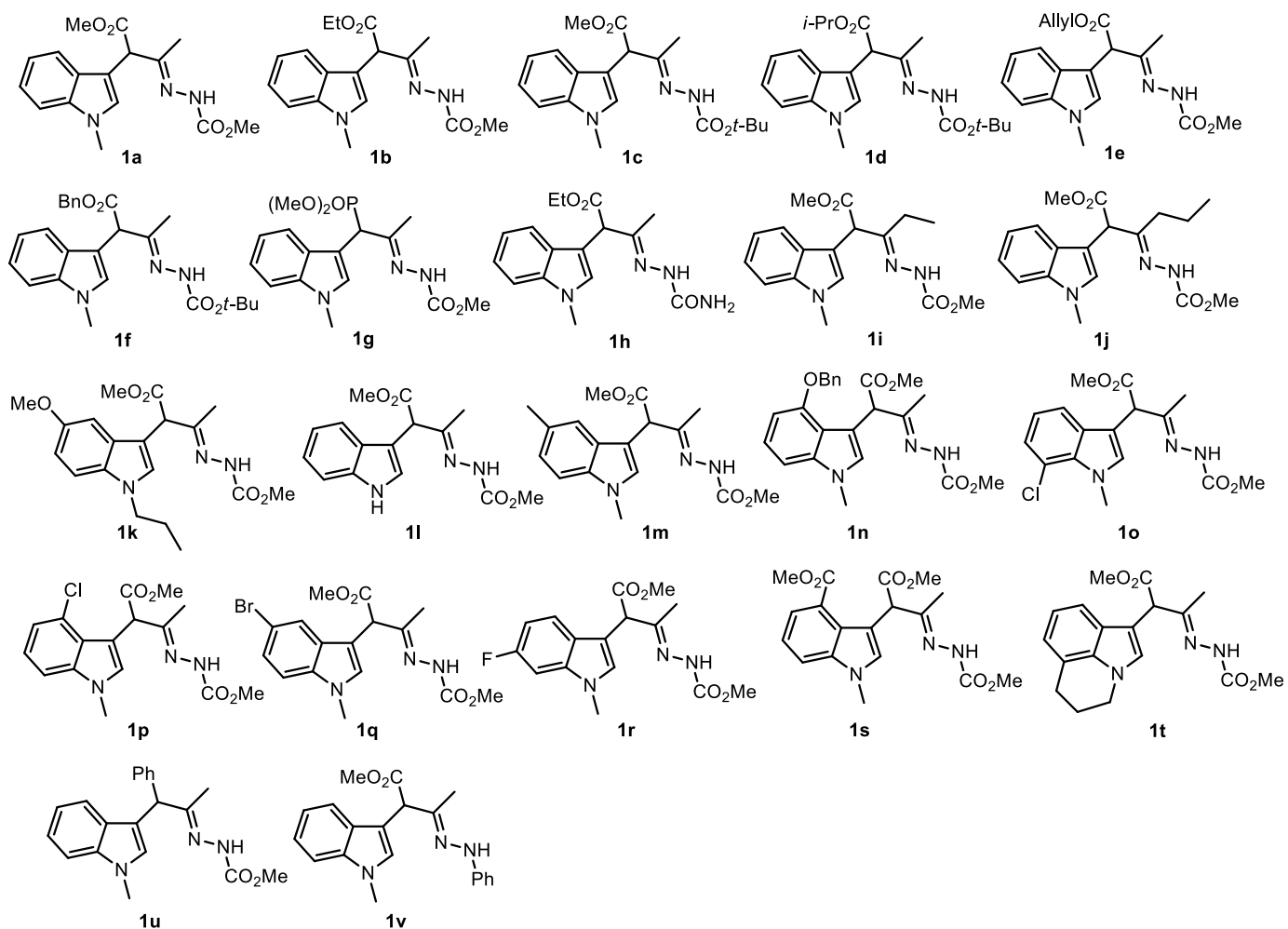
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1. General Remarks

All the commercially available reagents and solvents were used without further purification. α -(Indol-3-yl)hydrazones **1a–v** were prepared according to our previously reported method with a slight modification.^{1,2} Chromatographic purification of compounds was carried out on silica gel (60–200 μm). TLC analysis was performed on pre-loaded (0.25 mm) glass supported silica gel plates (Kieselgel 60); compounds were visualized by exposure to UV light and by dipping the plates in 1% $\text{Ce}(\text{SO}_4)\cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$, 2.5% $(\text{NH}_4)_6\text{Mo}_7\text{O}_{24}\cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$ in 10% sulphuric acid followed by heating on a hot plate. All ^1H NMR and ^{13}C NMR spectra were recorded at 400 and 100 MHz using $\text{DMSO-}d_6$ or CDCl_3 as solvent on a Bruker Ultrashield 400 spectrometer (Bruker, Billerica, MA, USA). Chemical shift (δ scale) are reported in parts per million (ppm) relative to the central peak of the solvent and are sorted in descending order within each group. The following abbreviations are used to describe peak patterns where appropriate: s = singlet, d = doublet, dd = doublet of doublet, dt = doublet of triplet, t = triplet, q = quartet, sept = septet, m = multiplet and br = broad signal. All coupling constants (J value) are given in Hertz [Hz]. High-resolution mass spectral (HRMS) analyses were performed using Orbitrap Exploris 240 Mass Spectrometers (Thermo Scientific) equipped with an ESI source. Melting points were determined in open capillary tubes and are uncorrected.

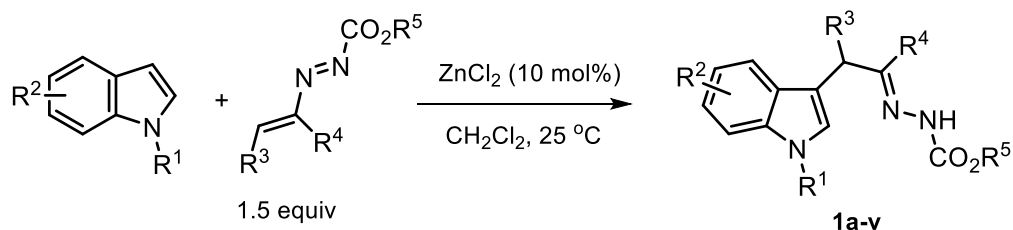
2. Synthesis and characterization of substrates

List of substrates **1a–v** prepared according to the general procedures.^{1,2}



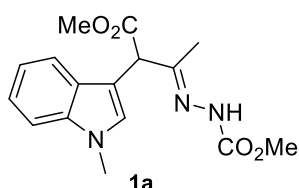
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2.1. Procedure for the synthesis of α -(indol-3-yl)hydrazones **1a–v**^{1,2}:

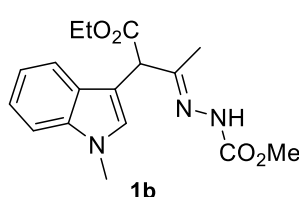


To a stirred mixture of indole (1 mmol) and azoalkene (1.5 mmol, 1.5 equiv) in dichloromethane (4 mL), zinc dichloride (13.6 mg, 0.1 mmol, 10 mol %) was added. After the disappearance of indole (0.25–18 h, TLC check), the solvent was removed and the crude mixture was purified by column chromatography on silica gel to afford, after crystallization, the α -(indol-3-yl)hydrazones **1** (23–95% yields).

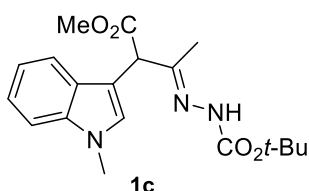
2.2 Characterization of substrates



Methyl 2-(4-methoxy-3-(1-methyl-1H-indol-3-yl)-4-oxobutan-2-ylidene)hydrazinecarboxylate (1a): The chemical-physical data of compound **1a** are in agreement with those reported.²



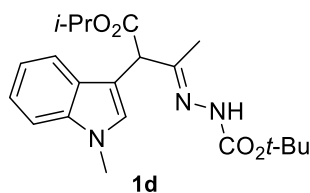
Methyl 2-(4-ethoxy-3-(1-methyl-1H-indol-3-yl)-4-oxobutan-2-ylidene)hydrazinecarboxylate (1b): The chemical-physical data of compound **1b** are in agreement with those reported.²



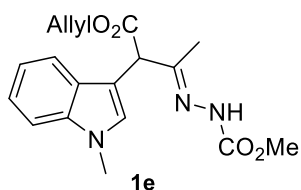
***tert*-Butyl 2-(4-methoxy-3-(1-methyl-1H-indol-3-yl)-4-oxobutan-2-ylidene)hydrazinecarboxylate (1c)**: Compound **1c** was isolated by column chromatography (ethyl acetate/cyclohexane 35:65) in 60% yield (216.6 mg), 1 h; white solid; mp: 138–140 °C. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 9.57 (br, 1H), 7.45 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.41 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 7.32 (s, 1H), 7.17–7.13 (m, 1H), 7.04–7.00 (m, 1H), 4.83 (s, 1H), 3.77 (s, 3H), 3.66 (s, 3H), 1.76 (s, 3H), 1.45 (s, 9H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 171.2, 153.0, 150.2, 136.5, 128.5, 126.8, 121.3, 118.9, 118.7, 109.8, 107.6, 79.1,

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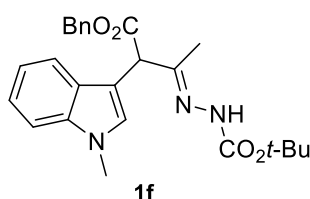
51.9, 51.3, 32.4, 28.1, 14.5. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, m/z): $[M+H]^+$ calcd for $C_{19}H_{25}N_3O_4$ 360.1918, found 360.1923.



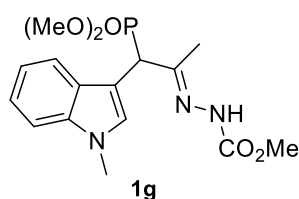
tert-Butyl 2-(4-isopropoxy-3-(1-methyl-1*H*-indol-3-yl)-4-oxobutan-2-ylidene)hydrazinecarboxylate: (1d): The chemical-physical data of compound **1d** are in agreement with those reported.²



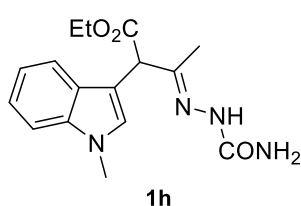
Methyl 2-(4-allyloxy-3-(1-methyl-1*H*-indol-3-yl)-4-oxobutan-2-ylidene)hydrazinecarboxylate: (1e): The chemical-physical data of compound **1e** are in agreement with those reported.²



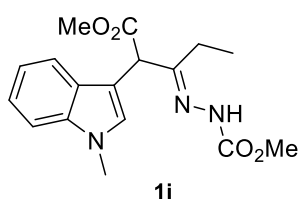
tert-Butyl 2-(4-(benzyloxy)-3-(1-methyl-1*H*-indol-3-yl)-4-oxobutan-2-ylidene)hydrazinecarboxylate (1f): The chemical-physical data of compound **1f** are in agreement with those reported.²



Methyl 2-(1-(dimethoxyphosphoryl)-1-(1-methyl-1*H*-indol-3-yl)propan-2-ylidene)hydrazinecarboxylate: (1g): The chemical-physical data of compound **1g** are in agreement with those reported.²

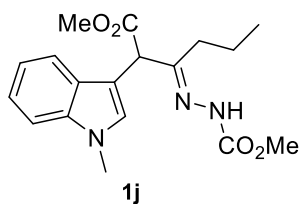


Ethyl 3-(2-carbamoylhydrazono)-2-(1-methyl-1*H*-indol-3-yl)butanoate: (1h): The chemical-physical data of compound **1h** are in agreement with those reported.²

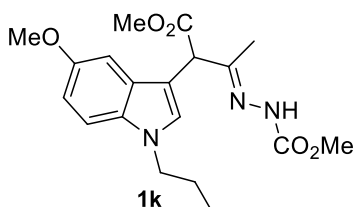


Methyl 2-(1-methoxy-2-(1-methyl-1*H*-indol-3-yl)-1-oxopentan-3-ylidene)hydrazinecarboxylate: (1i): The chemical-physical data of compound **1i** are in agreement with those reported.²

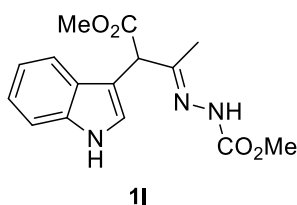
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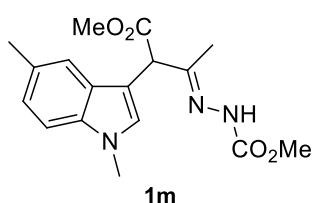
Methyl 2-(1-methoxy-2-(1-methyl-1H-indol-3-yl)-1-oxohexan-3-ylidene)hydrazinecarboxylate: (1j): The chemical-physical data of compound **1j** are in agreement with those reported.²



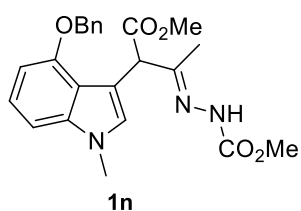
Methyl 2-(4-methoxy-4-oxo-3-(1-propyl-1H-indol-3-yl)butan-2-ylidene)hydrazinecarboxylate: (1k): The chemical-physical data of compound **1k** are in agreement with those reported.²



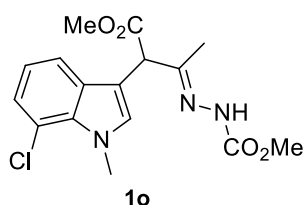
Methyl 2-(3-(1H-indol-3-yl)-4-methoxy-4-oxobutan-2-ylidene)hydrazinecarboxylate: (1l): The chemical-physical data of compound **1l** are in agreement with those reported.²



Methyl 2-(3-(1,5-dimethyl-1H-indol-3-yl)-4-methoxy-4-oxobutan-2-ylidene)hydrazinecarboxylate: (1m): The chemical-physical data of compound **1m** are in agreement with those reported.²

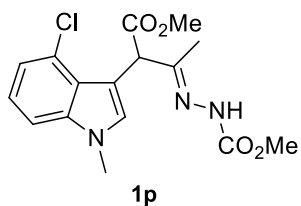


Methyl 2-(3-(4-(benzyloxy)-1-methyl-1H-indol-3-yl)-4-methoxy-4-oxobutan-2-ylidene)hydrazinecarboxylate: (1n): The chemical-physical data of compound **1n** are in agreement with those reported.²

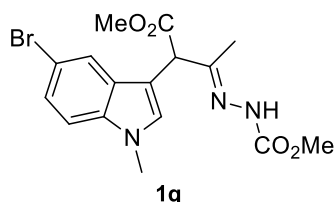


Methyl 2-(3-(7-chloro-1-methyl-1H-indol-3-yl)-4-methoxy-4-oxobutan-2-ylidene)hydrazinecarboxylate: (1o): The chemical-physical data of compound **1o** are in agreement with those reported.²

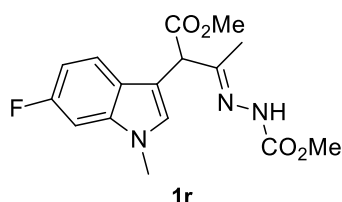
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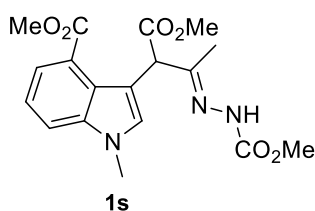
Methyl 2-(3-(4-chloro-1-methyl-1*H*-indol-3-yl)-4-methoxy-4-oxobutan-2-ylidene)hydrazinecarboxylate: (1p): The chemical-physical data of compound **1p** are in agreement with those reported.²



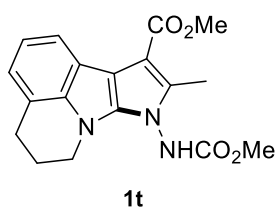
Methyl 2-(3-(5-bromo-1-methyl-1*H*-indol-3-yl)-4-methoxy-4-oxobutan-2-ylidene)hydrazinecarboxylate: (1q): The chemical-physical data of compound **1q** are in agreement with those reported.²



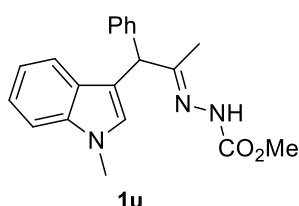
Methyl 2-(3-(6-fluoro-1-methyl-1*H*-indol-3-yl)-4-methoxy-4-oxobutan-2-ylidene)hydrazinecarboxylate: (1r): The chemical-physical data of compound **1r** are in agreement with those reported.²



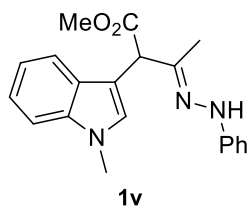
Methyl 3-(1-methoxy-3-(2-(methoxycarbonyl)hydrazono)-1-oxobutan-2-yl)-1-methyl-1*H*-indole-4-carboxylate: (1s): The chemical-physical data of compound **1s** are in agreement with those reported.²



Methyl 2-(3-(5,6-dihydro-4*H*-pyrrolo[3,2,1-*ij*]quinolin-1-yl)-4-methoxy-4-oxobutan-2-ylidene)hydrazinecarboxylate: (1t): The chemical-physical data of compound **1t** are in agreement with those reported.²



Methyl 2-(1-(1-methyl-1*H*-indol-3-yl)-1-phenylpropan-2-ylidene)hydrazinecarboxylate: (1u): The chemical-physical data of compound **1u** are in agreement with those reported.²

**Methyl 2-(1-methyl-1*H*-indol-3-yl)-3-(2-phenylhydrazono)butanoate (1v):**

Compound **1v** was isolated by column chromatography (ethyl acetate/cyclohexane 30:70) in 64% yield (215.0 mg), 4 h; pale yellow solid; mp: 121–122 °C. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 8.90 (s, 1H), 7.50 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.41 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.32 (s, 1H), 7.20–7.12 (m, 3H), 7.10–7.07 (m, 2H), 7.02–6.98 (m, 1H), 6.74–6.69 (m, 1H), 4.91 (s, 1H), 3.77 (s, 3H), 3.69 (s, 3H), 1.83 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 171.6, 146.3, 142.7, 136.6, 128.8, 128.4, 127.0, 121.2, 118.9, 118.8, 118.4, 112.4, 109.7, 108.3, 51.8, 51.3, 32.4, 14.1. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, *m/z*): [M+H]⁺ calcd for C₂₀H₂₁N₃O₂ 336.1707, found: 336.1701.

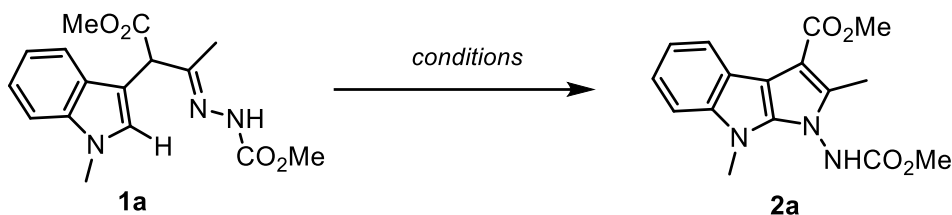
3. Copper-Iron catalyzed Intramolecular C(sp²)-H Amination

3.1 Preliminary optimization studies

Optimization of Reaction Conditions for the Intramolecular Oxidative Cyclization of 1a (Table S1).

First, we tested the conversion of α-indolylhydrazone **1a** to 1-amino pyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole **2a** using a combination of a palladium catalyst and an oxidant. To our delight, product **2a** was obtained in 90% yield in the presence of Pd(OAc)₂ (0.1 mmol) and AgOAc (2 equiv) in DCM at room temperature (entry 1). A further investigation of the process revealed that the palladium catalyst was not needed since both Cu(OAc)₂·H₂O (0.1 mmol) or FeCl₃·6H₂O (0.1 mmol) alone catalyze the reaction albeit with scarce yield and poor conversion (entries 2 and 3). On the other hand, we were pleased to find that the intramolecular C–N coupling was successful in the presence of catalytic amounts of both Cu(OAc)₂·H₂O and FeCl₃·6H₂O (82% yield, entry 4). A comparable yield of **2a** (76%) within a shorter reaction time was registered when the reaction was conducted in DCE at 50 °C (entry 5). Extra additives such as acid (PivOH) and base (K₂CO₃) gave inferior results (entries 6 and 7). Doubling the co-catalyst loading led to a slightly increase in the yield of **2a** (entry 8). A contextual reducing of the half the amount of catalyst (0.05 mmol) and doubling that of co-catalyst (0.1 mmol) did not lead to a significant improvement in yield (76%, entry 9). Other copper salts with different oxidation states (I, II) tested (e.g., CuO, Cu(OTf)₂, CuCl₂, CuI, and CuCl) in combination with FeCl₃·6H₂O co-catalyst also performed well (entries 10–14). Finally, different solvents were explored, and the best result was obtained when acetone/H₂O, or neat H₂O was used, albeit with slower conversion for the latter (entries 15–20). Based on these preliminary studies and considering the economic and environmental issue we decided to employ H₂O as a solvent for the transformation. Therefore, conditions involving 10 mol% of Cu(OAc)₂·H₂O and 5 mol% of FeCl₃·6H₂O in H₂O at room temperature were selected as base to further optimize this intramolecular C–H amination.

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Table S1: Preliminary experiments^a

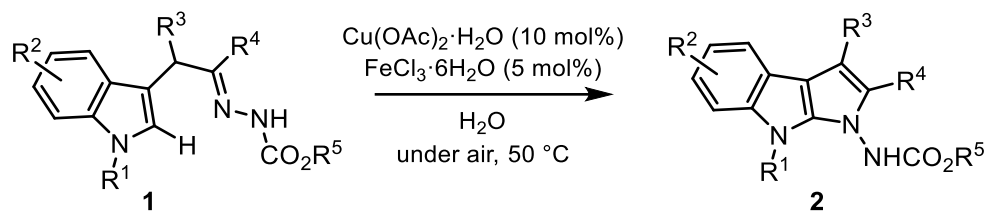
entry	catalyst [equiv.]	co-catalyst [equiv.]	additive [equiv.]	solvent	t [h]	yield [%] ^b
1 ^c	Pd(OAc) ₂ (0.1)	–	–	DCM	3	90
2	FeCl ₃ ·6H ₂ O (0.1)	–	–	DCM	12	28 ^{d,e}
3	Cu(OAc) ₂ ·H ₂ O (0.1)	–	–	DCM	12	33
4	Cu(OAc) ₂ ·H ₂ O (0.1)	FeCl ₃ ·6H ₂ O (0.05)	–	DCM	5	82
5	Cu(OAc) ₂ ·H ₂ O (0.1)	FeCl ₃ ·6H ₂ O (0.05)	–	DCE ^f	0.8	76
6	Cu(OAc) ₂ ·H ₂ O (0.1)	FeCl ₃ ·6H ₂ O (0.05)	PivOH (5.0)	DCM	18	60
7	Cu(OAc) ₂ ·H ₂ O (0.1)	FeCl ₃ ·6H ₂ O (0.05)	K ₂ CO ₃ (2.0)	DCM	6	47
8	Cu(OAc) ₂ ·H ₂ O (0.1)	FeCl ₃ ·6H ₂ O (0.1)	–	DCM	4	83
9	Cu(OAc) ₂ ·H ₂ O (0.05)	FeCl ₃ ·6H ₂ O (0.1)	–	DCM	5	76
10	CuO (0.1)	FeCl ₃ ·6H ₂ O (0.05)	–	DCM	4	83
11	Cu(OTf) ₂ (0.1)	FeCl ₃ ·6H ₂ O (0.05)	–	DCM	8	76
12	CuCl ₂ (0.1)	FeCl ₃ ·6H ₂ O (0.05)	–	DCM	12	82
13	CuI (0.1)	FeCl ₃ ·6H ₂ O (0.05)	–	DCM	24	79
14	CuCl (0.1)	FeCl ₃ ·6H ₂ O (0.05)	–	DCM	24	68
15	Cu(OAc) ₂ ·H ₂ O (0.1)	FeCl ₃ ·6H ₂ O (0.05)	–	toluene	24	trace ^d
16	Cu(OAc) ₂ ·H ₂ O (0.1)	FeCl ₃ ·6H ₂ O (0.05)	–	MeCN	1	35
17	Cu(OAc) ₂ ·H ₂ O (0.1)	FeCl ₃ ·6H ₂ O (0.05)	–	MeOH	1	54
18	Cu(OAc) ₂ ·H ₂ O (0.1)	FeCl ₃ ·6H ₂ O (0.05)	–	Me ₂ CO	1	57
19	Cu(OAc) ₂ ·H ₂ O (0.1)	FeCl ₃ ·6H ₂ O (0.05)	–	H ₂ O(9)/Me ₂ CO(1)	3	95 ^g
20	Cu(OAc) ₂ ·H ₂ O (0.1)	FeCl ₃ ·6H ₂ O (0.05)	–	H ₂ O	24	99 ^g

^aAll reaction were performed on 0.2 mmol scale of **1a** in 2 mL of solvent (0.1 M) under air atmospher for the indicate time. ^bAll yields refer to the isolated product after column chromatography, unless otherwise noted. ^cAgOAc (2.0 eq.) as an external oxidant was used. ^dThe unreacted

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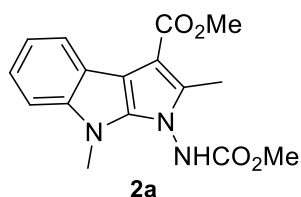
starting material was recovered. ^e38% Yield of **2a** with complete consumption of **1a** was observed with 1.0 equiv. of FeCl₃·6H₂O. ^fPerformed at 50 °C. ^gWithout column chromatography.

3.2 Procedure for the synthesis of products **2a–t**



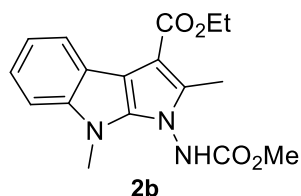
In a round-bottom flask, α -indolylylhydrazone **1** (0.2 mmol), Cu(OAc)₂·H₂O (0.02 mmol, 4.0 mg), FeCl₃·6H₂O (0.01 mmol, 2.7 mg) and water (2 mL) were added. The aqueous suspension was stirred at 50 °C (oil bath) until consumption of the starting material (TLC check). Then, the reaction mixture was diluted with brine and extracted with ethyl acetate (3 x 10 mL). The organic phase was dried over anhydrous sodium sulphate and the solvent was removed under vacuum. The crude product was purified by crystallization or by flash chromatography on silica gel (cyclohexane/ethyl acetate) to give the corresponding product **2** (52-99% yields).

3.3 Characterization of products



Methyl 1-((methoxycarbonyl)amino)-2,8-dimethyl-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole-3-carboxylate (2a**)**²: compound **2a** was obtained by simple extraction with ethyl acetate and crystallization from diethyl ether in 99% yield (62.8 mg), 3 h; pale brown solid; The chemical-physical data of compound **2a** are in

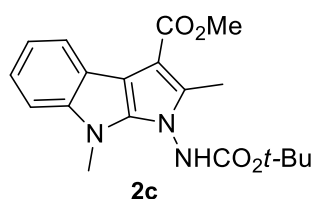
agreement with those reported.² mp: 164–166 °C; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 10.99 (br, 1H), 7.93 (dd, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 0.8 Hz, 1H), 7.44 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.19–7.14 (m, 1H), 7.12–7.08 (m, 1H), 3.89 (s, 3H), 3.79 (s, 6H), 2.48 (s, 3H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 165.1, 156.2, 139.7, 136.5, 136.3, 120.6, 120.1, 119.7, 119.2, 109.5, 102.7, 102.1, 53.3, 50.9, 29.1, 10.2; HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, *m/z*): [M+H]⁺ Calcd for C₁₆H₁₈N₃O₄ 316.1292; Found 316.1288.



Ethyl 1-((methoxycarbonyl)amino)-2,8-dimethyl-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole-3-carboxylate (2b**)**: compound **2b** was isolated by column chromatography (ethyl acetate/cyclohexane 40:60) in 71% yield (46.6 mg); 4 h; whitish solid; mp: 149–151 °C; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 11.04 (br, 1H), 7.96 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.45 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.18–7.14 (m, 1H), 7.12–7.08 (m, 1H), 4.36 (q, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 3.81 (s, 3H), 3.79 (s, 3H), 2.49 (s, 3H), 1.42 (t, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 164.6, 156.2, 139.7, 136.5, 136.6, 120.5, 120.1, 119.7, 119.1, 109.5, 102.6, 102.4, 59.3,

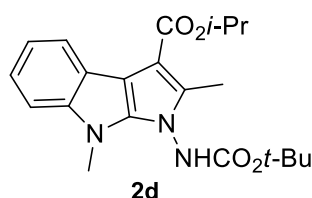
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53.2, 29.1, 14.6, 10.2. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, m/z): $[M+H]^+$ calcd for $C_{17}H_{19}N_3O_4$ 330.1448, found 330.1452.



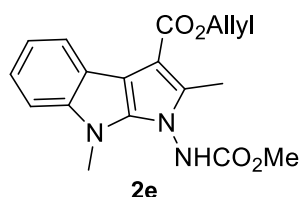
Methyl **1-((*tert*-butoxycarbonyl)amino)-2,8-dimethyl-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole-3-carboxylate (2c):** compound **2c** was isolated by simple extraction with ethyl acetate and crystallization from diethyl ether/petroleum ether in 92% yield (66.0 mg); 4 h; whitish solid; mp: 179–180 ;

1H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO- d_6) δ 10.73 (br, 1H), 7.92 (d, $J = 7.2$ Hz, 1H), 7.44 (d, $J = 8.0$ Hz, 1H), 7.18–7.14 (m, 1H), 7.11–7.07 (m, 1H), 3.89 (s, 3H), 3.79 (s, 3H), 2.47 (s, 3H), 1.51 (s, 9H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO- d_6) δ 165.1, 154.7, 139.7, 136.5, 136.4, 120.5, 120.1, 119.6, 119.1, 109.4, 102.5, 101.8, 81.5, 50.8, 29.0, 27.8, 10.2. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, m/z): $[M+H]^+$ calcd for $C_{19}H_{23}N_3O_4$ 358.1761, found 358.1752.



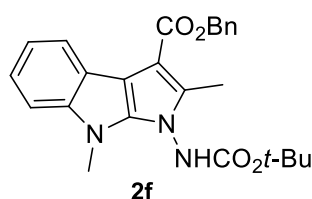
Isopropyl **1-((*tert*-butoxycarbonyl)amino)-2,8-dimethyl-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole-3-carboxylate (2d):** compound **2d** was obtained by simple extraction with ethyl acetate and crystallization from diethyl ether/petroleum ether in 97% yield (74.5 mg); 12 h; pale grey solid; mp: 152–

154 °C; 1H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO- d_6) δ 10.73 (br, 1H), 7.96 (d, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 1H), 7.43 (d, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 1H), 7.17–7.07 (m, 2H), 5.19 (sept, $J = 6.4$ Hz, 2H), 3.79 (s, 3H), 2.45 (s, 3H), 1.51 (s, 3H), 1.40 (d, $J = 6.0$ Hz, 6H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO- d_6) δ 164.2, 154.7, 139.7, 136.5, 136.4, 120.4, 120.2, 119.7, 119.1, 109.4, 102.7, 102.6, 81.5, 66.4, 29.0, 27.8, 22.2, 10.4. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, m/z): $[M+H]^+$ calcd for $C_{21}H_{27}N_3O_4$ 386.2074, found 386.2077.



Allyl **1-((methoxycarbonyl)amino)-2,8-dimethyl-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole-3-carboxylate (2e):** compound **2e** was isolated by column chromatography (ethyl acetate/cyclohexane 40:60) in 64% yield (49.2 mg); 20 h; white solid; mp: 134–136 °C; 1H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO- d_6) δ 11.06 (br, 1H),

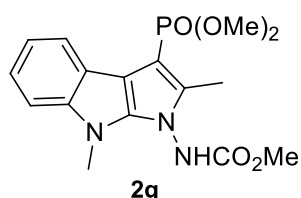
7.94 (d, $J = 8.0$ Hz, 1H), 7.45 (d, $J = 8.0$ Hz, 1H), 7.18–7.14 (m, 1H), 7.10–7.06 (m, 1H), 6.19–6.10 (m, 1H), 5.46–5.40 (m, 1H), 5.32–5.29 (m, 1H), 4.87–4.86 (m, 2H), 3.80 (s, 3H), 3.79 (s, 3H), 2.49 (s, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO- d_6) δ 164.2, 156.2, 139.7, 136.7, 136.3, 133.4, 120.6, 120.0, 119.7, 119.1, 117.9, 109.5, 102.6, 102.0, 63.9, 53.3, 29.1, 10.2. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, m/z): $[M+H]^+$ calcd for $C_{18}H_{19}N_3O_4$ 342.1448, found 342.1450.



Benzyl **1-((*tert*-butoxycarbonyl)amino)-2,8-dimethyl-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole-3-carboxylate (2f):** compound **2f** was obtained by simple extraction with ethyl acetate and crystallization from ethyl acetate/diethyl ether in 85% yield (74.1 mg); 20 h at 50 °C then 24 h to 70 °C;

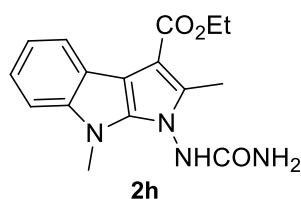
ELECTRONIC SUPPORTING INFORMATION

brown solid; mp: 188–190 °C; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, $\text{DMSO-}d_6$) δ 10.76 (br, 1H), 7.77 (d, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 1H), 7.50 (m, 2H), 7.43–7.40 (m, 3H), 7.38–7.34 (m, 1H), 7.11 (t, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 1H), 6.93 (t, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 1H), 5.41 (s, 2H), 3.78 (s, 3H), 2.47 (s, 3H), 1.50 (s, 9H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, $\text{DMSO-}d_6$) δ 164.4, 154.6, 139.6, 136.9, 136.8, 136.4, 128.5, 128.1, 127.9, 120.4, 120.0, 119.8, 119.0, 109.3, 102.6, 101.9, 81.5, 64.9, 29.0, 27.8, 10.2. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, m/z): $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$ calcd for $\text{C}_{25}\text{H}_{27}\text{N}_3\text{O}_4$ 434.2074, found 434.2082.



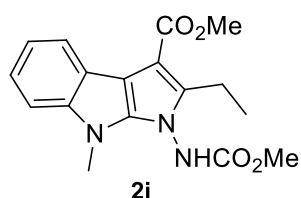
Methyl (3-(dimethoxyphosphoryl)-2,8-dimethylpyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indol-1(8H)-yl)carbamate (2g): compound **2g** was obtained by simple extraction with ethyl acetate and crystallization from ethyl acetate/petroleum ether in 99% yield (72.5 mg); 12 h; brown solid; mp: 184–186 °C; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, $\text{DMSO-}d_6$)

δ 10.98 (br, 1H), 7.74 (d, $J = 8.0$ Hz, 1H), 7.45 (d, $J = 8.0$ Hz, 1H), 7.17–7.13 (m, 1H), 7.08 (t, $J = 7.2$ Hz, 1H), 3.80 (s, 3H), 3.78 (s, 3H), 3.65 (d, $^3J_{\text{HP}} = 8.4$ Hz, 3H), 3.62 (d, $^3J_{\text{HP}} = 8.4$ Hz, 3H), 2.40 (s, 3H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, $\text{DMSO-}d_6$) δ 156.3, 139.6, 137.8 (d, $^2J_{\text{CP}} = 26.2$ Hz), 137.0 (d, $^2J_{\text{CP}} = 14.7$ Hz), 120.5, 119.7, 119.3, 118.6, 109.6, 104.2 (d, $^2J_{\text{CP}} = 11.0$ Hz), 93.4 (d, $^1J_{\text{CP}} = 215$ Hz), 53.2, 51.8, 51.7, 29.1, 10.2. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, m/z): $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$ calcd for $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{20}\text{N}_3\text{O}_5\text{P}$ 366.1213, found 366.1216.



Ethyl 2,8-dimethyl-1-ureido-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole-3-carboxylate (2h): compound **2h** was obtained by simple extraction with ethyl acetate and crystallization from diethyl ether in 85% yield (53.2 mg); 36 h; grey solid; mp: 240–242 °C; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, $\text{DMSO-}d_6$) δ 9.55 (br, 1H), 7.95 (d,

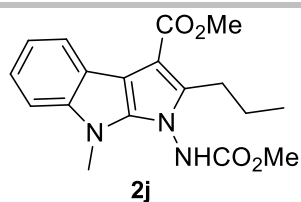
$J = 7.6$ Hz, 1H), 7.42 (d, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 1H), 7.13 (t, $J = 7.2$ Hz, 1H), 7.07 (t, $J = 7.2$ Hz, 1H), 6.55 (br, 2H), 4.35 (q, $J = 6.8$ Hz, 2H), 3.80 (s, 3H), 2.48 (s, 3H), 1.41 (t, $J = 6.8$ Hz, 3H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, $\text{DMSO-}d_6$) δ 164.8, 157.6, 139.6, 137.3, 137.0, 120.3, 120.2, 119.6, 118.9, 109.3, 102.4, 101.9, 59.1, 29.0, 14.7, 10.4. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, m/z): $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$ calcd for $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{18}\text{N}_4\text{O}_3$ 315.1452, found 315.1454.



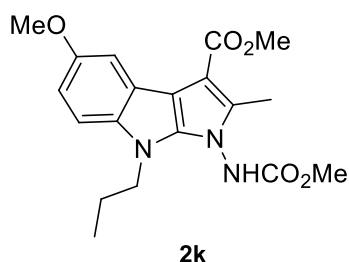
Methyl 2-ethyl-1-((methoxycarbonyl)amino)-8-methyl-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole-3-carboxylate (2i): compound **2i** was isolated by column chromatography (ethyl acetate/cyclohexane 30:70) in 80% yield (52.6 mg); 4 h; pale yellow solid; mp: 188–190 °C; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, $\text{DMSO-}d_6$)

δ 11.10 (br, 1H), 7.94 (d, $J = 8.0$ Hz, 1H), 7.45 (d, $J = 8.0$ Hz, 1H), 7.19–7.15 (m, 1H), 7.12–7.08 (m, 1H), 3.90 (s, 3H), 3.81 (s, 3H), 3.78 (s, 3H), 3.06–2.97 (m, 1H), 2.87–2.78 (m, 1H), 1.14 (t, $J = 7.4$ Hz, 3H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, $\text{DMSO-}d_6$) δ 164.8, 156.4, 142.3, 139.8, 136.2, 120.6, 120.1, 119.7, 119.1, 109.4, 102.7, 101.3, 53.2, 50.8, 29.0, 17.5, 14.0. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, m/z): $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$ calcd for $\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_{19}\text{N}_3\text{O}_4$ 330.1448, found 330.1441.

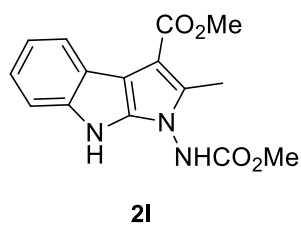
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Methyl 1-((methoxycarbonyl)amino)-8-methyl-2-propyl-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole-3-carboxylate (2j): compound **2j** was isolated by column chromatography (ethyl acetate/cyclohexane 30:70) in 85% yield (58.7 mg); 12 h; pale yellow solid; mp: 122–124 °C; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 11.07 (br, 1H), 7.94 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.45 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.19–7.15 (m, 1H), 7.12–7.08 (m, 1H), 3.90 (s, 3H), 3.81 (s, 3H), 3.78 (s, 3H), 3.04–2.97 (m, 1H), 2.83–2.76 (m, 1H), 1.65–1.50 (m, 2H), 0.93 (t, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 164.9, 156.3, 140.8, 139.8, 136.3, 120.6, 120.1, 119.7, 119.1, 109.4, 102.7, 101.9, 53.2, 50.8, 29.0, 25.9, 22.4, 13.7. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, *m/z*): [M+H]⁺ calcd for C₁₈H₂₁N₃O₄ 344.1605, found 344.1609.

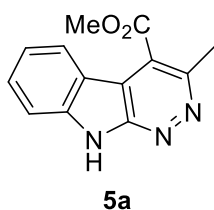


Methyl 5-methoxy-1-((methoxycarbonyl)amino)-2-methyl-8-propyl-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole-3-carboxylate (2k): compound **2k** was isolated by column chromatography (ethyl acetate/cyclohexane 40:60) in 99% yield (73.9 mg); 6 h; whitish solid; mp: 186–188 °C; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 11.02 (br, 1H), 7.45 (d, *J* = 2.4 Hz, 1H), 7.36 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 6.77 (dd, *J* = 8.8, 2.4 Hz, 1H), 4.23–4.04 (m, 2H), 3.89 (s, 3H), 3.79 (s, 6H), 2.46 (s, 3H), 1.75–1.58 (m, 2H), 0.82 (t, *J* = 7.4 Hz, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 165.0, 156.1, 153.3, 136.6, 136.4, 134.3, 120.5, 110.3, 109.0, 103.1, 102.8, 102.1, 55.3, 53.1, 50.8, 44.3, 23.1, 11.1, 10.2. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, *m/z*): [M+H]⁺ calcd for C₁₉H₂₃N₃O₅ 374.1710, found 374.1715.



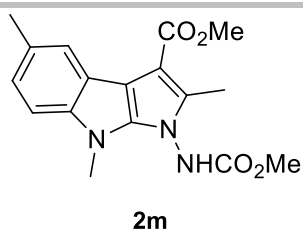
Methyl 1-((methoxycarbonyl)amino)-2-methyl-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole-3-carboxylate (2l)²: compound **2l** was isolated by column chromatography (ethyl acetate/cyclohexane 55:45) in 52% yield (31.1 mg); 12 h; white solid; for compound **2l**, a spontaneous ring enlargement reaction to azacarboline was observed²; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 11.50 (br, 1H), 10.88 (br, 1H), 7.90–7.88 (m, 1H), 7.34–7.32 (m, 1H), 7.10–7.02 (m, 2H), 3.89 (s, 3H), 3.78 (s, 3H), 2.48 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 165.2, 155.7, 138.6, 137.3, 135.6, 120.9, 120.3, 119.5, 118.8, 111.7, 102.4, 102.0, 52.9, 50.7, 10.3. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, *m/z*): [M+H]⁺ calcd for C₁₅H₁₅N₃O₄ 302.1135, found 302.1131.

During the course of the reaction, the following work-up, and the long standing in the presence or absence of DMSO-*d*₆ solution, the compound **2l** gives a partial conversion to azacarboline **5a**.

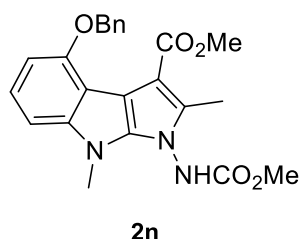


Methyl 3-methyl-9H-pyridazino[3,4-*b*]indole-4-carboxylate (5a): The chemical-physical data of compound **5a** are in agreement with those reported.²

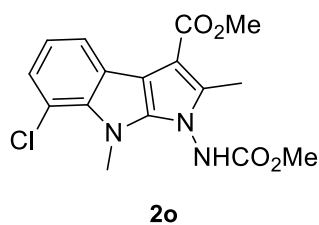
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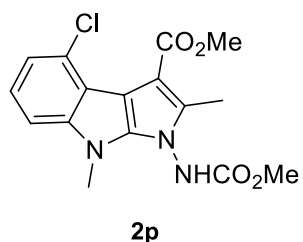
Methyl 1-((methoxycarbonyl)amino)-2,5,8-trimethyl-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole-3-carboxylate (2m): compound **2m** was isolated by column chromatography (ethyl acetate/cyclohexane 40:60) in 93% yield (61.4 mg); 5 h; pale brown solid; mp: 201–203 °C; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 11.00 (br, 1H), 7.72 (s, 1H), 7.32 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 6.98 (dd, *J* = 8.4, 1.2 Hz, 1H), 3.89 (s, 3H), 3.80 (s, 3H), 3.74 (s, 3H), 2.47 (s, 3H), 2.42 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 165.1, 156.2, 138.2, 136.5, 136.2, 127.6, 121.8, 120.2, 119.7, 109.1, 102.4, 102.1, 53.2, 50.8, 29.1, 21.3, 10.2. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, *m/z*): [M+H]⁺ calcd for C₁₇H₁₉N₃O₄ 330.1448, found 330.1449.



Methyl 4-(benzyloxy)-1-((methoxycarbonyl)amino)-2,8-dimethyl-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole-3-carboxylate (2n): compound **2n** was obtained by simple extraction with ethyl acetate/diethyl ether and crystallization from ethyl acetate/diethyl ether in 96% yield (80.7 mg); 48 h; whitish solid; mp: 150–152 °C; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 10.98 (br, 1H), 7.49–7.47 (m, 2H), 7.38–7.34 (m, 2H), 7.31–7.27 (m, 1H), 7.05–7.02 (m, 2H), 6.67–6.65 (m, 1H), 5.25 (s, 2H), 3.80 (s, 3H), 3.75 (s, 3H), 3.38 (s, 3H), 2.36 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 165.8, 156.3, 151.6, 140.9, 138.0, 135.5, 134.3, 128.3, 127.6, 127.5, 121.3, 110.6, 103.9, 102.7, 100.6, 69.3, 53.2, 50.3, 29.3, 10.1. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, *m/z*): [M+H]⁺ calcd for C₂₃H₂₃N₃O₅ 422.1710, found 422.1708.



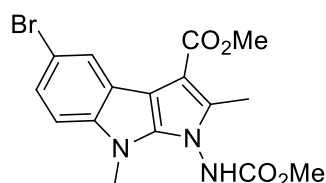
Methyl 7-chloro-1-((methoxycarbonyl)amino)-2,8-dimethyl-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole-3-carboxylate (2o): compound **2o** was obtained by simple extraction with ethyl acetate and crystallization from diethyl ether/petroleum ether in 97% yield (67.6 mg); 24 h; brownish solid; mp: 189–191 °C; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 11.10 (br, 1H), 7.95 (dd, *J* = 7.6, 1.2 Hz, 1H), 7.15 (dd, *J* = 7.6, 1.2 Hz, 1H), 7.08 (t, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 1H), 4.12 (s, 3H), 3.89 (s, 3H), 3.80 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 164.8, 156.1, 137.9, 137.1, 134.4, 123.4, 122.5, 120.5, 119.0, 115.6, 102.9, 102.0, 53.3, 50.9, 32.2, 10.2. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, *m/z*): [M+H]⁺ calcd for C₁₆H₁₆ClN₃O₄, 350.0902, found 350.0909.



Methyl 4-chloro-1-((methoxycarbonyl)amino)-2,8-dimethyl-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole-3-carboxylate (2p): compound **2p** was obtained by simple extraction with ethyl acetate and crystallization from diethyl ether/petroleum ether in 99% yield (69.1 mg); 2 h; brownish solid; mp: 170–172 °C; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 11.02 (br, 1H), 7.48–7.43 (m, 1H), 7.16–7.11 (m, 2H), 3.81 (s, 6H), 3.78 (s, 3H), 2.34 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 165.6, 156.3,

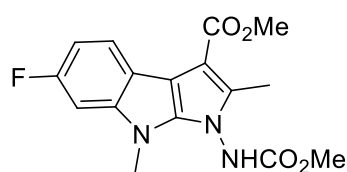
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140.5, 137.0, 134.7, 123.7, 121.1, 120.2, 118.4, 108.4, 104.1, 100.0, 53.3, 50.7, 29.4, 10.0. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, m/z): $[M+H]^+$ calcd for $C_{16}H_{16}ClN_3O_4$, 350.0902, found 350.0911.



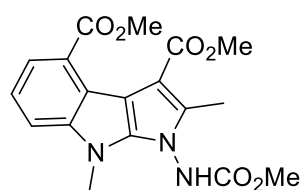
2q

Methyl 5-bromo-1-((methoxycarbonyl)amino)-2,8-dimethyl-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole-3-carboxylate (2q): compound **2q** was obtained by simple extraction with ethyl acetate and crystallization from diethyl ether in 98% yield (77.3 mg); 9 h; brownish solid; mp: 194–196 °C; 1H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO- d_6) δ 11.07 (br, 1H), 8.02 (d, $J = 2.0$ Hz, 1H), 7.46 (d, $J = 8.4$ Hz, 1H), 7.29 (dd, $J = 8.8, 2.0$ Hz, 1H), 3.89 (s, 3H), 3.79 (s, 6H), 2.48 (s, 3H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO- d_6) δ 164.8, 156.2, 138.4, 137.3, 137.0, 122.8, 121.7, 121.5, 111.7, 111.5, 102.0, 53.4, 51.1, 29.3, 10.3. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, m/z): $[M+H]^+$ calcd for $C_{16}H_{16}BrN_3O_4$, 394.0397, found 394.0404.



2r

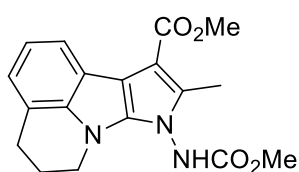
Methyl 6-fluoro-1-((methoxycarbonyl)amino)-2,8-dimethyl-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole-3-carboxylate (2r): compound **2r** was obtained by simple extraction with ethyl acetate and crystallization from diethyl ether in 98% yield (65.4 mg); 8 h; brownish solid; mp: 200–202 °C; 1H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO- d_6) δ 11.07 (br, 1H), 7.88 (dd, $J = 8.8$ Hz, $^4J_{HF} = 6.0$ Hz, 1H), 7.38 (dd, $^3J_{HF} = 10.8$ Hz, $J = 2.4$ Hz, 1H), 6.96–6.91 (m, 1H), 3.89 (s, 3H), 3.80 (s, 3H), 3.77 (s, 3H), 2.47 (s, 3H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO- d_6) δ 165.0, 158.3 (d, $^1J_{CF} = 232.4$ Hz), 156.2, 139.8 (d, $^3J_{CF} = 12.2$ Hz), 136.3, 120.3 (d, $^3J_{CF} = 9.9$ Hz), 116.8, 106.7 (d, $^2J_{CF} = 23.4$ Hz), 102.5, 101.9, 96.8 (d, $^2J_{CF} = 26.9$ Hz), 59.7, 53.3, 50.9, 29.4, 10.1. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, m/z): $[M+H]^+$ calcd for $C_{16}H_{16}FN_3O_4$, 334.1198, found 334.1201.



2s

Dimethyl 1-((methoxycarbonyl)amino)-2,8-dimethyl-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole-3,4-dicarboxylate (2s): compound **2s** was obtained by simple extraction with ethyl acetate and crystallization from diethyl ether in 99% yield (74.8 mg); 6 h; whitish solid; mp: 210–212 °C; 1H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO- d_6) δ 11.04 (br, 1H), 7.68 (d, $J = 8.0$ Hz, 1H), 7.39 (d, $J = 8.0$ Hz, 1H), 7.20 (t, $J = 8.0$ Hz, 1H), 3.83 (s, 3H), 3.81 (s, 3H), 3.75 (s, 3H), 3.72 (s, 3H), 2.36 (s, 3H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO- d_6) δ 168.8, 165.4, 156.3, 139.9, 137.8, 135.2, 123.0, 120.4, 119.5, 117.9, 113.0, 104.4, 101.9, 53.3, 51.4, 51.0, 29.2, 10.0. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, m/z): $[M+H]^+$ calcd for $C_{18}H_{19}N_3O_6$, 374.1347, found 374.1349.

ELECTRONIC SUPPORTING INFORMATION



2t

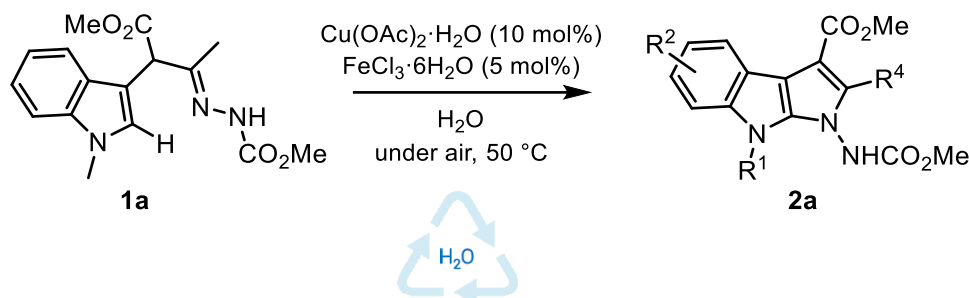
Methyl 8-((methoxycarbonyl)amino)-9-methyl-4,5,6,8-tetrahydropyrrolo[3',2':4,5]pyrrolo[3,2,1-*ij*]quinoline-10-carboxylate (2t):

compound **2t** was obtained by simple extraction with ethyl acetate and crystallization from diethyl ether in 97% yield (65.9 mg); 4 h; whitish solid; mp: 169–171 °C; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, $\text{DMSO-}d_6$) δ 11.00 (br, 1H), 7.66 (d, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 1H), 6.98 (t, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 1H), 6.87 (d, $J = 7.2$ Hz, 1H), 4.32–4.27 (m, 1H), 4.09–4.02 (m, 1H), 3.89 (s, 3H), 3.79 (s, 3H), 2.93 (t, $J = 6.0$ Hz, 2H), 2.48 (s, 3H), 2.18–2.13 (m, 2H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, $\text{DMSO-}d_6$) δ 165.1, 156.2, 135.9, 135.9, 135.6, 121.5, 119.0, 118.4, 118.1, 117.2, 102.6, 102.1, 53.2, 50.8, 41.2, 23.9, 21.9, 10.1. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, m/z): $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$ calcd for $\text{C}_{18}\text{H}_{19}\text{N}_3\text{O}_4$, 342.1448, found 342.1451.

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4. Recycling of the aqueous catalytic system

Recycling of $\text{Cu}(\text{OAc})_2 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$ / $\text{FeCl}_3 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$, and water in the intramolecular oxidative cyclization of **1a**.



In a round-bottom flask, α -indolylhydrazone **1a** (0.4 mmol), $\text{Cu}(\text{OAc})_2 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$ (0.04 mmol, 8.0 mg), $\text{FeCl}_3 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (0.02 mmol, 5.4 mg) and water (4 mL) were added. The aqueous suspension was stirred at $50\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ (oil bath) until consumption of the starting material (TLC check). At the end, the reaction mixture was extracted with ethyl acetate (3 x 3 mL). The aqueous phase containing the catalyst system was re-used for the five runs with the catalyst activities indicated in the Table S2.

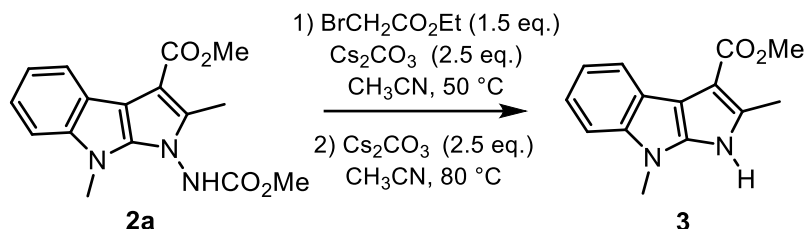
On the other hand, the collected organic phase was dried over anhydrous sodium sulphate and the solvent was removed under vacuum. The crude was purified by crystallization (for the first 3 cycles) or by flash chromatography on silica gel (cyclohexane/ethyl acetate 60:40 for the last 2 cycles) to give the corresponding product **2a** (Table S2).

Table S2. Recycling of the aqueous catalytic system.

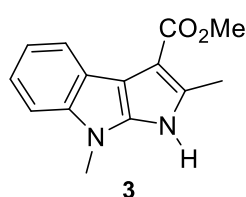
Cycle	Yield (%)	Time (h)
Fresh	99	4
1 st	99	4
2 nd	82	6.5
3 rd	81	24
4 th	74	28
5 th	52	48

5. Synthetic transformations

5.1 Access to compound 3



Compound **3** was prepared according to a modified version of the Magnus method.³ To a solution of **2a** (63.1 mg, 0.2 mmol) in acetonitrile (5 mL), ethyl bromoacetate (0.033 mL, 0.3 mmol) and Cs₂CO₃ (162.9 mg, 0.5 mmol) were added. The mixture was stirred at 50 °C (oil bath) until the disappearance of the starting material (0.5 h). The solvent was removed under vacuum, water (5 mL) was added and the mixture was extracted with ethyl acetate (3 x 10 mL). The combined organic layer was dried over Na₂SO₄ and filtered. After the solvent was removed under reduced pressure, the residue was dissolved in acetonitrile (5 mL) and Cs₂CO₃ (162.9 mg, 0.5 mmol) was added. The mixture was stirred at 80 °C until TLC showed complete consumption of intermediate (1 h). The solvent was removed under vacuum, water (5 mL) was added and the mixture was extracted with ethyl acetate (3 x 10 mL). The collected organic phase was washed with brine, dried over Na₂SO₄ and filtered. After the solvent was removed under vacuum, the residue was purified by column chromatography (ethyl acetate) to afford compound **3** as a red solid (16.5 mg, 34% yield).



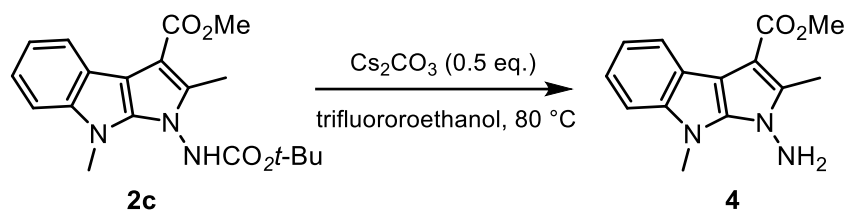
Methyl 2,8-dimethyl-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole-3-carboxylate (3): mp

88–90 °C (dec.); ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.95 (br, 1H), 7.82 (d, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 1H), 7.37–7.30 (m, 3H), 4.02 (s, 3H), 3.71 (s, 3H), 2.34 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 179.8, 169.5, 165.7, 144.8, 135.7, 124.2, 123.8, 123.8, 120.3, 110.4,

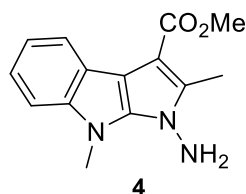
101.5, 53.0, 32.9, 24.4. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, *m/z*): [M+H]⁺ calcd for C₁₄H₁₄N₂O₂, 243.1128, found 234.1121.

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5.2 Access to compound **4**



Compound **4** was prepared according to the literature procedure⁴. To a solution of **2c** (357.4 mg, 1.0 mmol) in trifluoroethanol (2 mL), CsOAc (96.0 mg, 0.5 mmol) was added. The mixture was stirred at 80 °C (oil bath) for 24 hours. Upon the completion of reaction (TLC check), the solvent was removed by vacuum and the residue was purified by column chromatography (ethyl acetate/cyclohexane 30:70) to afford compound **4** as a red solid (120.2 mg, 47% yield b.r.s.m.).



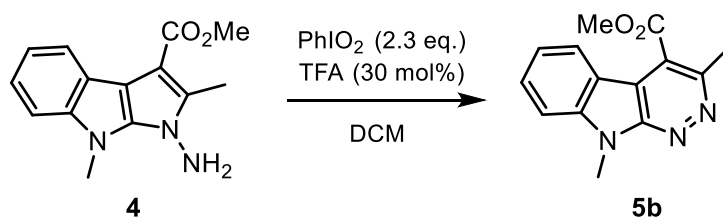
Methyl 1-amino-2,8-dimethyl-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-*b*]indole-3-carboxylate

(4): mp 228–230 °C; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 7.91–7.88 (m, 1H), 7.40–7.37 (m, 1H), 7.13–7.03 (m, 2H), 6.04 (s, 2H), 4.01 (s, 3H), 3.86 (s, 3H), 2.63 (s, 3H).

¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 165.4, 139.9, 137.5, 137.3, 120.3, 119.9, 119.4,

118.6, 109.1, 102.2, 99.8, 50.5, 29.6, 10.6. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, *m/z*): [M+H]⁺ calcd for C₁₄H₁₅N₃O₂, 258.1237, found 258.1243.

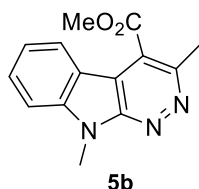
5.3 Access to compound **5b**²



To a solution of compound **4** (48.6 mg, 0.2 mmol) in dichloromethane, PhIO₂ (108.6 mg, 0.46 mmol) and trifluoroacetic acid (0.05 mL, 0.06 mmol) were added. The solution was stirred at room temperature for

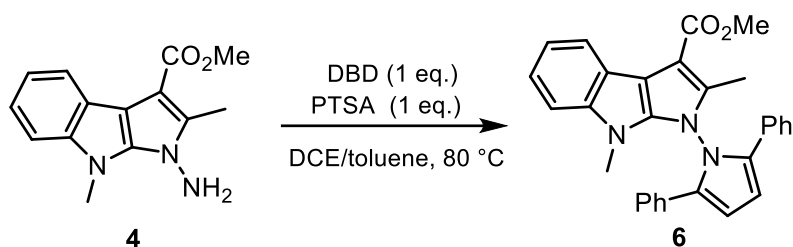
ELECTRONIC SUPPORTING INFORMATION

0.5 hour. After completion of the reaction (TLC check), the solvent was removed under vacuum and the residue was purified by column chromatography (ethyl acetate/cyclohexane 50:50) to afford compound **5b** as a yellow solid (27.6 mg, 54% yield).²

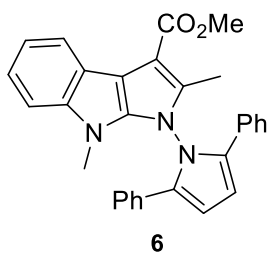


Methyl 3,9-dimethyl-9H-pyridazino[3,4-b]indole-4-carboxylate: (5b): The chemical-physical data of compound **5b** are in agreement with those reported.²

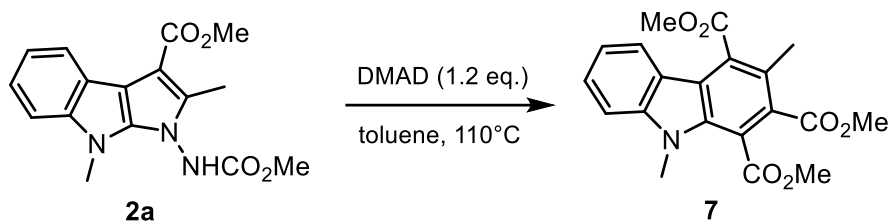
5.4 Access to compound **6**



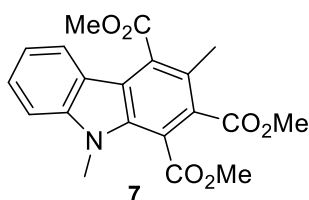
Compound **6** was prepared according to the literature procedure.⁵ To a solution of compound **4** (48.6 mg, 0.2 mmol) in dichloroethane/toluene 1:1 (2 mL), 1,4-diphenylbutane-1,4-dione (47.7 mg, 0.2 mmol) and *p*-toluenesulfonic acid (34.4 mg, 0.2 mmol) were added. The solution was heated at 80°C for 48 hours. After the disappearance of the starting material (TLC check), the solvent was removed under vacuum and the residue was purified by column chromatography (ethyl acetate/cyclohexane/dichloromethane 20:80:10) to afford compound **6** as a colorless oil (37.7 mg, 41% yield).



Methyl 1-(2,5-diphenyl-1H-pyrrol-1-yl)-2,8-dimethyl-1,8-dihydropyrrolo[2,3-b]indole-3-carboxylate(6): ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 7.97–7.95 (m, 1H), 7.83–7.81 (m, 1H), 7.47–7.43 (m, 1H), 7.38–7.36 (m, 1H), 7.25–7.15 (m, 7H), 7.05–7.03 (m, 3H), 6.87 (s, 2H), 3.90 (s, 3H), 3.29 (s, 3H), 2.23 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 164.7, 152.6, 139.9, 135.2, 135.0, 130.1, 129.8, 129.0, 128.9, 127.7, 127.5, 126.1, 123.4, 121.1, 120.1, 119.9, 119.6, 109.9, 109.2, 108.2, 103.5, 102.9, 51.1, 28.5, 10.3. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, *m/z*): [M+H]⁺ calcd for C₃₀H₂₅N₃O₂, 460.2020, found 460.2013.

5.5 Access to compound **7**

Compound **7** was prepared according to the literature procedure.⁶ To a solution of **2a** (94.6 mg, 0.3 mmol) in toluene (1 mL) dimethyl acetylenedicarboxylate (0.049 mL, 0.36 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was refluxed for 12 hours. After the disappearance of the starting material (TLC check), the solvent was removed under vacuum and the residue was purified by column chromatography (ethyl acetate/cyclohexane 40:60) to afford compound **7** as a red oil (64.3 mg, 58% yield).

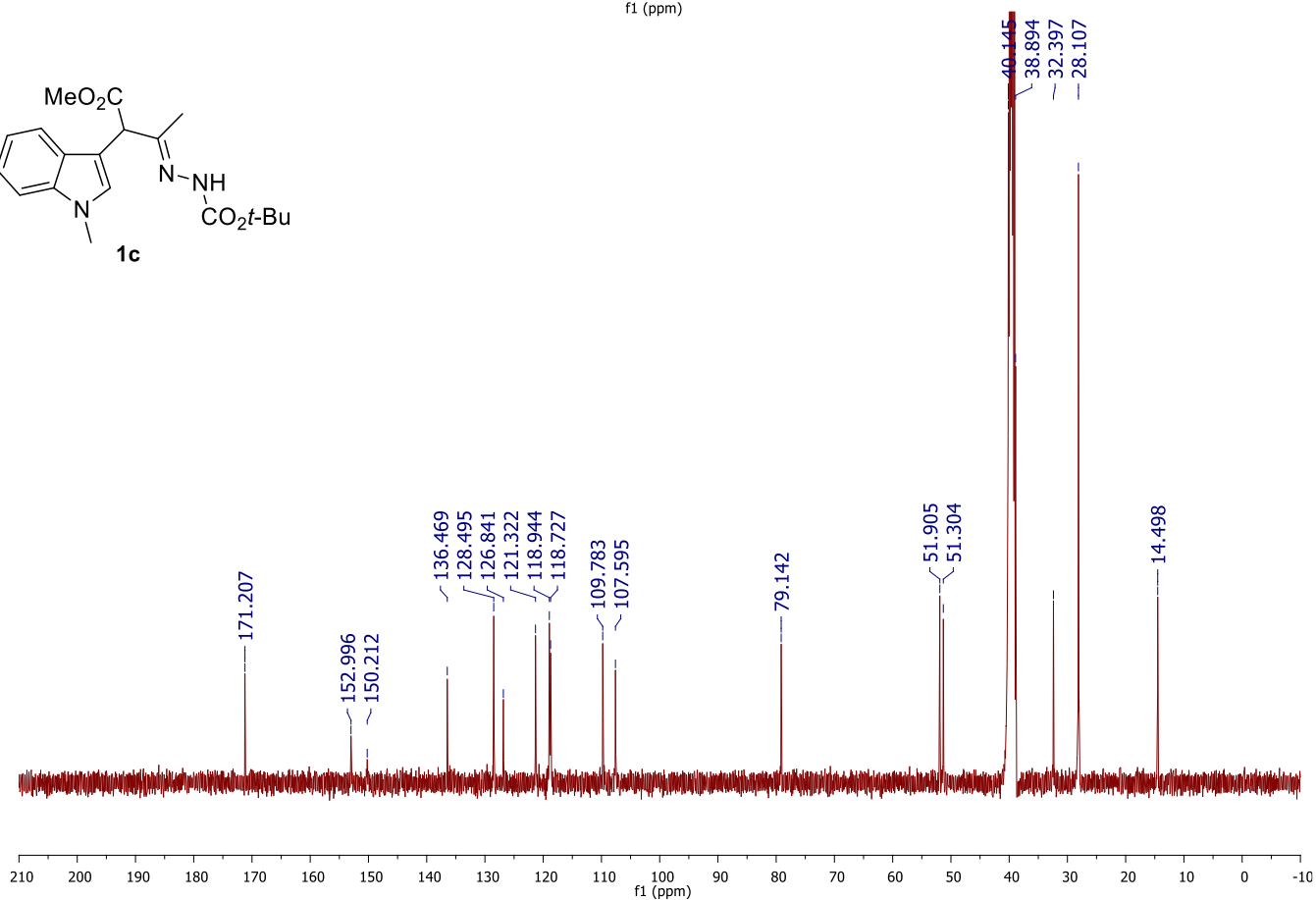
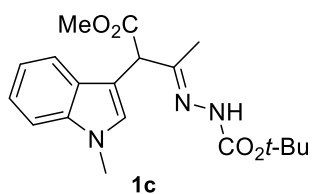
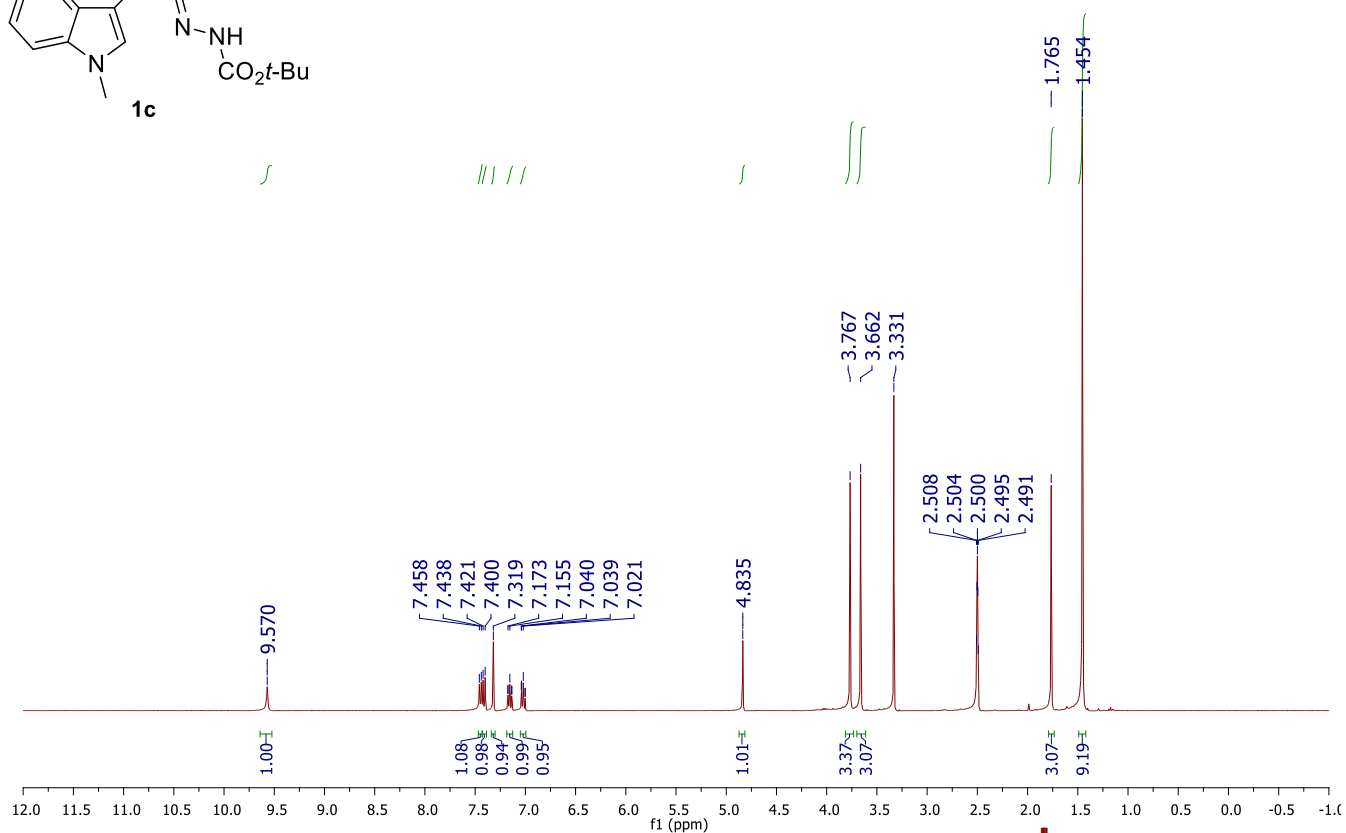
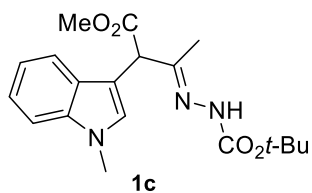


Trimethyl 3,9-dimethyl-9H-carbazole-1,2,4-tricarboxylate (7): ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 7.76 (d, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 1H), 7.73 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 7.63–7.58 (m, 1H), 7.32–7.28 (m, 1H), 4.10 (s, 3H), 3.96 (s, 3H), 3.88 (s, 3H), 3.75 (s, 3H), 2.36 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 168.5, 167.8, 166.8, 142.8, 134.7, 129.9, 129.0, 128.0, 121.7, 121.0, 120.8, 120.5, 118.6, 116.3,

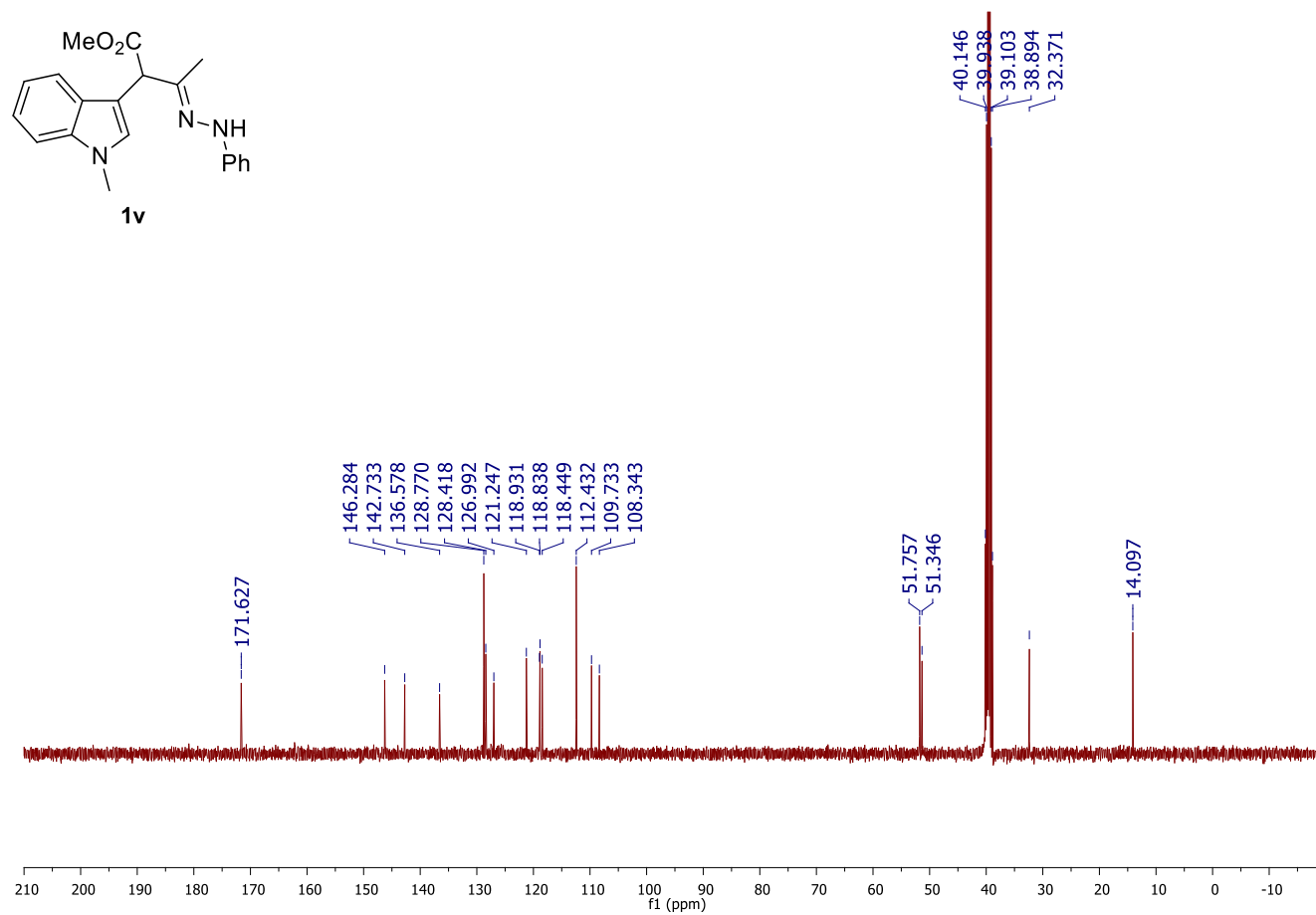
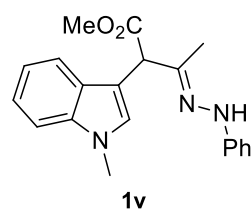
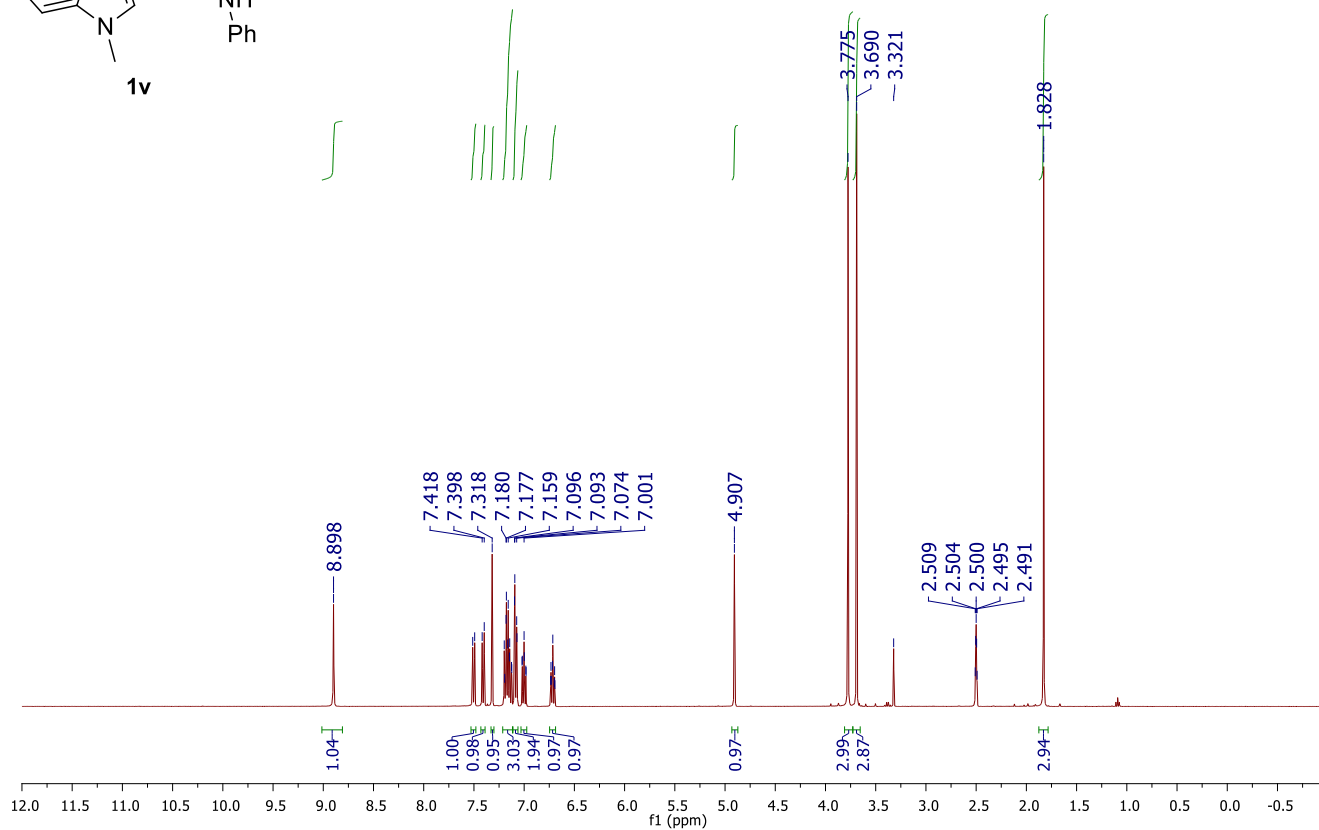
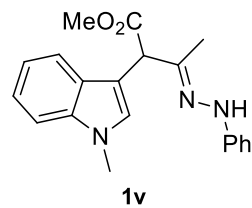
110.3, 53.2, 53.1, 52.8, 31.7, 16.2. HRMS (ESI-Orbitrap, *m/z*): [M+H]⁺ calcd for C₂₀H₁₉NO₆, 370.1285, found 370.1279.

ELECTRONIC SUPPORTING INFORMATION

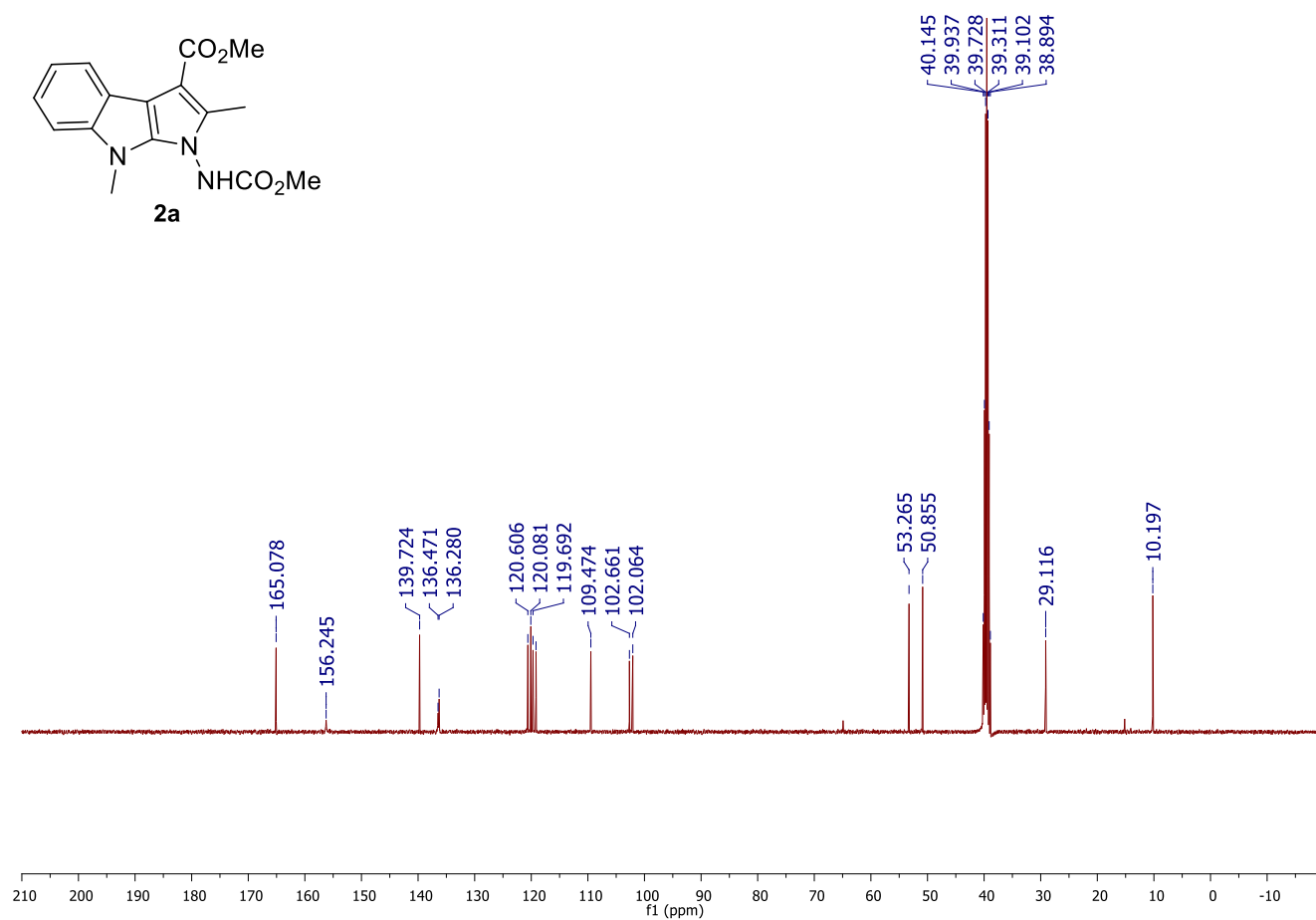
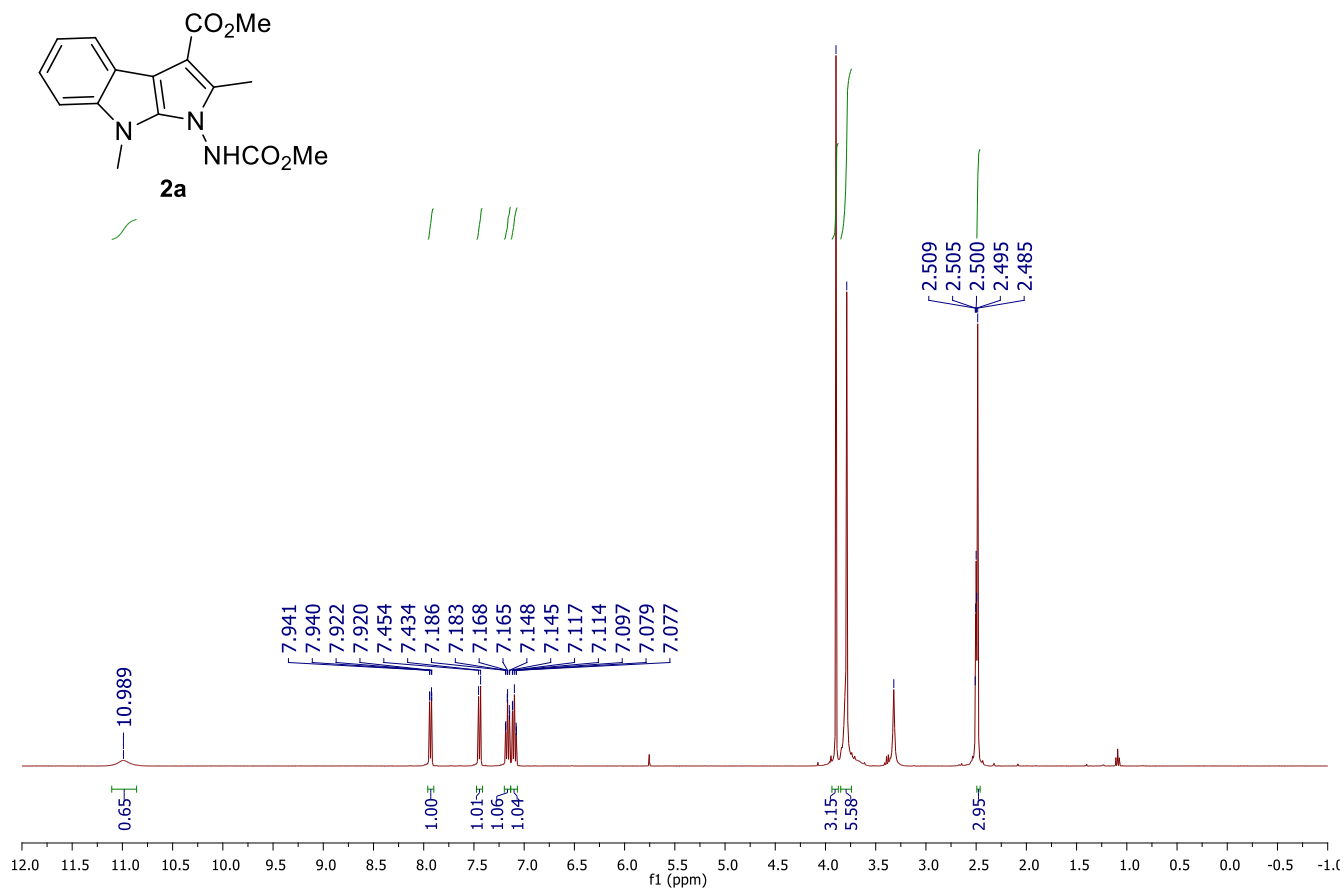
6. ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra



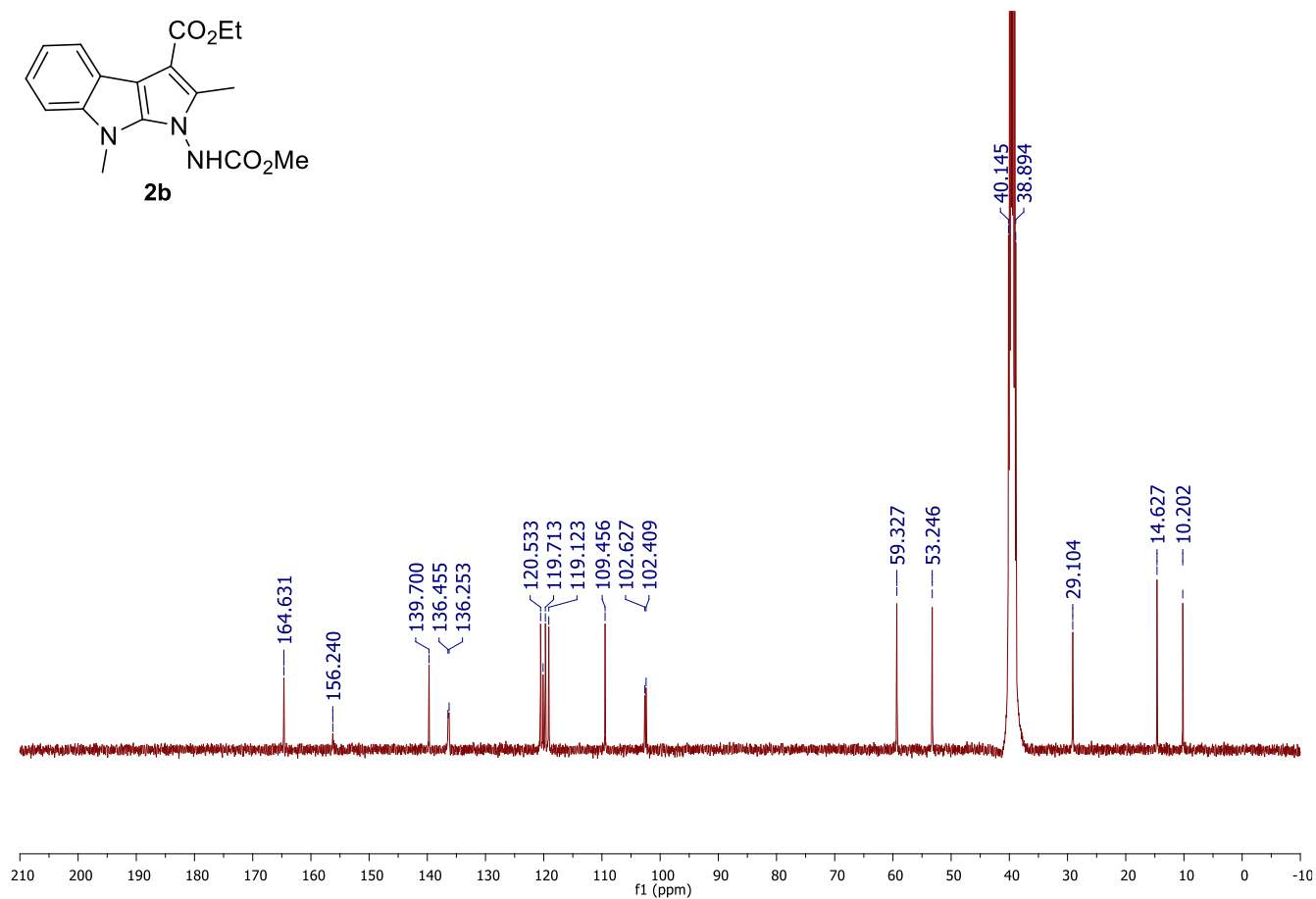
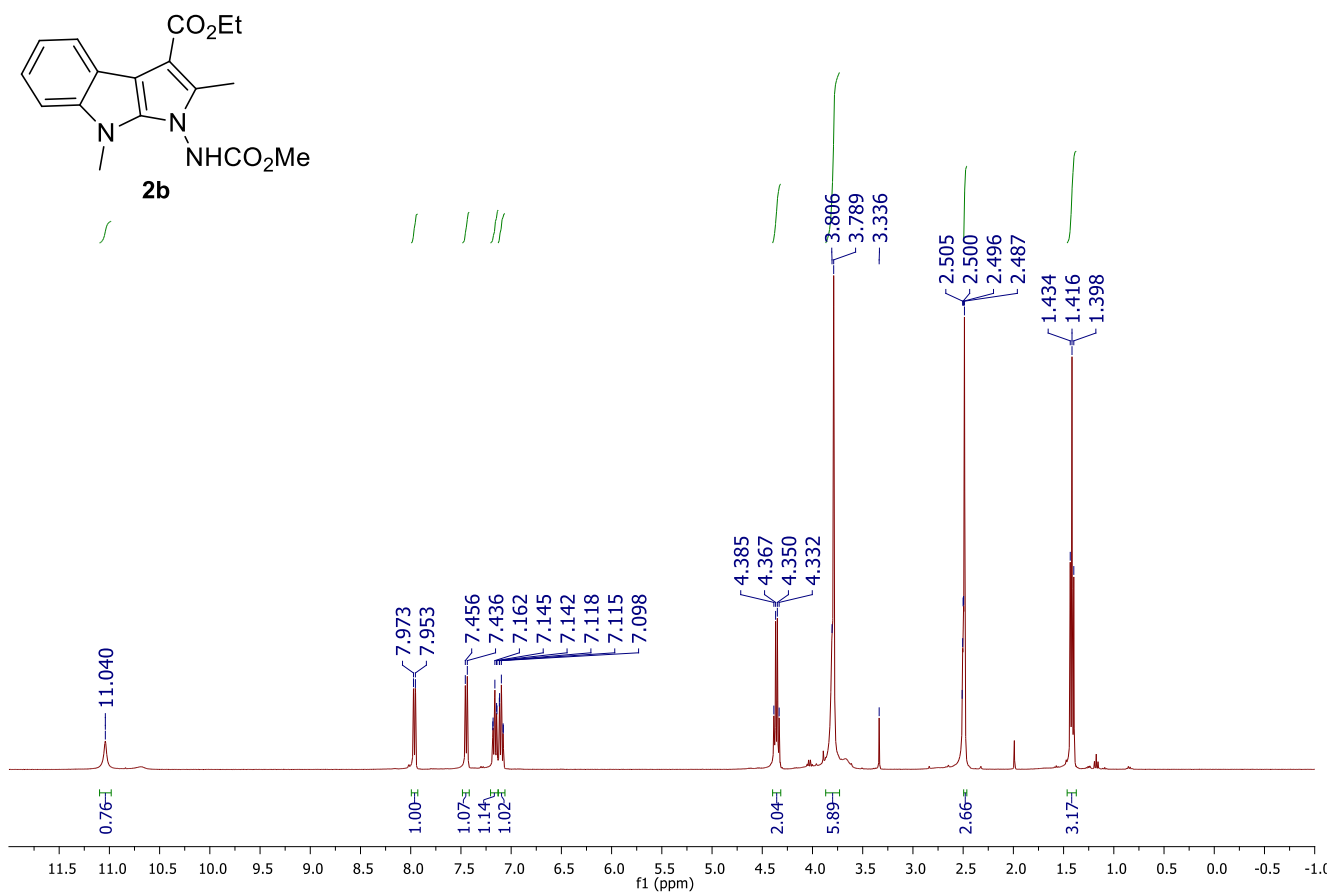
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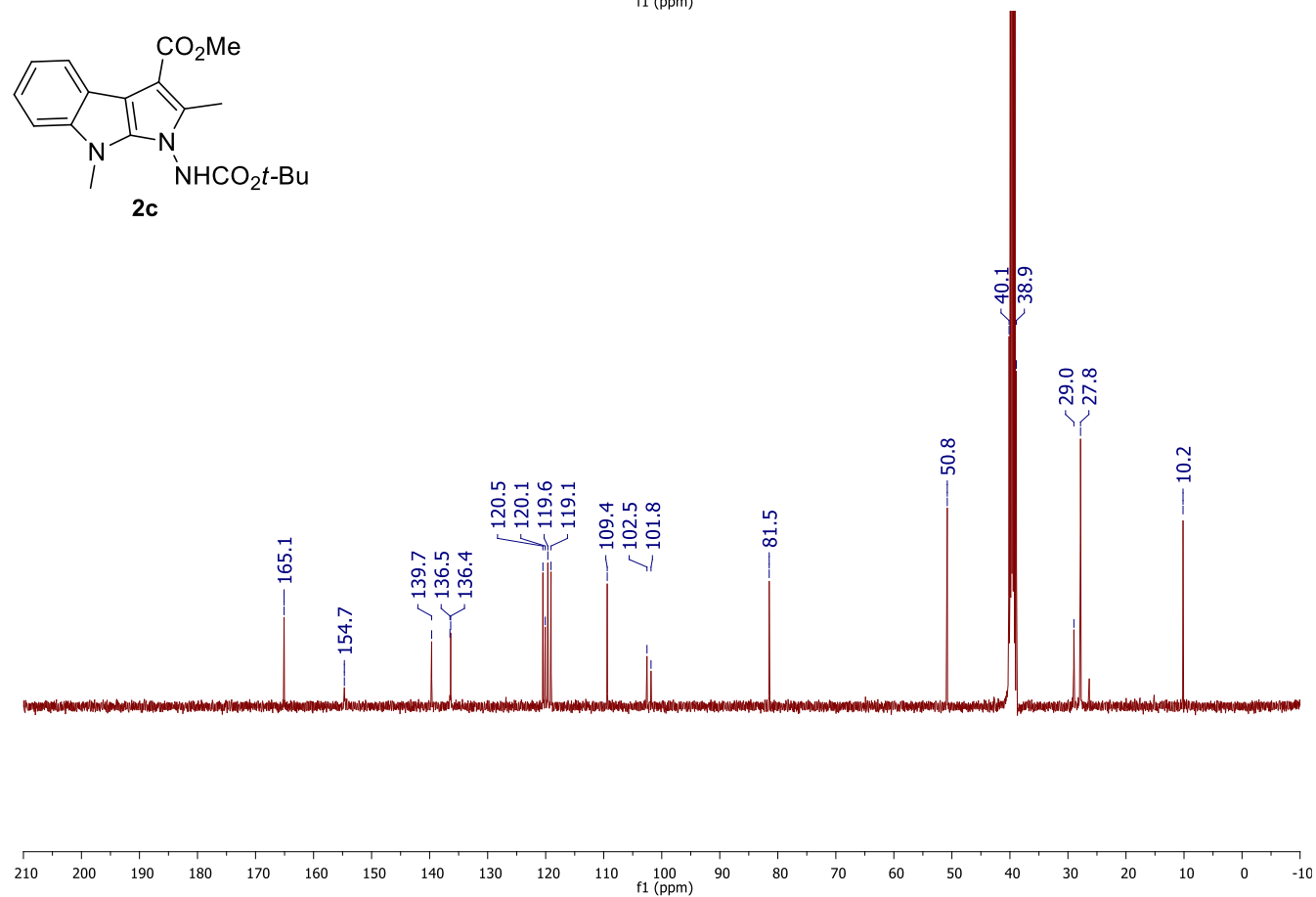
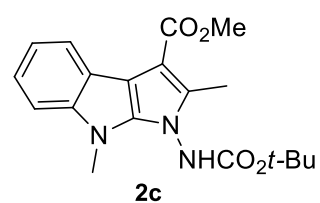
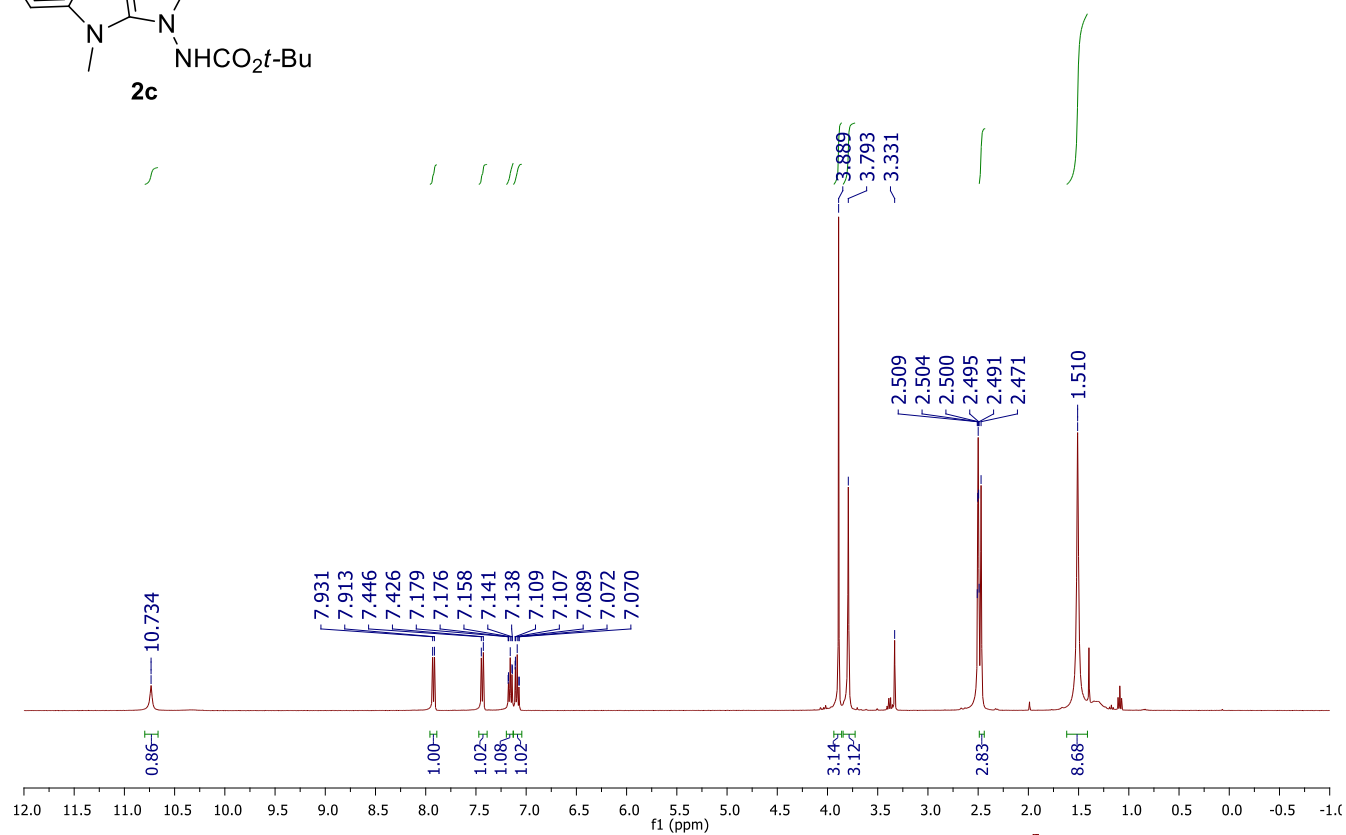
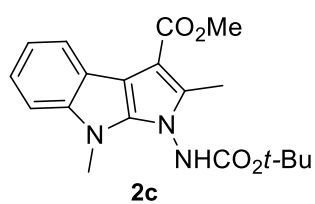
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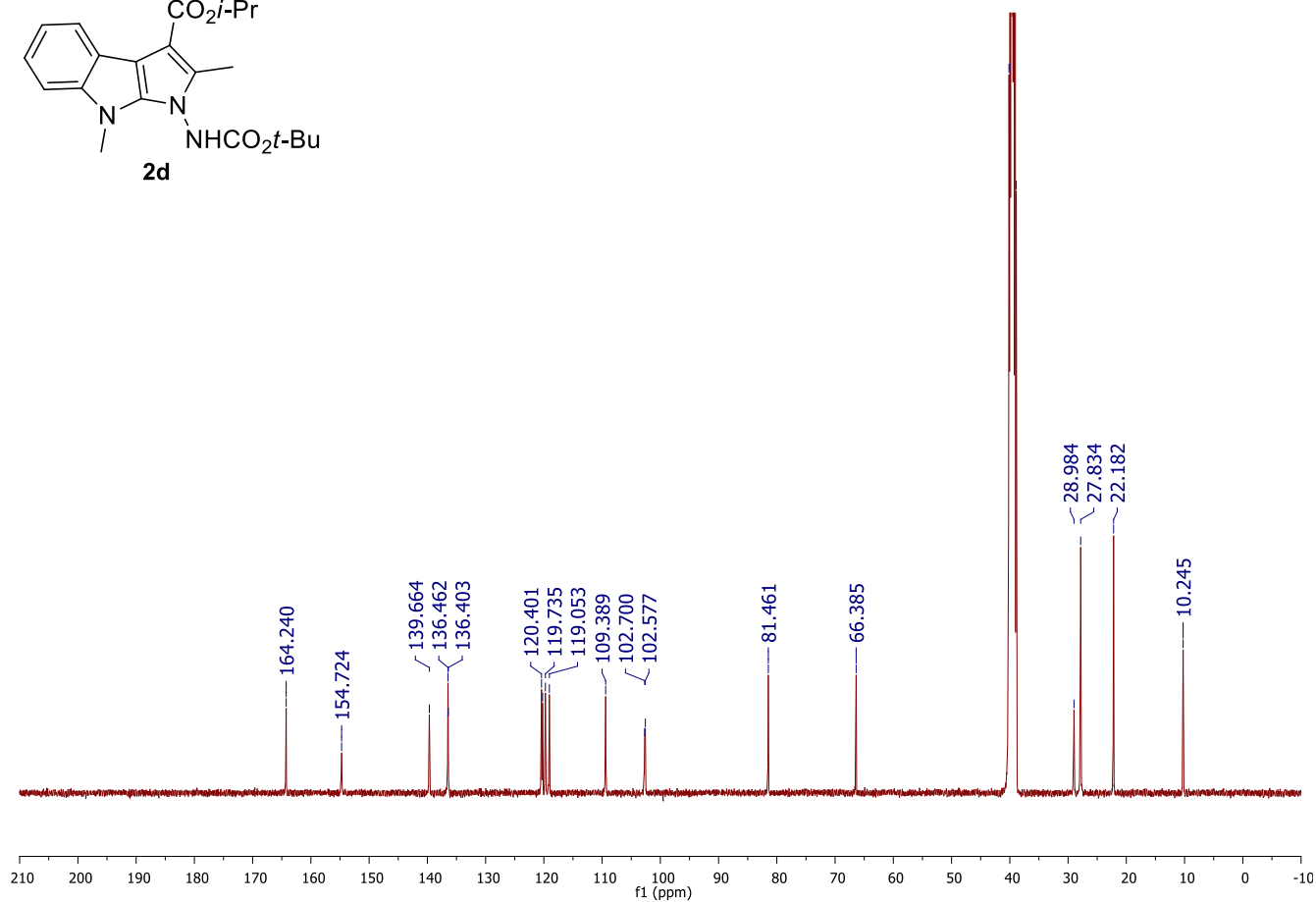
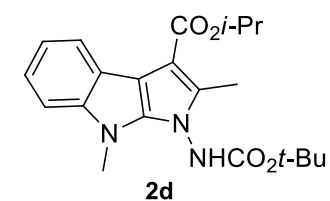
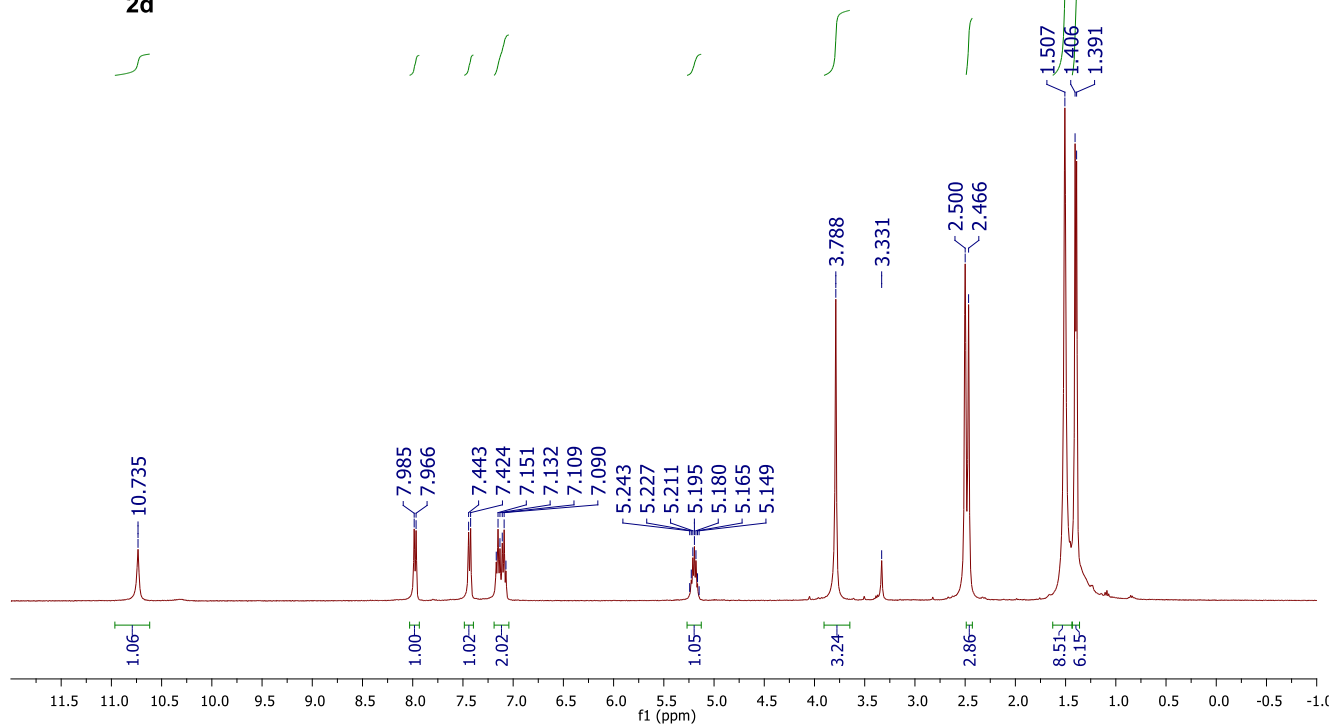
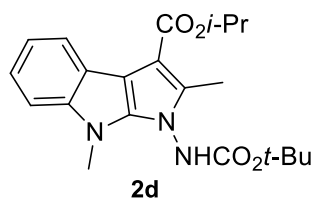
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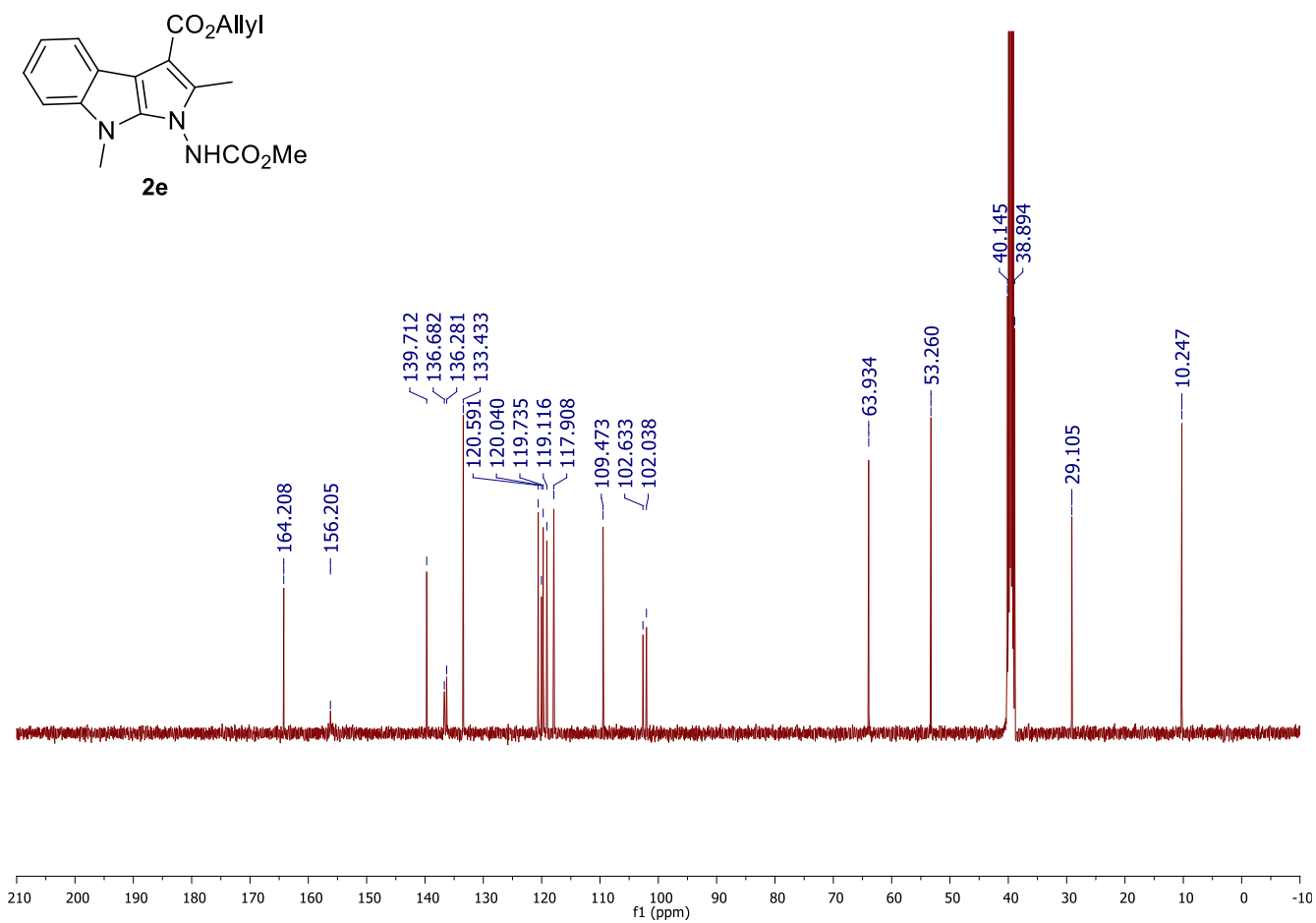
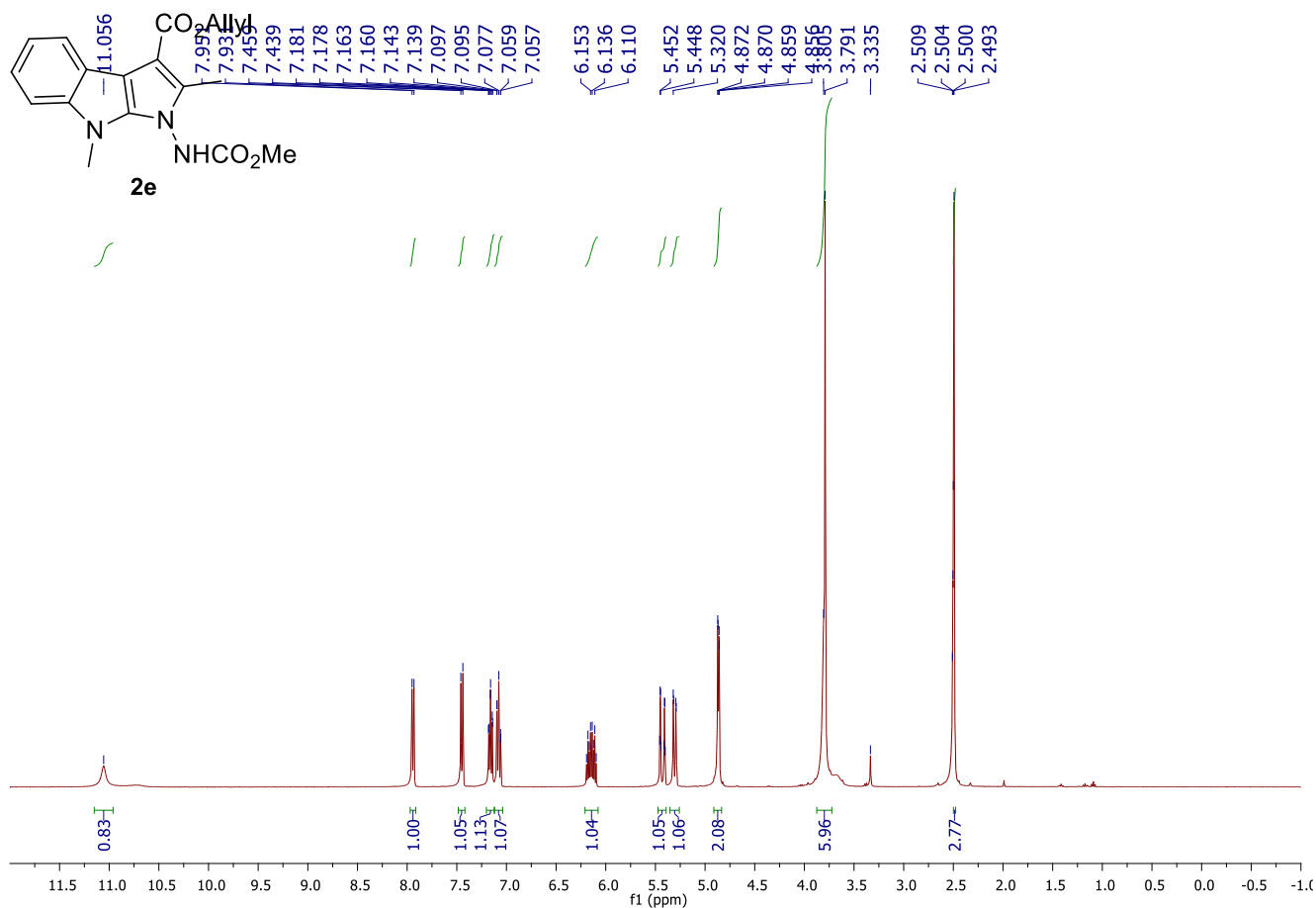
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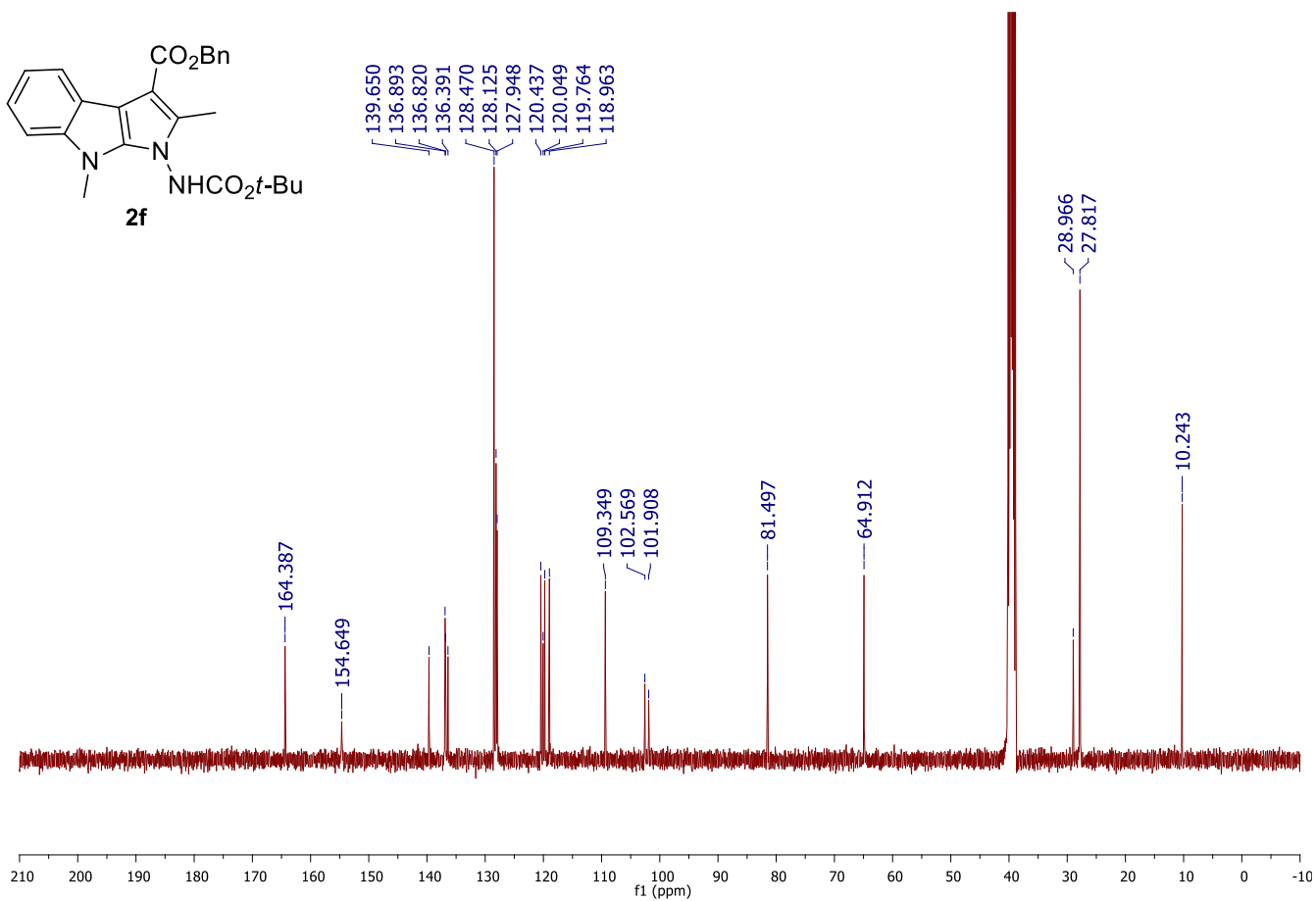
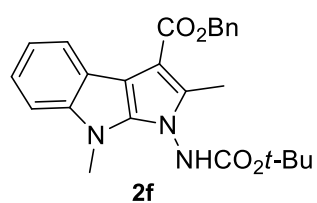
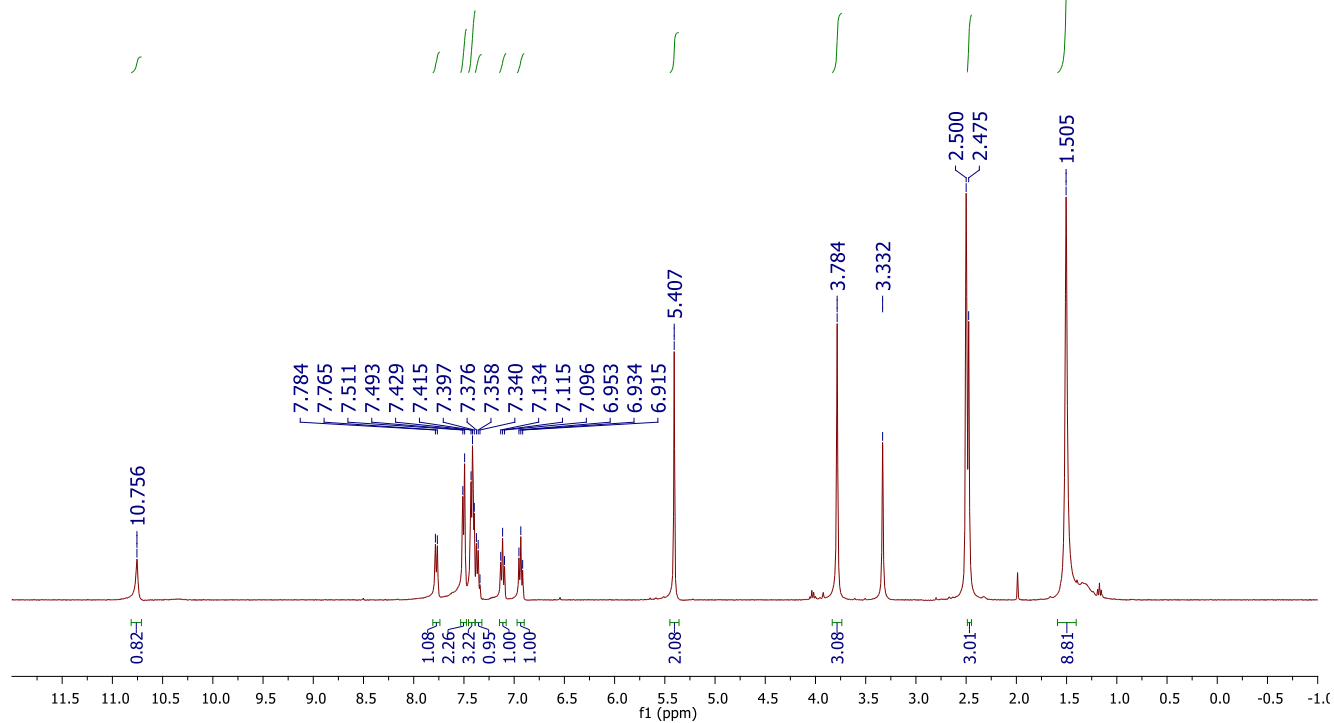
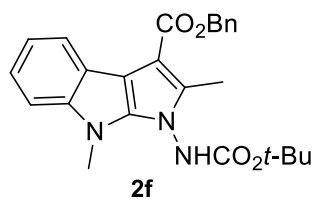
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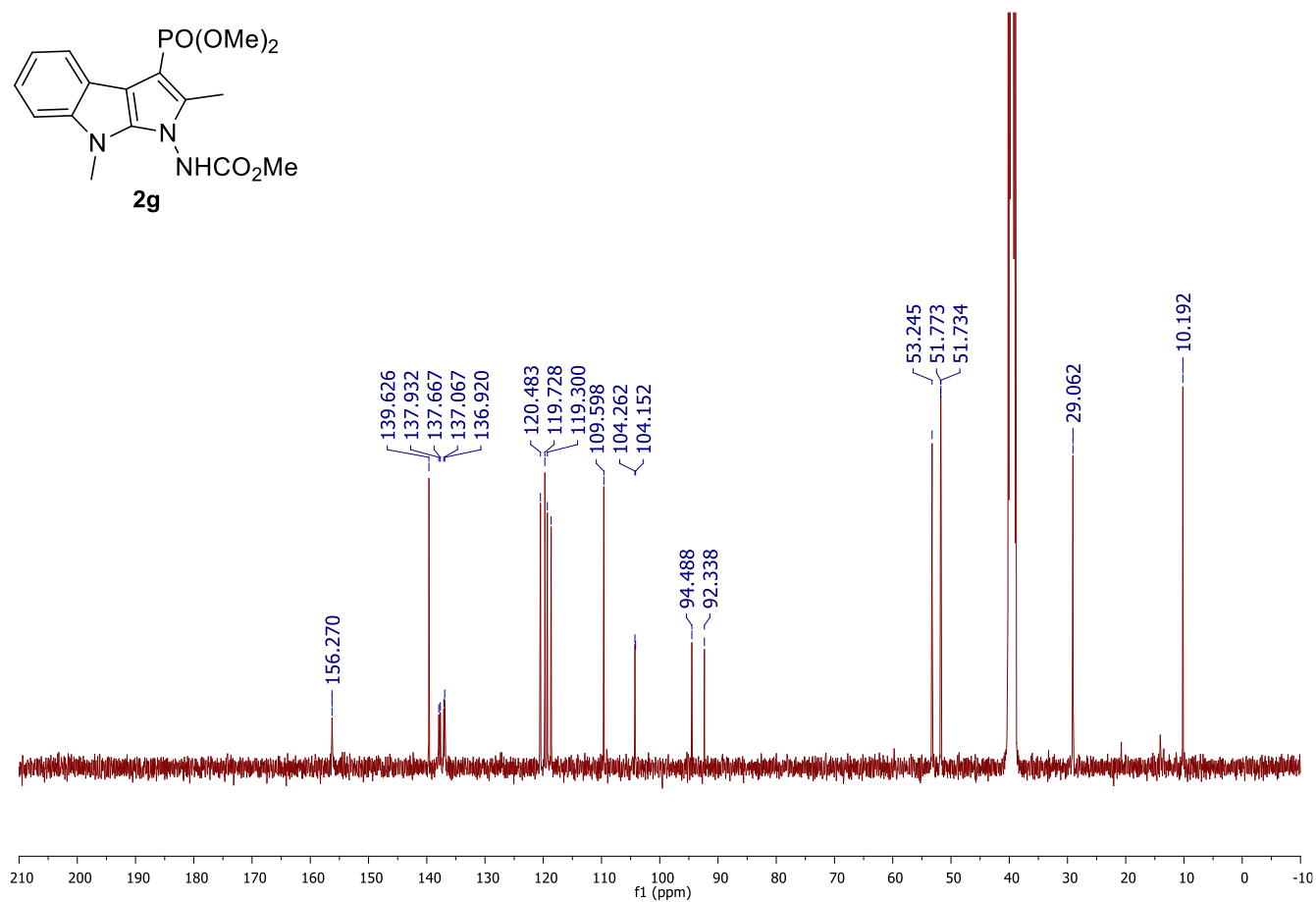
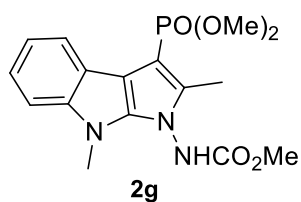
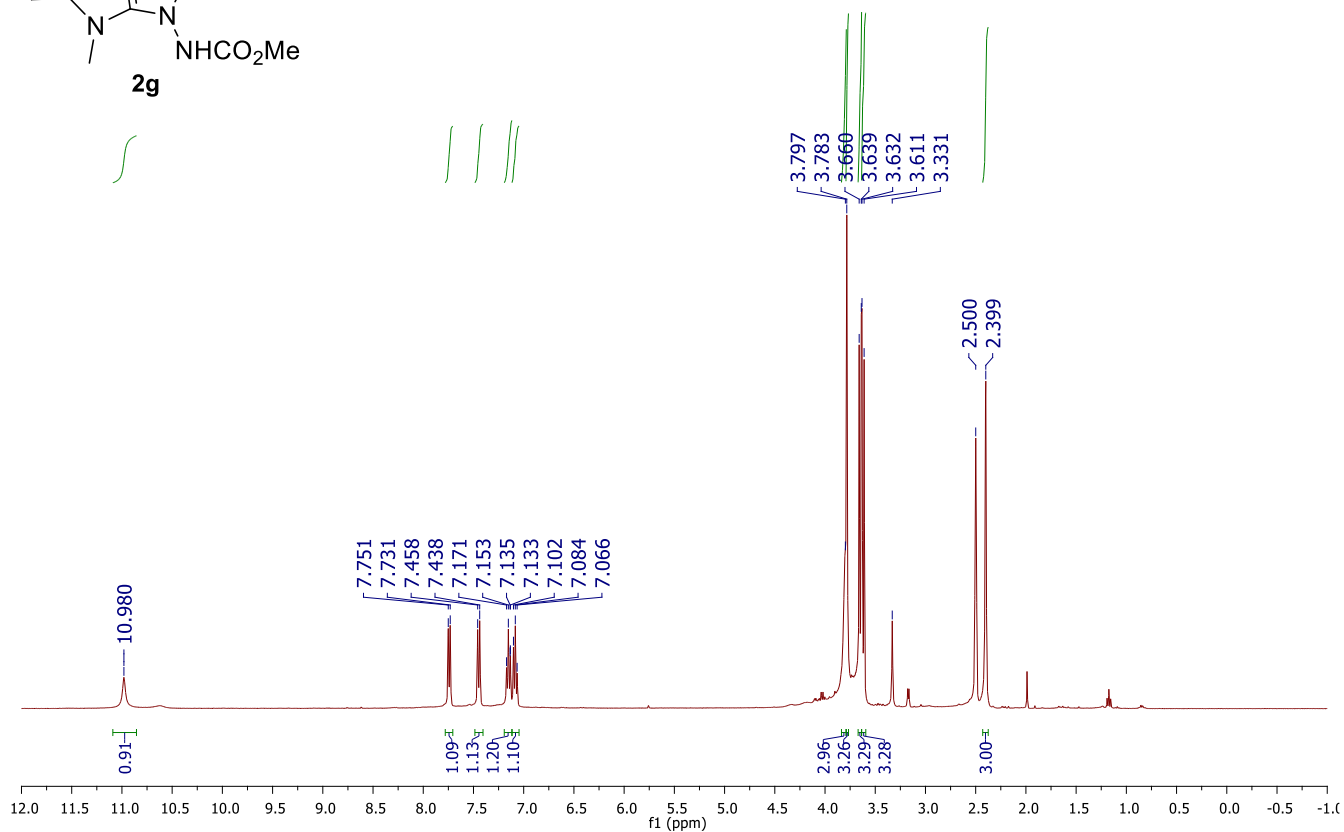
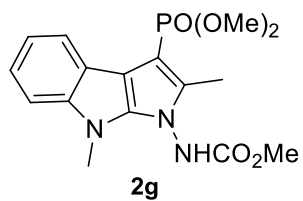
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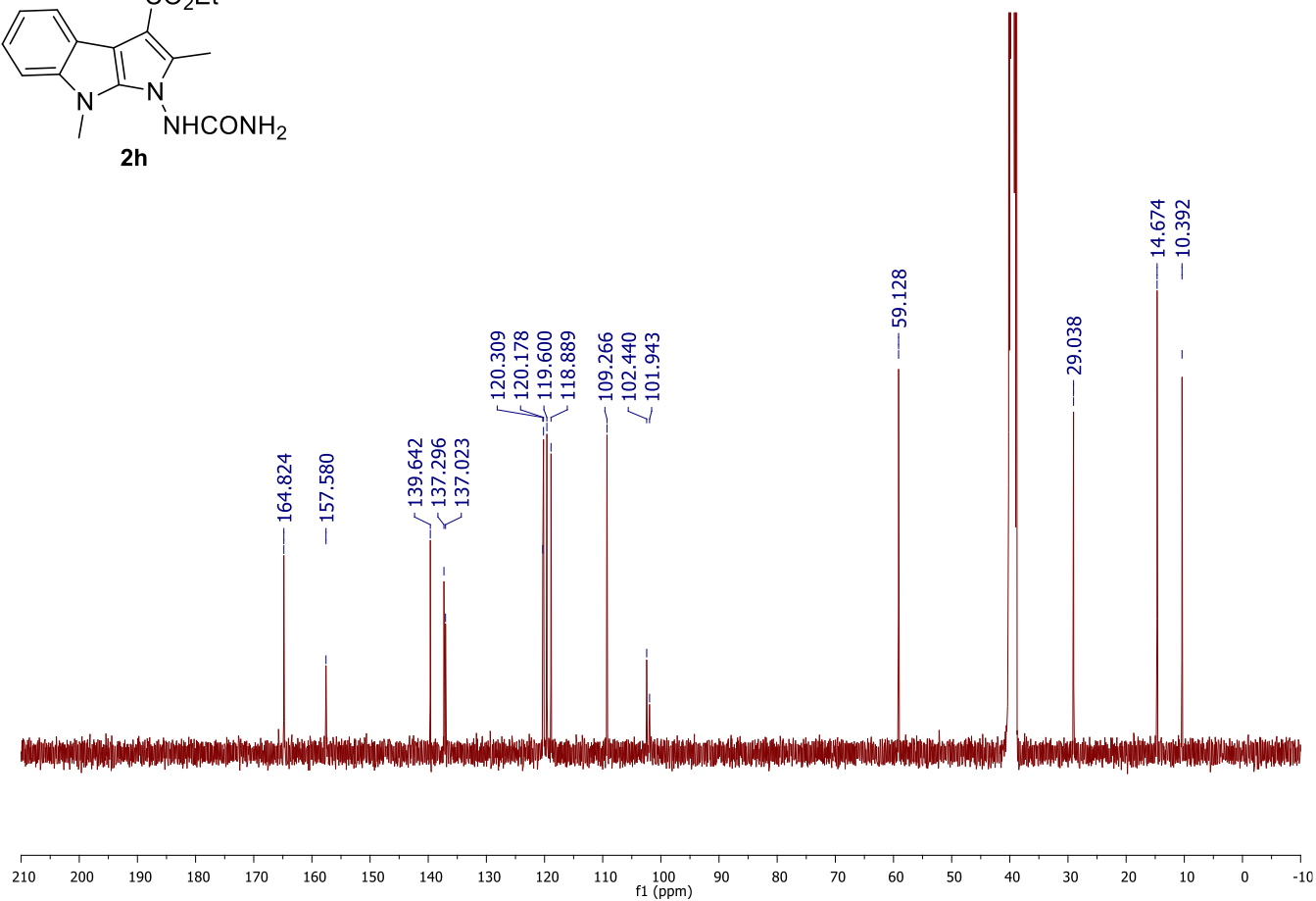
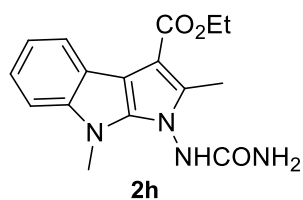
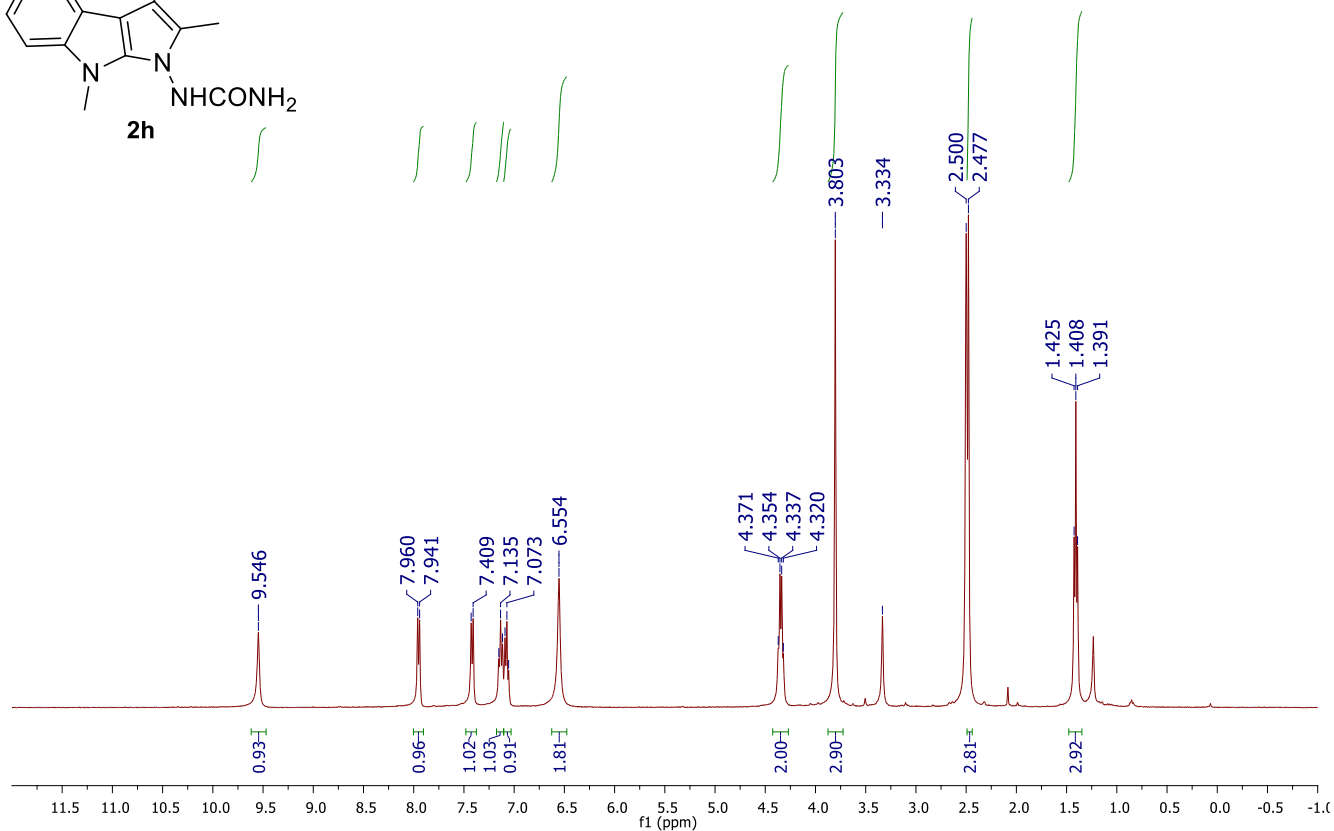
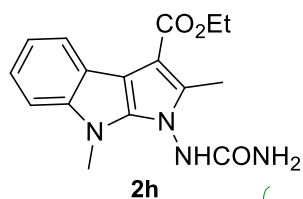
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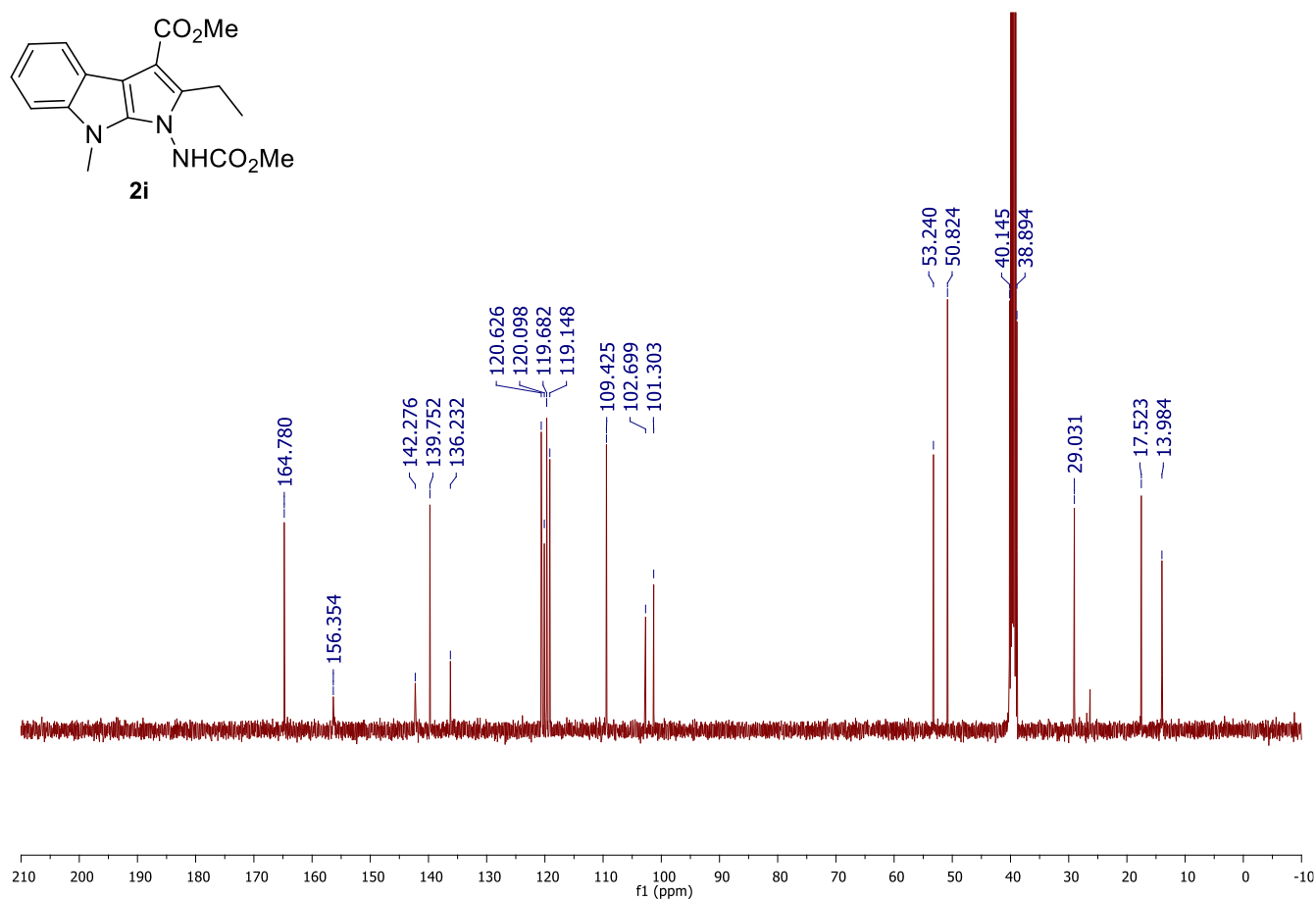
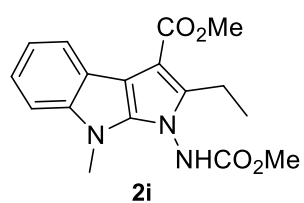
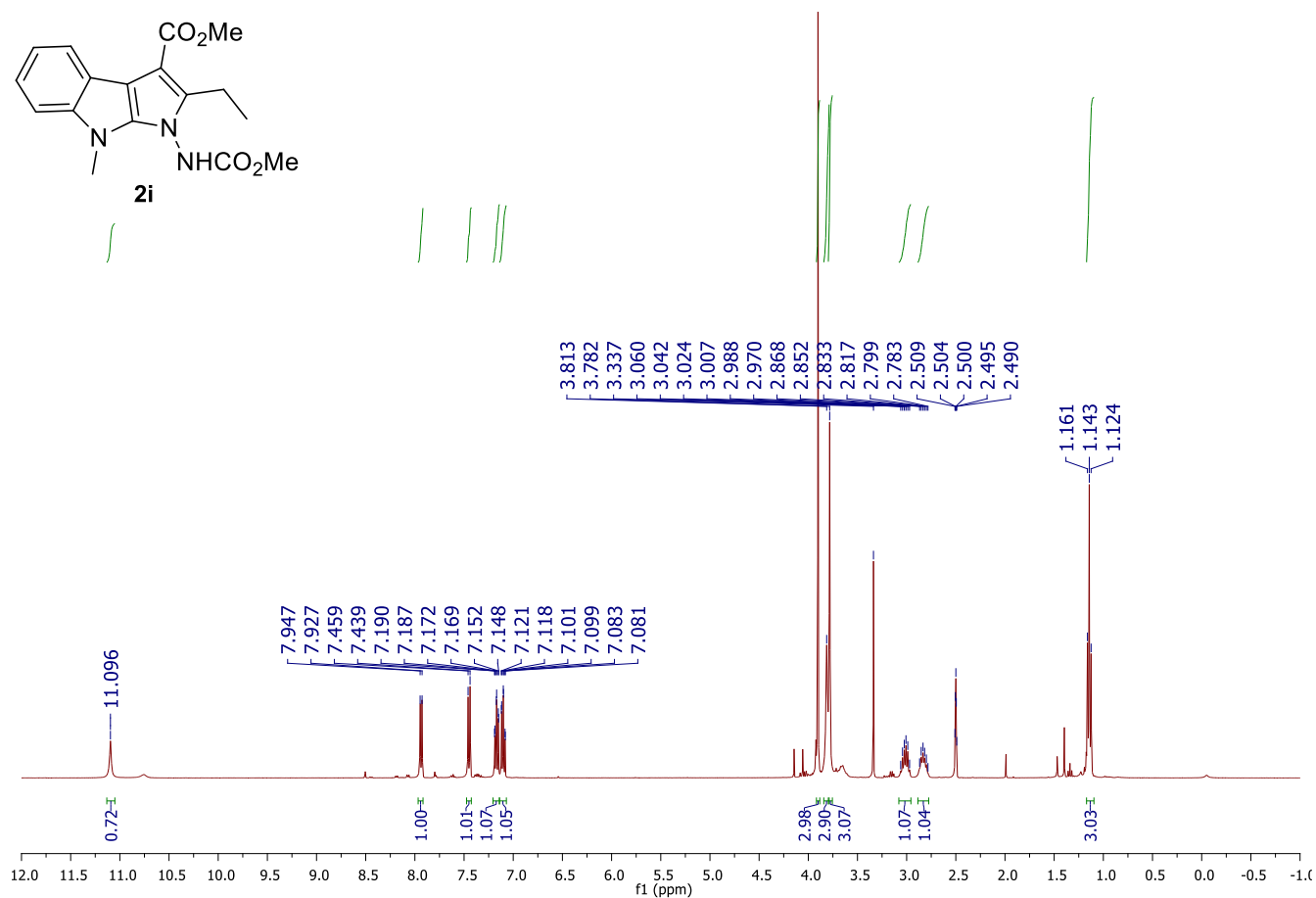
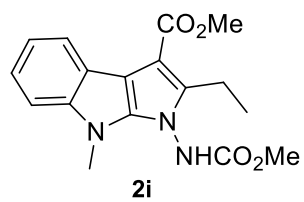
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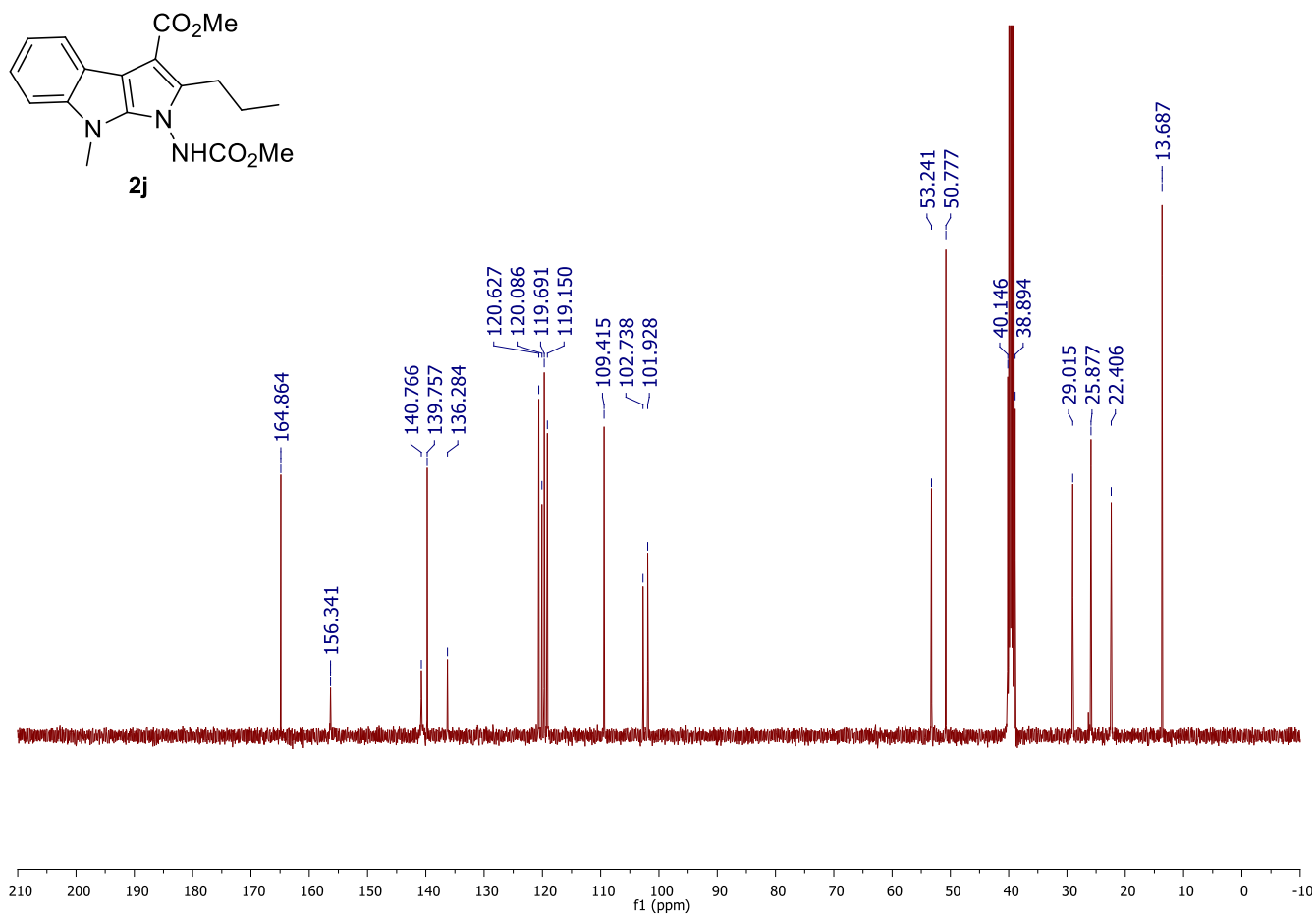
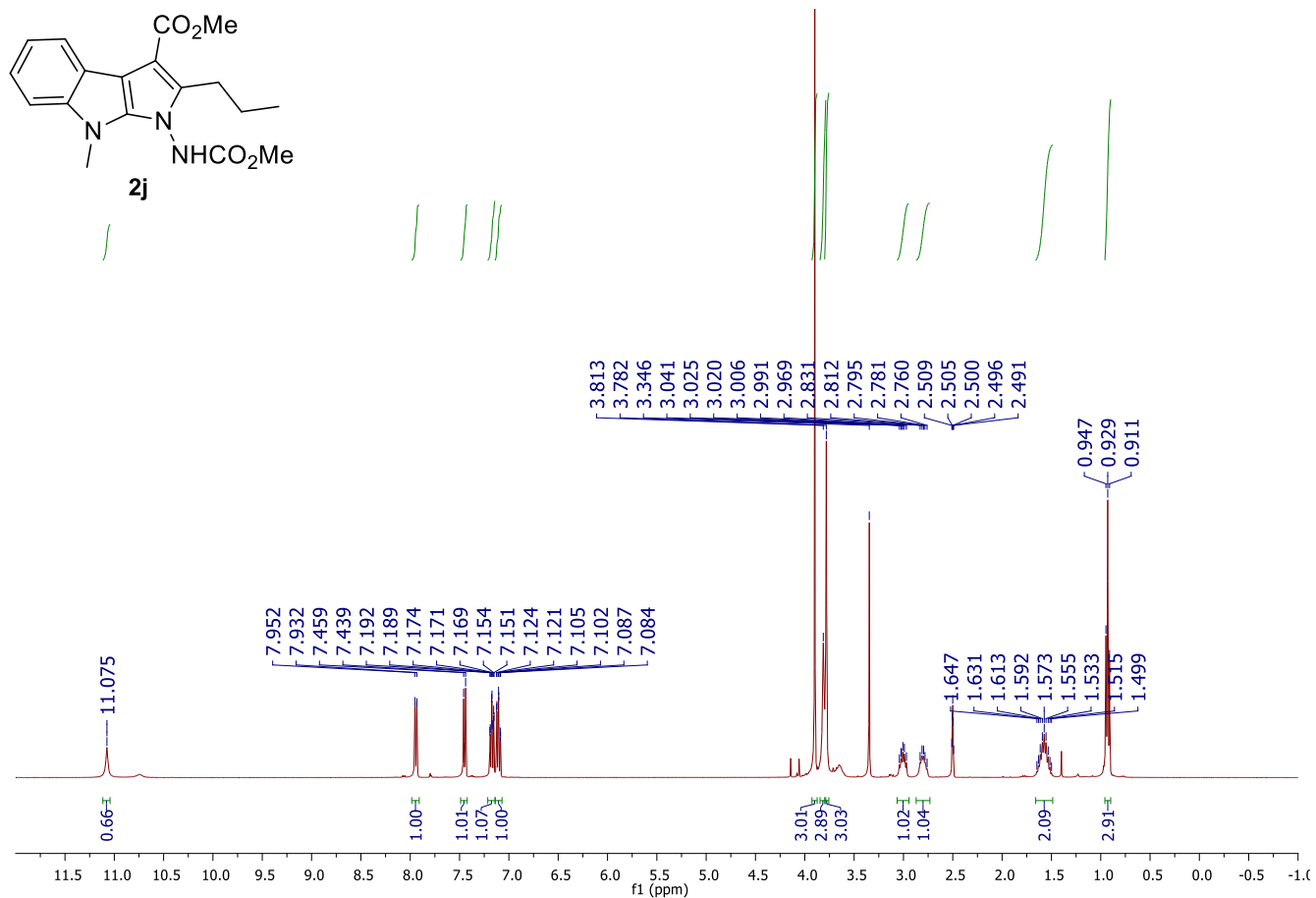
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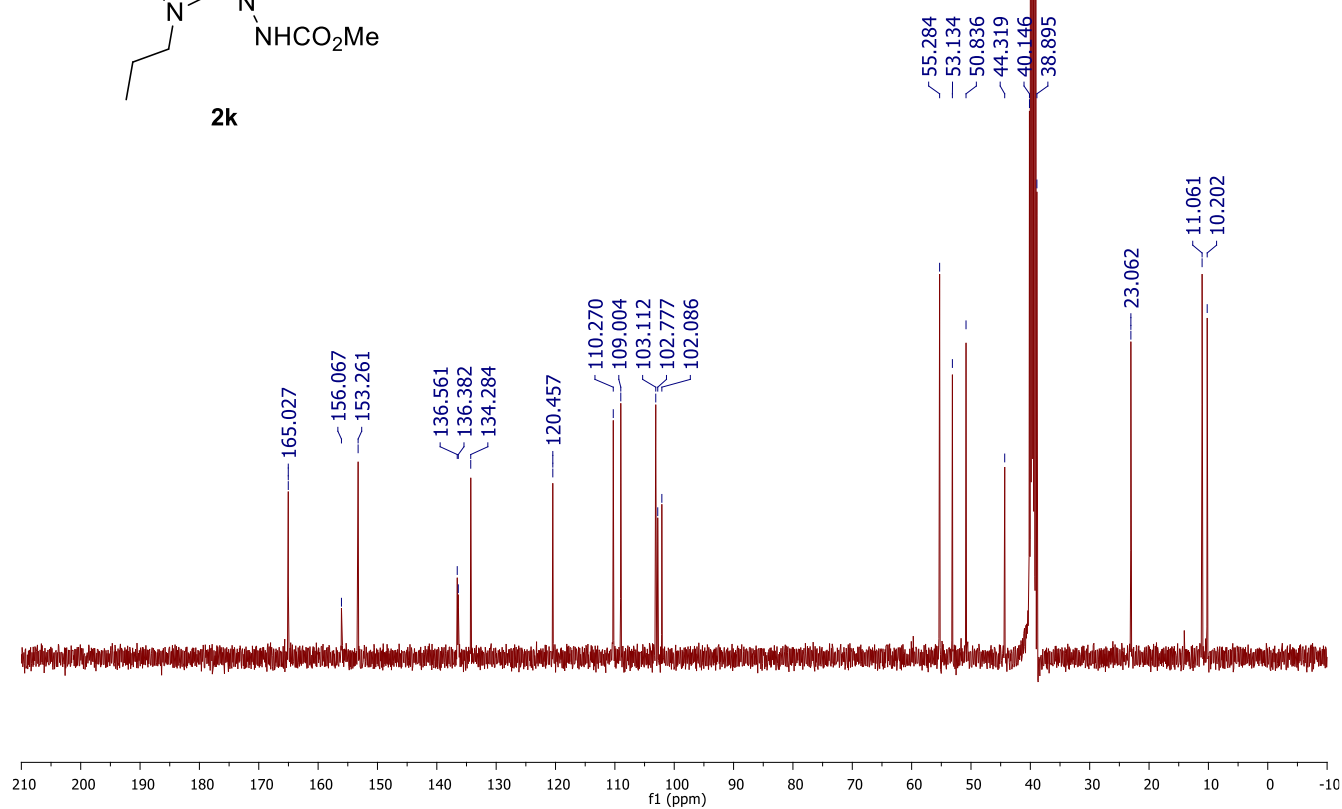
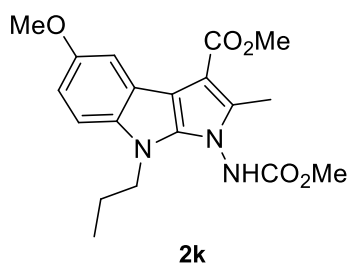
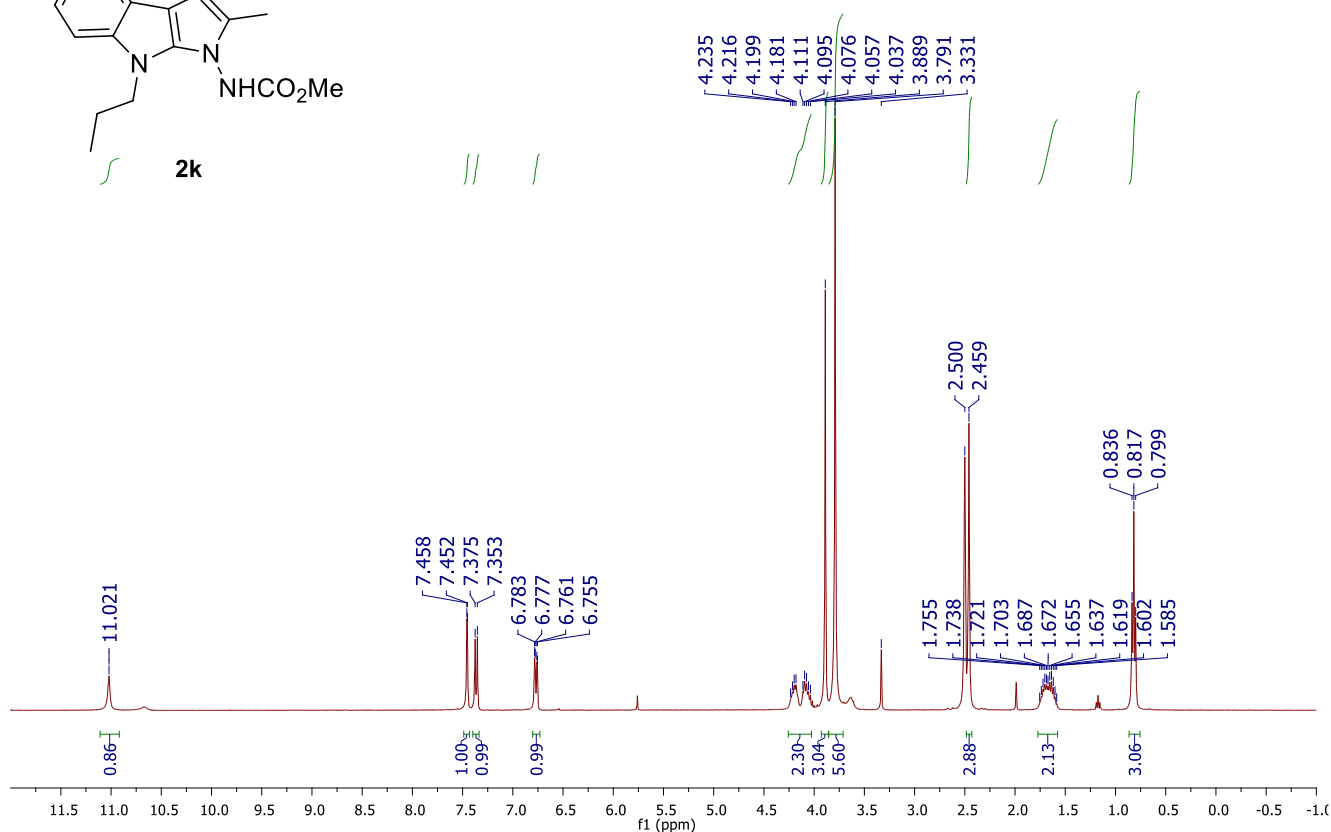
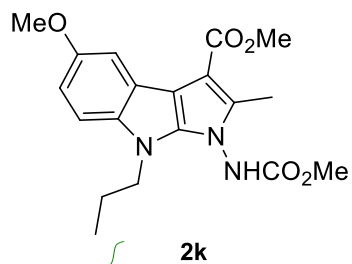
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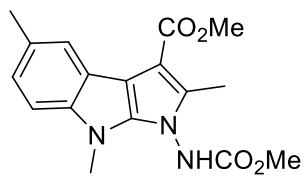
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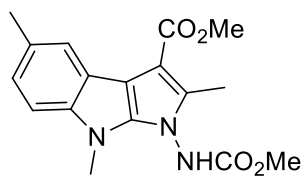
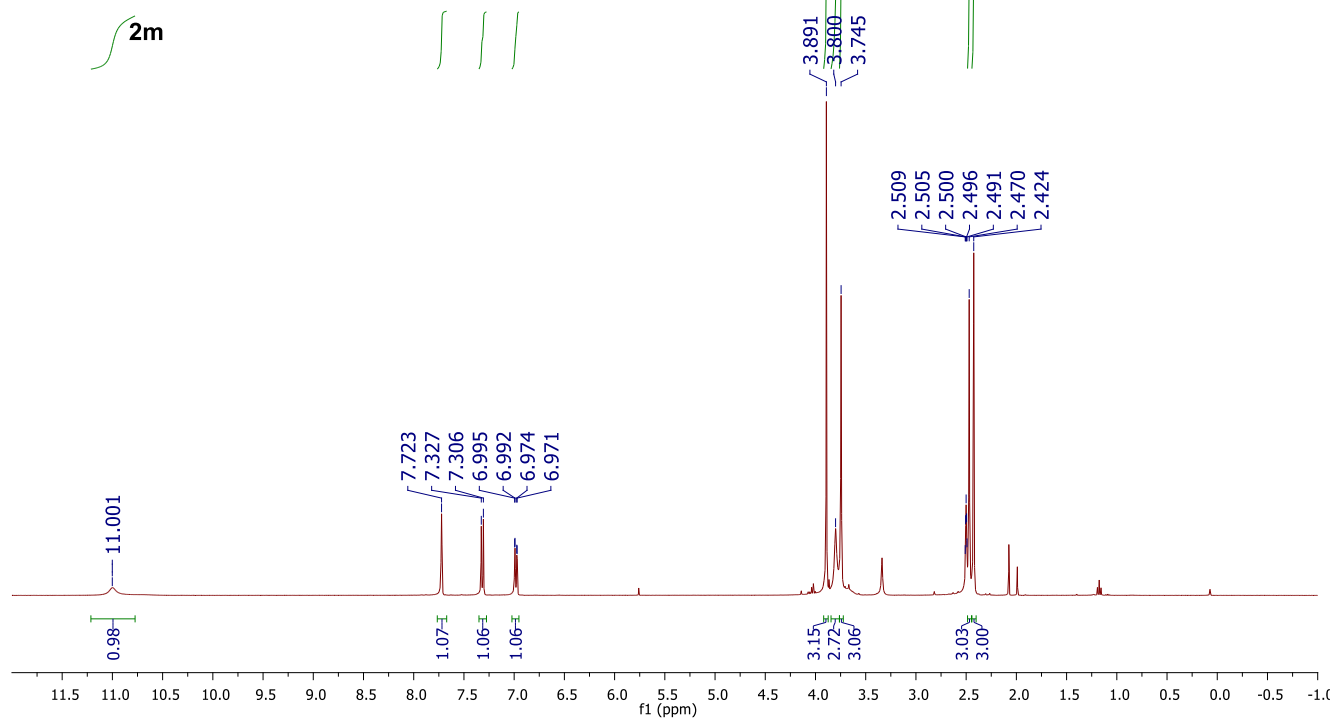
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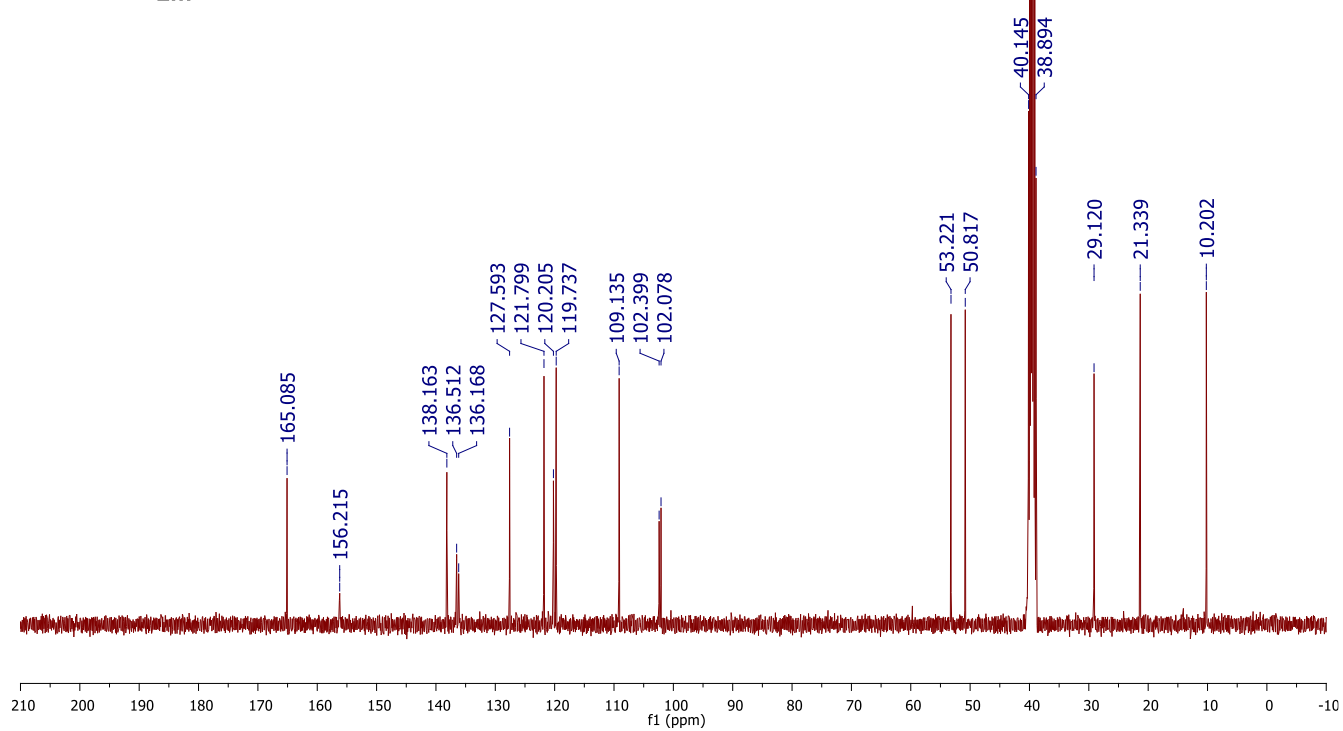
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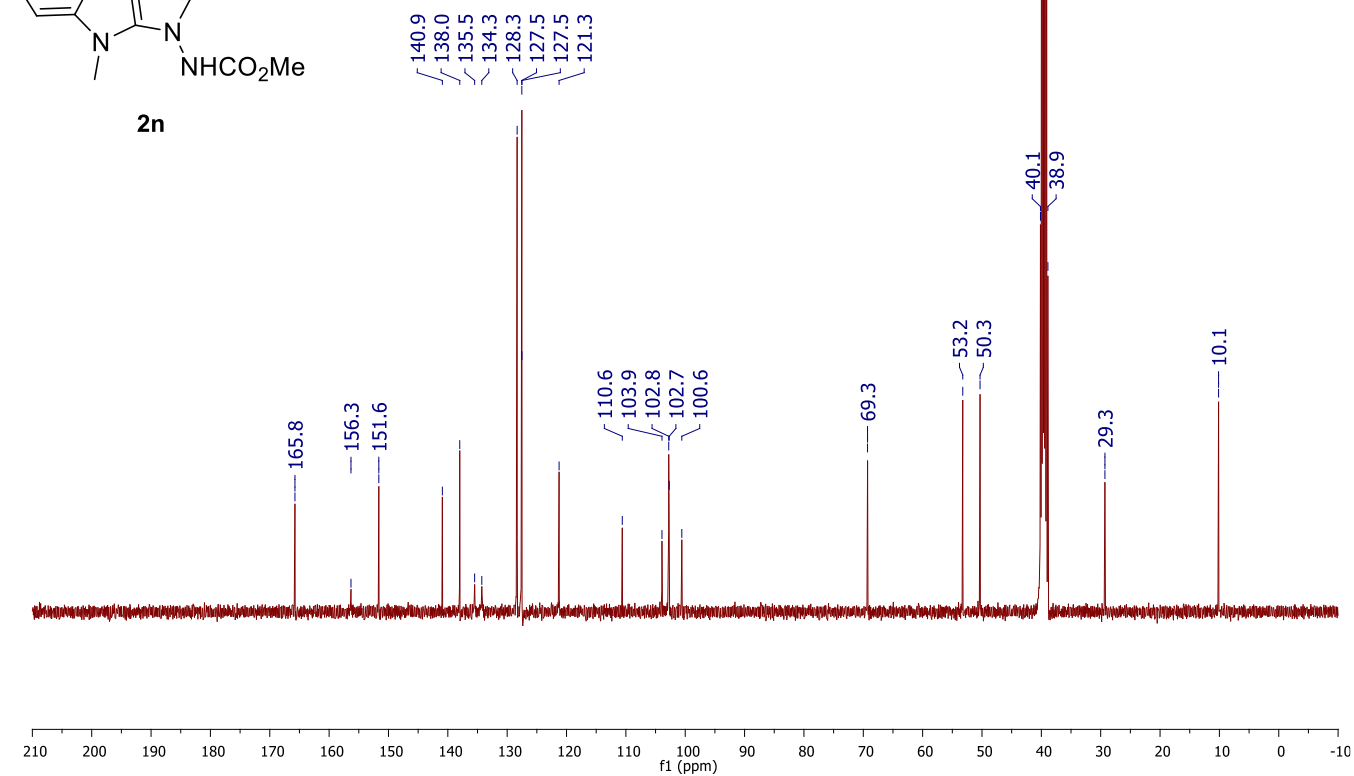
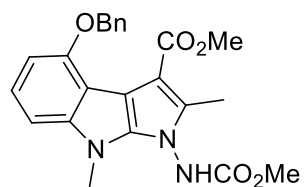
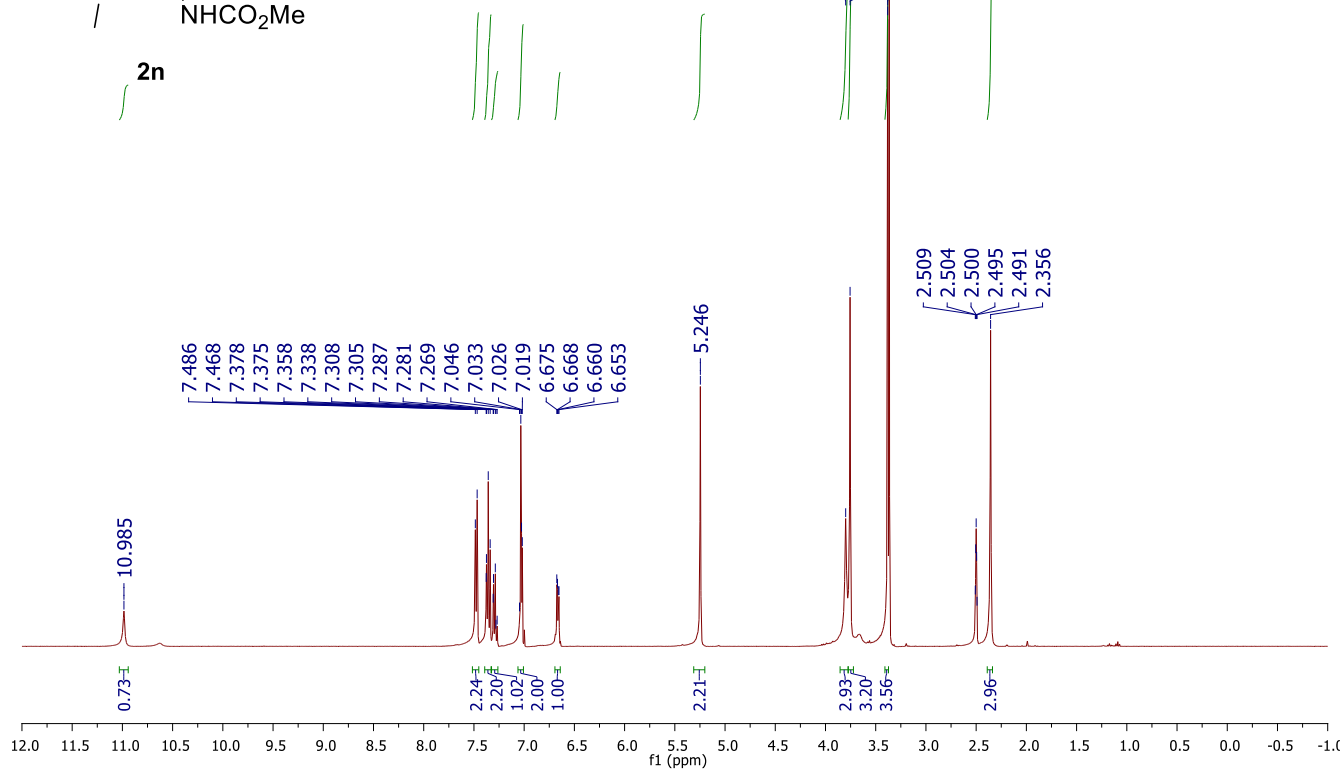
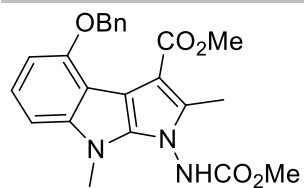
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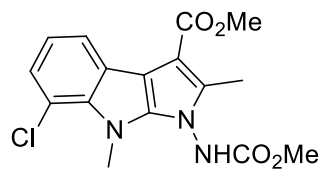
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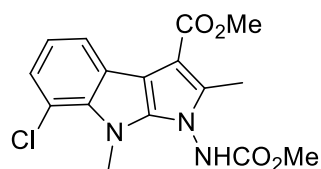
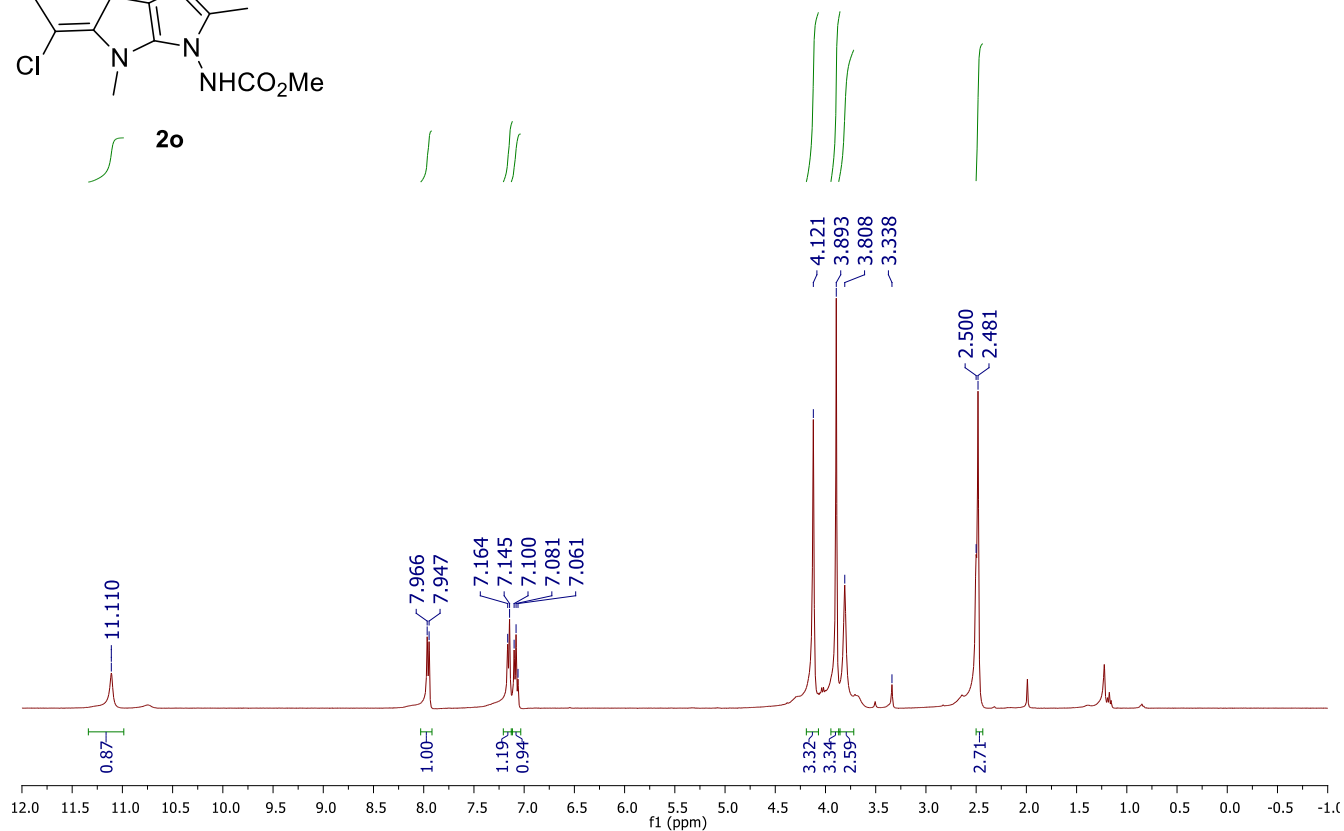
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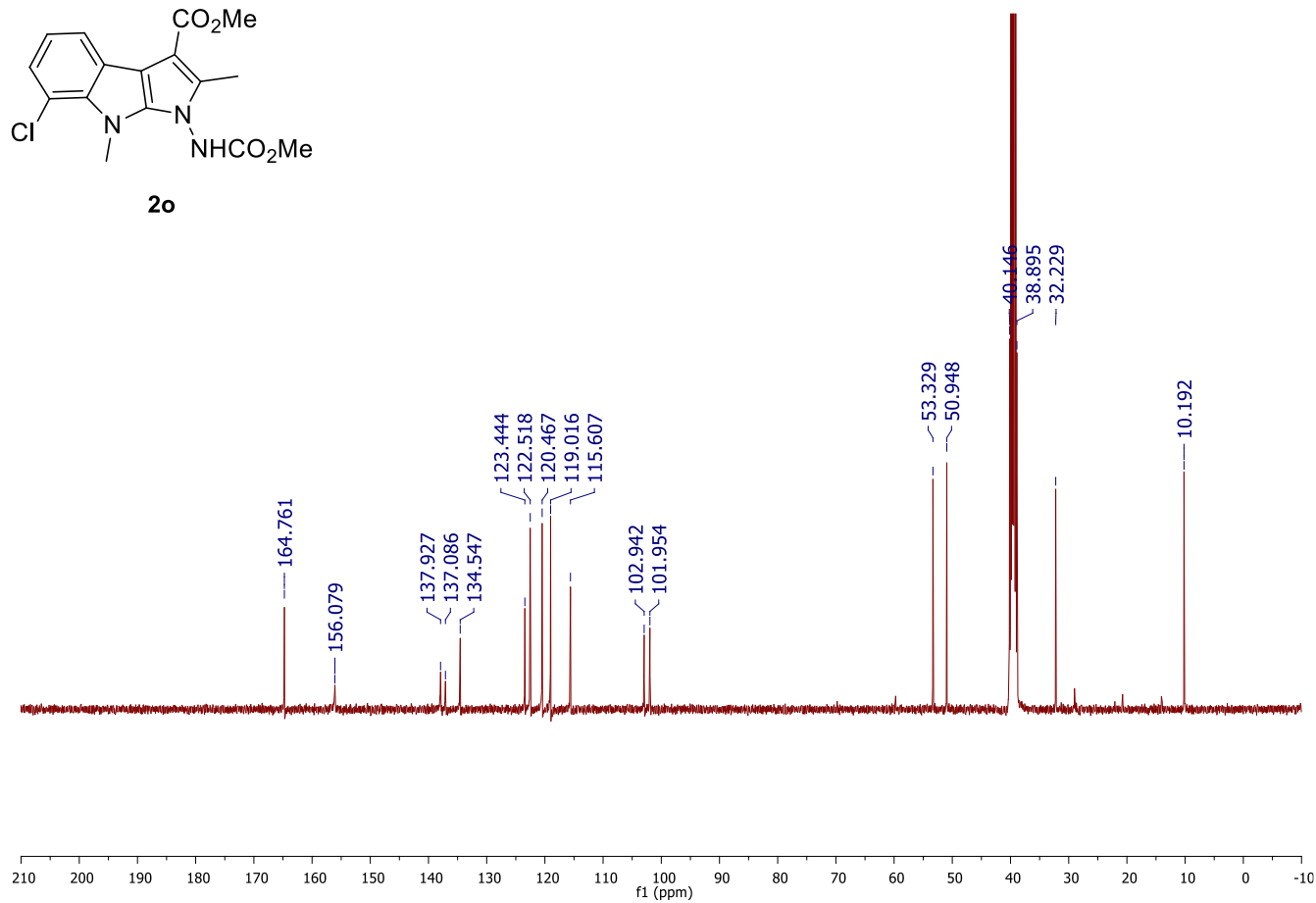
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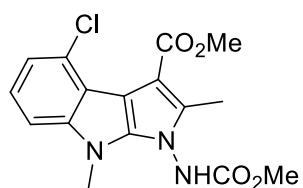
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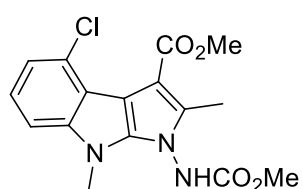
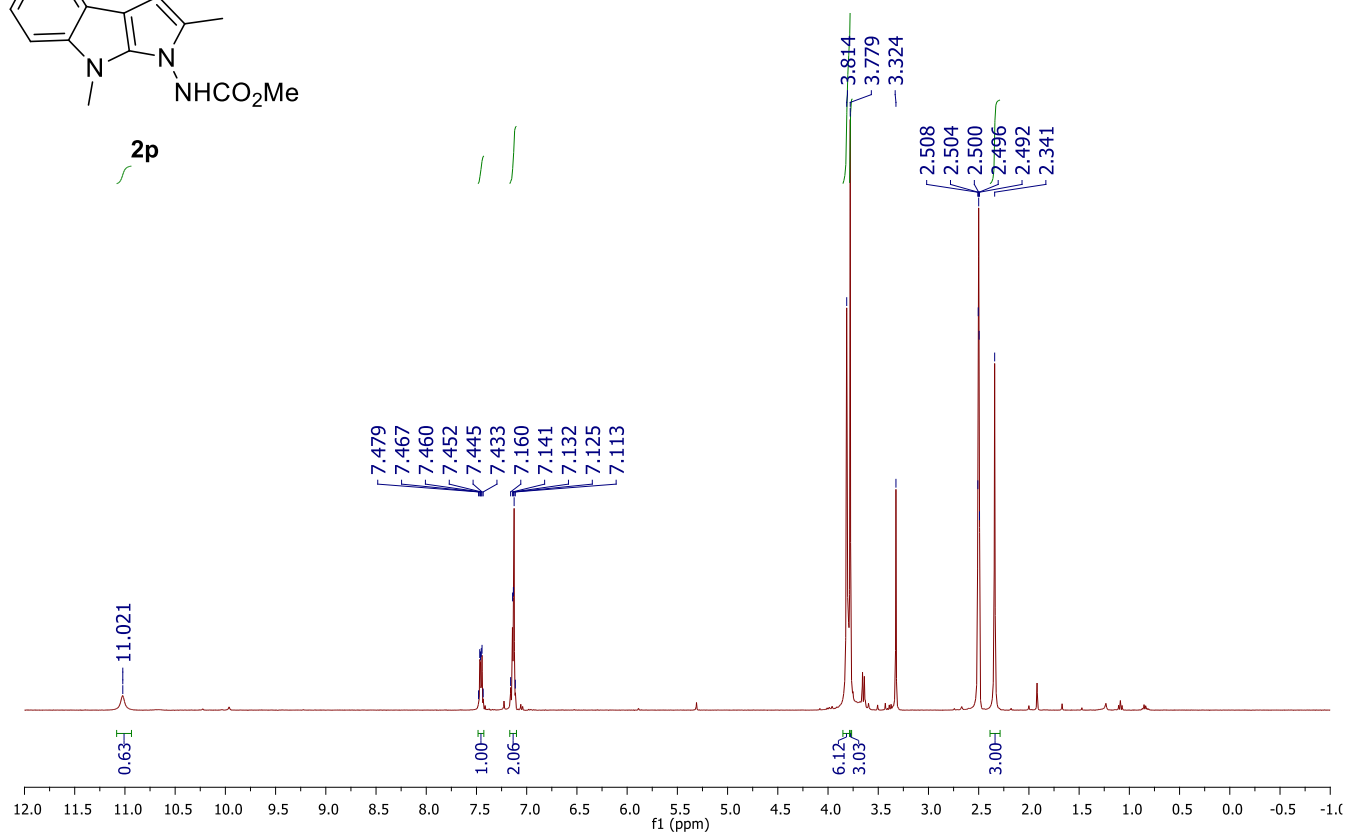
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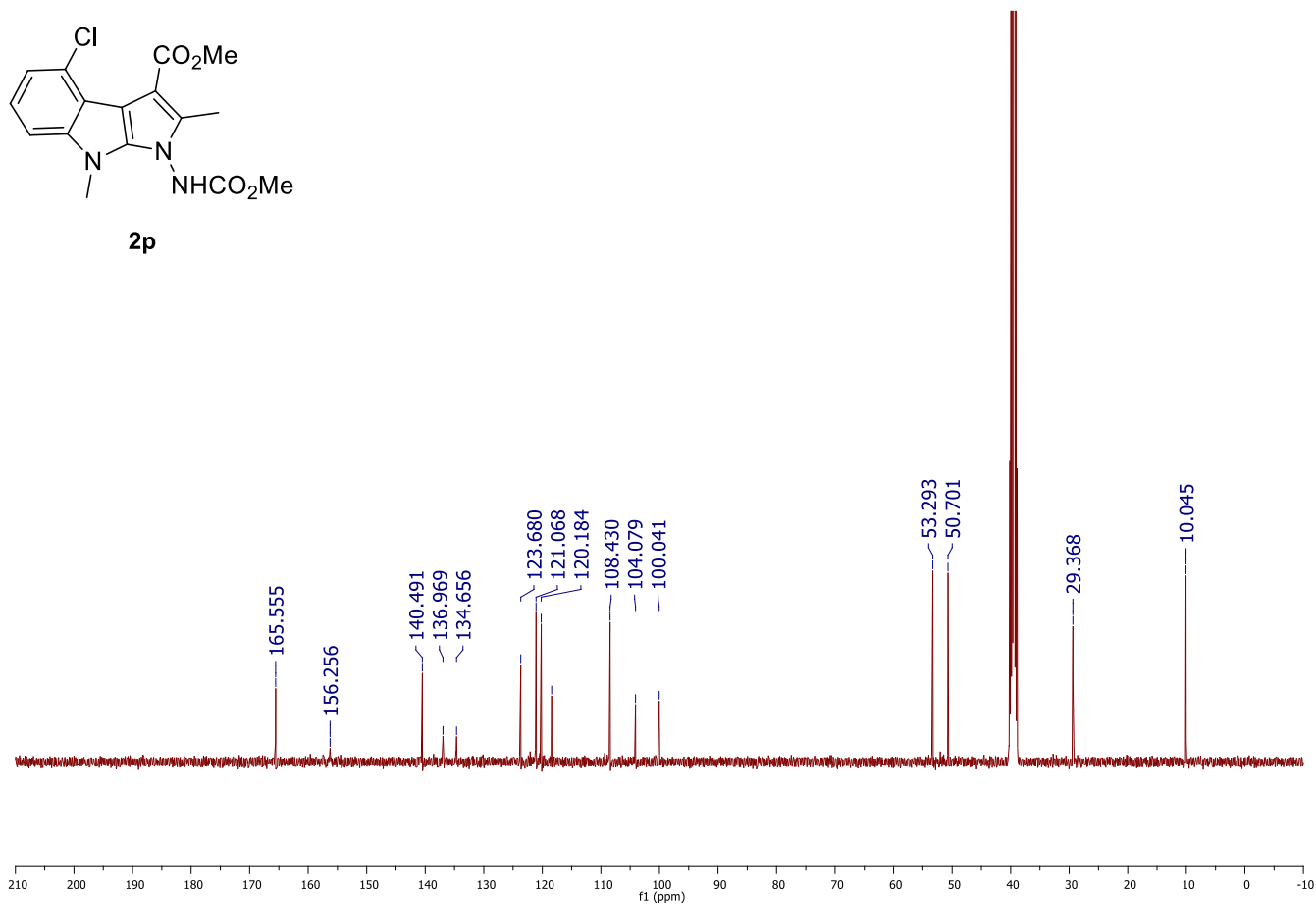
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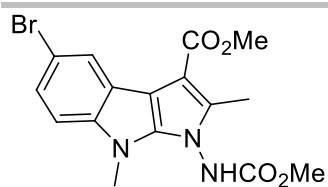
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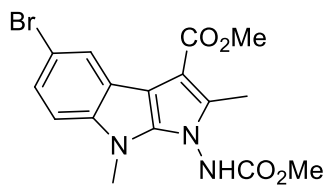
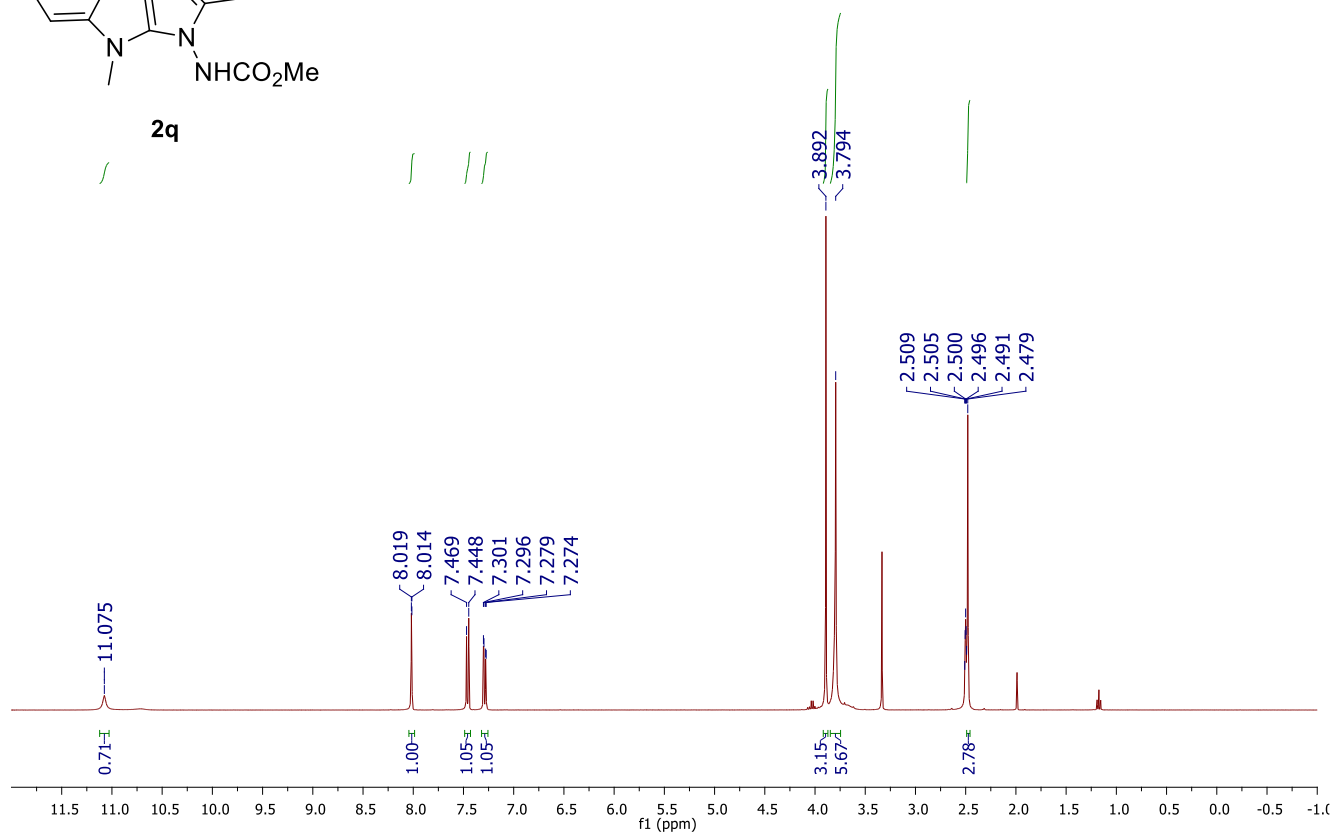
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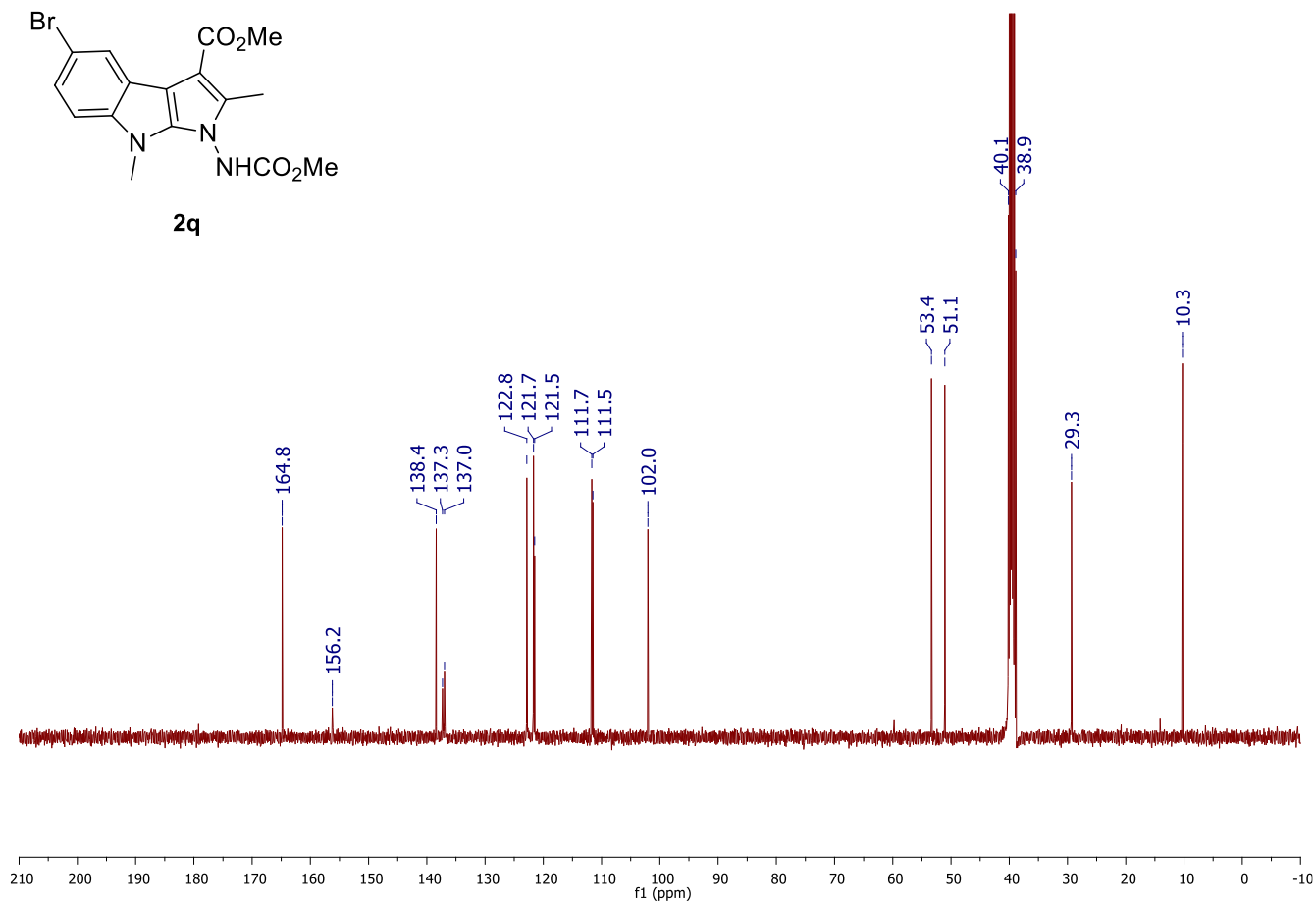
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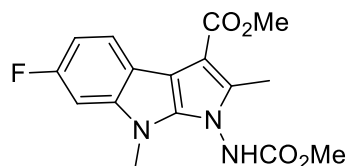
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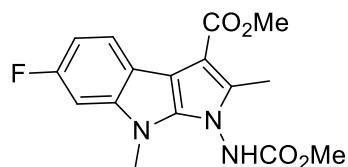
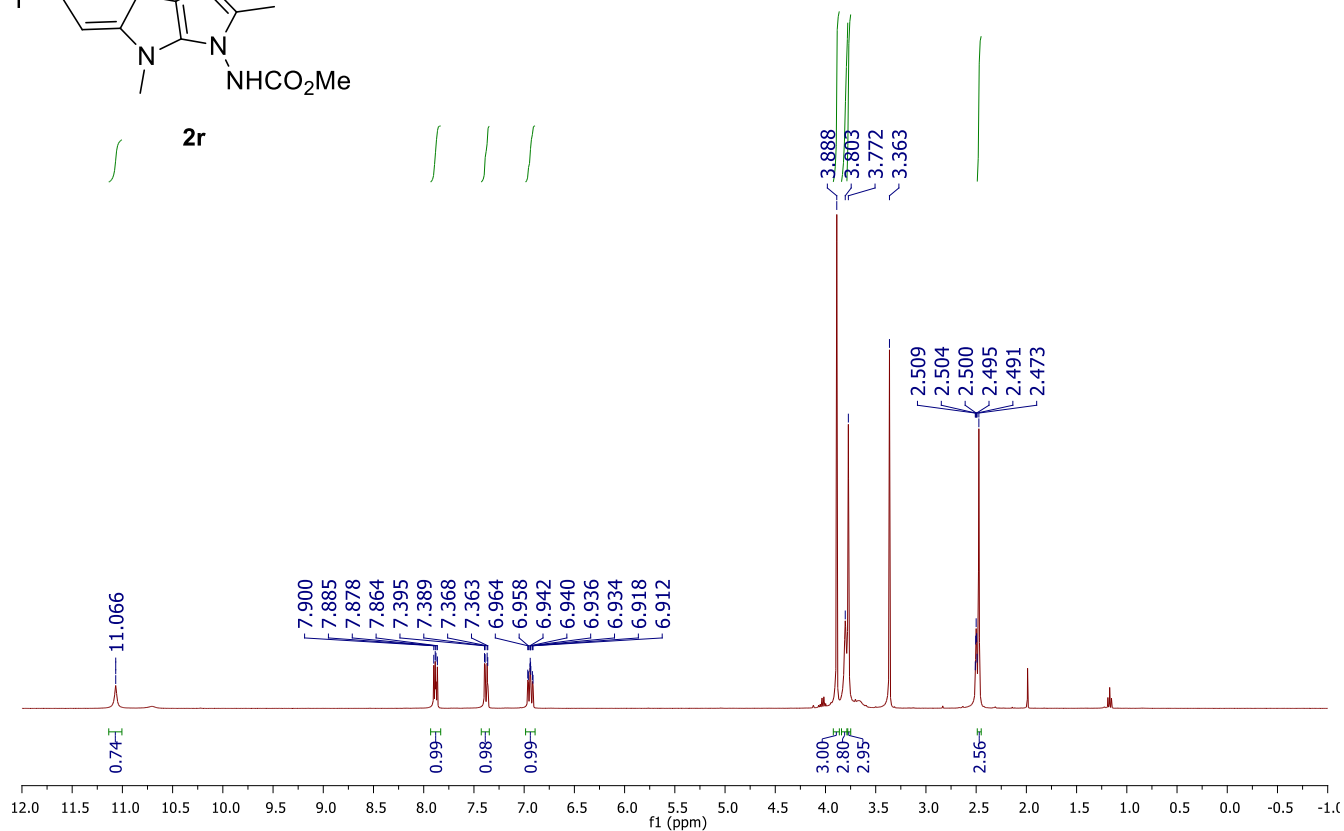
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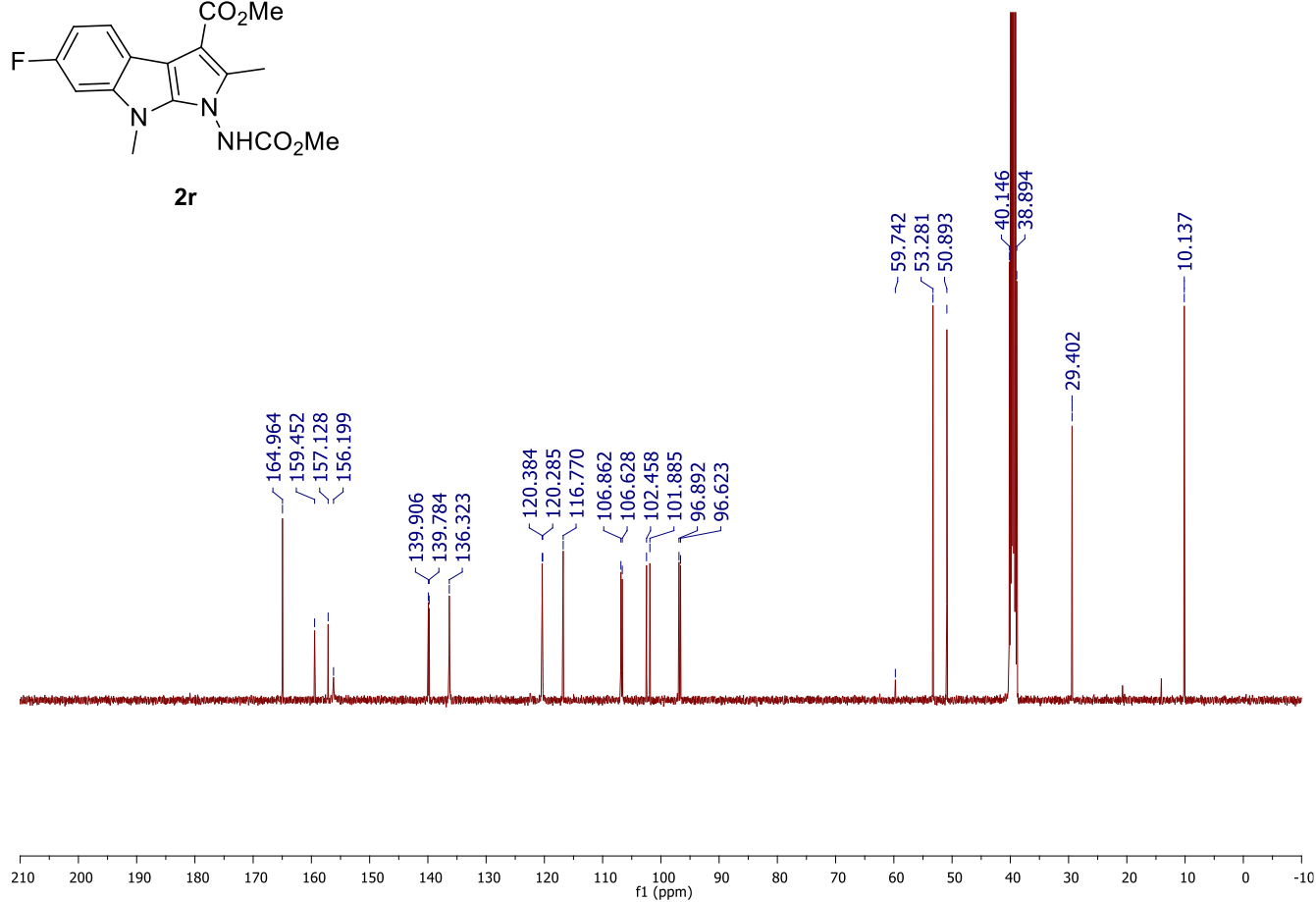
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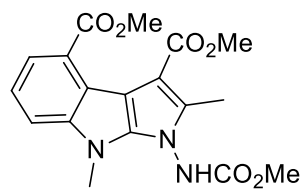
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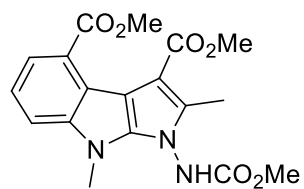
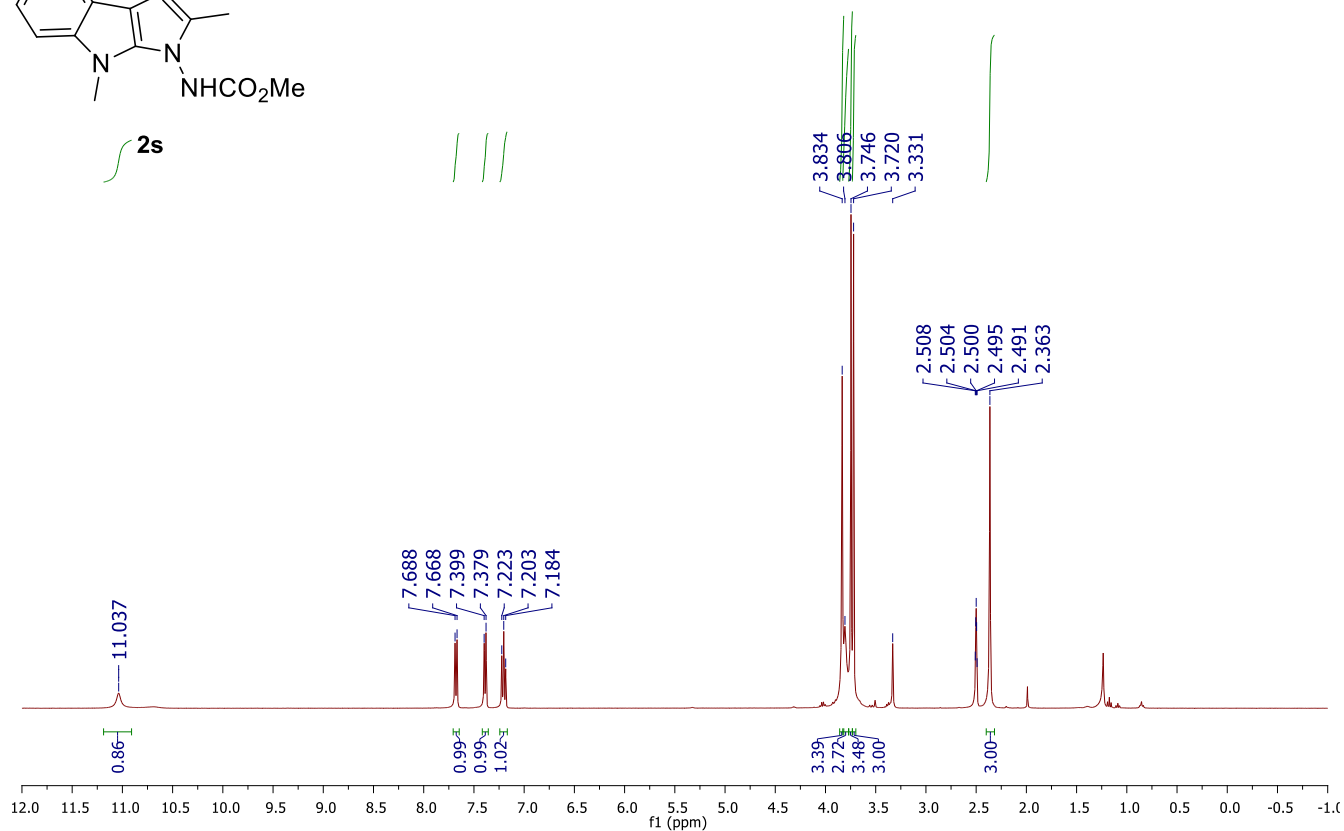
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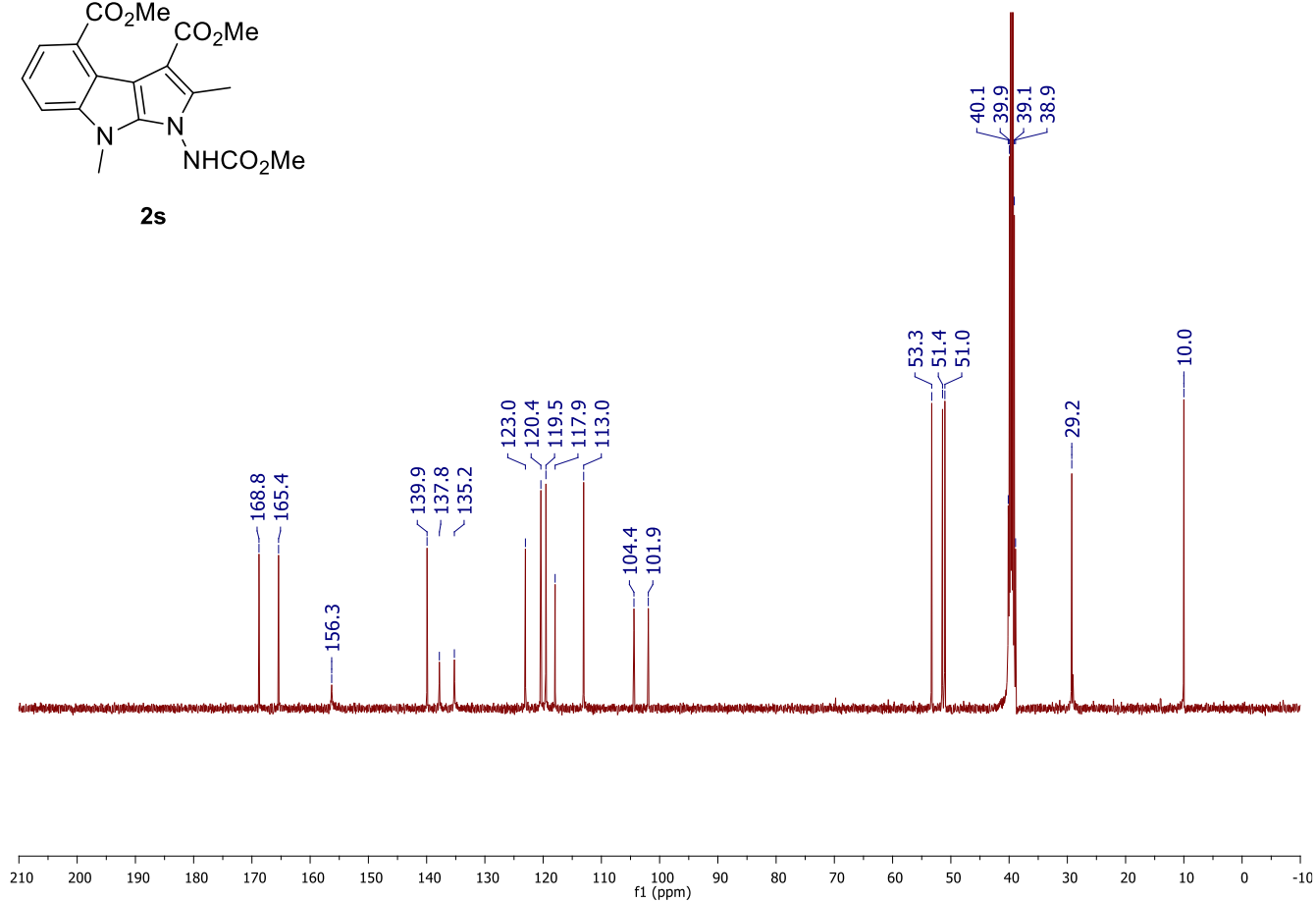
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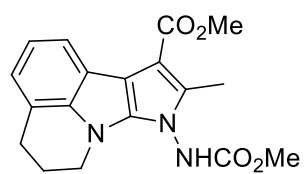
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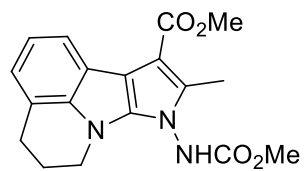
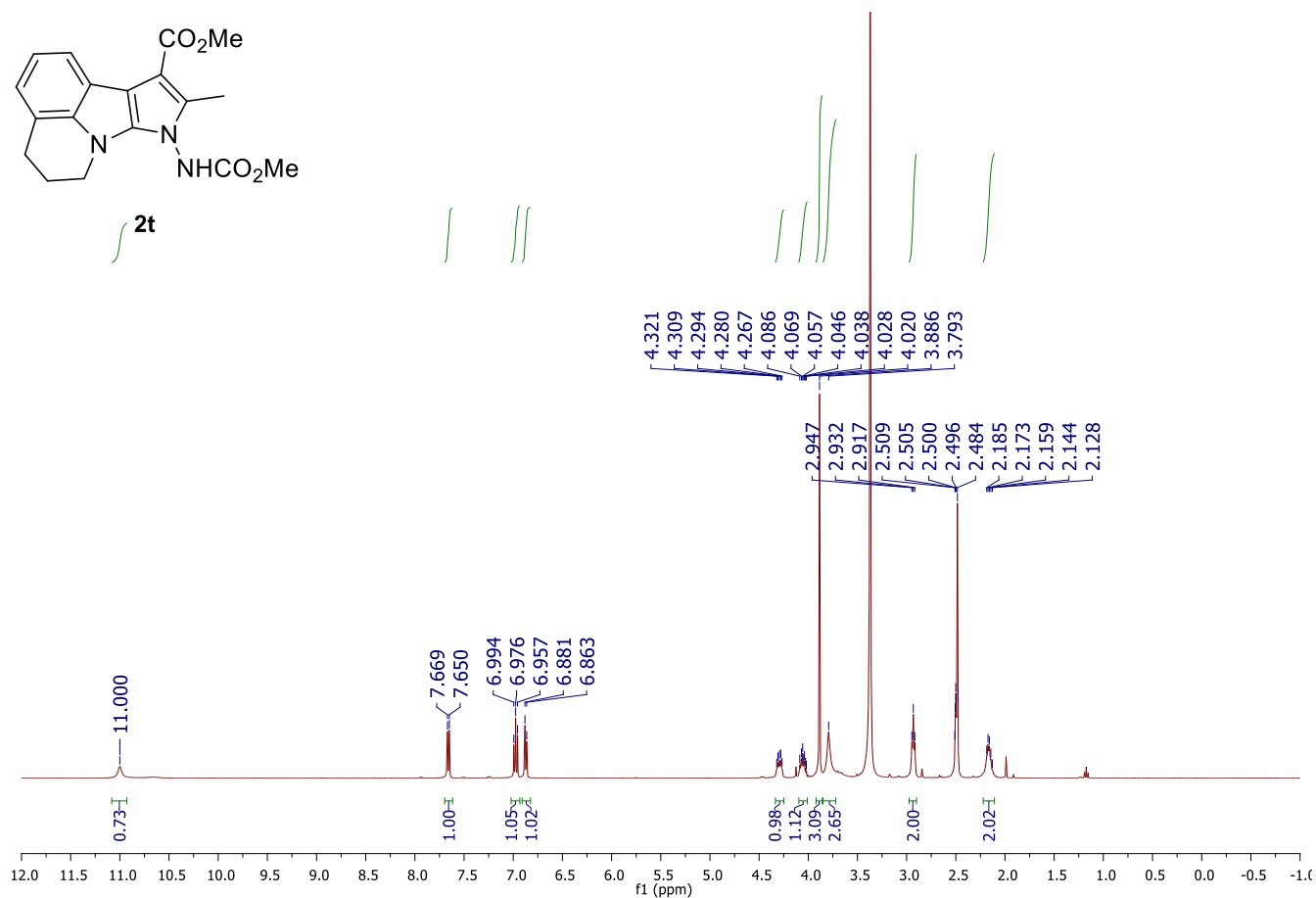
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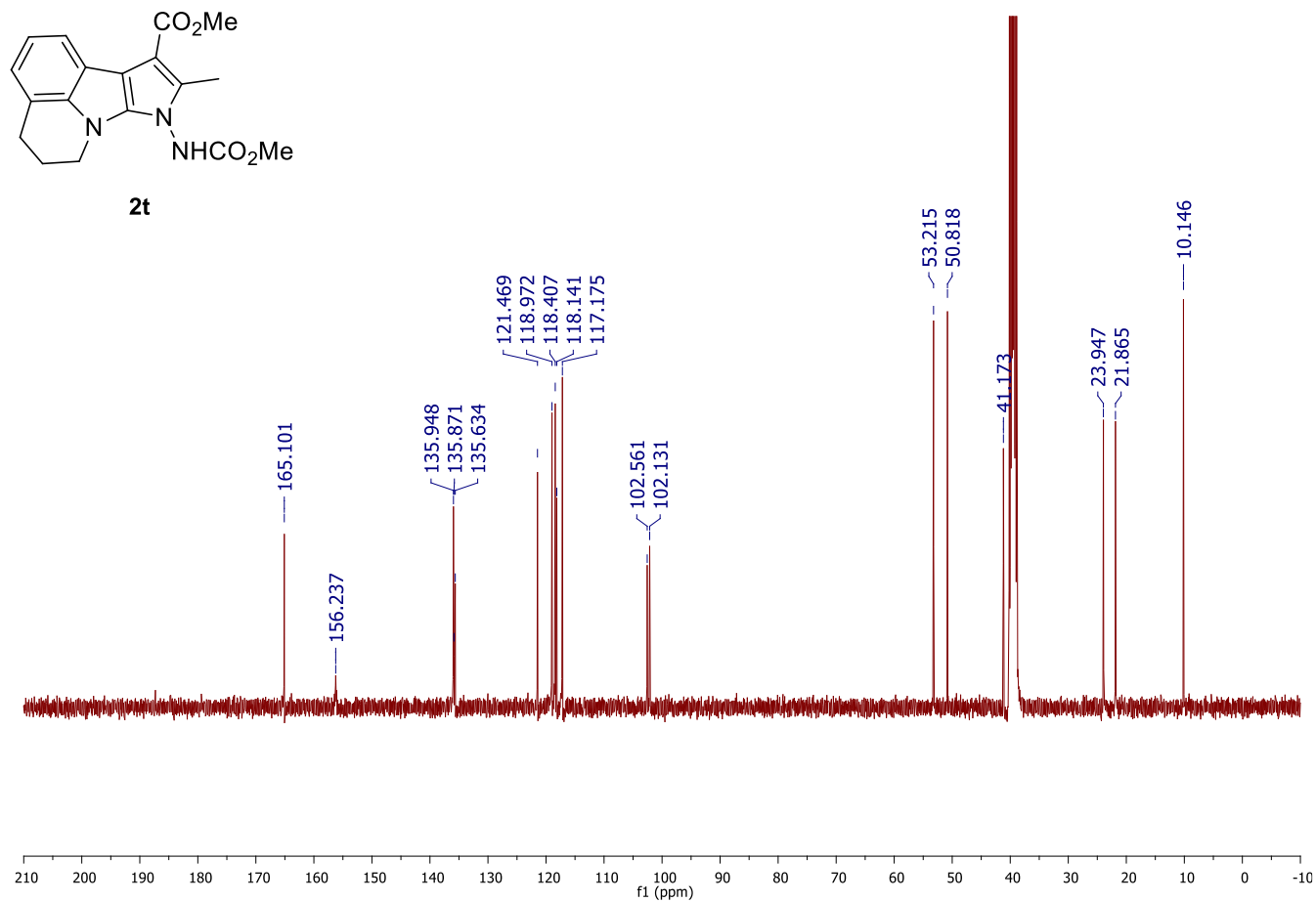
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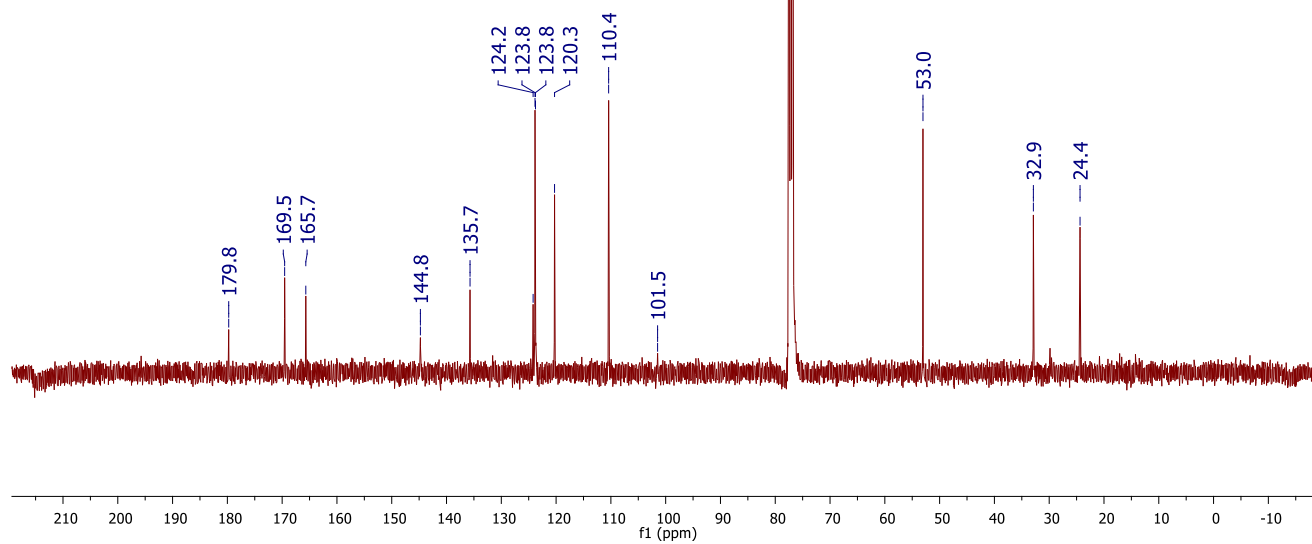
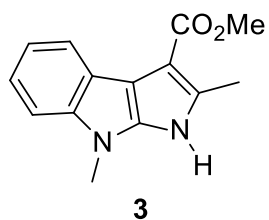
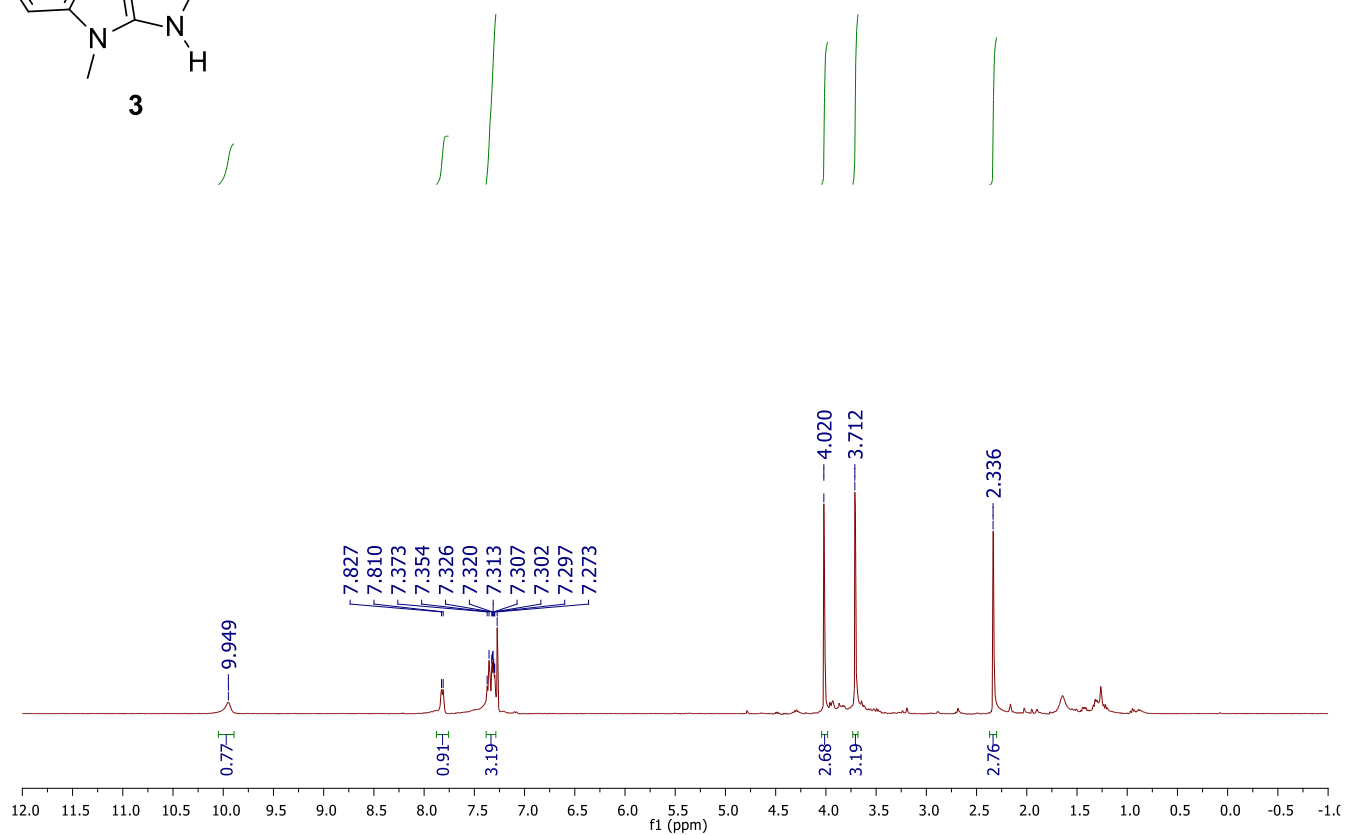
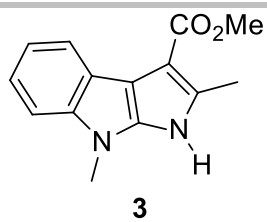
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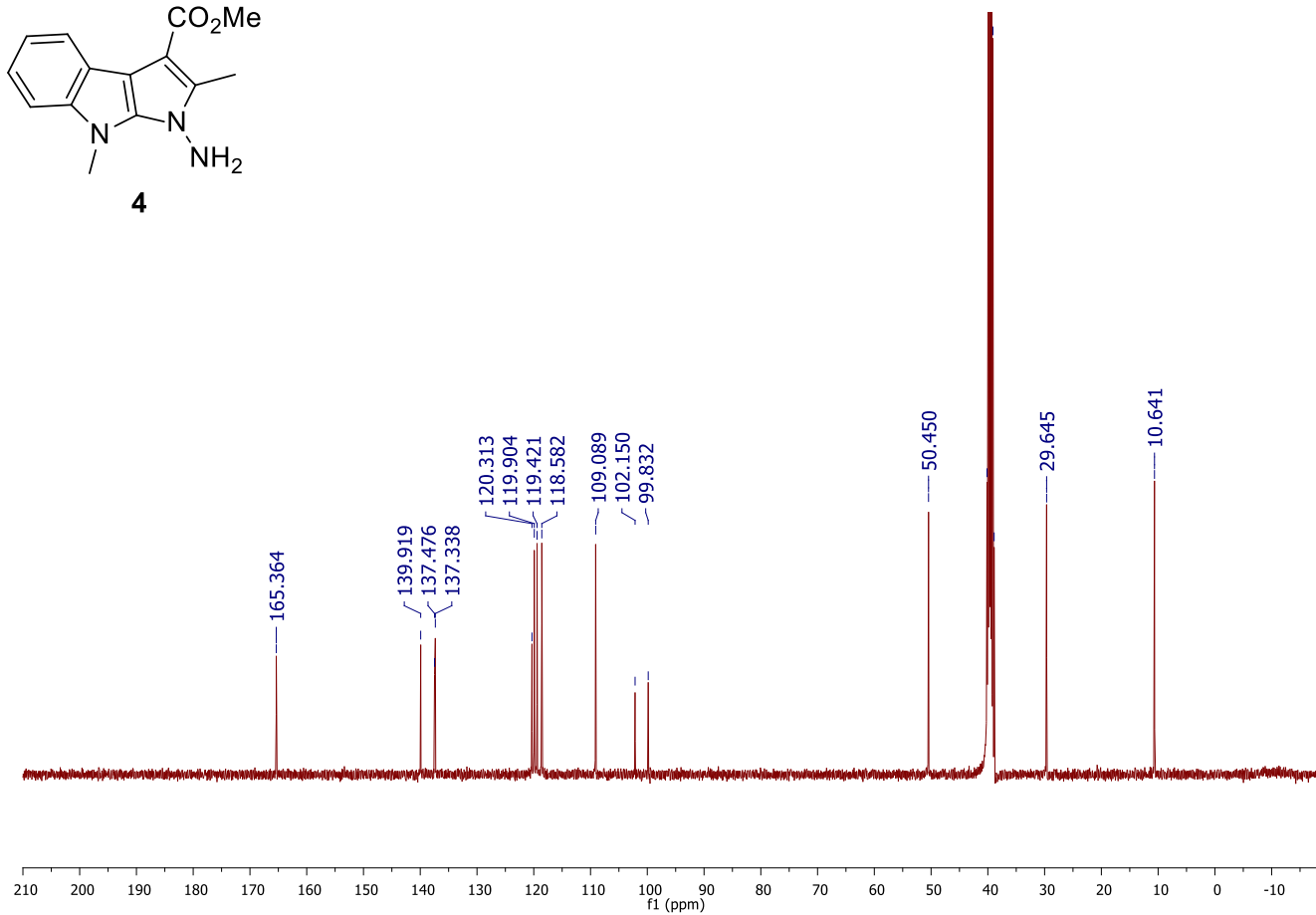
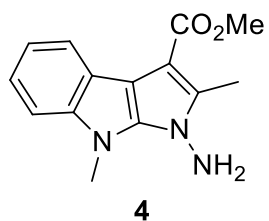
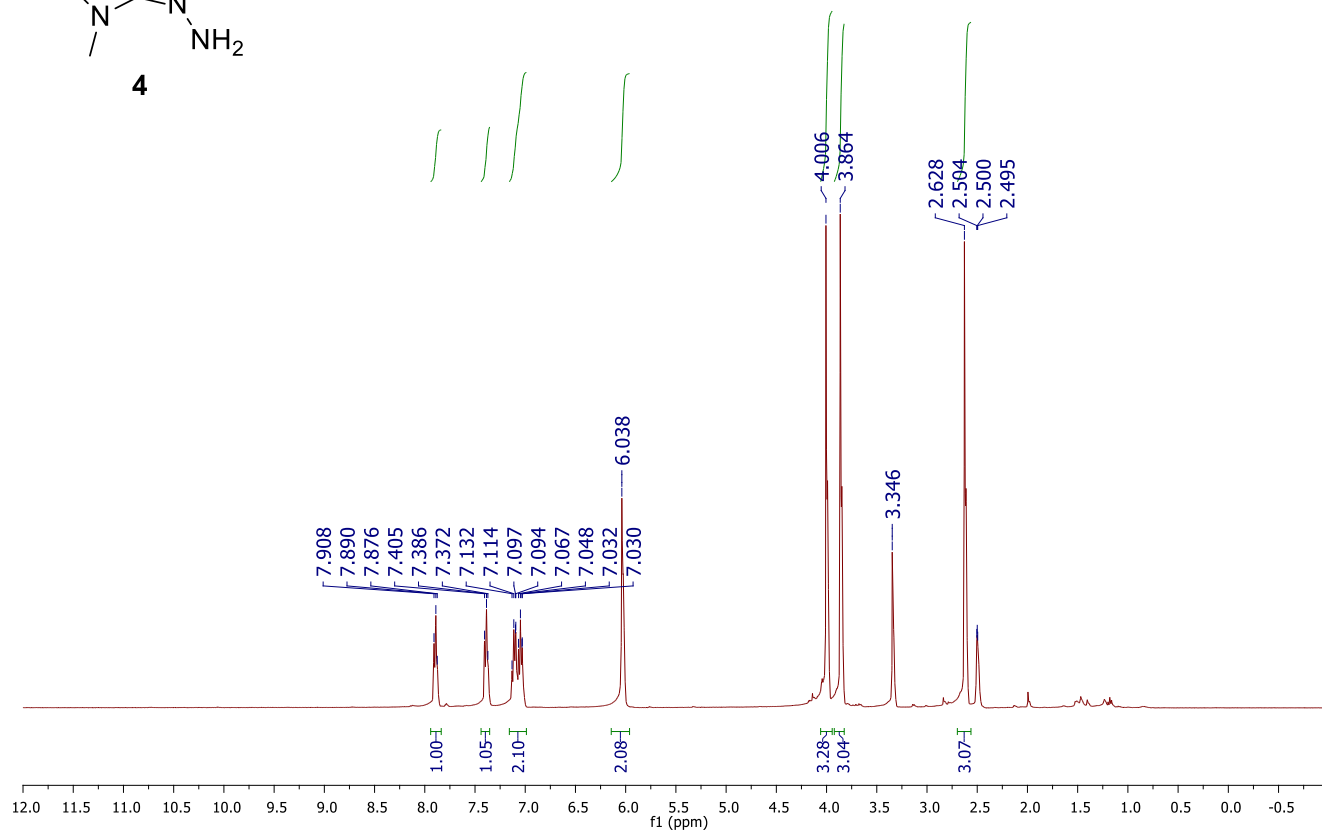
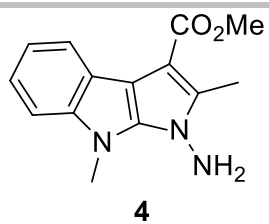
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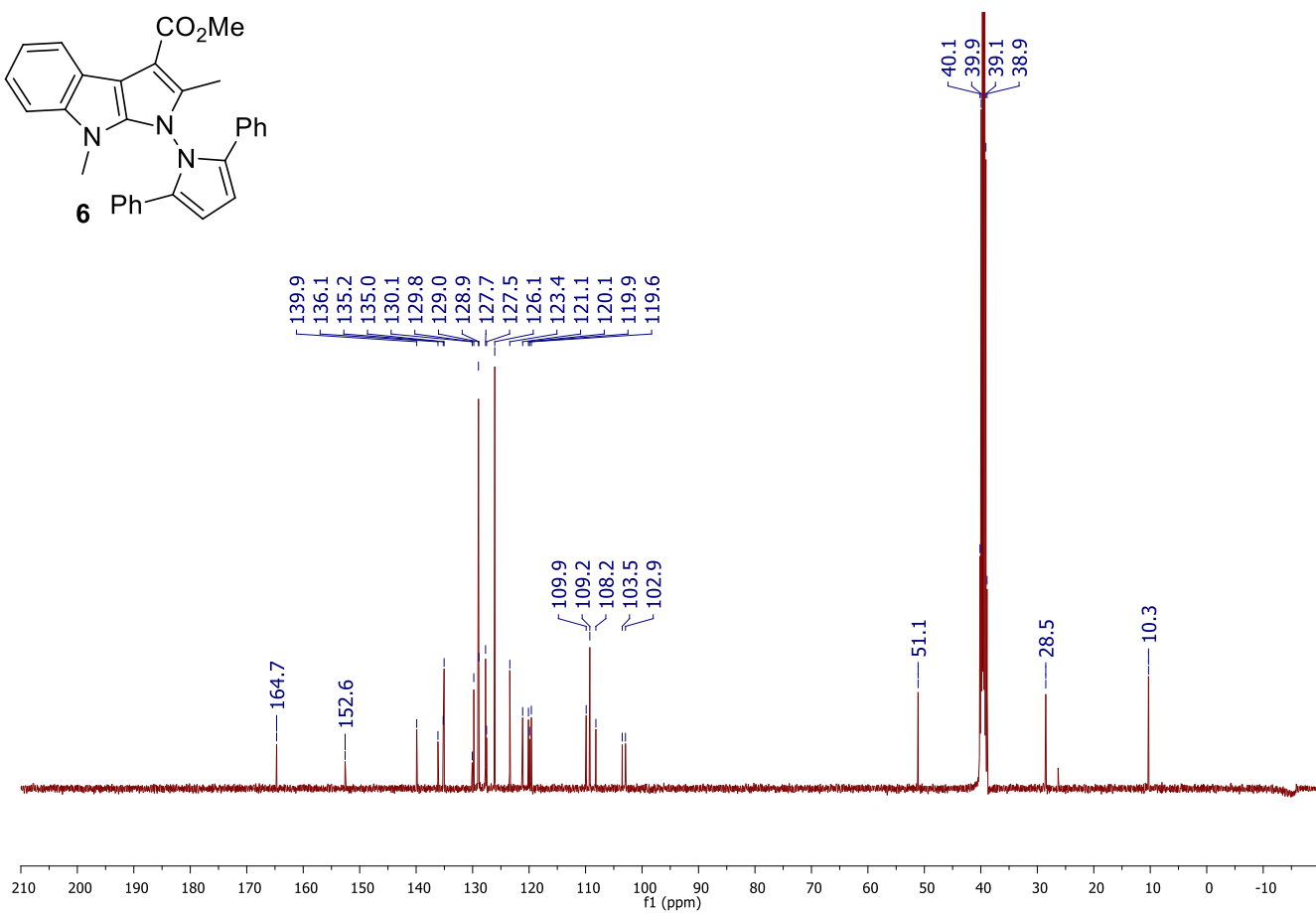
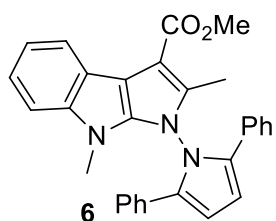
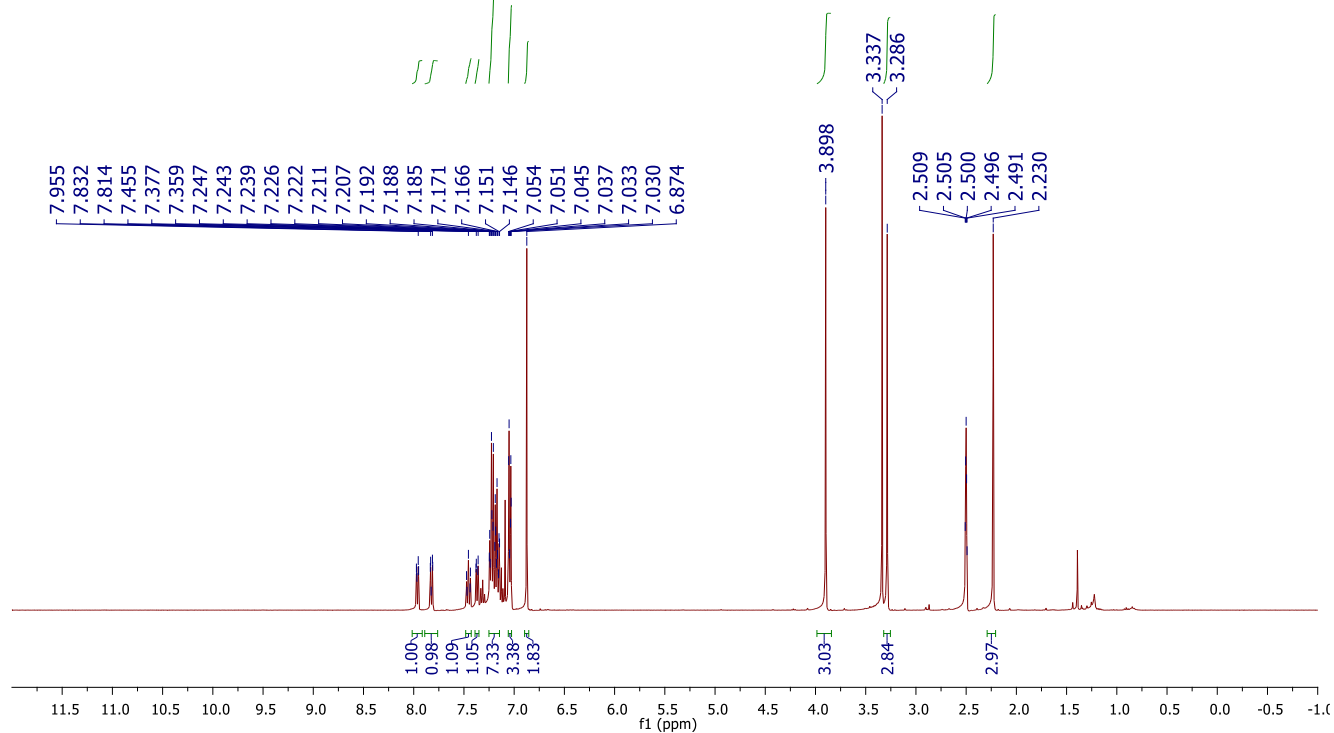
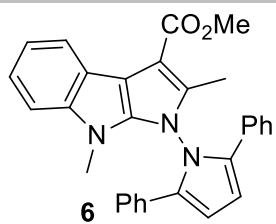
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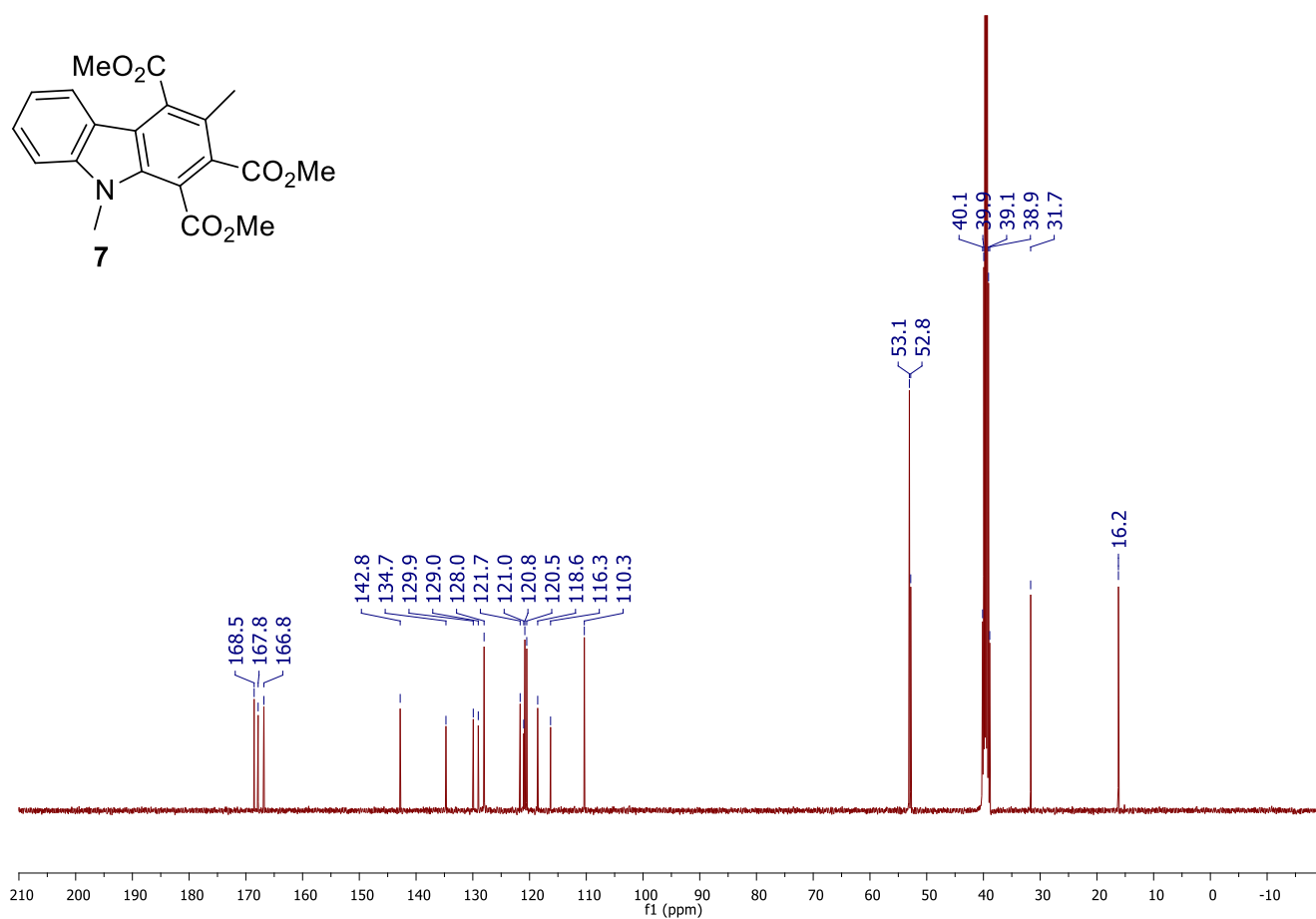
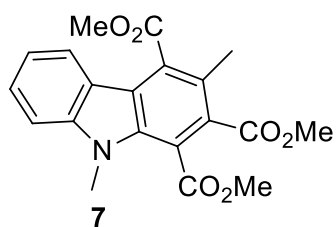
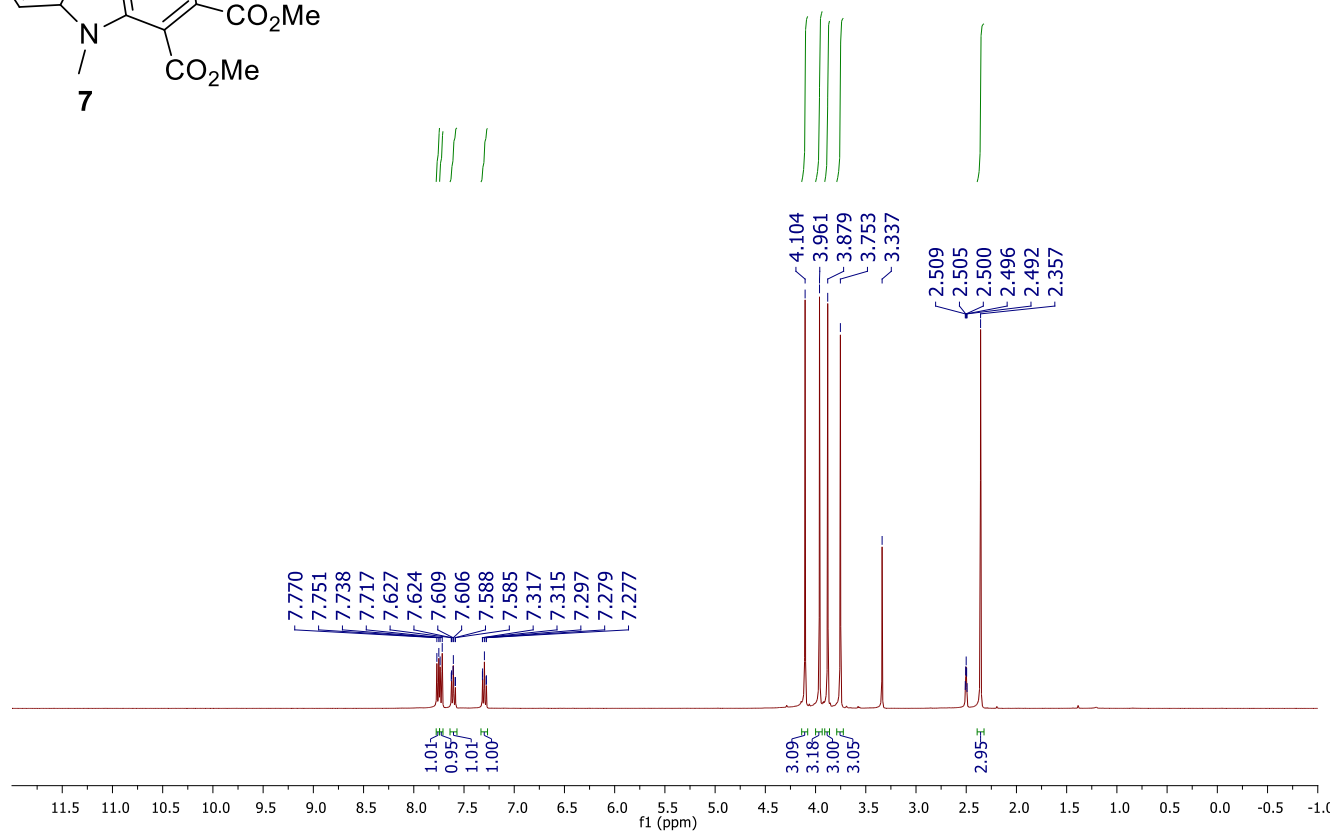
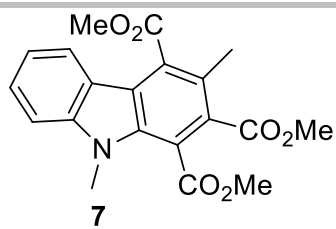
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7. First Pass CHEM21 green metrics toolkit

Reaction carried out on a gram scale. Typical procedure.

In a round-bottom flask, methyl 2-(4-methoxy-3-(1-methyl-1*H*-indol-3-yl)-4-oxobutan-2-ylidene)hydrazinecarboxylate **1a** (3.15 mmol, 1 g), Cu(OAc)₂·H₂O (0.315 mmol, 62.9 mg), FeCl₃·6H₂O (0.157 mmol, 42.4 mg) and water (30 mL) were added. The aqueous suspension was stirred at 50 °C (oil bath) until consumption of the starting material (12 h, TLC check). Then, the crude product that precipitates was collected on a Büchner funnel, washed with water (5 mL), and dried in air or a vacuum desiccator to give the corresponding product **2a** (0.933 g, 94% yields).

ELECTRONIC SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Summary of First Pass Metrics Toolkit

Yield, AE, RME, MI/PMI and OE

Reactant (Limiting Reactant First)	Mass (g)	MW	Mol	Catalyst	Mass (g)	Reagent	Mass (g)	Reaction solvent	Volume (cm ³)	Density (g ml ⁻¹)	Mass (g)	Work up chemical	Mass (g)	Workup solvent	Volume (cm ³)	Density (g ml ⁻¹)	Mass (g)
1a	1,00	317,345	0,00315	Cu(OAc) ₂ ·H ₂ O	0,0629			H ₂ O	30,00	1,00	30,00			water	5,00	1,00	5,00
			#DIV/0!	FeCl ₃ ·6H ₂ O	0,0424						0,00						0,00
			#DIV/0!								0,00						0,00
			#DIV/0!								0,00						0,00
			#DIV/0!								0,00						0,00
			#DIV/0!								0,00						0,00
Total	1,00	317,35			0,11		0,00				30,00		0,00				5,00

$$RME = \frac{\text{mass of isolated product}}{\text{total mass of reactants}} \times 100$$

$$AE = \frac{\text{molecular weight of product}}{\text{total molecular weight of reactants}} \times 100$$

$$\text{mass intensity} = \frac{\text{total mass in a process or process step}}{\text{mass of product}}$$

$$OE = \frac{RME}{AE} \times 100$$

	Flag	
Yield	93,9	93,9
Conversion	100,0	100,0
Selectivity	93,9	93,9
AE	99,4	
RME	93,9	93,9
PMI total	38,7	
PMI Reaction	33,3	
reagents, catalyst	1,2	
PMI reaction solvents	32,2	
PMI Workup	5,4	
PMI Workup chemical	0,0	
PMI workup solvents	5,4	

Product 2a	Mass	MW	Mol
	0,933	315,329	0,0030
Unreacted limiting reactant	mass		
	0,00		

Solvents (First Pass)

Preferred solvents	List solvents below
water, EtOH, nBuOH, AcOpr, AcOnBu, PhOMe, MeOH, tBuOH, BnOH, ethylene glycol, acetone, MEK, MIBK, AcOEt, sulfolane	water
Problematic solvents: (acceptable only if substitution does not offer advantages)	DMSO, cyclohexanone, DMPU, AcOH, Ac ₂ O, Acetonitrile, AcOMe, THF, heptane, Me-cyclohexane, toluene, xylene, MTBE, cyclohexane, chlorobenzene, formic acid, pyridine, Me-THF
Hazardous solvents: These solvents have significant health and/or safety concerns.	dioxane, pentane, TEA, diisopropyl ether, DME, DCM, DMF, DMA, NMP, methoxyethanol, hexane
Highly hazardous solvents: The solvents which are agreed not to be used, even in screening	Et ₂ O, Benzene, CCl ₄ , chloroform, DCE, nitromethane, CS ₂ , HMPA

Catalyst/enzyme (First Pass)

Catalyst or enzyme used, or reaction takes place without any catalyst/reagents.	Green Flag	Tick
Use of stoichiometric quantities of reagents <td>Amber Flag <td></td> </td>	Amber Flag <td></td>	
Use of reagents in excess	Red Flag	

Facile recovery of catalyst/enzyme	Green Flag	Tick
catalyst/enzyme not recovered	Amber Flag	

Critical elements

Supply remaining	Flag colour	Note element
5-50 years	Red Flag	
50-500 years	Amber Flag	Cu
+500 years	Green Flag	

Energy (First Pass)

Reaction run between 0 to 70°C	Green Flag	Tick
Reaction run between -20 to 0 or 70 to 140°C	Amber Flag	
Reaction run below -20 or above 140°C	Red Flag	

Reaction run at reflux	Red Flag	Tick
Reaction run 5°C or more below the solvent boiling point	Green Flag	X

Batch/flow

Flow	Green Flag	Tick
Batch	Amber Flag	X

Work Up

quenching	Green Flag	List
filtration		filtration
centrifugation		
crystallisation		
Low temperature distillation/evaporation/ sublimation (< solvent exchange, quenching into aqueous solvent)	Amber Flag	
chromatography/ion exchange	Red Flag	
high temperature multiple recrystallisation		

Health & safety

	Red Flag	Amber Flag	Green Flag	List substances and H-codes	List substances and H-codes	List substances and H-codes
Highly explosive	H200, H201, H202, H203	H205, H220, H224	If no red or amber flagged H codes present then green flag	none	none	none
Explosive thermal runaway	H230, H240, H250	H241				
Toxic	H300, H310, H330	H301, H311, H331				
Long Term toxicity	H340, H350, H360, H370, H372	H341, H351, H361, H371, H373				
Environmental implications	H400, H410, H411, H420	H401, H412				

Use of chemicals of environmental concern

Chemical identified as Substances of Very High Concern by ChemSec which are utilised	Red Flag	List substances of very high concern
		none

8. References

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