



T1900202669

THE USE OF PACLOBUTRAZOL IN CONTROLLING TREE GROWTH

by

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Science
of the University of New England

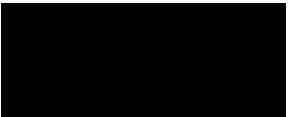
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December 1997

DECLARATION

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis

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Martin A. Witchard

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people to thank who helped this work become a reality. Firstly, to the late Professor John A. Milburn whose staunch faith and support that commenced me on the road of postgraduate research in the area of plant physiology. He was a great motivator and generated immense enthusiasm in plant physiology for many of his students. I am one of these. Thanks also to Mr. Rick Kenny, technician in plant physiology until 1996 who assisted with setting up and maintaining equipment for many of my experiments.

Sincere thanks to Dr. Acram Taji who accepted the final reading of this thesis following the death of Prof. Milburn, and to Dr. Peter Clarke for initial readings and comments on individual chapters.

There are also many friends and supporters, and a few names stand out ; Dr. Virginia Williamson, Ms. Dorothy Bell, Mrs. Sara McNeill, and all the Botany postgrads who shared the experience!

Finally, to my family, especially my mother Ann Crosson and my sister, Fiona Duncan, who, like many others, helped maintain a modicum of sanity through the whole process! A process and experience I would recommend to any aspiring scientist.

ABSTRACT

Paclobutrazol (PAC), is a synthetic compound which inhibits the gibberellin biosynthesis pathway. A range of studies were conducted investigating PAC's reactivity, detection, movement, effects and, introduction into trees.

PAC was subjected to a range of experiments to detect its presence either *in vitro* or *in vivo*. PAC is a relatively inert compound and neither chemical reactivity nor optical recognition could be used to identify it *in vitro*. *In vivo*, PAC could be detected using a linear displacement technique, ^{14}C -PAC tracer studies and bioassays. The relative success of each detection method was related to its complexity, with radioactive tracer studies proving most effective in identifying PAC *in vivo*.

Field trials using PAC were established in Armidale, New South Wales, Australia. Three street tree species which posed a potential threat to overhead powerlines were chosen for study. *Liquidambar styraciflua* responded favourably to PAC showing sustained shoot growth inhibition for up to 18 months. *Pistachia chinensis* responded to PAC, but its inhibitory effects were not as well sustained over the trial period. *Eucalyptus nicholii* responded poorly to PAC in comparison to the other test species. The level of response of a tree species to the inhibitory effects of PAC is discussed, and is dependent on anatomical, physiological and environmental factors.

PAC was believed to be exclusively xylem mobile in plants. This thesis presents evidence using HPLC detection and radiolabelled ^{14}C -PAC that the compound is also phloem mobile in *Ricinus communis*.

The main method of introduction of PAC into trees is through the use of pressurised trunk injection. This practice can potentially damage the tree if high pressure is applied to force material into the xylem. A new method presented in this thesis, uses a negative suction to extract emboli from the xylem and provide a contiguous interface between the xylem sap and solution to be introduced.

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ABBREVIATIONS

a.i.	active ingredient
AUFS	absorbance unit full scale
cm	centimetre
°C	(temperature in) degrees Celsius
HPLC	high pressure liquid chromatography
h	hour/s
µm	micrometre
l	litre (used instead of the SI unit of dm ³)
mg	milligrams
min	minute/s
MPa	megapascals
nm	nanometre
PAC	paclobutrazol
ppm	parts per million
s	second/s
TLC	thin layer chromatography
TZ	tetrazolium chloride
UV	ultraviolet
y	year/s