

Copper and zinc are essential nutrients for the plants; however, they become rapidly phytotoxic at elevated concentrations in the root environment. Exposure of Chinese cabbage to elevated Cu^{2+} ($\geq 2 \mu\text{M}$) or Zn^{2+} concentrations ($\geq 5 \mu\text{M}$) resulted in leaf chlorosis and subsequently in a loss of photosynthetic activity and a strongly reduced biomass production of both root and shoot. Cu is a redox-active metal, which has the potential to accelerate the formation of reactive oxygen species in plant tissue. However in Chinese cabbage, the Cu-induced chlorosis was most likely not due to the formation of reactive oxygen species but the consequence of a negatively affected chloroplast development. UV-A+B radiation and elevated Cu^{2+} concentrations had negative synergistic effects on biomass production, pigment content on the quantum yield of photosystem II.

The uptake and metabolism of sulfur and nitrogen were differentially affected at elevated Cu^{2+} or Zn^{2+} concentrations. Both Cu^{2+} and Zn^{2+} exposure resulted in an increased sulfate uptake by the roots and in enhanced total sulfur content of the shoot, which could be ascribed partially to an accumulation of sulfate. Moreover, exposure resulted in a strongly enhanced level of water-soluble non-protein thiols in the root, which only partially could be ascribed to a metal-induced synthesis of phytochelatins. The nitrate uptake by the root was decreased upon Cu^{2+} or Zn^{2+} exposure, demonstrating the absence of a mutual regulation of the uptake of sulfate and nitrate. There was no direct relation between the sulfur metabolite levels viz. total sulfur, sulfate and water-soluble non-protein thiols and the expression and activity of the sulfate transporters and the expression of APS reductase at elevated Cu and Zn concentrations. Apparently, the presumed signal transduction pathway involved in their regulation appeared to be overruled or bypassed at high tissue Cu and Zn levels. It is doubtful that the Cu^{2+} or Zn^{2+} -induced effects on the uptake and metabolism of sulfate have any adaptive significance in the detoxification of these metals in Chinese cabbage.

Elevated Zn^{2+} concentrations in the root environment did not only disturb the uptake, distribution and assimilation of sulfate, it also affected the uptake and metabolism of nitrate in Chinese cabbage. The uptake of nitrate appeared to be closely linked to the growth rate of the plant, even at toxic Zn levels. The total N content was strongly decreased in the shoot at toxic Zn concentrations. The decrease in total N in the shoot could only partly be ascribed to a decrease in nitrate content. In the root, however, the total N content remained unaffected at elevated Zn^{2+} concentrations.

17) Using H^+ -selective microelectrodes to study the adaptive response of plant roots to sulfate deficiency

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The knowledge about the response of the sulfate uptake system of plants to sulfate deficiency on the level of gene expression has increased a lot during the last decades. However, there is still a need for a deeper understanding of the bio- and electrochemical processes involved in plant adaptation to sulfate deficiency. Ion-selective microelectrodes are a useful tool to answer questions in various fields of plant physiology, e.g. salt stress, calcium signaling, growth regulation and defense responses to pathogens. In plant nutrition ion-selective microelectrodes have been applied to study e.g. the uptake preference of plants for

different nitrogen sources, and the uptake of calcium and potassium into wheat seeds. However, determination of sulfate uptake by plant roots using ion-selective microelectrodes was not carried out until now, probably also due to the lack of a liquid ion exchanger that is selective enough for sulfate over other anions. Sulfate is taken up by plant sulfate transporters via sulfate/proton-symporters and in the current case study the activity of sulfate transporters of plant roots was measured by using the non-invasive *Microelectrode Ion Flux Estimation* method (MIFE). Roots of seedlings of Chinese cabbage which were grown under sufficient nutrient conditions were compared with roots that had been sulfur deprived with the result that the latter showed a much higher proton influx in response to addition of MgSO_4 . This indicated that the activity of the sulfate uptake system could be determined adequately by measuring proton fluxes using the MIFE technique. Sulfate-deficient plants acidified their rhizosphere via proton efflux, while sulfate sufficient plants did not. Furthermore the extent of the response to MgSO_4 addition to roots of sulfate-deficient plants correlated strongly with the root surface pH prior addition. This indicated that acidification might be an important component of the adaptation to sulfate deficiency, as known for other nutrients such as phosphate and iron. This component might be an explanation for the discrepancies between the expression levels of sulfate transporters and the actual sulfate uptake capacity that are sometimes observed under sulfate deficiency. The involvement of the plasma membrane located ATPase in this adaptation will be further examined. Using MIFE, it was also possible to record root profiles of the sulfate import along the first seven millimeters from the root tip. Preliminary results suggest that there is no sulfate uptake taking place in the first 3.5 mm from the tip, but in the mature zone of the root. H^+ -selective electrodes show promise as tool to further investigate adaptive responses of plant roots to sulfate deficiency, other than solely an up-regulation of the sulfate transporter genes.

18) Metabolic coordination of sulfur metabolism in *Brassica napus* by clock-controlled genes

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Experiments done with *Arabidopsis* plants so far, such as results from microarrays, indicate that some key enzymes in sulfur metabolism are regulated diurnally and/or by the circadian clock. Understanding metabolic changes in plants and determining output-related function of clock genes could help in elucidating circadian-clock mechanisms underlying plant growth and development. The sulfur requirement of the plants fluctuate during plant development and vary between species differing in sulfur need for growth and the potential sink capacity of secondary sulfur compounds.

Several sulfur-containing metabolites are involved in pathogen defense mechanisms and are suggested as compounds to enhance defense (SED = sulfur enhanced defense). We analyzed whether in addition to genes involved in sulfur metabolism also the levels of sulfur-containing metabolites such as cysteine and glutathione were clock regulated. They could be released rhythmically to the apoplastic fluid or via the stomata and defend the plants against attacking pathogens.

Oilseed rape (canola) is one of the most important agricultural crop plants for oil and declared as renewable resource. Two different *Brassica napus* L. (oilseed rape) lines were analyzed on the transcriptomic and metabolomic level in light/dark and