

## Letter to the Editor

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### On the need for uniformity in descriptions of colours in chromatography

Most regular users of chromatography are familiar with the diversity of names used in the literature to describe colours of spots, both in paper and thin-layer chromatography. One has only to consider the variety of colours covered by the terms "blue-violet" or "green-blue" to illustrate the ambiguities entailed in such descriptions. When, to these variations, is added the difficulty of translating into a language other than the author's own, the result can be exemplified by such recorded colours as "pale cinnamon pink", or "baby blue" (in this case, contrasted with "pale blue").

The purpose of this letter is to bring to the attention of chromatographers a relatively cheap chart of colours published by the Royal Horticultural Society of London<sup>1</sup>. This consists of a boxed set of four books, the "pages" of which are arranged fanwise, each page measuring 16 × 19 cm and consisting of a single colour subdivided into four tints. The pages (colours) are numbered from 1 to 202 and the tints derived from them are lettered A, B, C, D.

The use of this chart was suggested by a member of the audience at a Symposium held in 1968, although the discussion was not published in the edited proceedings<sup>2</sup>. We have successfully used the index since then and think that its use is worthy of wider consideration.

The following points are submitted in its favour:

- (1) Precision of colour definition for use in publications and records.
- (2) Easy storage of information in simple card indexes, the colours being defined by numbers.
- (3) Non-subjective description of colours. We have found that persons afflicted with "red-green" colour blindness can match the colours of spots with those in the chart and obtain the same results as other workers.
- (4) Compact, cheap and easy-to-use chart suitable for the bench-worker. It is accompanied by a booklet of cross-references, whereby the colours can be related to those in other British and international systems.

An excellent colour chart is included in another inexpensive handbook<sup>3</sup>, which contains about 1400 numbered tints, 48 on each double page, together with cross-references to other systems and much information on the etymology and practice of colour. For the chromatographer, there is possibly too wide a range of colours and the Royal Horticultural Society chart may be found more easy to handle, but the above listed favourable points are equally applicable to this handbook.

For anyone who uses paper or thin-layer chromatography, these charts,

once used, will be found invaluable for record purposes. It is strongly recommended that their use be adopted as common practice in publications.

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- 1 *R.H.S. Colour Chart*, Royal Horticultural Society, London.
- 2 E. J. SHELLARD (Editor), *Quantitative Paper and Thin-Layer Chromatography*, Academic Press, London, 1968.
- 3 A. KORNERUP AND J. H. WANSCHER, *Handbook of Colour*, Methuen, London, 1967. Translated from *Farver i Farver*, Politikens Forlag, Copenhagen, 1967.

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