

# CO2 may help some trees weather ice storms

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U.S. scientists say higher levels of carbon dioxide predicted for later this century might help reduce damage to some trees caused by ice storms.

Researchers working at a Duke University outdoor test facility found commercially important loblolly pines, growing under carbon-dioxide levels mimicking those predicted for the year 2050 -- roughly one and a half times today's levels -- fared somewhat better during and after a major ice storm than did loblollies growing under current concentrations of the gas.

The results came as a surprise, the researchers said.

"Before the storm, I was absolutely certain the pines would be more susceptible to ice damage under elevated concentrations of carbon dioxide," said Ram Oren, a Duke ecology professor. "My impressions were absolutely wrong. Instead of increasing the sensitivity to ice-storm damage, carbon dioxide decreased the sensitivity."

The scientists cautioned, however, they were not able to identify the actual mechanisms that helped to protect the trees grown under elevated carbon-dioxide conditions. "We just couldn't tease out anything obvious," McCarthy said.

The findings are reported in the Journal of Geophysical Research.

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