

TEST VACCINE TO WARD OFF ELM DISEASE

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Madison, Wis., April 20 (AP) — The day may come when you call the tree surgeon to hurry over and give your favorite elm a shot to protect it from Dutch elm disease.

At least, a research team that had been working on the project for four years is willing to concede that experiments have been so successful that professional foresters are being sought for test of the technique.

Dr. Dale M. Norris Jr., assistant professor of entomology at the University of Wisconsin who has headed the research, said today the method involves injection of an organic phosphate compound he calls SD-3562 into quarter-inch holes drilled into the sapwood of healthy elms.

No Job for Amateur

The compound, a poison dangerous enough to require handling by professionals, is absorbed by the tree. Within a few days the compound is present in the bark in a quantity that will kill the European bark beetle that carries the Dutch Elm fungus.

The compound acts against the beetle, not the fungus, and therefore is help to an infected tree.

Last year, a team made up of university, state department of agriculture and Milwaukee county park commission experts selected 100 mature elms in a heavily infected plot of land in Milwaukee county.

Each tree was within 500 feet of a diseased tree, Norris said. Fifty trees were treated with the phosphate, and 50 were left untreated.

No Lifetime Immunity

By fall, 20 of the 50 untreated elms had the disease. But 47 of the treated trees remained healthy. Two of the three that showed symptoms had received smaller doses than the others.

Norris said that the injections must be made during a comparatively short period — the last two weeks in May, he believes, in the southern Wisconsin area. The insecticide remains active for about a month, which covers the May 25-June 25 period during which elms are infected by the beetles in this climate. By autumn, the tree's system is clear of the compound.

If wider scale usage shows continued high effectiveness, Norris sees his system as a tool of particular value in protecting specimen trees, as an added safety measure used in connection with spraying, or in areas where spraying may be objectionable for one reason or another.

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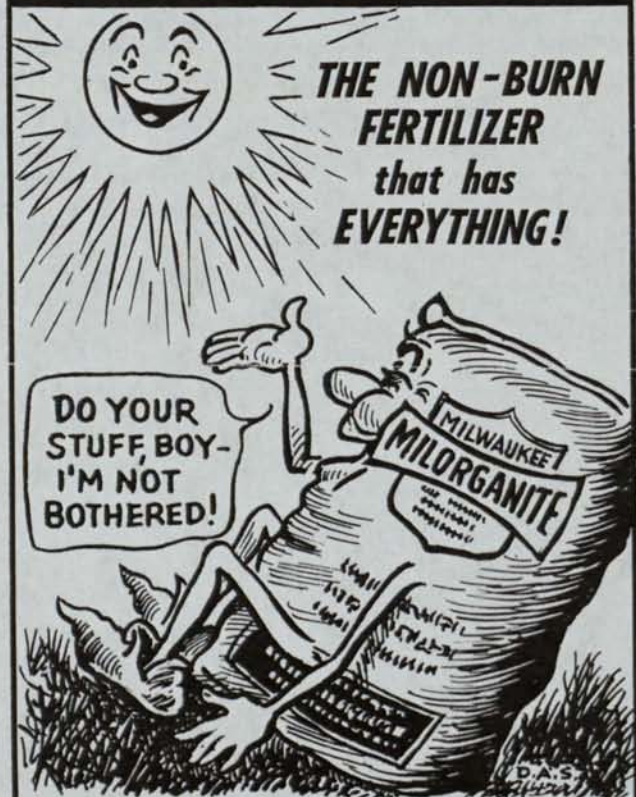
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