

# New York State Flower Growers

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## Mercury Injury

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Recently, several rose growers have run into trouble after using a paint which contained an "additive" to prevent mildew. Apparently, this additive was compounded of an organic mercury. This paint produced typical mercury injury symptoms, bleaching of Better Times, very short stems, profuse breaking and finally stoppage of all top growth and breaks from the soil level which were abnormal. These plants will not return to normal for periods up to one year after removal from the contaminated greenhouse.

At the present time, no method is known whereby the mercury in the paint can be neutralized, inactivated or covered-up. The only apparent answer is for these growers to discontinue rose growing in the newly painted houses and, instead, grow carnations, mums,

etc. which are not so susceptible to mercury injury. Although roses are most likely to be injured by mercury, it is recommended that all forms of mercury be kept out of any greenhouse unless its use is specifically recommended (as for disease control).

It has also been noted in the trade journals that some paint companies are advertising a "penta" wood preservative. This material should not be used in the greenhouse. The full name of the compound is pentachlorophenol and all phenols are toxic to plants and may be sufficiently volatile to injure crops not in direct contact with the material.

Be careful that the paint and other supplies you use do not contain harmful additives. It is generally a safe bet to buy from a concern who caters specifically to the horticultural trade.