

BAREFOOT IN THE GREENHOUSE

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Many greenhouse operators hire teenagers and young adults during the summer months. Many of these young people like to go barefoot as it gives them a sense of freedom. They also like to feel the cool soil on their feet as shoes and sneakers are hot during the summer weather. Finally, many have to hand water pots or leach bench crops. This may cause wet shoes. Therefore, it is easier or more comfortable to go without them.

But is this safe?

For all practical purposes, no! There are too many hazards in the greenhouse that cause harm or discomfort by going barefoot.

Serious cuts and bruises could be incurred by stepping on a sharp stone, broken glass, pot, wire or a nail. A pot dropped or knocked from a bench is more likely to injure a bare foot than a covered one. Next, there is always the possibility of tetanus. This organism gains entrance into the body with the dirt when a dirty object is forced into the flesh.

Another possible problem could be pesticides. Absorption occurs readily through the feet. Therefore anything on the ground could easily come in contact with the feet. For example, aldicarb (Temik) is now used extensively in Connecticut

greenhouses. While application methods vary, there is undoubtedly some spillage onto the walks. This could be absorbed through the feet.

Another pesticide which could be dangerous is paraquat, a weed killer. Many growers use this to kill all existing vegetation. While this material becomes inactive shortly after it comes in contact with the soil, it is dangerous before it dries. Anyone applying this material should wear rubber boots.

