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Subject: Alstroemeria causing Contact Dermatitis in a florist also
allergic to Tulips

Mrs. M.D. (A.H.330822) aged 30, has been employed as a florist since the age of 16. Towards the end of her first year in this occupation she developed a vesicular dermatitis of the fingers of both hands. She soon observed that the dermatitis was provoked by handling either tulips or Alstroemeria and that all other plants in the shop could be handled with impunity. She has suffered recurrences of gradually increasing severity each year.

On examination in May, 1969 she had a healing vesicular dermatitis involving more or less symmetrically the index, middle and ring fingers of both hands. Patch tests with the leaves and stems of Tulip Golden Harvest, unnamed pink and red tulips and Alstroemeria were very strongly positive. Patch tests with Alstroemeria in four control subjects gave no reaction.

The Alstroemerias, natives of South America, classified in the Amaryllidaceae family, are widely cultivated in gardens and are also sold for flower arrangement. Cultivars of *A. Ligtu* are the most popular but other species, such as *A. auriantacea* are not uncommon.

Alstroemeria appears not to have been recorded as a cause of dermatitis, although a number of other genera in the same family, notably *Narcissus* sp. are well known offenders.

The Tulips are classified in the Liliaceae family. Verspyck Mijnsen (1969) has recently shown that the sensitizing substance present in many species and cultivars is α -methylene- γ -butyrolactone. This substance was also present in bulbs of *Erythronium dens-canis* (Liliaceae) but not in *Narcissus* bulbs.

Our patient was sensitive to both Tulip and Alstroemeria and appears to have acquired both sensitivities simultaneously. It is possible that two unrelated chemical substances are concerned but if investigation establishes the presence of α -methylene- γ -butyrolactone in Alstroemeria, the taxonomic status of this species may need to be reviewed. Liliaceae and Amaryllidaceae are related families.

Meanwhile the possibility of sensitization to Alstroemeria is of some practical importance since the plant is increasingly frequently handled by florists.

Reference. Verspyck Mijnsen, G.A.W. (1969) Pathogenesis and Causative Agent of 'Tulip Finger'. *Br. J. Derm.*, 81, 737