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# Temperature and Atmosphere Composition Influence on Colour Change of Apples.

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## Abstract

In apples colour is a major quality parameter used by consumers to determine apple maturity. A full understanding of the nature of the relationship between storage conditions and apple fruit colour change would be of advantage in formulating models to predict how changes to handling systems would affect fruit colour. While much is known in a general way about how environmental conditions affect colour change, little information is available to characterise the nature of the relationships between temperature, oxygen and carbon dioxide.

The postharvest change in colour was measured for two export apple cultivars; Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith. Previous research on these and other apple cultivars has determined that colour change is from green to yellow. The colour of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples were measured by subjective and objective methods during experiments to investigate the effect of temperature and atmosphere composition on colour change. The objective methods used were: chlorophyll extraction and colour using a Minolta chromameter. The subjective method was colour matching for Granny Smith using the NZAPMB maturity colour charts. When related to changes in chlorophyll, the principal skin pigment, the colour parameters used had non-linear relationships. Lightness, hue angle and colour chart score all reflect pigment changes occurring as apples change colour from green to yellow. Lightness values were the least variable followed by hue angle then colour chart score. All methods used showed more sensitivity to changes in chlorophyll content when chlorophyll content was low compared to when chlorophyll content was high. The objective measurements were highly correlated with the subjective measurements and the conclusion was that the use of hue angle or lightness to follow colour change in the skin of Granny Smith and Cox's Orange Pippin apples is an accurate indirect measure of chlorophyll and other pigments.

The rate constant of colour change ( $k$ ), measured using a declining exponential function, from green to yellow, at eleven temperatures over two seasons, two

harvests per season and several growers was investigated in order to characterise the relationship between yellowing and temperature. All the methods of colour measurement used had the same relationship with temperature which was described by a modified form of the Arrhenius equation. Re-worked published data also fitted the modified Arrhenius equation. The modified Arrhenius equation was used to generate  $k$  for the various colour parameters measured (chlorophyll, hue angle, lightness and colour charts score). The value of  $k$ , as a function of temperature, increases slowly between 0°C and 6°C (the lag phase), increases exponentially between 6°C and 20°C and reaches a maximum at 25.3°C for Cox's Orange Pippin and 23.5°C for Granny Smith before declining. Pattern of response to temperature was the same for each cultivar although Granny Smith yellowed more slowly than Cox's Orange Pippin. For Cox's Orange Pippin apples more variation was accounted for by differences between growers than years or harvests within a year. For Granny Smith fruit most variation was accounted for by differences between years.

Sixteen atmospheres were used each year for Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples from one harvest in order to characterise the relationship between yellowing and oxygen or carbon dioxide. Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples differ in their response to oxygen. For Cox's Orange Pippin the value of  $k$  as a function of oxygen level increased slowly from 0% to 6% and thereafter increased exponentially from 6% to 19%. This function may be sigmoidal as the  $k$  values increase slows above 17% oxygen. The relationship for Granny Smith was poorly defined by this function,  $k$  values increased slowly as the oxygen level rose. This could be due to a fundamental physiological or biochemical difference between these two cultivars. Each cultivar had a similar response to carbon dioxide, described by a declining exponential function, with the relationship for Granny Smith being better defined than for Cox's Orange Pippin. The relationship of carbon dioxide with colour change was poorly defined as the effects of oxygen on colour change were not removed from the analysis.

Oxygen appears to have a greater influence on colour change than carbon dioxide. Atmospheres for Cox's Orange Pippin apples were not scrubbed for carbon dioxide in 1989 but were in 1990. The pattern of response to oxygen in the absence of levels of carbon dioxide above 1% in the atmosphere did not alter the sigmoidal relationship found. This may be evidence that the effect on yellowing by oxygen and carbon dioxide is by separate processes. Ethylene levels in the atmosphere appeared to have little effect on the rate of yellowing in all the atmospheres studied. The carbon dioxide and oxygen functions were combined into a single equation for use as a predictive model.

The temperature function, the modified Arrhenius equation, and the atmosphere functions were combined into one equation to which different environmental values were added. The use of such a model and other practical applications for the information gathered for this thesis are discussed and a chart drawn comparing the hue angle, lightness and colour chart score to chlorophyll level.

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## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	i
Acknowledgements .....	iv
Table of Contents .....	v
List of Tables .....	ix
List of Figures .....	xi
List of Abbreviations .....	xvii
List of Formulae .....	xviii
<b>Chapter 1</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Structure and Location of Chlorophyll .....	4
1.1.1 Chlorophyll Structure .....	4
1.1.2 Organelle Changes .....	8
1.2 Biochemistry of Yellowing .....	9
1.2.1 Chlorophyll Breakdown .....	9
1.2.2 Proposed Pathway of Chlorophyll Breakdown .....	11
1.2.2.1 Dephytylation .....	13
1.2.2.2 Porphyrin Breakdown .....	14
1.2.2.3 Photobleaching .....	15
1.2.3 Breakdown by Peroxidases .....	16
1.2.3.1 Mode of Action .....	16
1.3 Protective Mechanisms to Photoinhibition Damage .....	18
1.4 Physiology of Yellowing .....	19
1.5 Effect of Temperature .....	22
1.6 Oxygen and Carbon Dioxide .....	25
1.7 Plant Hormones .....	29
1.7.1 Ethylene .....	29
1.7.2 Other Plant Hormones .....	30
1.8 Colour Measurement .....	32
1.8.1 Perception of Colour .....	32
1.8.2 What is Colour? .....	33
1.8.3 How the Eye Responds to Light .....	36
1.8.4 Instruments that Measure Colour .....	36
1.8.4.1 Spectrophotometer .....	36
1.8.4.2 Tristimulus colourimeter .....	37
1.8.5 Colour Charts .....	39
1.9 Conclusions .....	40

<b>Chapter 2.</b> .....	41
<b>Materials and Methods</b> .....	41
2.1 Temperature Treatments. ....	41
2.1.1 Cox's Orange Pippin .....	42
2.1.1.1 1989 .....	42
2.1.1.2 1990 .....	43
2.1.2 Granny Smith. ....	43
2.1.2.1 1989 .....	43
2.1.2.2 1990 .....	44
2.2 Oxygen and Carbon Dioxide Treatments. ....	44
2.3 Measurements Taken at Each Sampling. ....	49
2.3.1 Firmness. ....	49
2.3.2 Soluble Solids. ....	50
2.3.3 Weight Loss. ....	50
2.3.4 Colour Measurement. ....	50
2.3.4.1 Minolta Chromameter. ....	50
2.3.4.2 Colour Chart. ....	51
2.3.5 Chlorophyll Content. ....	52
2.5 Calculating Chlorophyll Loss .....	52
2.6 General Observations. ....	54
 <b>Chapter 3</b> .....	 56
<b>Comparison of Methods of Measuring Colour.</b> .....	56
3.1 Introduction .....	56
3.2 Methods .....	61
3.3 Results .....	61
3.3.1 Hue angle and Chlorophyll Content .....	65
3.3.2 Hue angle and Lightness .....	65
3.3.3 Hue Angle and Colour Chart Score .....	71
3.3.4 Lightness and Chlorophyll Content .....	71
3.3.5 Colour Chart Score and Chlorophyll Content .....	74
3.3.6 Lightness Values and Colour Chart Score .....	74
3.3.7 Chroma, Hue angle and Chlorophyll Content .....	74
3.4 Discussion .....	78
3.4.1 Chlorophyll Content and Hue Angle .....	78
3.4.2 Chlorophyll Content and Lightness .....	80
3.4.3 Chlorophyll Content and Colour Chart Score .....	81
3.4.4 Hue Angle, Lightness and Colour Chart Score .....	81
3.4.5 Hue Angle and Lightness .....	81
3.5 Conclusions .....	83
 <b>Chapter 4</b> .....	 84
<b>Temperature Effects on Colour Change.</b> .....	84
4.1 Introduction .....	84
4.2 Methods .....	87
4.3 Results .....	88
4.3.1 Colour change and temperature. ....	88
4.3.2 Cultivars .....	90



4.3.3	Years	98
4.3.4	Harvests	100
4.3.5	Growers	103
4.4	Discussion	106
4.4.1	Modified Arrhenius Equation	107
4.4.2	Chlorophyll	109
4.4.3	Hue Angle, Lightness and Colour Chart Score	113
4.4.4	Cultivars	113
4.4.5	Preharvest Factors	117
4.4.6	Early and Late Harvests	117
4.4.7	Growers	118
4.4.8	Methods of Measuring Colour	119
4.4.9	Conclusions	120
<b>Chapter 5</b>		<b>121</b>
	<b>Effect of Atmosphere Composition on Colour Change of Apples</b>	<b>121</b>
5.1	Introduction	121
5.2	Methods	122
5.3	Results	123
5.3.1	Oxygen	123
5.3.2	Carbon Dioxide	134
5.3.3	Interaction between oxygen and carbon dioxide	142
5.3.4	Ethylene	149
5.3.5	Cultivars	149
5.3.6	Years	151
5.3.7	Growers	153
5.4	Discussion	155
5.4.1	Oxygen and Carbon Dioxide	155
5.4.2	Ethylene	163
5.4.3	Cultivar	164
5.4.4	Preharvest factors	165
5.5	Conclusions	165
<b>Chapter 6</b>		<b>167</b>
	<b>General Discussion</b>	<b>167</b>
6.1	Introduction	167
6.2	Methods of Measuring Colour	169
6.2	Model of colour change in apples	173
6.4	Implications	182
<b>References</b>		<b>184</b>
<b>Appendix 1</b>		
	<b>Equations for determining chlorophyll concentration in N,N'-dimethylformamide.</b>	<b>204</b>

<b>Appendix 2</b>	
<b>Rate constants of quality parameter changes at different temperatures. . . . .</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>Appendix 3</b>	
<b>Rate constants of quality parameters in different controlled atmospheres. . . . .</b>	<b>216</b>
<b>Appendix 4</b>	
<b>Parameter estimates of regression equations of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples stored at different temperatures. . . . .</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>Appendix 5</b>	
<b>Parameter estimates of fits for colour change and oxygen or carbon dioxide levels in the external atmosphere. . . . .</b>	<b>221</b>

## List of Tables

Table 1.1 Relationship of chlorophyll to some of its derivatives (Schwartz and Lorenzo 1990). . . . .	6
Table 1.2 Flesh temperatures recommended for long storage of various New Zealand apples (Padfield 1969) (NZAPMB pers. comm.). . . . .	22
Table 1.3 Ranges of oxygen and carbon dioxide levels which inhibit yellowing in controlled atmospheres for selected vegetables. . . . .	29
Table 3.1 Summary of methods used to measure colour and colour change in horticultural produce. . . . .	59
Table 3.2 Comparison of ratios of $a^*/b^*$ to hue angle. . . . .	61
Table 3.3 Correlation coefficients for chlorophyll relating to hue angle, lightness and colour chart score. . . . .	83
Table 4.1 Significance levels of $k$ in quality parameters with temperature when assessed by year, harvest and grower. . . . .	90
Table 4.2 Colour parameters of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples stored during 1989 and 1990. . . . .	97
Table 4.3 Quality parameters of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith fruit at initial assessment during 1989 and 1990 . . . . .	99
Table 4.4 Rate constants of change in quality parameters during 1989 and 1990 . . . . .	100
Table 4.5 Quality parameters from start and end of commercial harvest during 1989 and 1990 . . . . .	101
Table 4.6 Average $k$ values for quality parameters of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples from the start and end of commercial harvest in 1989 and 1990 . . . . .	102
Table 4.7 Internal ethylene levels (ppm) of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith fruit prior to storage in 1990. . . . .	103
Table 4.8 Quality parameters of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples obtained from different growers in 1989 and 1990 at initial measurement. . . . .	105

Table 4.9	Rate constants of change in quality parameters per day of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples from different growers during storage at different temperatures in 1989 and 1990. . .	106
Table 4.10	Days to reach climacteric maximum compared to days to yellow to 91° Hue at 20°C for Golden Delicious apples. Data reworked from Workman (1964). . . . .	115
Table 5.1	Values of $r^2$ for fits to equations [5.1], [5.2] and [5.3] for Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples stored in different atmospheres at 20°C during 1989 and 1990. . . . .	143
Table 5.2	Colour parameters of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples stored during 1989 and 1990. . . . .	151
Table 5.3	Rate constants of quality parameters during 1989 and 1990. . . . .	151
Table 5.4	Quality parameters of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples at initial assessment during 1989 and 1990. . . . .	152
Table 5.5	Rate constants of colour change per day in quality parameters during 1989 and 1990. . . . .	153
Table 5.6	Quality parameters of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples of each grower prior to storage in controlled atmospheres. . . . .	154
Table 5.7	Rate constants of colour change per day of quality parameters during 1989 and 1990. . . . .	155
Table 5.8	Values of $k$ for total chlorophyll of Cox's Orange Pippin apples stored in controlled atmospheres with $O_2$ concentrations ranging between 11.6 and 11.9% . . . . .	163
Table 6.1	Days to reach certain percentage chlorophyll loss at different temperatures of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples during 1989 and 1990. Days are calculated using equation [4.3]. . . . .	183

## List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Structure of chlorophylls (Schwartz and Lorenzo 1990) . . . . .	5
Figure 1.2 Formation of chlorophyll derivatives by demetalation and dephytylation (Hendry <i>et al</i> 1987) . . . . .	7
Figure 1.3 Degradation rate plot of chlorophylls a and b during storage of aseptically packaged spinach puree (Schwartz and Lorenzo 1990) . . . . .	10
Figure 1.4 Possible model for degradation of chlorophyll (R = phytol) (Hendry <i>et al</i> 1987) . . . . .	12
Figure 1.5 Events occurring when light strikes an apple fruit . . . . .	35
Figure 1.6 Graphical representation of the $a^*/b^*$ ratio when $b^*$ is equal to 20 or -20 units . . . . .	38
Figure 2.1 Flow diagram of controlled atmosphere gas mixing system . . . . .	46
Figure 2.2 Controlled atmosphere system, chambers and gas mixing system	47
Figure 2.3 Change in chlorophyll a content over time for Cox's Orange Pippin apples at 4°C (●) and 25°C (Δ) showing (a) actual data and (b) regression lines . . . . .	55
Figure 3.1 Comparison of change in (a) lightness, (b) hue angle and (c) chlorophyll at 25°C of Cox's Orange Pippin (Δ) and Granny Smith (●) apples early harvest, 1989 . . . . .	63

Figure 3.2 Chlorophyll a ( $\Delta$ ) and chlorophyll b ( $\bullet$ ) concentration in early harvested Granny Smith and Cox's Orange Pippin apples stored at 25°C, 1989 .....	64
Figure 3.3 Hue angle as a function of total chlorophyll content of apple peel during 1989 and 1990 .....	66
Figure 3.4 Hue angle as a function of total chlorophyll of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples during 1989 and 1990 .....	67
Figure 3.5 Lightness as a function of hue angle of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples during 1989 and 1990 .....	68
Figure 3.6 Lightness as a function of hue angle of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith fruit during 1989 and 1990 .....	69
Figure 3.7 Colour chart as a function of hue angle for Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples during 1989 and 1990 .....	70
Figure 3.8 Lightness as a function of total chlorophyll for Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples during 1989 and 1990 .....	72
Figure 3.9 Lightness as a function of total chlorophyll of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples during 1989 and 1990 .....	73
Figure 3.10 Colour chart score as a function of total chlorophyll of Granny Smith apples during 1989 and 1990 .....	75
Figure 3.11 Lightness as a function of colour chart score of Granny Smith apples during 1989 and 1990 .....	76

Figure 3.12 Chroma in relation to hue angle and total chlorophyll of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples during 1989 and 1990 . . . . .	77
Figure 3.13 New Zealand Apple and Pear Marketing Board Granny Smith maturity colour chips and table of hue angles and lightness of each score . .	82
Figure 4.1 Graphical representation of the modified Arrhenius equation taken from Johnson and Thornley (1985) . . . . .	85
Figure 4.2 Comparison of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples on removal from storage at different temperatures . . . . .	89
Figure 4.3 Rate constants of chlorophyll a in the skin of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples at various temperatures during 1989 and 1990 . . .	91
Figure 4.4 Rate constants of chlorophyll b in the skin of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples at various temperatures during 1989 and 1990 . . .	92
Figure 4.5 Rate constants of total chlorophyll in the skin of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples at various temperatures during 1989 and 1990 . . .	93
Figure 4.6 Rate constants of hue angle in the skin of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples at different temperatures . . . . .	94
Figure 4.7 Rate constants of lightness of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples at different temperatures . . . . .	95
Figure 4.8 Rate constants of colour chart score in the skin of Granny Smith apples at various temperatures . . . . .	96
Figure 4.9 Change in chlorophyllase activity with temperature (Holden 1961) . . . . .	107

Figure 4.10 (a) Rate constants of chlorophyll loss of Anjou, Buerre Bosc pears (Hansen 1956) and (b) Change in quality rating of Brussel Sprouts (Lyons and Rappaport 1962) . . . . .	111
Figure 5.1 Comparison of Cox's Orange Pippin and Granny Smith apples upon removal from controlled atmosphere storage . . . . .	125
Figure 5.2 Rate constants of total chlorophyll over different oxygen levels in the storage atmosphere of Cox's Orange Pippin ( $\Delta$ ) and Granny Smith ( $\bullet$ ) apples stored at 20°C for eight or sixteen weeks . . . . .	126
Figure 5.3 Rate constants of chlorophyll a over different oxygen levels in the storage atmosphere of Cox's Orange Pippin ( $\Delta$ ) and Granny Smith ( $\bullet$ ) apples at 20°C for eight or sixteen weeks . . . . .	127
Figure 5.4 Rate constants of chlorophyll b over different oxygen levels in the storage atmosphere of Cox's Orange Pippin ( $\Delta$ ) and Granny Smith ( $\bullet$ ) apples at 20°C for eight or sixteen weeks . . . . .	128
Figure 5.5 Rate constants of hue angle over different oxygen levels in the storage atmosphere of Cox's Orange Pippin ( $\Delta$ ) and Granny Smith ( $\bullet$ ) apples at 20°C for eight or sixteen weeks . . . . .	131
Figure 5.6 Rate constants of lightness over different oxygen levels in the storage atmosphere of Cox's Orange Pippin ( $\Delta$ ) and Granny Smith ( $\bullet$ ) apples at 20°C for eight or sixteen weeks . . . . .	132
Figure 5.7 Rate constants of colour chart score over different oxygen levels in the storage atmosphere of Granny Smith ( $\bullet$ ) apples at 20°C for sixteen weeks . . . . .	133



- Figure 5.8 Rate constants of total chlorophyll over different carbon dioxide levels in the storage atmosphere of Cox's Orange Pippin ( $\Delta$ ) and Granny Smith ( $\bullet$ ) apples at 20°C for eight or sixteen weeks . . . . . 136
- Figure 5.9 Rate constants of chlorophyll a over different carbon dioxide levels in the storage atmosphere of Cox's Orange Pippin ( $\Delta$ ) and Granny Smith ( $\bullet$ ) apples at 20°C for eight or sixteen weeks . . . . . 137
- Figure 5.10 Rate constants of chlorophyll b over different carbon dioxide levels in the storage atmosphere of Cox's Orange Pippin ( $\Delta$ ) and Granny Smith ( $\bullet$ ) apples at 20°C for eight or sixteen weeks . . . . . 138
- Figure 5.11 Rate constants of hue angle over different carbon dioxide levels in the storage atmosphere of Cox's Orange Pippin ( $\Delta$ ) and Granny Smith ( $\bullet$ ) apples at 20°C for eight or sixteen weeks . . . . . 139
- Figure 5.12 Rate constants of lightness over different carbon dioxide levels in the storage atmosphere of Cox's Orange Pippin ( $\Delta$ ) and Granny Smith ( $\bullet$ ) apples for 20°C for eight or sixteen weeks . . . . . 140
- Figure 5.13 Rate constants of colour chart score over different carbon dioxide levels in the storage atmosphere of Cox's Orange Pippin ( $\Delta$ ) and Granny Smith ( $\bullet$ ) apples at 20°C for sixteen weeks . . . . . 141
- Figure 5.14 Three dimensional surface plot of k for total chlorophyll of Cox's Orange Pippin apples versus  $O_2$  and  $CO_2$  levels calculated from equation [5.3] . . . . . 145
- Figure 5.15 Estimates of rate constants of total chlorophyll by the combined Gompertz/declining exponential equation [5.3] for Cox's Orange Pippin apples, fits ( $\Delta$ ) and actual data ( $\Delta$ ) . . . . . 146

- Figure 5.16 Three dimensional surface plot of  $k$  for total chlorophyll of Granny Smith apples versus  $O_2$  and  $CO_2$  levels calculated from equation [5.3] . . . . . 147
- Figure 5.17 Estimates of rate constants of total chlorophyll by the combined Gompertz/declining exponential equation [5.3] for Granny Smith apples, fits ( $\Delta$ ) and actual data ( $\Delta$ ) . . . . . 148
- Figure 5.18 Rate constants of (a) total chlorophyll and (b) hue angle in relation to ethylene level for Cox's Orange Pippin ( $\Delta$ ) and Granny Smith (O) apples . 150
- Figure 5.19 Rate constants of total chlorophyll over different oxygen levels in the storage atmosphere of Cox's Orange Pippin apples during 1989 and 1990 at 20°C for eight weeks . . . . . 160
- Figure 5.20 Rate constants of total chlorophyll over different carbon dioxide levels in the storage atmosphere of fresh asparagus at 1.7°C for eleven days. Oxygen levels were 21% for 0% carbon dioxide and 3% for other carbon dioxide levels. There was no 3% oxygen 0% carbon dioxide treatment. Data reworked from Wang *et al* (1971) . . . . . 161
- Figure 6.1 Relationship of total chlorophyll content to hue angle, lightness and colour chart score expressed on a common axis . . . . . 171
- Figure 6.2 Cox's Orange Pippin theoretical rate constants of total chlorophyll with temperature at: (a) constant oxygen levels of 20% and varying carbon dioxide levels; (b) constant carbon dioxide levels of 0% and varying oxygen levels, using equation [6.1] . . . . . 179
- Figure 6.3 Granny Smith theoretical rate constants of total chlorophyll at different temperatures with: (a) constant oxygen levels of 20% and varying levels of carbon dioxide; (b) constant carbon dioxide levels of 0% and varying levels of oxygen, using equation [6.1] . . . . . 180

## List of Abbreviations

$\Delta H$  = change in enthalpy  $J.(kg.mol)^{-1}$ .

$\Delta S$  = change in entropy  $J.(kg.mol)^{-1}.K^{-1}$

$A = K_a$

$A_r$  = rate constant of the asymptote

$A_o$  = chlorophyll concentration at time zero

$A_t$  = chlorophyll concentration at time  $t$

$B = E_a/R$

$C = \Delta S/R$

$CO_2$  = percent carbon dioxide

$D = \Delta H/R$

$D_e$  = decay in specific rate constant of change

$E_a$  = activation energy  $J.(kg.mol)^{-1}$

$k$  = rate constant of reaction

$K_a$  = rate constant of a process if there is no inhibition

$K_{CO_2}$  = rate constant for carbon dioxide

$O_2$  = percent oxygen

$R$  = gas constant  $8314 J.(kg.mol)^{-1}.K^{-1}$

$t$  = time

$T$  = temperature K

$Y_o$  = mean value at zero concentration

$K_{O_2CO_2}^{20^\circ C}$  = rate constant at  $20^\circ C$  for a controlled atmosphere

$K_{temp}^{20^\circ C}$  = rate constant at  $20^\circ C$  in air

$K_{temp}^n$  = rate constant at a temperature of  $n$  in air

## List of Formulae

<u>Name</u>	<u>Formula</u>	
Declining exponential	$A_t = A_o * e^{-kt}$	[2.1]
Arrhenius equation	$k = K_a e^{-E_a / RT}$	[4.1]
Boltzmann enzyme distribution function	$k = 1 + e^{\Delta S / R} e^{-\Delta H / RT}$	[4.2]
Modified Arrhenius equation	$k = \frac{K_a e^{-E_a / RT}}{1 + e^{\Delta S / R} e^{-\Delta H / RT}}$	[4.3]
Simplified modified Arrhenius equation	$k = \frac{A * e^{-B/T}}{1 + e^{C-D/T}}$	[4.4]
Maximum temperature	$T_{\max} = \frac{D}{C + \ln(D/B - 1)}$	[4.5]
Gompertz growth function	$k = A_o \frac{e^{Y_o(1 - e^{-D_e O_2})}}{D_e}$	[5.1]
Carbon dioxide declining exponential function	$k = A_r + A_o e^{-K_{CO_2} CO_2}$	[5.2]
Combined Gompertz-declining exponential function	$k = A_o \frac{e^{Y_o(1 - e^{-D_e O_2})}}{D_e} e^{-K_{CO_2} CO_2}$	[5.3]

Temperature/atmosphere  
function

$$k = K_{\text{O}_2\text{CO}_2}^{20^\circ\text{C}} * \frac{K_{\text{temp}}^n}{K_{\text{temp}}^{20^\circ\text{C}}}$$

[6.1]

## Chapter 1.

### Introduction

Fruit colour along with size, shape, freedom from rot and defects is used by consumers to assess the worth of fruit on sale. In the case of apples colour is a major quality parameter (Wills *et al* 1981) determining, in the eyes of the consumer, eating quality. To the consumer different cultivars of apples have different colour criteria, with redness being important in red skinned cultivars and yellowness important in green and red/green skinned cultivars. Additionally apple fruit quality has a different meaning to consumers of apples than to growers, handlers or retailers (Hedrick 1920). More sophisticated means of measuring fruit quality than by eye alone such as assessing fruit firmness and sweetness are not possible by apple consumers in retail outlets. A full understanding of the nature of the relationship between apple fruit colour change and methods used to maintain fruit quality would give apple marketers and handlers an advantage in prediction of how changes to handling systems would affect fruit colour. This is especially important for producers of high quality apples such as New Zealand growers in maintaining high quality standards.

Postharvest storage technologies such as storage at low temperatures and controlled or modified atmospheres are used extensively by the apple industry in New Zealand due to the large distances fruit are transported to export markets. The influence of the above storage technologies on apple colour change is well documented but the nature of the relationship is poorly defined. Specific quantitative information is scarce despite many publications mentioning the effect of various storage treatments on fruit colour.

In this thesis the changes in apple colour discussed are from green to yellow as earlier research has shown that production of red pigments depends on UV light

(Arakawa *et al* 1985, Chalmers *et al* 1973) and once harvested and placed into storage the red colour of fruit changes little compared to chlorophyll (Goldschmidt 1980). Change in colour from green to yellow for apples is result of chlorophyll breakdown with carotenoid biosynthesis playing a minor role (Gorski and Creasy 1977, Knee 1980a). Breakdown of chlorophyll represents the most conspicuous of a number of symptoms which together constitute the deteriorative process, known as senescence, that ends the functional life of plant cells (Ceppi *et al* 1987). In leaves and fruit, senescence involves many physical and metabolic processes including loss of structural integrity and progressive lessening of photosynthesis with increasing failure of synthetic chloroplast function. For example in tree leaves the saturating level of light intensity rises from 7000 lux in young leaves to about 21000 lux in fully expanded leaves and reduces to 8000 lux with increasing age (Richardson 1957). Chlorophyll content and photosynthetic rate do not necessarily follow one another closely. Even in the rapid senescence of seedling leaves, photosynthetic decline is not ascribable to chlorophyll loss, as the enzyme ribulose biphosphate carboxylase/oxygenase (RUBISCO) is rapidly broken down in senescing leaves (Bathgate *et al* 1985).

These events are accompanied by a colour change, usually from green to yellow (Thimann 1980), but non-yellowing mutant grasses are known in which chlorophyll is retained throughout senescence (Osborne and Cheah 1982). Degradation of chlorophylls in aging plants is linked to changes both in chlorophylls themselves and other plant pigments (Hendry *et al* 1987). In millet, chlorophyll a and b concentrations decrease by about 83% while the concentration of carotenoids remain stable during senescence (Embry and Nothnagel 1988). Timing of leaf or fruit senescence appears to be controlled by extrinsic and intrinsic factors, the response being determined by events taking place in other parts of the plant and by genetic constitution of the leaf and the fruit. Disassembly of cell organelles is thought to be polygenically regulated, depending on a complex of tightly co-ordinated intracellular enzymatic agents (Ceppi *et al* 1987, Thomas and Stoddart 1980).

In recent years biochemical studies on chlorophyll catabolism have concentrated on the following lines of enquiry:

(i) Enzymatic.

(a) Chlorophyllase (EC 3.1.1.14) (Terpstra 1981, Shimokawa 1982).

Upsurge in chlorophyllase activity is found in ethylene treated citrus fruit and in senescing leaves (Sabater and Rodriguez 1978).

(b) Oxidative and peroxidative enzyme systems (Huff 1982, Martinoia *et al* 1982).

Model systems in which thylakoids fortified with linolenic acid rapidly degrade chlorophyll (Luthy *et al* 1984). The presence of an enzyme responsible for removal of  $Mg^+$  from the tetrapyrrole ring has also been investigated (Owens and Falkowski 1982).

(ii) Biochemical/biophysical changes.

(a) *In vivo* spectroscopy of senescing fruit to detect changes in biochemical/biophysical pigments associated with ripening and senescence (Gross and Ohad 1983).

(iv) Breakdown products, for example,  $13^2$ -hydroxychlorophyll a as a breakdown intermediate (Schoch *et al* 1984, Maunders *et al* 1983).

Many attempts have been made to identify products of chlorophyll breakdown which remain elusive due to rapid disappearance of chlorophyll from senescing tissues. A similar lack of knowledge also applies to carotenoids of senescing tissue which undergo destruction before, during or after chlorophyll breakdown.



The following literature review outlines current knowledge and understanding of yellowing in plants and fruit in particular.

## **1.1 Structure and Location of Chlorophyll**

### **1.1.1 Chlorophyll Structure**

The structure of chlorophylls a and b are shown in Figure 1.1. Both chlorophylls are derivatives of dihydroporphyrin chelated with a centrally located magnesium atom, all contained an isocyclic ring. Chlorophylls are hydrophobic because of the C<sub>20</sub> mono-unsaturated isoprenoid alcohol, phytol (which is esterified) with its double bond in the trans configuration (Schwartz and Lorenzo 1990). Chlorophyll is present in chloroplasts complexed with protein but the nature of binding is not well understood. Since chlorophylls are readily extracted with organic solvents, covalent linkages to other components are not present. Historically, a number of generic names for the chlorophylls and their derivatives have been accepted and are outlined in Table 1.1. Figure 1.2 indicates the relationship of the chlorophylls to their major derivatives. The central Mg atom is easily removed, particularly under acidic conditions, being replaced with hydrogen and thus forming the pheophytins.

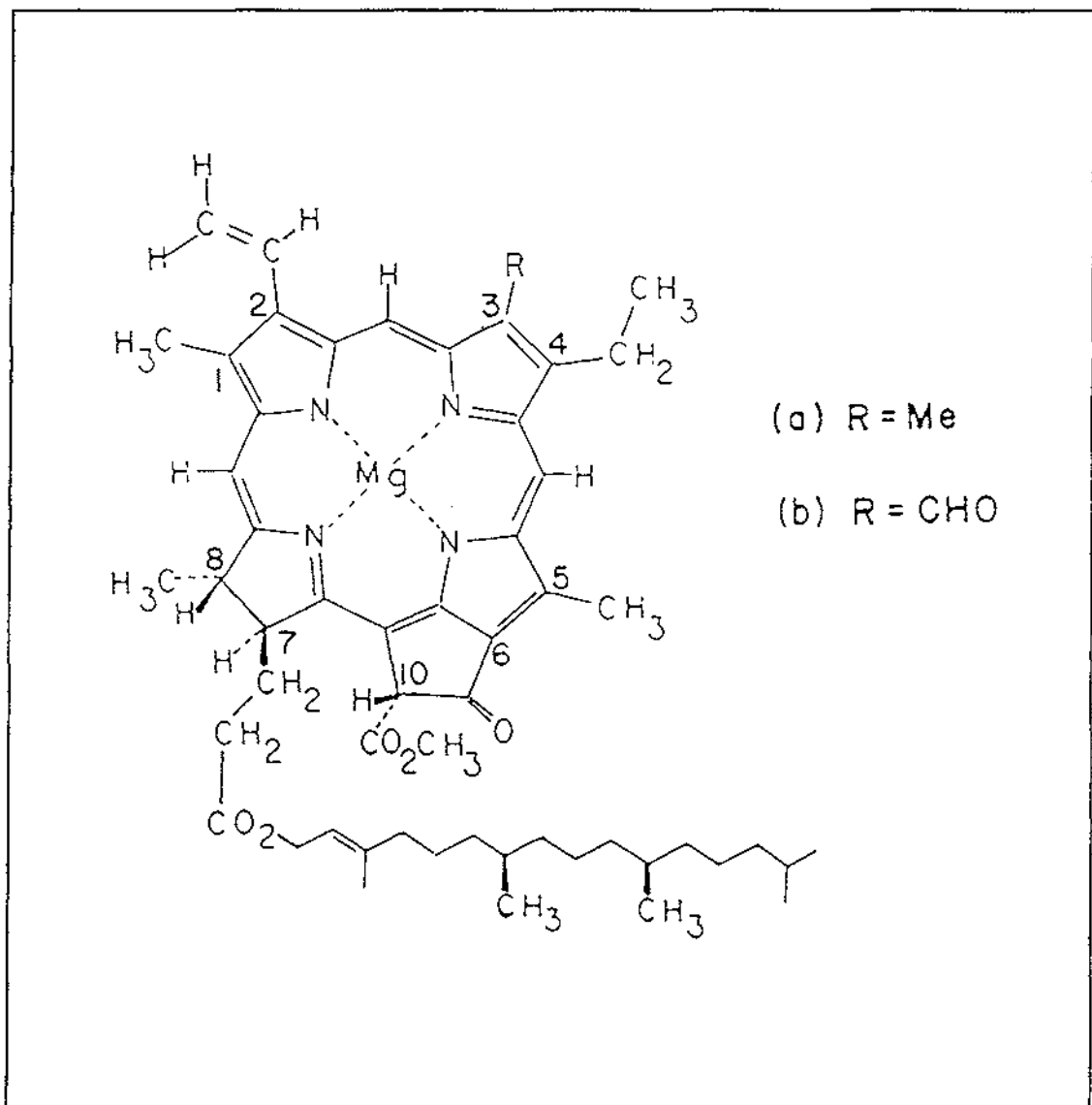


Figure 1.1 Structure of chlorophylls (Schwartz and Lorenzo 1990).

<p style="text-align: center;">           CHLOROPHYLL <math>\xrightarrow{-Mg}</math> PHEOPHYTIN <math>\xrightarrow{-CO_2CH_3}</math> PYROPHEOPHYTIN  <math>\downarrow</math> CHLOROPHYLLASE <math>\downarrow</math> <math>\downarrow</math>            - PHYTOL - PHYTOL - PHYTOL            CHLOROPHYLLIDE <math>\xrightarrow{-Mg}</math> PHEOPHORBIDE <math>\xrightarrow{-CO_2CH_3}</math> PYROPHEOPHORBIDE         </p>	
Phyllins:	Chlorophyll derivatives containing magnesium
Pheophytins:	The magnesium-free derivatives of the chlorophylls
Chlorophyllide:	The acid derivative resulting from enzymic or chemical hydrolysis of the C <sub>7</sub> propionate ester
Chlorophyllase:	The enzyme present in leaves which catalyzes hydrolysis of the C <sub>7</sub> propionate ester
Pheophorbides:	The products containing a C <sub>7</sub> propionic acid resulting from removal of magnesium and hydrolysis of the phytol ester; the corresponding 7-propionate methyl (or ethyl) ester is, however, somewhat unsystematically named as methyl (or ethyl) pheophorbide
"Meso" compounds:	Derivatives in which the C-2 vinyl group has been reduced to ethyl
"Pyro" compounds:	Derivatives in which the C-10 carbomethoxy group has been replaced by hydrogen
Chlorins <i>e</i> :	Derivatives of pheophorbide <i>a</i> resulting from cleavage of the isocyclic ring; these are usually given a subscript number, e.g., chlorine <i>e</i> <sub>6</sub> specifies a product with six oxygen atoms (in three ester groups)
Rhodins <i>g</i> :	The corresponding derivatives from pheophorbide <i>b</i>

Table 1.1 Relationship of chlorophyll to some of its derivatives (Schwartz and Lorenzo 1990).

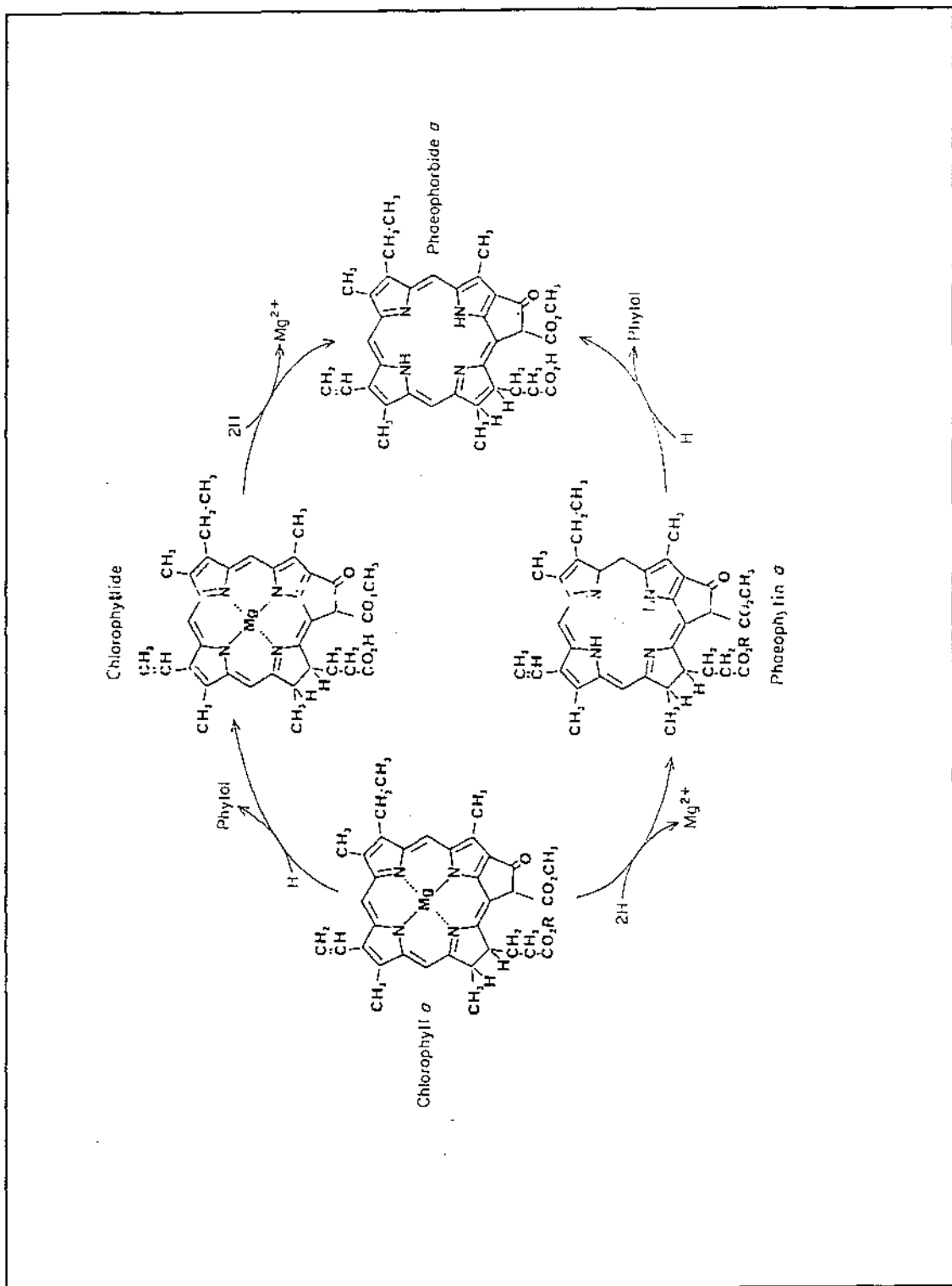


Figure 1.2 Formation of chlorophyll derivatives by demetalation and dephytylation (Hendry *et al* 1987).

### 1.1.2 Organelle Changes

Differentiation of chloroplasts into chromoplasts is a prominent part of senescence in mesophyll cells (Woolhouse 1984). It is an orderly process with all the features typical of developmental processes. At the organelle level chloroplast and endomembrane systems are susceptible to degradation by cytoplasmic agents (Thomas and Stoddart 1980, Hendry *et al* 1987). In leaf chloroplasts loss of plastid integrity is one of the earliest visible features of senescence and is presumably the same for fruit. The initial event in the sequence appears to be a change in characteristics of the envelope leading to separation of inner and outer membranes. Plastid disassembly appears to be mediated by agents synthesized in the cytoplasm (Duggelin *et al* 1988), and changes in envelope integrity are viewed as initial events in the transport of degradation agents into the chloroplast. Ingress of degrading enzymes may be a consequence of the decline or removal of envelope membrane components normally preventing access. It is known that enzymes associated with the outer surface of mature chloroplasts lose activity rapidly during early senescence (Davies *et al* 1990, Thomas 1977, Thomas and Stoddart 1980). Enzyme and structural protein lysis follow rapidly after envelope degradation. Chloroplast membrane proteins are rapidly degraded during yellowing.

Cells become increasingly vacuolated with age, and surviving organelles are contained in a diminishing rim of cytoplasm. Changes in permeability of the tonoplast membrane, consequent upon degradation, might allow exposure to materials which lower cytoplasmic pH thus favouring the operation of hydrolases with acidic optima or, alternatively allow transfer of these enzymes from vacuole to cytoplasm (Thomas and Stoddart 1980).

Ultrastructural studies indicate that mitochondria persist in an intact state, except for some swelling or distortion of the cristae, throughout senescent breakdown. Advancing senescence is paralleled by considerable changes in composition and physical state of microsomal membranes (Thomas and Stoddart 1980). Changes

in leaf peroxisomes may result in a release of superoxide radicals which may be involved in further membrane breakdown (Rio *et al* 1989).

It is suggested that chloroplast disintegration involves action of two proteolytic systems, one acting on stroma enzymes and extrinsic membrane proteins and other degrading intrinsic thylakoid components, including chlorophyll. Thomas *et al* (1985), using a non-yellowing mutant of *Festuca pratensis*, a meadow fescue, found this non-yellowing character to be associated with a marked structural stability of chloroplast thylakoid membranes during senescence which was reflected in retention of thylakoid proteins and pigment protein complexes and of membrane lipids (Davies *et al* 1990).

## **1.2 Biochemistry of Yellowing**

### **1.2.1 Chlorophyll Breakdown**

Though some chlorophyll degradation in leaves may result from photooxidation of pigment the fact that mature leaves lose chlorophyll in the dark indicates that degradation *in vivo* is at least partially enzymatic. And treatments that inhibit or destroy enzymes such as low temperatures, anaerobic conditions, boiling or freezing and desiccation of leaves during incubation greatly reduce chlorophyll loss.

Occurrence of dephytylated forms of chlorophyll in senescent leaves indicates that chlorophyllase is responsible for the initial step of chlorophyll degradation. Data available suggests that chlorophyllase is located in plastids and thylakoids (Hirschfeld and Goldschmidt 1983, Tarasenko *et al* 1986) and that its activity in senescent leaves is correlated with loss of chlorophyll (Sabater and Rodriguez 1978). The enzyme appears to be present and potentially active in mature presenescent leaves. Extraction of chlorophyllase activity requires use of acetone powders, detergents or organic solvents (Holden 1961, Schoch and Brown 1987) indicating that under natural conditions the enzyme is inactive.

Although it is known that chlorophyllase catalyzed conversion of purified chlorophyll a does not occur, or occurs only slightly, in the absence of lipids (Terpstra and Lambers 1983) it is not clear how the contact between chlorophyll molecules, complexed with their apoproteins, and enzymes is achieved in a controlled fashion in senescent chloroplasts.

Rates of destruction for chlorophylls a and b are similar according to Jen and McKinney (1970) but other authors (MacKinney and Joslyn 1940, Schwartz and Lorenzo 1990, Schwartz and von Elbe 1983) suggest that chlorophyll a is destroyed faster than chlorophyll b. For example, chlorophyll a in aqueous acetone solution reacts with acid seven to nine times more rapidly than chlorophyll b (Figure 1.3). Measurements at various temperatures of chlorophyll loss indicate that the rate of chlorophyll degradation follows first order kinetics for spinach puree (Holden 1961) and canned kiwifruit (Robertson and Swinburne 1981).

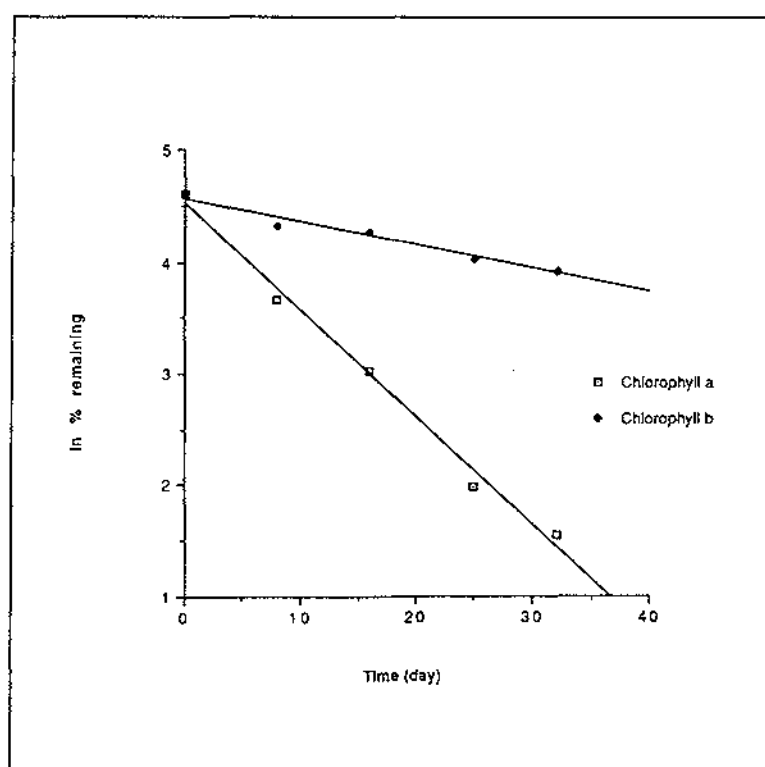


Figure 1.3 Degradation rate plot of chlorophylls a and b during storage of aseptically packaged spinach puree (Schwartz and Lorenzo 1990).