Colorado Flower Growers Association, Inc.

IN COOPERATION WITH COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
Dorothy Conroy, Executive Secretary
Bulletin 187 901 Sherman St., Denver, Colorado 80203 November 1965

Response of Carnation to Three Concentrations of CO2

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It has been established that additional CO_2, up to 550 ppm, results in higher quality and yield of carnations (1,2). Additional benefits from higher levels of CO_2 are in question.

The three greenhouses used were oriented east-west, having dimensions of 15 x 18 feet with height of 7 feet at the eave and 10 feet at the ridge. The framework was wood, and the covering of clear fiberglass.

A fan and evaporative pad cooling system was used in summer cooling and plenum tube cooling in winter. The cooling system came on at 69F in the two houses where CO_2 was added. In the control house from November 15 to March 15 cooling was at 65F, and from March 15 to November 15 cooling was at 69F. The heating system was operable at 54F at night and 60F during days for all houses. Temperature controls were housed in a shelter that allowed free air passage while minimizing stray radiation. A Foxboro 24-hour hygrothermograph was used in each house to set and adjust temperatures.

Irrigation was on demand with a standard nutrient solution. Two applications of 6-10-4 fertilizer were applied dry on April 2 and 23 at the rate of 4 pounds per 100 square feet to insure adequate nutrition.

Each house had two raised benches with dimensions of 4 x 13 feet. Eighty plants of four different varieties and two different ages were planted in each house. Two-year-old plants of White No. 88 and Safari were in place at the start of the experiment, and rooted cuttings of Elliott's White Sim and Pink Coquette were planted June 23, 1964 in steamed soil. After the plants were pinched, a mulch of leaves was applied.

A MSA Lira infrared gas analyzer was used to set the equipment for metering CO_2 to houses 1 at 1200 ppm and 2 at 600 ppm and used periodically to check these levels.

Results

Table 1 shows the yield for the three treatments and indicates that 1200 ppm CO_2 concentration did not significantly increase yield over 600 ppm. Since total flower production is in proportion to the number of lateral breaks that return from a flower stem, the optimum CO_2 level for the production of laterals for

*This is a part of the work done by the author in completing requirements for the M.S. Degree at Colorado State University. This should be considered a progress report as the work is being continued.

Table 1. Yield of four carnation varieties grown at three CO_2 concentrations from October 2, 1964 to June 12, 1965.

	1200 ppm	600 ppm	300 ppm
Safari	1103	972	957
White No. 88	976	1110	988
Total for 2-year-old plants	2079	2082	1945
Elliott's White	1229	1346	1185
Pink Coquette	828	1033	863
Total for first-year plants	2057	2379	2048
Total all plants	4136	4461	3993
% over control	4	12	0

Table 2. Effects of three levels of CO_2 on mean grade of Elliott's White and Pink Coquette from October 2, 1964 to June 12, 1965.

Source	D of F	Mean grade	F value	Probability
1200 ppm vs 600 ppm	1	4.15 vs 4.04	1.064	N S
1200 ppm vs 300 ppm	1	4.15 vs 3.95	7.716	.02
600 ppm vs 300 ppm	1	4.04 vs 3.95	2.493	N S

the conditions of this experiment was around 600 ppm. 300 ppm reduced laterals as did 1200 ppm, when compared to 600 ppm.

The mean grade of flowers from the first-year plants, Elliott's White Sim and Pink Coquette, are shown in Table 2. Grade data collected on the two-year-old plants were not compared since lack of support of the plants resulted in downgrading many flowers due to crooked stems. Mean grade is significantly higher under 1200 ppm of CO_2 as compared to 300 ppm. There were no significant differences in mean grade between 1200 ppm and 600 ppm, or between 600 ppm and 300 ppm. This suggests a linear relationship between grade and CO_2 concentration.

The mean grade of Elliott's White Sim by months is plotted in figure 1. While there were differences in grade between 600 and 1200 ppm during January and February, mean grade was the same in these two levels from late February to June. Mean grade of

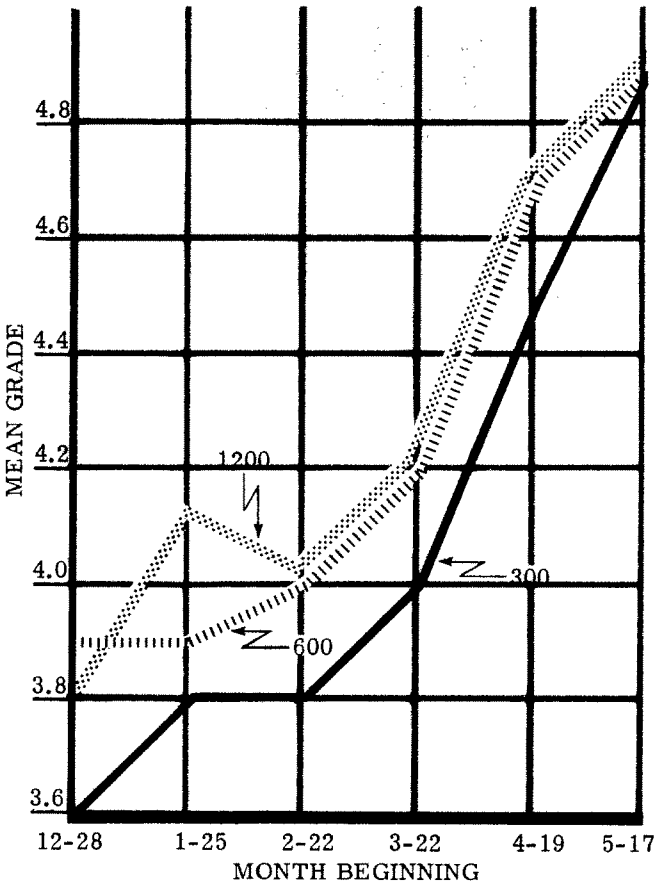

Figure 1: Monthly mean grade of Elliott's White Sim flowers produced in three concentrations of CO_2.

flowers produced in 300 ppm CO_2, was significantly lower until the period beginning May 17.

Measurements made on the flowers from the variety Elliott's White Sim further corroborate this relationship. Table 3 indicates that average weight and average number of leaf pairs increased with CO_2 concentrations up to 1200 ppm.

Table 3. Physical measurements of flowers and stems cut at the origin for Elliott's White Sim from May 15, 1965 to May 31, 1965.

	No. stems	Ave. weight	Ave. length	Ave. no. leaf pairs
1200 ppm	52	52.1	3' 10"	18.1
600 ppm	66	48.1	4' 0"	17.0
300 ppm	77	41.8	3' 3"	16.3

Figure 2 illustrates the effect of CO_2 concentration on the timing of crops. An extremely fast second crop followed by a period of low production occurred under 1200 ppm of CO_2. This fast second crop occurred on Elliott's White Sim and not on Pink Coquette; therefore, the response appears to be varietal. The control and 600 ppm produced more typical production curves. The response of young growth, such as laterals, to higher CO_2 is not known but appears to be very favorable at 1200 ppm. Normally this crop should return in April or May from 2-4 inch shoots. In this experiment, it returned in February, some 2 months earlier than expected. In order to return 2 months early, the shoots would have to be 4 inches longer than normal at the time first crop is cut or the growth responses of these shoots is great. The work is being repeated as this timing response may not be typical.

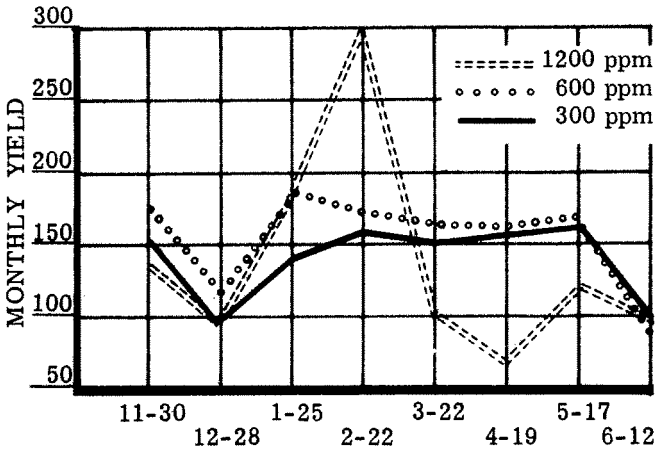

Figure 2. Total production in number of flowers for Elliot's White under the three levels of CO_2 from November 30, 1964 to June 12, 1965.

Plants of all varieties receiving 1200 ppm appeared "hardened" or checked during March and early April. This time corresponded to the low period of production (Fig. 2). Tissue samples from the three CO_2 treatments were sent to The Pennsylvania State University laboratory to eliminate hunger as a cause of this hardening. All nutrients, major and trace minerals, were adequate in these samples and not different due to CO_2 level. Other possible causes of hardening were lack of water and possible toxic gases from the natural gas burner. Close examination showed slight hardening in the 600 ppm level and more severe hardening in 1200 ppm. The problem cleared up by late April. Close observation will be made for the appearance of this problem during the current growing season.

Summary

An experiment designed to compare yield and quality of carnations under three levels of CO_2 was executed. Three small greenhouses were used; and

CO_2 levels were set at 1200 ppm, 600 ppm, and atmospheric (300 ppm). Records of yield and quality from July, 1964 to June, 1965 reveal the following effects:

a. 1200 ppm increased yield 4 per cent compared to 300 ppm, while 600 ppm increased yield 12 per cent over 300 ppm.

b. Mean grade of first-year plants was significantly increased by 1200 ppm compared to 300 ppm. Differences in mean grade between 1200 ppm and 600 ppm, or 600 ppm and 300 ppm were not significant.

c. 1200 ppm CO_2 accelerated the second crop on Elliott's White Sim by 2 months when compared to 600 ppm or the control.

Literature Cited

1. Goldsberry, K. L. 1961. Effects of carbon dioxide on carnation growth. Colorado Flower Growers Association Bulletin 174.

2. Holley, W. D., K. L. Goldsberry, and C. Juengling. 1964. Effects of CO_2 concentration and temperature on carnations. Colorado Flower Growers Association Bulletin 174.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank the Tectrol Division of Whirlpool Corporation for supplying the CO_2 generator and the gas analyzer for this experiment; and Public Service Company of Colorado, who supplied the fuel for the generator.