

POINSETTIAS AND 2,4-D*

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Each year for the past four years a poinsettia crop in Connecticut has been injured with a phenoxy herbicide. This includes 2,4-D, 2,4,5-T, silvex, dicamba, MCPA and related compounds. Poinsettias are extremely sensitive to this group of herbicides.

The injury is very characteristic (figure 1). Leaves and bracts curl, twist and become distorted. Nodes may be swollen. All of this makes the plants unsightly and usually unsalable (figure 2).

Where does the herbicide come from? Sometimes the source is never found. Certainly the grower did not apply it intentionally.

Here are some of the sources found when talking with growers.

1. Sprayer was contaminated with herbicide. It is for all practical purposes impossible to remove all trace of phenoxy herbicides from sprayers. Label and use for no other purpose.

*When this article originally appeared in the September issue, the photographs were unintentionally omitted.



Figure 1. Using a sprayer previously used for 2,4-D caused this distorted growth.

2. Someone sprayed during the summer to control weeds under the benches.
3. Fertilizers were contaminated with herbicide.
4. Grower stored container of 2,4-D in the head house. (The phenoxy type herbicides are extremely volatile; that is, they vaporize and move rapidly from one area to another.)
5. Clay flower pots were sprayed accidentally.

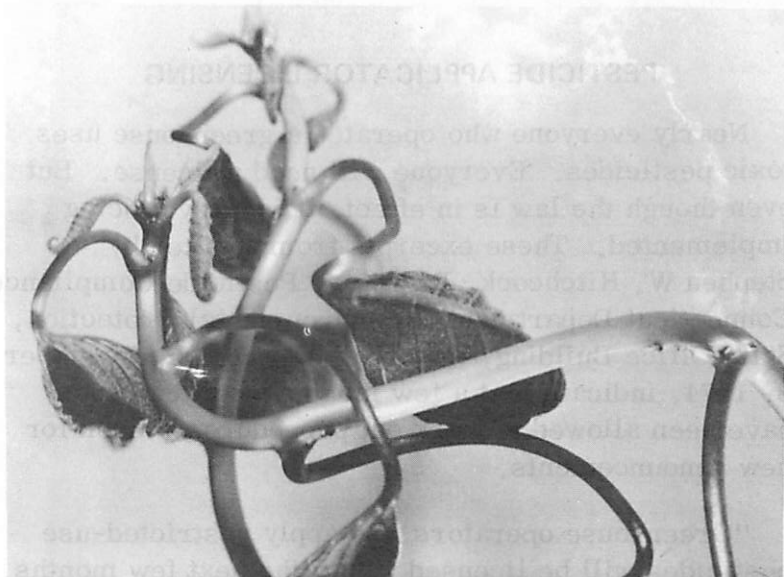


Figure 2. Herbicides can cause twisting of stems, epinasty of leaf petioles and even formation of root initials on poinsettia stems.