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Questions to the Specialist

Ammonia Gas Injury to Asparagus Crowns

Additional index words. *refrigerant injury*

We received a call from a Michigan asparagus grower, asking if we had any information on the susceptibility and symp-

toms of ammonia gas injury in asparagus crowns. The grower had received a shipment of crowns with a note from the crown supplier that the crowns had been exposed to ammonia gas resulting from a refrigerant leak in cold storage. There were no obvious signs of injury, although the surface coloration may have been slightly tanned rather than the cream color usually associated with healthy crowns. The internal color of the crowns was normal. Other plant material in the same storage exhibited serious injury symptoms.

As far as we could determine, there is no record of such an occurrence, but we had no reason to expect that exposure to low levels of ammonia gas would injure dormant crowns. The grower still had 2 weeks before he needed to get the crowns in the ground, so we suggested that several of the crowns might be planted in pots and forced in a warm greenhouse. After about 10 days, the buds on the potted crowns had not expanded as one would expect from healthy crowns. Apparently, there had been injury from the ammonia, so the crown grower replaced the injured crowns with others that had not been exposed to the ammonia, and the Michigan grower was able to plant nearly on schedule.

This is an excellent example of grower, supplier, and extension working together to resolve a new and unique problem without any exchange of ill will. The supplier acted ethically by informing the grower of a potential problem. Extension suggested a solution. The grower made a reasonable effort to check out the possible usability of the crowns. The supplier accepted the grower's analysis of the situation and supplied replacements promptly, permitting the grower to stay on schedule. And, no attorneys got involved.

*John F. Kelly
Bernard H. Zandstra
Dept. of Horticulture
Michigan State Univ.
East Lansing, MI 48824*

Editors note: This category of paper was established by the committee that recommended the original format for *HortTechnology*, but to date we have had no submissions. We have not eliminated the category, because we still believe that it has good potential for distribution of otherwise unrecorded or unpublished extension work. When Bernie and I put this together, he commented that a typical week during the growing season produces several similar experiences for specialists. Alright *specialists*, let's start writing down those otherwise unrecorded gems of wisdom!