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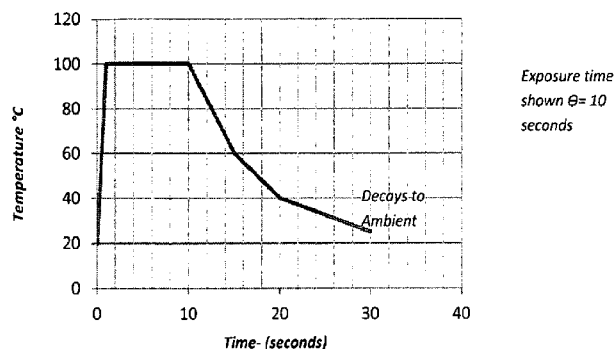
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Time temperature response of a unit plant environ in the application of

TPT.



(57) Abstract: The invention relates to a method of impacting the fruit production of a plant or crop by applying short-duration thermal shock streams of hot air to the plant periodically to impact the flavonoid biosynthetic pathway mechanisms in a plant thereby improving its fruit. The method includes the steps of (1) passing by the plant in a row at a speed of 1- 5 mph in an improved Thermal Plant Treatment (TPT) machine, (2) ejecting from the TPT machine at least one hot stream of air in the direction of the unit plant area for no more than 15 seconds per unit plant area per pass, (3) optionally measuring the thermal shock profile that the plant is subjected with thermal sensors, and (4) repeating the thermal shock profile treatment steps (1) and (2) at pre-determined regular intervals over at least a fraction of the crop year.



THERMAL PLANT TREATMENT AND A MACHINE TO APPLY THE TREATMENT

[001] The entire disclosures of US patent applications 61/685,745 filed March 24, 2012 and 61/848,643 filed on January 8, 2013 are incorporated herein by reference. This application claims the benefit of priority of these two applications.

[002] FIELD OF INVENTION

[003] The present invention relates to methods of improving the quality parameters of a plant's fruit in commercial agriculture. This invention more specifically relates to a method of Thermal Plant Treatment (TPT) wherein the temperature and water balance in the plant ecosystem are changed. TPT is optimized for improved plant biological functioning for commercial benefits in agriculture. The method specifically consists of applying different temperature regimes using blown hot air to a plant in the field to achieve improvements in plant-output measures such as the fruit set, initiation of flowering, resultant fruit chemistry, plant disease resistance, fruit skin thickness and fruit color. This invention also relates to specific improvements in equipment to implement TPT.

[004] BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

[005] Temperature treatment in agriculture and fruit culture has been used to prevent plant damage from low temperature exposure. It is known from prior art that thermal systems are used for anti-frost damage control during what is colloquially known as "cold snaps". In USP 5,934,013 to Lazo, heat from moveable tractors is proposed as a method of frost control. The objectives here are to limit the duration of exposure to low temperatures for a plant. Generally these measures are applied whenever cold snaps occur.

[006] Temperature treatment in agriculture and fruit culture has also been used successfully to control pests in the past decade. Using burn temperatures and below burn temperatures exhaust air from heaters has been used to eliminate pests such as fungal pests such as *Oidium (uncinula necator)* and *Botritis (Botritis cinerea)* in grapes and insect pests like *Drosophila melanogaster* larvae and mites such as *Brevipalpus chilensis*. The blown air temperatures required to effectively treat such pests are on the high side, typically 65 C to 250C for the hot air. USP 7,134,239 Lazo discloses the method for pest control with hot air streams from a roaming tractor,

[007] The use of temperature in the cases above represents a loss minimization approach to agriculture production. There is a real commercial need to develop temperature control techniques in the field to enhance the quality of agriculture output, especially of fruit and vegetables, without the use of chemicals. There is also a need to improve fruit quality parameters so as to enhance their commercial 'nutraceutical' value.

[008] The effect of temperature on a plant's flavonoid pathway is well documented in the literature. Flavonoid pathway controls the fruit quality parameters or plant-output measures. A good representation of the flavonoid biosynthetic pathway of grapevine is illustrated in *Czemmel S. et al, Plant Physiol. 2009; Vol. 151; pgs. 1513-1530* and is included herein by reference. But no commercial practice of using a routine periodic shock to the plant ecosystem for enhancing fruit production exists. The present invention introduces the practice of routinely using periodic heat stimuli (TPT) in agricultural practice to improve the fruit quality parameters. As a result various fruit parameters are enhanced. Amongst them are riper fruit, berries with thicker skin and intense color in juice extracted from fruit, increased production of Jasmonic acid as part of self-defense expression of plant are all related to the nature of the TPT stimulus applied to the plant.

[009] We also observe real practical limitations in the machines used in frost and pest control for use in TPT. They limit the effectiveness and efficiency of the machine for use in TPT. Temperature control and thermal profile are extremely

important in TPT. The prior art machine is designed with a central burner prior to the blower that throws the air to the crop. The air is heated and thrown out in a single fixed direction. As a result, the air stream can face a substantial thermal loss and prematurely cool when ejected to the crop from the machine. Moreover, the prior art machines do not have any configurable means of transport of the ejected hot- air to different heights, row configurations, of the exposed crop. Additionally, this is also necessary for accurate and precise thermal profile control in TPT. A need exists for improvements in the existing machinery to apply TPT with increased precision for meaningful commercial gain.

[010] SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[011] There is provided a method (TPT) for improving fruit production by subjecting the plant to periodic thermal shocks with high velocity hot-air for short durations. In another embodiment, such treatment for grape vines over the growing season is demonstrated that result in improved grape harvest and improved quality of wine produced therefrom. In yet another embodiment is an improved machine to precisely control the application of such hot-air shock treatment to the plant using better burner placement, hot-air direction nozzles, temperature sensors and programmable controls.

[012] It is the objective of the proposed TPT methodology to modify the crop environment in a manner most beneficial for commerce through the use of machines as described above. While the two main physical parameters of TPT (air temperature and air velocity) are controlled by the machine, the other factors such as frequency of application of TPT, air quality, air humidity, aerosol additives etc. can also be utilized to shape the plant's ecosystem. They can also be envisaged to be added to the described TPT methodology in order to most beneficially and comprehensively control the crop environment.

[013] While the examples concern mostly fruit plants, TPT could be applied nut plants, vegetable plants and even forest plants.

[014] DRAWINGS AND FIGURES

[015] *Figure 1:* Time-temperature response of a unit plant environ in the
5 application of TPT.

[016] *Figure 2:* Two examples of Wine Chemistry Analysis

[017] *Figure 3:* Air Intake and Outflow in a TPT machine

[018] *Figure 4:* Improvements over prior art machines for precise and accurate
TPT

10 [019] *Figure 5:* A TPT machine in application mode with thermal gradient
created by the blown hot air onto a tree

[020] *Figure 6:* Modulation of temperature gradients with nozzle articulation

[021] DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[022] There is a need to improve crop yield and quality performance without the
15 use of chemicals. As the use of chemicals faces increasing scrutiny, as market demand
for chemical-free crops increases with organic farming, there is a need to look for ways
to improve crop yield and quality without the use of chemicals. It is one objective of our
TPT method to improve crop yield and quality without the use of chemicals.

[023] The present invention provides a method to routinely incorporate heat
20 stimulation of a plant's biochemical process mechanisms to benefit fruit quality

parameters. The temperatures of application are in general lower than those used in thermal pest control methods. The frequency of application is designed to maximize a certain fruit quality parameter. We have carried out test in various locations around the globe to demonstrate these benefits of such treatments. While some treatments are well defined, others still have to be fully explored. The key ingredient is to increase the temperature in the plant with a certain periodicity to produce improved fruit quality.

[024] It is well known and experienced that thermal stresses can affect crop. Crop Responses and Adaptations to Temperature Stress, Amarjit Basra, 2001, ISBN-1-56022-890-3). Thermal stress is one of the most constant and pervasive stresses encountered by plants. Frost damage is an example. Certain regimes of temperature can also induce stress reactions in plants. Generally thermal stresses can be clinical (with visible symptoms) or non-clinical (no visible symptoms). They can occur diurnally and seasonally. Diurnal stresses can typically be of the order of 20°C and seasonal stresses can be of the order of 40°C. Typically, thermal stresses are characterized as low or high with the presumption that there is a thermal optimum. A zero stress condition is important from cellular protection systems of the plant and is important for preventing damage. It is an objective of the proposed TPT scheme to be configured below the temperature/time thresholds where thermal stress would negatively impact a plant.

[025] However, it is becoming increasingly evident that certain regimes of temperature change are favorable and can result in faster growth, improved crop production or improved traits in produce from the crop. Thermal environmental regimes can affect and control the expression and transcription activities in a plant. For example, induction of small heat-shock proteins (sHSP) in the mesocarp of the Cherimoya fruit produces a chilling tolerance, which can be a desirable trait. (Sevillano, L. et al, Journal of Food Biochemistry (2010), Vol 34, Issue 3, pgs 625-638). A TPT treatment can potentially induce such sHSP.

[026] This invention covers the surprising discovery of improved crop yield and quality that has been experienced in the field when applying thermal treatment. We noticed surprising positive effects on crop quality and yields. This discovery has suggested that desirable product traits can be engineered into a specific crop with specific thermal treatment. Without being tied to the numerous biochemical theories of plant response to thermal treatments, we seek to cover the net positive crop yield and quality improvement effects achievable from such thermal treatments as envisaged by our TPT protocol.

[027] The TPT process involves the application of heated air at temperatures ranging from 15°C to 200°C and exit air speeds of the hot air vectors ranging from 10 Km/hr. to 250 km/hr. The temperature range *notably* goes below Lazo's 30°C on the low temperature side, specifically with the idea that TPT is not limited to merely pest control or frost control but is designed to affect the biochemical operation of the plant to improve crop quality and volume without destroying the plant or organisms.

[028] Temperature and hot-air vectors (speed and direction) and distance from the plant area are three main adjustable parameters of TPT. Some of the others are frequency of application, stage of plant growth. In addition to these, there are the variables of speed of the machine through the field containing the crop and also machine and/or nozzle placement with respect to the planting arrangement in the field. While the description is mainly around crop planted in rows, the application of TPT to plants in beds or in trellises is also envisaged.

[029] The resultant effects of TPT can be characterized by set of multitude parameters such as plant yields, even-ness of yield, extent of pollination or fruit chemistry parameters such as color, weight, skin thickness, production level of antioxidant, or System Acquired Resistance (SAR), time to crop maturation, etc. All these variables and more that get affected will need to be mapped for different crops and TPT can be optimized for each depending upon the commercial objectives.

[030] Specifically as an example, as a result of placing plants into the stress regime of TPT as delivered by the machine described above, the plant will raise its normal production levels of antioxidants (including resveratrol, etc.) and this is either produced in the developing fruit or passed into the fruit resulting in significantly higher levels of antioxidants.

[031] Specifically as another example, as a result of placing plants into the stress regime of TPT as delivered by the machine described above, the plant will speed up bloom and provide even and broad scale pollination. This could apply to most fruit and nut plants and trees and selected vegetables including tomatoes, eggplant, melons and squash. These principles also apply in the case of leafy vegetable such as spinach, baby spinach, lettuce, and cabbage where disease control due to SAR stimulation can occur.

[032] While most other plant treatments typically involve adding chemicals that get absorbed into the plant's biological system, the TPT methodology instead manages physical eco-system variables that condition the plant's environment and thereby create a place conducive to growth. This is done by modifying the internal and external systems associated with the plant bio system as a whole.

[033] And by doing so, TPT methodology can create a biosystem for plant growth that does not rely solely on conventional chemical additives for growth and ability to thrive. In effect, the TPT technology can produce similar plant growth benefits without the use of chemicals additives by improving the plant's basic biological functioning.

[034] Various theories are put forth to explain the effects of TPT treatment. Without being bound to any specific mechanism, an attempt is made to explain the mechanisms/modes of action. It is quite evident from the thermal exposure times of the crop that these treatments result in a short-duration of the crop to hot air and in a sense it is a thermal shock that is created to the plant. The protocol can then be more suitably

called Thermal Shock Plant treatment (TSPT) and in our view terms TPT and TSPT are interchangeable.

[035] The thermal shock produced in the plant environment with our inventive method has a maximum timed exposure Θ of 15 seconds per unit plant area. As an example, in a grape vine the unit plant area is defined by the square area of grape leaves stems and vines approximating a 4 inch by 4 inch square sector orthogonal to the air velocity. Typical time-temperature profile at any point in plant environment takes the profile shown in Figure 1 below during treatment as a result of the thermal shock imparted.

[036] As shown in Fig. 1, in this specific case, the temperature of the unit plant area's environ reaches a maximum (100°C) within 10 seconds. This response would depend upon on plant area's location with respect to the hot-air ejected from the machine duct. The temperature would be expected to slowly decay back to the ambient over time as shown in Fig. 1. This profile shows the nature of the curve and the maximum temperature, exposure time and the decay time will vary depending on many factors. The maximum temperature will depend upon numerous variables including the setting of the hot air source at the TPT machine. As the TPT machine traverses through the field, one can expect such thermal shock profiles to be generated wherever the hot-air is blown. This modifies the plant environ for a certain period of time and if done repeatedly would affect the plant's mechanisms. Proper selection of such thermal shocks in terms of time, temperature and frequency would allow one to tailor the impact for specific plants in a TPT protocol for that species of plant.

[037] The area under the curve is indicative of the thermal energy imparted to the environment over time. This includes a change in the kinetic constants of all the biosynthetic reactions including the reactions of the flavonoid biosynthetic pathway. It is postulated that such rapid change in thermal energy component may trigger favorable reactions for fruit quality enhancement.

[038] Additionally, the area under this curve is important to the water transport processes occurring around the plant and the other elements of the bio-sphere including insects, plants and diseases. These processes are diffusion driven and affect the water balance between the atmosphere and the internal water vapor status of the plant and organisms in the biosphere.

[039] Today many crop management protocols require "deficit water management" techniques to improve fruit quality (Example Brix in grapes, harvest quality in cantaloupes) and it is postulated that this TPT protocol is a management tool in that direction that can help improve fruit quality.

[040] Additionally, water balance is affected by the velocity of the hot air with respect to the stationary plant part due to the effect of moving hot dry air on the plant and the organisms of the plant's biosphere. The diffusion gradient created by the TPT due to diffusion deficit as there is a rapid loss of water by the plant and other organisms to the outside air. The loss of water also makes it difficult for pests and diseases to survive.

[041] Additionally, the movement of high velocity air across leaf surfaces has been demonstrated to result in the stimulation of those bio-synthetic pathways which lead to the phenomenon "Systemic Acquired Resistance" (SAR) to disease and Insect attack and infestation.

[042] We provide herein some definitions for terms used in the present application.

[043] Plant-output measure: A quantitative attribute of a plant or its fruit which is usually of commercial importance in agricultural production and can be measured and used in comparatory analysis of crops. Synonymously used with the term "fruit quality parameter".

[044] Plant or crop : Interchangeably used herein. Examples are apple tree, vegetable plant, nut tree.

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[045] Thermal Plant Treatment: A process of altering a plant ecosystem – thermal and water balance – with the programmed use of blown hot air. The exposure is optimized specifically for each plant variety as needed. We also refer to it as a thermal shock treatment. This treatment is applied with a machine that typically traverses the farm.

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[046] Plant Unit: A measure of plant productive surface in square feet or cubic feet.

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[047] Fruit Set: The weight of fruit produced by flowers and retained on the plant per plant unit.

[048] Fruit Weight: The weight of fruit finally produced per plant unit. Another equivalent term is fruit yield.

20

[049] Fruit Count: The number of fruit produced per plant unit.

25

[050] Flowering: Number of flowers per plant unit. Also referred to as initiation of flowering.

[051] Fruit Chemistry: All of the chemicals in the flavonoid biosynthetic pathway of a fruit.

30

[052] Wine Chemistry: Content of compounds that contribute to wine quality as measured in standardized test results as shown in Figure 2.

[053] TPT can unleash biological changes in a plant to impact its fruit. Some of these positive changes, which can result in significant economic benefits, are

(1) Increase in the fruit set, fruit count, fruit weights

(2) Increased initiation of flowering

(3) Improved fruit chemistry through impact on the bio-chemical kinetics and locus of the flavonoid biosynthetic pathway leading to improvements in flavonols, PAs and anthocyanins. As an example, improved grape chemistry that results in improved wine chemistry parameters

(4) Thickening of leaves (which can potentially result in higher photosynthesis activity increasing energy capture from the sun for the plant).

(5) Induction of Systemic Acquired Resistance (SAR) in plants to produce tolerance

(6) Increase in fruit skin thickness

(7) Increase in the darker/deeper coloration of the grape and resultant wine coloration

[054] The Lazo machine described in USP 7,134,239 can be improved in two ways and this forms the basis of our improvement of the machine in the present invention making it more suitable for precise control of the TPT.

[055] One is to post-heat the air as it leaves the turbine on its way out to the plant as opposed to preheat the air as in the Lazo machine. This reduces thermal losses and may provide hotter air at the application points. Our improvement thus provides burner tubes located at the exit of the blower as opposed to the inlet burner in the Lazo machine. Fuel usage is beneficially impacted and improved temperature control at the point of application is achieved.

[056] Secondly, configurable specialized articulating trunks or nozzle equipment can be added to the blower exit delivery end so that the impacted plant can be reached

with hot air in more efficient ways to prevent thermal losses and higher efficiency in heat transfer to the plant environ. For example, air speed vectors for the hot-air can be defined and the hot air flows set up with such configurable equipment to obtain well optimized hot air flow tailored to specific characteristic of a certain crop and to specific distance from the plant area. A hot-air vector field can be define for each crop for its specific size and stage of growth. The vector field can be optimized based on crop results. The optimal air vectors at the right temperature can benefit the plant in various ways, as is described later. The heat transfer to the plant and it's environ is thus more precisely controlled and more configurable to a crop and the wastage of heat is minimized. Furthermore, more burners to heat air can be added to the articulating trunks equipment so that the air is heated at the point of application if needed.

[057] Since the hot air exit from the machine is movable due to articulating nozzle/trunk extension, there is an advantage in having movable heat sources rather than static heat source as in the prior art machine. This is critical to the functionality of the process for tall trees and multiple row crops. The Lazo machine is a fixed single burner. We use multiple burners close to the application targets and potentially quite remote from the blower and we may use multiple blowers in larger machines. The Lazo machine did not work when we had to treat rows of plants that were more than a few feet from the machine. With our inventive design we can move an unlimited number of burners and blowers to application sites. The multiple burner differentiation from prior art is also an important distinction that has resulted from the lack of adequate temperature control with the Lazo machine in our TPT trials.

[058] Figure 4 shows the proposed improvements of our invention with respect to prior art machines. The three improvements of heater placement, the use of articulating delivery nozzles/trunk and the incorporation of feedback control for hot air application enable precise and accurate application of the hot air to the plant area in a reproducible manner. This result in better control of temperature and air velocity in the application of the TPT protocol.

[059] The treatment can be applied with a unit that is tractor mounted or scaled down and can be backpack mounted. The same unit can be built into a self-contained mobile device, on wheels or tracks, and can be utilized in a manner similar to small automobile, small or full sized truck, a suitably sized water craft or a mobile device similar to that known as an All-terrain Vehicle.

[060]

Example 1 Increase in fruit yield

In 2012, we conducted replicated TPT protocols in John Anthony-Carrefour Vineyard farms at Napa, California on grape varieties of Cabernet Sauvignon, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, Malbec and Petit Verdot.

The TPT protocols were conducted at a hot air discharge temperatures of 100 degrees C for a period of 13 weeks in a weekly application. The hot air was delivered at a machine speed of 3.5 mph (5.1 ft./s). Applications were done in May through August 2012 between 7 and 11 AM when ambient temperatures were typically between 4°C and 22° C. The grape vines during this period were in the stages between fruit set and harvest. Grape vines to be treated were selected for uniformity of growth, habit and health and were separated by a buffer row of similar vine (so that one row did not affect the results on the other). Grape vines to be used as control were also included.

The resultant fruit yield responses are shown below. The data compares the Berry Count for vines with TPT and without TPT. The data shows significant advantage in Berry Count with the TPT treatment.

John Anthony - Carrefour Vineyard - Napa, CA				Berry Count	2012				
Cabernet Sauvignon									
Block 3	<u>TPT</u>	<u>AVG</u>	<u>STDEV</u>	<u>Control</u>	<u>AVG</u>	<u>STDEV</u>	<u>Δ IN MEAN</u>	<u>Δ IN TOT</u>	<u>% Difference</u>
Shade side	134	9	25	102	7	13	2	32	31%
Sunny side	165	11	26	114	8	21	3	51	45%
OVERALL	299	10		216	7		3	83	36%

John Anthony - Carrefour Vineyard - Napa, CA									
Savignon Blanc									
Block 6	TPT	AVG	STDEV	Control	AVG	STDEV	Δ IN MEAN	Δ IN TOT	% Difference
Shade side	108	7	22	92	6	12	1	16	17%
Sunny side	142	9	27	104	7	19	3	38	37%
OVERALL	250	8		196	7		2	54	28%

John Anthony - Carrefour Vineyard - Napa, CA									
Merlot									
Block 5	TPT	AVG	STDEV	Control	AVG	STDEV	Δ IN MEAN	Δ IN TOT	% Difference
Shade side	122	8	17	92	6	11	2	30	33%
Sunny side	127	8	22	98	7	13	2	29	30%
OVERALL	249	8		190	6		2	59	31%

John Anthony - Rossi Vineyard - Napa, CA									
Malbec									
Block 11	TPT	AVG	STDEV	Control	AVG	STDEV	Δ IN MEAN	Δ IN TOT	% Difference
Sunny side	245	16	52	242	16	49	0	3	1%

John Anthony - Carrefour Vineyard - Napa, CA									
Petit Verdot									
Block 10A	TPT	AVG	STDEV	Control	AVG	STDEV	Δ IN MEAN	Δ IN TOT	% Difference
Shade side	159	23	37	126	18	21	5	33	26%
Sunny side	187	23	30	148	19	15	5	39	26%
OVERALL	346	23		274	18		5	72	26%

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Example 2: Increase in fruit yield

Resultant fruit yield results from the TPT treatment and replicated trials of the protocol of Example 1 on Pinot Noir grapes was done in Washington State at Adelsheim Vineyard. Limited results show a large 121% increase in fruit yield from control.

PINOT NOIR GRAPES

Adelsheim Vineyard

WASHINGTON

	Lot	Weights
		Tons
TPT	A1	0.42
	A2	0.44
CONTROL	B1	0.19
	B2	0.2

Yld. Increase 121 %

Example 3: Increase in fruit yield and number of fruit -- Savignon Blanc

The crop from Example 1 was selectively analyzed later in the growing season for fruit yield and the number of fruit. We found that while the yield showed an increase from that of control, the number of fruit also increased from that of control. This typically leads to more skin content in the resultant wine produced from the grape which can be beneficial to wine quality.

An increase of 19.48% on combined fruit weight, an increase of 26.2% on the number of berries, and a decrease in average berry weight of 5.4% is indicated from the following raw data of Bunch weight and Berry Counts.

Napa Sauvignon Blanc		Sunny Side	Shady Side	Sunny Side	Shady Side
BLOCK 1 Not Irrigated		Bunch Weight	Bunch Weight	Berry Count	Berry Count
TEST					
Bunch Number	Ounces				
1	8.6	4.7	116	54	
2	4.5	4.9	51	64	
3	7.2	3.4	120	37	
4	5.2	6.6	64	94	
5	9.0	3.3	122	51	
6	6.2	2.8	83	36	
7	5.6	7.5	67	116	
8	7.7	8	103	122	
9	6.0	2.3	83	31	
10	5.5	7.8	98	106	
11	4.4	3.8	77	52	
12	8.7	7.6	145	89	
13	9.2	11.3	156	154	
14	2.9	8.3	36	121	
15	7.7	7.6	98	64	
Total		98.4	89.9	1419.0	1191.0

CONTROL		Sunny Side	Shady Side	Sunny Side	Shady Side
Bunch Number		Bunch Weight	Bunch Weight	Berry Count	Berry Count
1	6.3	4.5	89	44	
2	5.1	5.4	60	62	
3	8.9	5.8	134	71	
4	3.8	4.2	43	40	
5	6.2	3.6	83	39	
6	4.9	3.4	67	47	
7	6.2	5.8	86	43	
8	8.1	3.3	118	71	
9	9.8	4.3	143	77	
10	4.5	6.6	76	78	
11	2.3	7.9	33	99	
12	4.5	2.9	55	45	
13	7.1	2.5	75	47	
14	5.3	5.6	67	70	
15	3.6	5.2	39	66	
		86.6	71	1168	899

Example 4 Increase in fruit yield and number of fruit -- Pinot Noir

- 5 Field trials conducted at Klopp Ranch – Thorn Road Vineyard, Sonoma, California on this variety with the TPT protocol.

Pinot Noir crop was selectively analyzed for fruit yield and the number of fruit. We found that while the yield showed an increase from that of control, the number of fruit also

increased from that of control. This typically leads to more skin content in the resultant wine produced which can be beneficial to wine quality.

An increase of 22.4% on combined fruit weight, an increase of 15.6% on the number of berries, and an increase in average berry weight of 5.8% is indicated from the following raw data of Bunch weight and Berry Counts.

Klopp Pinot Noir Sunny Side		Shady Side	Sunny Side	Shady Side
TEST	Bunch Weight	Bunch Weight	Berry Count	Berry Count
Bunch Number	Row 22	Row 21	Row 22	Row 21
	Ounces			
1	5.1	2.6	139	97
2	4.3	2.8	99	72
3	2.5	5.1	82	127
4	4.2	4.2	108	146
5	8.7	5.3	239	153
6	4.3	3.4	163	138
7	3.7	3.9	115	132
8	3.7	5.2	142	134
9	4.4	2.8	108	77
10	2.5	3.8	87	121
11	5.8	5.6	150	112
12	4.2	2.6	109	105
13	4.1	4.4	118	157
14	4.6	4	127	126
15	3.9	5.3	113	135
			26	87
Total	66.0	61.0	1925.0	1919.0

CONTROL		Shady Side	Sunny Side	Shady Side
Bunch Number	Bunch Weight	Bunch Weight	Berry Count	Berry Count
	Row 25	Row 26	Row 25	Row 26
1	1.7	7	68	84
2	3.2	5	51	105
3	2.5	4	86	93
4	2.7	5	82	175
5	2.8	3.1	108	131
6	6.3	3.3	159	114
7	4	2.2	85	91
8	1.7	3.5	79	144
9	4.1	4.4	97	122
10	4.4	2.4	121	183
11	2.2	4.4	144	147
12	2.3	4.6	101	95
13	4.4	1.7	67	69
14	3	2.6	107	104
15	1.7	3.6	69	134
			56	54
	47	56.8	1480	1845

Example 5 Improvement in Wine Chemistry parameters

Figure 2 shows Wine Chemistry Analysis results, from ETS Labs (St. Helena CA) Reports 572150 of 24 Sept., 2012 and 578033 of 16 Oct. 2012, both included by reference here-in, show that for some of the grapes harvested from Example 1, there are impacts on polymeric anthocyanins, gallic acid, caftaric acid, catechin, epicatechin and tannin content of wine thereby indicating a stimulation of sections of the flavonoid biosynthesis pathway with the TPT treatment.

Example 6 Improvement in wine quality from taste testing results

We conducted 9 expert blind tasting tests (from University and Industry) of bottled wine (made at Fresno State University, Fresno CA) made from the Malbec grape grown in Napa CA subjected to the TPT treatment of Example 1. A unanimous rating of BTC (Better than Control) was obtained in this testing.

WINE TASTING RESULTS		Fruitiness	Mouthfeel	Fruity Aroma
No.	Experts from			
1	Fresno State Univ.	BTC	BTC	BTC
2	Fresno State Univ.	BTC	BTC	BTC
3-4	Agrothermal Technicians	BTC	BTC	BTC
5-9	Wine Industry Professionals	BTC	BTC	BTC

A similar tasting test from wine in casks --- with wine made from the Pinot Noir grape (subjected to the TPT treatment of Example 1 made at Adelsheim Winery in Washington State --- also resulted in a unanimous BTC rating.

Example 7 - Plant Thermal Exposure Environment with a TPT machine

Potential plant environ temperatures from hot air ejected from a TPT machine were mapped with the use of thermocouple sensors to establish the thermal short-duration exposure obtained in a TPT treatment by measurement of the gradient field at several points in the plant's environ.

- 5 Figure 5 and 6 shows the stationary (zero mph TPT machine) profile temperatures measured with the use of thermocouples around the typical ejection of hot air from the TPT machine onto a crop target. This shows that the temperature gradient field created can be used to blanket the unit plant area environ. These gradient temperature fields can be reproducibly applied with adequate control measures and thermal sensing
- 10 instrumentation in a dynamically programmed or pre-determined TPT protocol. The temperature field can be adjusted by controlling the distance to the plant with articulating nozzle for the hot air stream, controlling the exit temperature of the blown air, controlling the velocity of the blown air (both direction and speed).

[061] CLAIMS**[062]** We claim:

(1) An agricultural production treatment method to optimize a plant-output measure of a crop comprising

- 5 (i) passing by the planted crop with a TPT machine at a speed of 1-10 mph in a direction substantially parallel to a row of plants, and
- (ii) simultaneously ejecting from the TPT machine a heated air stream between 15°C and 200°C in the direction of the plant at an air velocity of 10 – 250 km per hour for a period not exceeding 15 seconds of hot air exposure per unit
- 10 plant area per pass, wherein the resulting ejected air mass moves through the targeted plant areas so as to impact at least one plant-output measure of the crop.

15 (2) The method of Claim 1 where the plant being treated could be selected from the group consisting of fruit plants, nut plants and vegetable plants.

(3) The method of Claim 2 wherein the said plant-output measure for fruit plant is selected from a group consisting of fruit set, fruit count, fruit weight, fruit flowering, fruit skin thickness, fruit color, fruit chemistry, resultant wine chemistry

20 from the fruit ,resultant wine color from the fruit, fruit tree leaf thickness, fruit tree disease, and induction of systemic acquired resistance in the fruiting plant.

(4) The method of Claim 2 wherein the said treatment is repeated on a periodic basis.

25 (5) The method of Claim 2 wherein the said treatment is weekly or fortnightly.

(6) A method of Claim 2 where the fruit-plant is selected from a group consisting of grape, kiwi, bushberries, caneberries, other vine fruit, apple, pear, and stone fruit.

(7) The method of Claim 4 wherein the wine chemistry parameters are selected from the group consisting anthocyanins, gallic acid, catechin, epicatechin, tannin, cafataric acid, caffeic acid, quercetin glycosides, quercetin aglycone, malvidin, antioxidants, pyrazines and Brix to Acid ratio.

(8) An improved apparatus to implement the treatment method of Claim 1 comprising a tractor unit to navigate between crop rows at a speed of 1-10 mph, on-board fan which ejects a 10-250 km per hour 15°-200°C hot-air stream in the direction of a plant, wherein the improvement comes from an additional burner in the output hot-air stream for improved hot-air temperature control and from a directional nozzle and articulating truns that allows more precise control over the targeting of the hot-air stream to any unit plant area.

(9) The apparatus of Claim 8 further fitted with temperature sensors and controls to enable a programmed consistent application of TPT.

Figure 1: Time temperature response of a unit plant environ in the application of TPT.

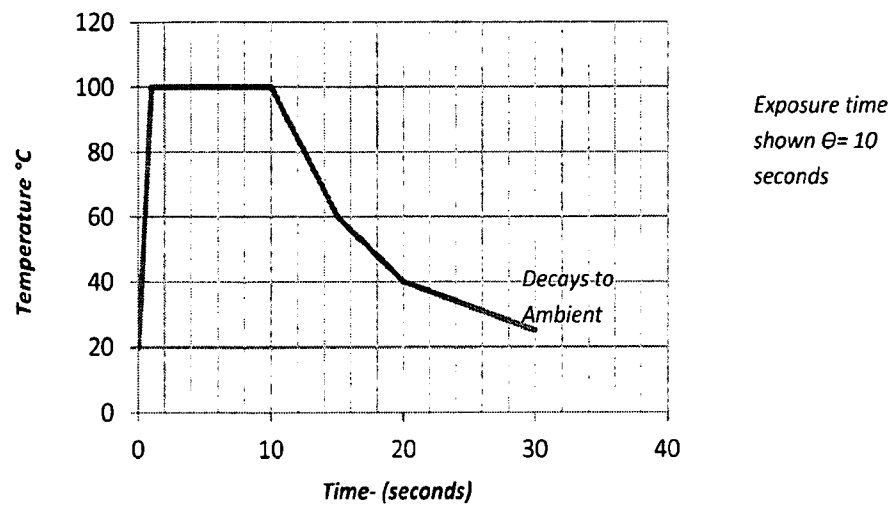


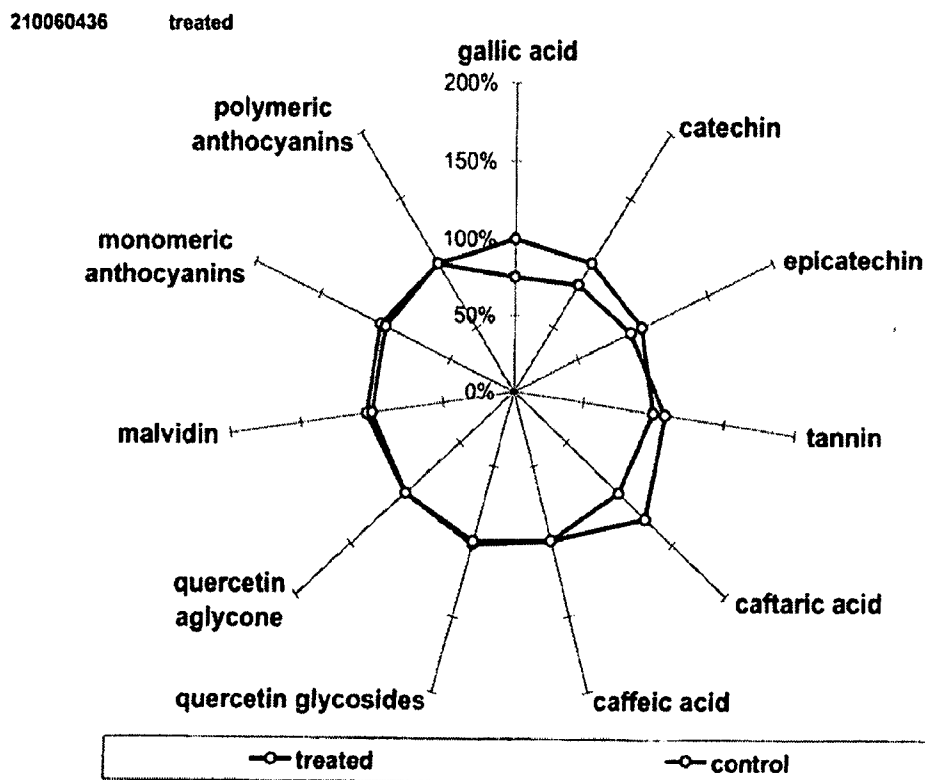
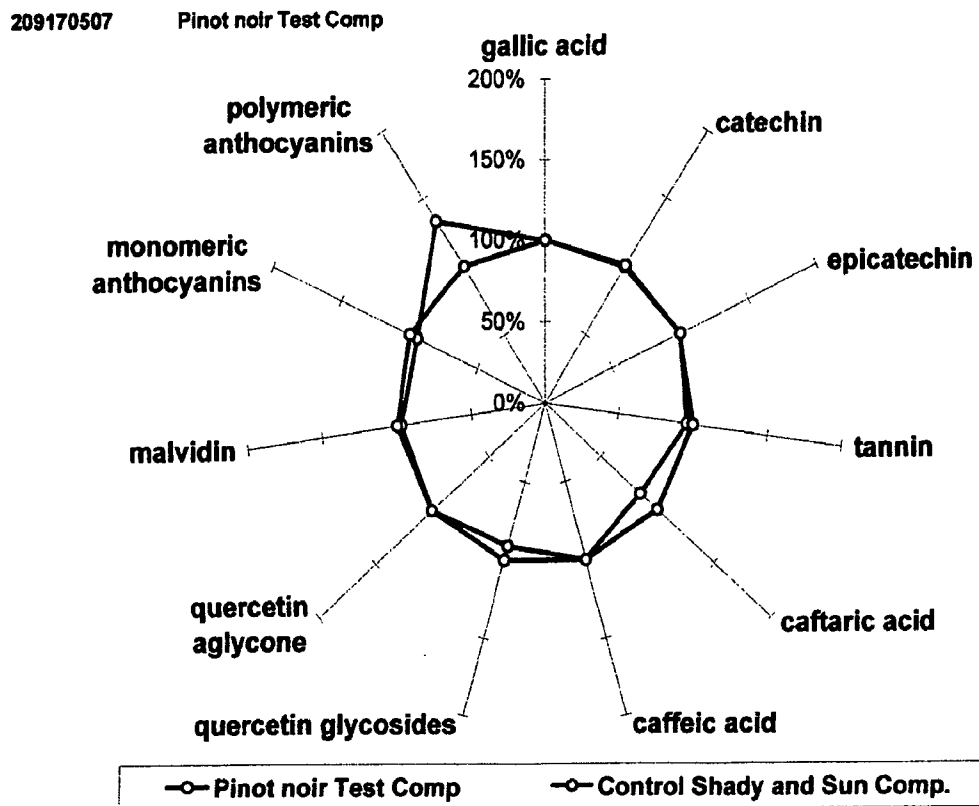
Figure 2: Two examples of Wine Chemistry Analysis

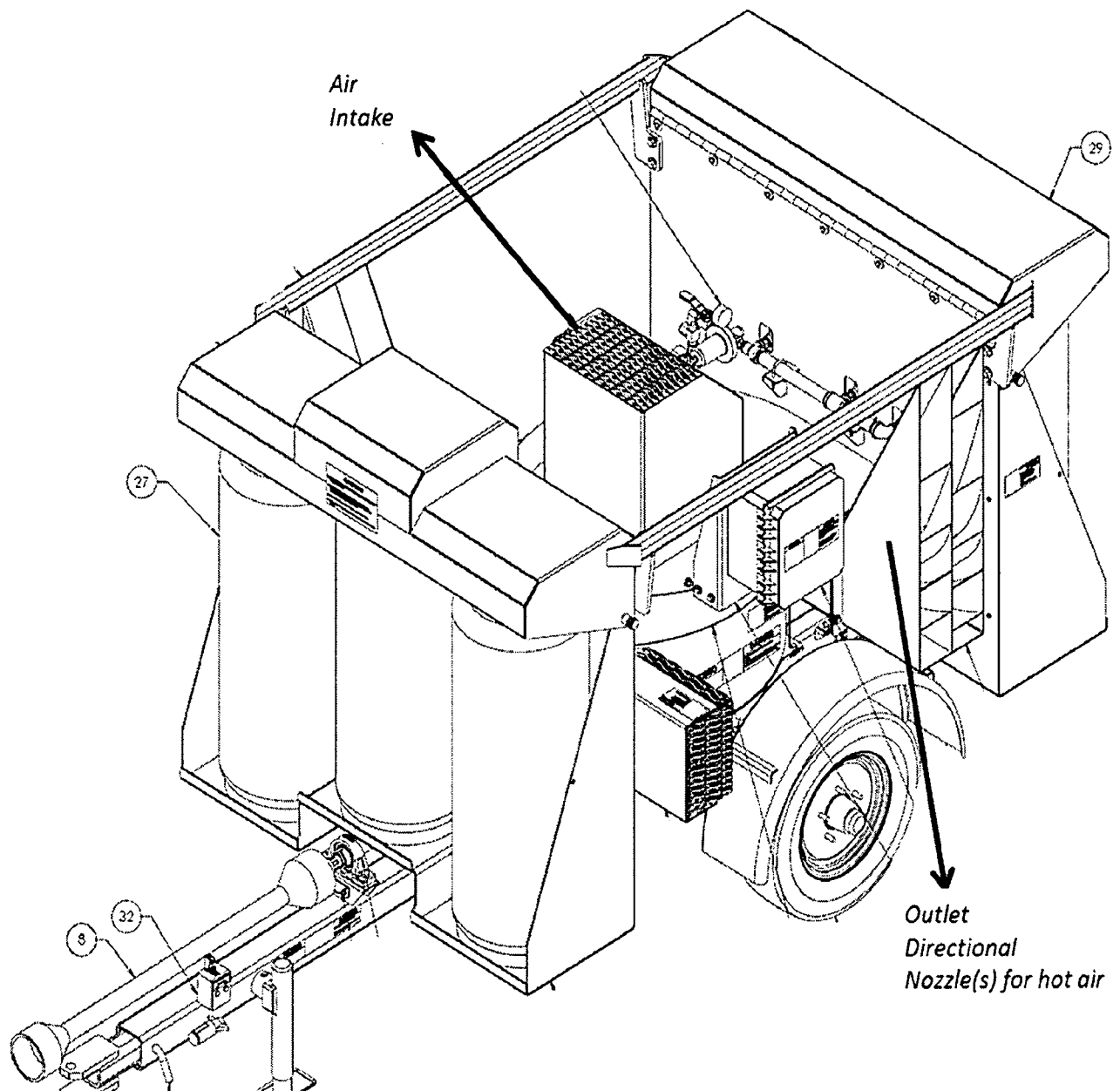
Figure 3. Air Intake and Outflow in a TPT machine

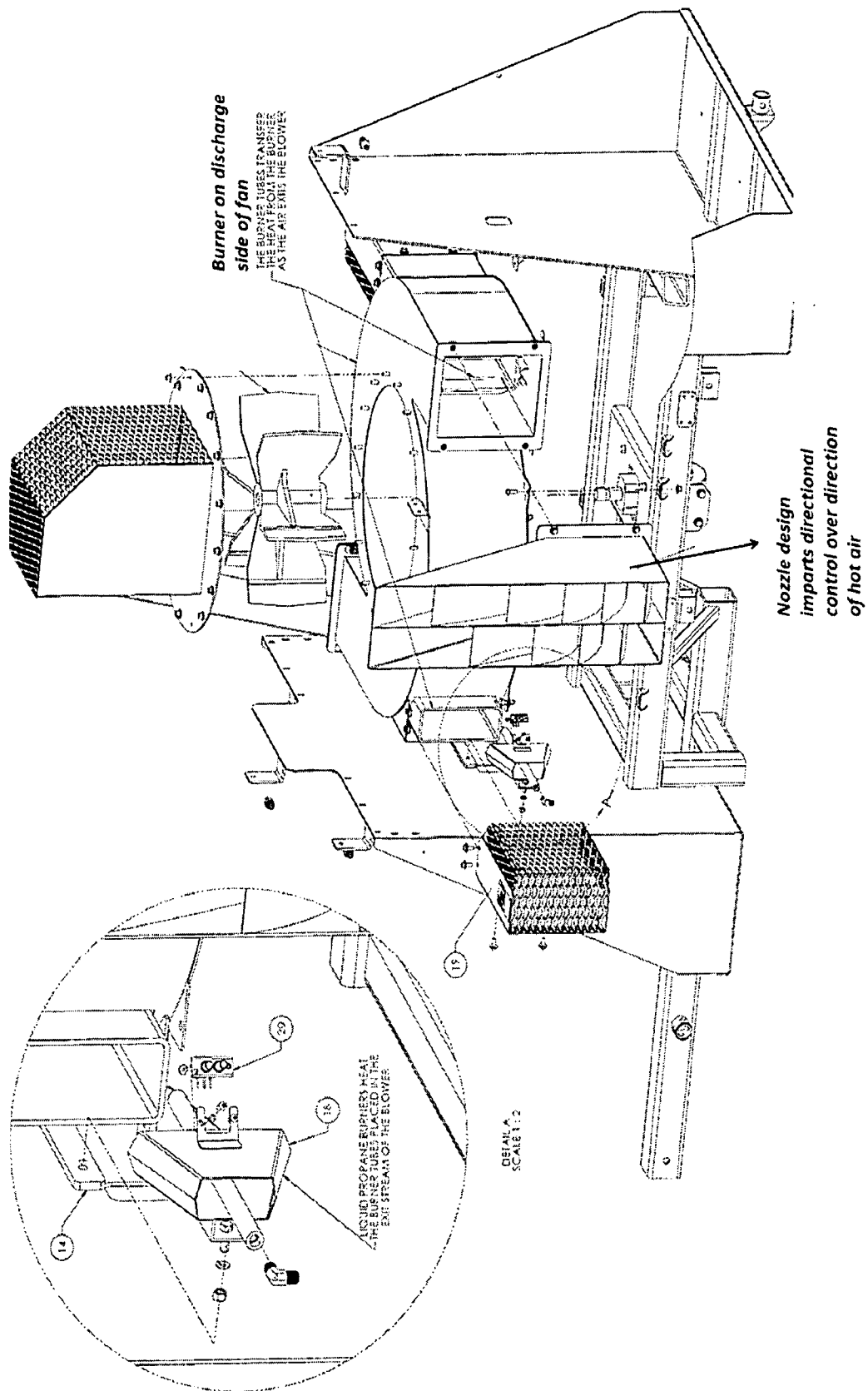
Figure 4 : Improvements over prior art machines for precise and accurate TPT

Figure 5. A TPT machine in application mode with thermal gradient created by the blown hot air onto a tree

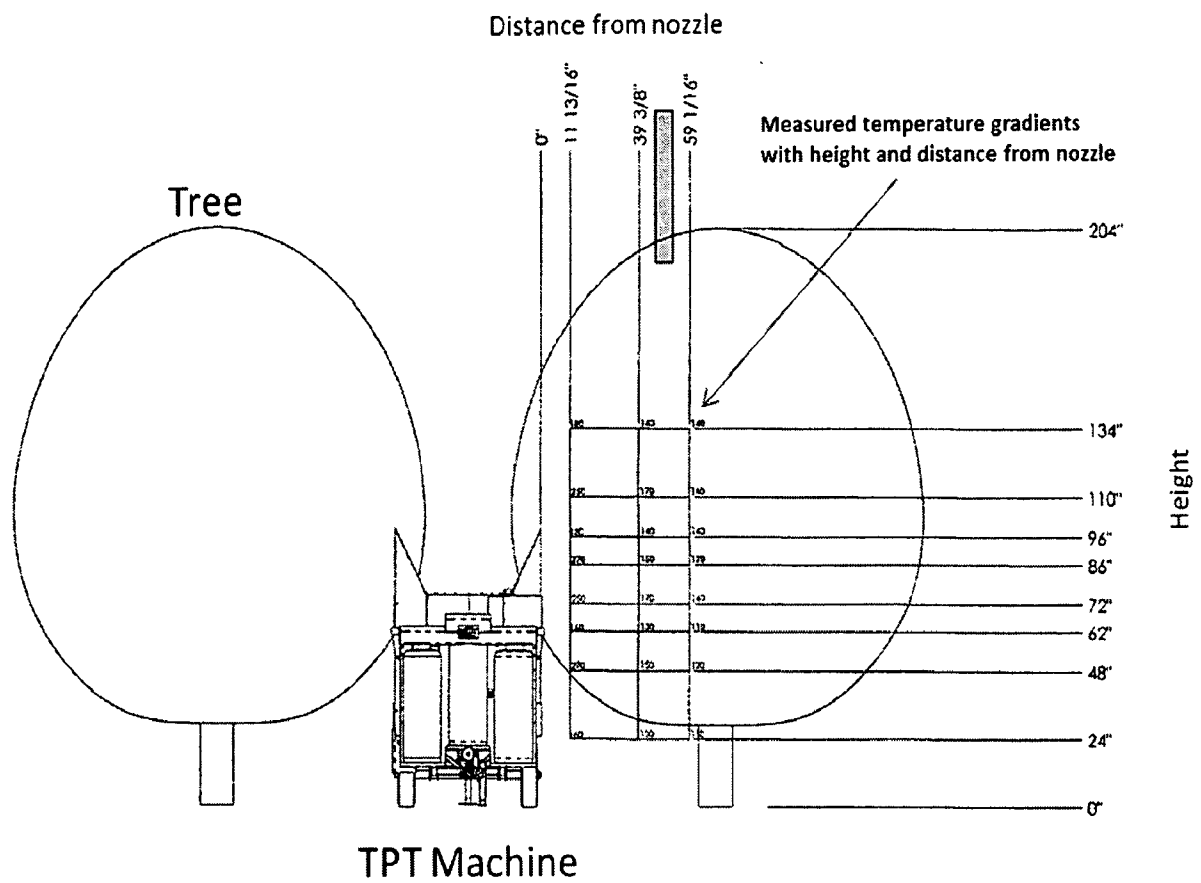
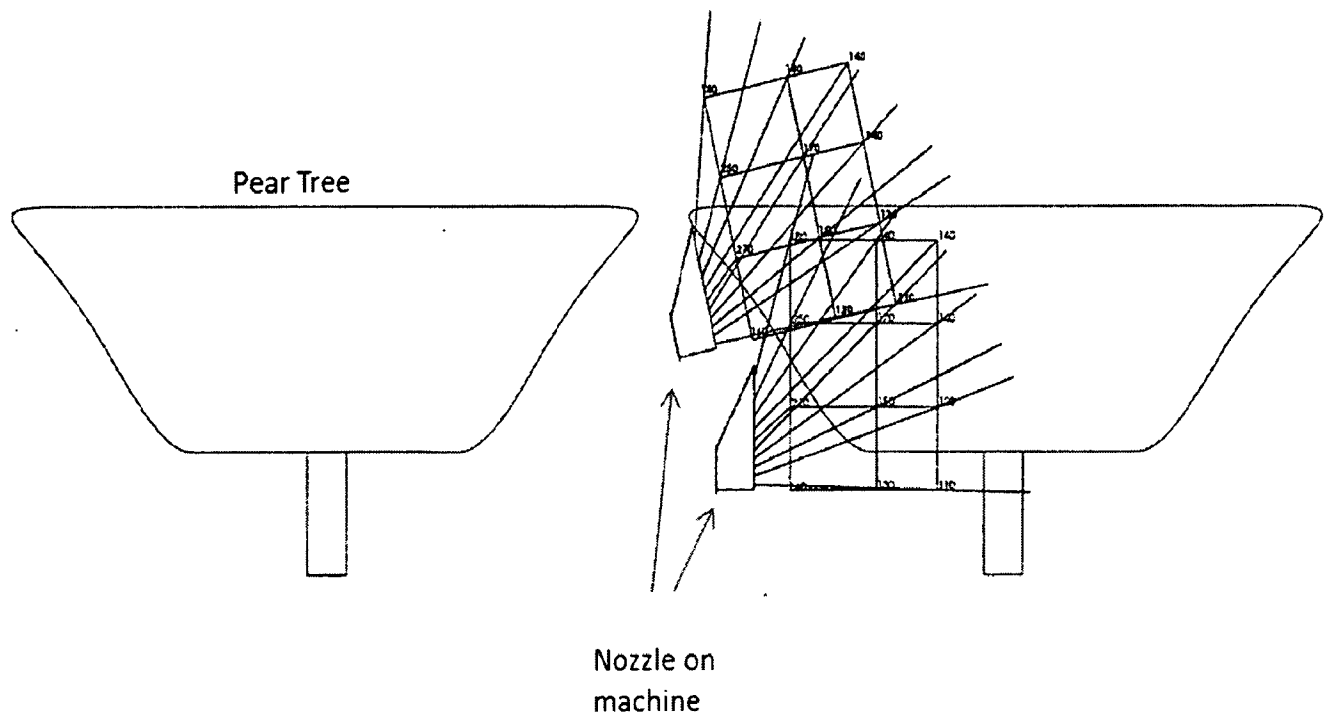


Figure 6. Modulation of temperature gradients with nozzle articulation



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US13/00092

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(8) - A01G 13/00, 13/06, 13/08 (2013.01)

USPC - 47/58.1FV, 58.1R; 99/474

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC(8): A01G 13/00, 13/06, 13/08, 17/02, 17/06; A01D 46/28; A23B 4/03, 4/044; B60H 3/00 (2013.01)

USPC: 47/58.1FV, 58.1R; 99/474, 467, 473; 426/312

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

MicroPatent (US-Granted, US-Applications, EP-A, EP-B, WO, JP, DE-G, DE-A, DE-T, DE-U, GB-A, FR-A); ScienceDirect; Pubmed; Google; Google Scholar; Search terms: 'agricultural production', 'heat plant treatment', 'heat shock', plants, flavor enhance, 'plant antioxidants'

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 2003/0200696 A1 (LAZO-BARRA, F) October 30, 2003; abstract, paragraphs [0012], [0015]-[0018]; Claim 3	1-9
Y	COHEN, SD et al. Assessing The Impact Of Temperature On Grape Phenolic Metabolism. Analytica Chimica Acta. 23 November 2007. Vol. 621, pp 57-67. DOI: 10.1016/j.aca.2007.11.029.	1-9
Y	WO 2011/085463 A1 (LAZO-BARRA, FM) July 21, 2011; abstract	8, 9
A	KANG, HM et al. Activity Of Enzymatic Antioxidant Defense Systems In Chilled And Heat Shocked Cucumber Seedling Radicles. Physiologia Plantarum. 21 May 2001, Vol. 113; pp 548-556. ISSN: 0031-9317.	1-9
A	KANG, HM et al. Elevated Growing Temperatures During The Day Improve The Postharvest Chilling Tolerance Of Greenhouse-grown Cucumber (Cucumis sativus) Fruit. Postharvest Biology and Technology. 2002, Vol. 24, pp 49-57.	1-9

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.


* Special categories of cited documents:

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date

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"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&" document member of the same patent family

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