MANAGING WATER STRESS OF ORNAMENTAL CROPS WITH S-ABSCISIC ACID PLANT GROWTH REGULATOR

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ABSTRACT

Floriculture nurseries producing crops for the most popular retailers need better ways to manage drought stress while plants are being displayed and sold. Wilting and flower drop commonly limit the market life of potted plants, and nurseries would benefit from improved methods to protect their plants from periods of drought stress. Valent BioSciences Corporation (VBC) is nearing the final stages of U.S. EPA registration of S-abscisic acid (S-ABA) as a new plant growth regulator for stress reduction in ornamentals. Laboratory and field research to date has indicated that this naturally occurring PGR reliably reduces transpiration and improves drought tolerance when applied to numerous floriculture crops the day before shipping. Crops such as impatiens, New Guinea impatiens, petunia, dianthus, chrysanthemum, hydrangea, lantana, euryops, and pentas have generally responded well to S-ABA applications. VBC is currently engaged in a large experimental use permit for cooperative testing with nurseries in 18 states that is designed to lead into full product registration of S-ABA for use on ornamental crops inside and outside of greenhouses.