

NEWS RELEASE
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VITAMINS FOR PLANTS?

BACKYARD HORTICULTURE

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Vitamins can help people, and some think they are good for plants as well. One example of a widely used plant vitamin is B-1, chemically called *Thiamine hydrochloride*. Vitamin B-1 is currently being sold as a root stimulator for a wide variety of plants, especially to be used at transplanting time. But does it really work?

To find out, we conducted a trial using thirty snapdragons. Ten plants were treated with a commercial vitamin B-1 plant starter solution (this product also contains fertilizers and growth hormones). Ten plants were treated with a commercial flower fertilizer alone, and the last ten were the untreated controls.

After two months, all the snapdragon plants were dug up, roots washed, and both the top growth and roots were weighed. The plants treated with the vitamin B-1 solution were larger than the control plants. The plants treated with fertilizer only were also larger than the control. But the final comparison between the B-1 treated and the fertilizer-only treated plants showed no significant difference between the two. This experiment shows that, at least with one ornamental plant, snapdragons, a commercial vitamin B-1 starter solution did not produce better plants than a commercial fertilizer.

We also compared costs of the B-1 product with the commonly available plant fertilizer alone. Following label directions, the vitamin B-1 product costs about \$.02 per plant and the

fertilizer alone runs around two-tenths of one cent per plant. Not only was the vitamin product no better than the fertilizer, but it actually costs ten times as much.

Finally, other tests on trees, shrubs, and vegetables have shown that vitamin B-1 alone failed to produce significant growth responses, even after two years.

For more information on garden fertilizers, a free leaflet is available from the UCCE office in Mariposa County. Call 966-2417 to request a copy.

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