# Antipollution "Shot-in-the-Stem" for Tree Seedlings

Scientists at the Agricultural Research Service's Nursery Crops Research Laboratory in Delaware, OH, have found a chemical that, when injected into shade trees, can reduce leaf damage from ozone pollution by as much as 94 percent. Ozone is a major air pollutant that damages crop and causes tree leaves to yellow, wither and fall. It also reduces vigor and growth, leaving trees vulnerable to attack by insects and disease. How ethylenediurea (EDU), the chemical found to protect trees from ozone, works is not well understood, according to Bruce R. Roberts, a plant physiologist with the ARS. "Our test results indicate that when it is injected directly into the stem, it alters enzyme and membrane activity within the leaf cells where photosynthesis takes place," Roberts said.

According to Roberts, honeylocust, red maple, pin oak and sweetgum seedlings were treated with the chemical by two different methods a week before being fumigated with 0.30 and 0.95 parts per million of ozone, an amount well above the normal level found in smog. Leaves were checked for damage within six days after fumigation. Roberts and coworkers found that injecting EDU into a small cut in the stem was more efficient than drenching the soil around the potted seedlings. With one-fiftieth as much EDU solution, injection provided up to 94 percent protection, while drenching provided a high of only 46 percent protection.

The study was conducted on two-year-old seedlings because they would fit into the fumigation chambers, but Roberts says EDU injection should protect mature trees as well. The scientist believe that "EDU" is a relatively safe chemical for protecting the leaves of most trees and shrubs from ozone damage," according to Roberts.

Betty Solomon, Agricultural Research, Jan. 1986

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### by Arnold Palmer

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