



PERRY LABORATORY

HORTICULTURAL ADVISING AND TESTING

January 2007 Ramblings

This inaugural newsletter for our new website is to introduce you to some observations and growing tips for various horticultural situations. As I am sometimes the only outside person who walks through nurseries, I often see things I feel may help others who may be experiencing the same issues at their operations. I will never intentionally reveal where the observation originated, as I will always try to respect our clients' privacy. If you have anything you would like to share with other readers of this section, please feel free to email it to me at cliff@perrylaboratory.com.

January began this year with relatively mild temperatures and was very welcome as the cost of heating is more reasonable compared to the past few years. With the mild weather has also come plenty of sunshine this year and always makes growing plants through the winter months easier. It seems that most container nurseries are still basking in the glow of the recent Christmas season and how well it went. Now the job is to fill the nurseries again in anticipation of the next Holidays.

For the cut flower industry, it is a time of relative calm as many of the crops are set to come in for the Valentine's Day Holiday. The excellent amount of sunshine this year is helping reduce the number of blind shoots on the plants, however the recent extreme cold is making it hard to maintain night temperatures. Some of the daily average temperatures are made up with warmer days, however this is not complete and some scheduling adjustments will be necessary.

It always amazes me how some plants grow. Heather plants like cold weather and really only grow right along the coast. Still, it's astounding how they produce new roots as we approach winter and the weather is very cold. I see new roots forming on these plants in November, when most other plants are considering dormancy.

Recently a grower was having a problem with their potted roses prematurely losing their leaves. They had classic ethylene symptoms, however no ethylene was detected in the greenhouses or coolers. Then some very nice looking plants were collected to try different ethylene treatments and before they could be treated, they dropped their leaves. The manager started thinking about this and realized that they had started a more aggressive cleaning program using a power washer for the benches. Since this washer has a gas motor, the thought was that this might be a source of the problem. When measurements were taken during a washing, even with the vents wide open, the ethylene meter went off the charts. There was also a need this year for more pesticide applications and this also uses a gas motor driven piece of equipment. This is a good lesson on the use of any equipment that is gas motor driven or utilizes a flame in the greenhouse. Over the years, I have seen many plants suffering from exposure to ethylene and the distorted growth that often occurs. So whenever you have an open flame or gas powered equipment in an enclosed space, beware. Ethylene damage is due to exposure to the gas and may be a function of concentration and time of exposure. In this case, it may have been a high concentration for a short time.

We are very excited about launching our website and utilizing this section to share information with you. Please check in with us monthly for news updates and feel free to share your experiences as well. We also look forward to any feedback you might have regarding our website and our services.

Best Regards, Cliff Low