
EthylBloc™—An Industry Perspective

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EthylBloc was approved by the US EPA in 1999 for use as an ethylene action inhibitor on ornamental crops. Since its approval, sales have continued to increase, surpassing Floralife's expectations.

This article will focus on application and industry feedback to the product.

The active ingredient in EthylBloc is 1-methylcyclopropene, which is a

gas. The application of a gas is relatively new to the ornamental industry, so product education has been key to the sales. For example, Kerry's Bromeliads (Homestead, FL) manufactured a

treatment chamber to facilitate treatment of potted orchids. For many smaller growers, and wholesale florists alike, this was not an option. Because of this obstacle, truck treatment kits were developed.

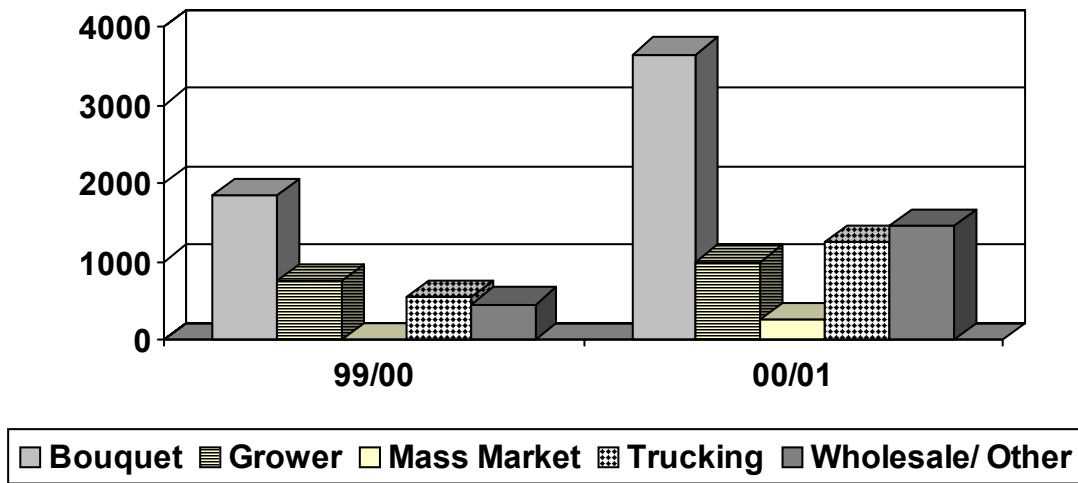
The truck treatment kits account for the overwhelming majority of EthylBloc sales. These kits allow for in-transit treatment of cut flowers and potted plants. Supermarkets, for example, treat entire truckloads of cut flowers in transit from Miami or California to

their distribution centers. A 53 ft. container can be treated for \$160-\$180. With the kits, we reached many groups that work with large volumes of cut flowers.

The chart below shows the EthylBloc market segment sales. By far most of the treatments are being done by bouquet operations selling into the mass markets/ supermarkets. This market segment generally has the highest ambient ethylene levels (0.5-2.0 ppm), high enough to cause major problems

associated with ethylene damage. It is important to keep in mind that studies have shown that less than 50% of the ethylene-sensitive flowers coming out of Latin America are properly treated with silver thiosulfate (STS), another ethylene action inhibitor used on floral crops. Another important fact is that almost no potted plants are protected against ethylene damage, thus demonstrating a need for EthylBloc.

EthylBloc Market Segment Units Sold



In one independent study conducted on the west coast with a large bouquet company and a supermarket, treatment with EthylBloc realized a 27% decrease in shrink when compared to not treating with EthylBloc. If we translate this data into dollars:

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| Truck full of flowers = | (minimum) \$20,000 |
| Average Shrink @ 10% = | -\$2,000 |
| Shrink due to Ethylene = | |
| 30% (USDA estimate, confirmed by independent study) = | -\$600 |
| Cost to treat = | -\$150 |
| Return on investment = | 400% |

Many mass market vendors have realized the benefits of EthylBloc. Norm White, Whites Nursery states, "My motto has always been quality. With EthylBloc, I deliver quality with increased longevity." Eric Smith, Sunshine Bouquet Company adds, "EthylBloc increases vase life with slower and fuller flower development...our customers always appreciate better in-store performance." Below are some of the major companies that are using EthylBloc, just to name a few:

- Kroger
- HEB
- Dole
- Walmart
- Whites Nursery
- Suyeyasu
- Sams
- Nurserymen
- Mayesh
- Sunshine Bouquet
- The Queens Group
- Safeway
- Clearwater Nursery
- Stop & Shop
- Delaware Valley Wholesale

But what about groups that don't buy or ship truckloads of flowers/plants at a time? Floralife has worked with potential customers on a case-by-case basis, helping to resolve any application concerns. EthylBloc can be used to treat individual carts or pallets of plants or cut flowers. Storage coolers are also an option for treatment. A liquid spray application has been submitted to the EPA for approval. Many growers of potted and bedding plants will find this application more attractive.

Overall, the ornamental industry recognizes the presence of ethylene as a postharvest problem. Several studies have been conducted to show that using EthylBloc will reduce shrink. Getting groups to change the way they do things, or to add a step, has

been challenging. Many groups that don't see most of their shrink directly (i.e. growers who sell wholesale) don't think they have a problem with high shrink- but their customers realize this number. The question becomes, "At what point should the product be treated?" Best results are realized when treatment comes just before shipment, at any point in the distribution chain.

In short, the benefactor of better quality ends up being the floriculture industry as a whole. In a time when reduced profit margins are a reality, much needs to be done to reduce shrink in order to increase profits. EthylBloc has been demonstrated to provide that benefit.

