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Celery may cause skin irritation

By Frale de Guzman
Emerald Reporter

Recent studies indicate that psoralen, a chemical compound present in celery, causes skin disease among some grocery workers.

According to local dermatologist Michael Ramsey, a study published in the September 1986 edition of *Annals of Internal Medicine* found that all 127 grocery workers surveyed suffered some form of skin rash after handling large quantities of cut celery. In addition, a study printed in the November 1987 edition of *The Archives of Dermatology* claimed that 19 supermarket

workers from Albany also developed various degrees of skin irritation after handling celery.

Once exposed to sunlight, workers' fingers, hands and forearms became inflamed, a condition known as phytophotodermatitis. Other symptoms of this skin irritation are the appearance of blisters and dark splotches that appear after the inflammation has subsided.

However, not all workers who work with celery develop skin rashes. In fact, Ramsey said, the complete opposite is true. Despite constant contact with cut celery, reported incidents of phytophotodermatitis are "fairly isolated," Ramsey said.

This viewpoint is echoed by Food Value assistant manager Jean Leroux, who was surprised to hear about the recent outbreak of celery rash. "I've been in the grocery business for over 30 years and I've never been around an individual who has developed this type of rash," Leroux said.

According to Leroux, produce managers who work at the Willamette division currently handle more than 200 stalks of celery a day but "no problems have yet occurred." "It's a brand new incident," Leroux said. However, he firmly believes that the few instances of phytophotoder-

Turn to Celery, Page 12

Leaves mean work for landscapers

By Michael Fisher
Emerald Contributor

To most passers-by, the sight of multicolored leaves on campus trees and lawns is pleasant and serene. But for the University landscape maintenance crew, leaves mean more work.

From early October through February, the crew spends most of its days collecting and removing leaves that fall on campus.

Tim King, landscape maintenance supervisor, said his crew of 10 full-time groundskeepers and five students takes care of about 180 acres of University grounds.

"The leaves have fallen all of a sudden this year" because of the late summer and accompanying lack of rainfall, King said.

As a result the crew was busier than usual during the early part of autumn.

"We're over the peak now," he said.

King estimated that it costs 35 to 40 thousand dollars to keep the leaves picked up, about 10 percent of the landscaping and maintenance department's budget.

The grounds crew's methods of handling the leaves have changed considerably over the past three years. The crew now uses blowers and Turf-Vac (vacuum) machines, whereas before workers had to rake and pile the leaves by hand, King said.

"Since we got the blowers, we've found that it takes a lot less time to pick up the leaves," he said.

One problem the groundskeepers acknowledge about using leaf blowers is the noise the machines create.

"One thing I tell all the groundskeepers is not to use the machines right outside classrooms," King said.

Dale Fish, a crew leader in charge of one of the University's four grounds areas, said people in classes and residence halls occasionally complain to him about the noise.

Because wet leaves are more difficult to pick up and because the grass underneath will be harmed if the leaves sit too long, "we try to get the leaves up early," Fish said.

The fate of these leaves once they are collected varies, according to Fish.

"Some crews sweep their leaves out into the street, and the city collects them," he said. Other loads of leaves, especially those with a great deal of garbage mixed in, are taken to the dump.

"We take a lot of leaves to a spot by the (Willamette) river," Fish said. Since the dump charges about \$17 per truckload of leaves, "we save the state a lot of money," he said.

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