ASSESSMENTS OF DIKEGULAC-SODIUM TO ENHANCE LATERAL BRANCHING ON WOODY ORNAMENTAL CROPS

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A number of commonly produced woody ornamentals such as hydrangea, have poor side branching in early growth stages. Growers often times do a hard prune of the main stem in order to influence lower lateral bud break. By allowing the lower buds to release, the plant develops fuller canopy growth resulting in a more attractive plant for sale. Dikegulac-Sodium (Augeo) is being evaluated for branching effects on several nursery woody crops. Applications were made early in the crop cycle soon after transplant into the finish pots. Plants were evaluated for phytotoxicity, total shoot counts and grower comments towards crop quality. Plants tested so far in 2012 consisted of hydrangea sp. Green Ash, Bald Cypress and Black Tupelo. Responses ranged from minimal to excellent to excessive. Ash for example appears to respond well at 200 PPM a significantly lower rate from early testing. Hydrangea responded well in the 800 to 1600 PPM range. Augeo shows promise as a pruning substitute for several woody ornamentals or as an aid in releasing lower auxiliary buds on hard to branch plants.