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Long-term exogenous application of melatonin improves nutrient uptake fluxes in apple plants under moderate drought stress

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Highlights

The effect of drought-induced stress can be alleviated by melatonin. Melatonin positively influenced the growth and physiological parameter of *Malus*. Melatonin increased ¹⁵N uptake, utilization and accumulation. Activity of enzymes involved in N-metabolism can be increased by melatonin. Melatonin increased nutrient uptake by increasing related genes transcription.

Abstract

To examine the potential roles of melatonin in nutrient uptake, we investigated the influence of its long-term exogenous application on 'Naganofuji No.2' apple (*Malus domestica* Borkh.) under moderate drought conditions. Both growth and the uptake of macro- and micronutrients were generally decreased in stressed plants. However, the application of exogenous melatonin significantly mitigated this growth reduction and enabled plants to maintain uptake fluxes. This addition of melatonin also markedly alleviated the inhibitory effects of drought on photosynthesis, stomatal apertures, chlorophyll levels, and relative water content, and it controlled the burst of

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