

Original Research Article

Effect of sowing media and variety on seedling root growth and field performance of Early Cauliflower (*Brassica oleracea* var. *botrytis*)

ABSTRACT: An experiment was conducted ~~inside-in the~~ greenhouse and in the field of the ~~Experimental-experimental Farmfarm~~, Department of Horticulture, College of Agriculture, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat for two consecutive years (2018 and 2019) to assess the effect of sowing media and variety on root growth of early cauliflower seedling and subsequent performance of seedling in the main field. The experiment was laid out in Factorial Randomized Block Design with eight treatments comprising ~~of~~ four sowing media [M₁-cocopeat (60): vermiculite (20): perlite (20), M₂-cocopeat (50): vermicompost (50), M₃-cocopeat (50): vermicompost (50): microbial consortium and M₄-Conventional nursery] and two varieties [V₁ (White Diamond) and V₂ (CFL1522)] replicated thrice. Treatments ~~were~~ M₁, M₂ and M₃ ~~were inside-in~~ green-house. The results revealed root parameters at ~~the~~ seedling stage were significantly influenced by sowing media. The highest root length (4.94 cm), root fresh weight (0.26 mg) and root dry weight (0.07 mg) of seedling were recorded in M₃. Between the ~~two varieties~~, V₁ exhibited the maximum root length (4.24 cm) while no significant difference was observed ~~for-in~~ root fresh and dry weight. Among interactions, M₂V₁ recorded maximum root length (5.83 cm) while M₃V₁ recorded maximum root fresh weight (0.28 mg) and dry weight (0.08 mg) of seedling. After transplanting in the field, significant variations for root parameters were observed. Cauliflower plants that were grown in M₃ at seedling stage recorded ~~the~~ highest root length (21.94 cm) and ~~-~~volume (74.59 cm³) but ~~for-in~~ root dry weight ~~-~~seedlings that were grown in M₂ recorded maximum ~~-~~dry weight *i.e.* 3.28 g. Variety V₂ recorded maximum root length (17.76 cm) and dry weight (2.68 g). M₃V₂ recorded ~~the~~ highest root length (22.01 cm), volume (76.46 cm³) and dry weight (3.48 g). Curd characters were also significantly influenced ~~ed~~ by media while variety showed significant variation for days to curd initiation, harvesting and curd diameter only. M₃ recorded minimum days for curd initiation and harvesting (37.09 and 53.26), maximum curd compactness (53.05 g/cm³), diameter (12.84 cm), weight (0.41 kg) and shelf life (8.89 days). ~~The~~ interaction effect between media and variety was also found significant.

Key words: Cauliflower, sowing media, seedling, root, curd-, green house, field

1. INTRODUCTION

Healthy seedling production is ~~a~~ prerequisite for raising vigorous and profitable crops. Recently, the use of ~~high-high~~ quality seedlings produced in facilities where climatic conditions are kept under control has increased. In the production of ready-to-plant seedlings, climatic conditions as well as ~~seed-seed~~ sowing media have ~~a~~ quite significant impact. Seedling production with conventional methods causes stress in plants. Seeds are sown in different media, which plays a vital role in ~~the~~ efficient production of horticultural seedlings in nurseries (Sterrett, 2001). The use of suitable growing media or substrates for sowing ~~of~~ seeds directly affects the germination, development of functional shoot and root system. A good growing medium provides sufficient anchorage or support to the plant, serves as ~~a~~ reservoir for nutrients and water, allows oxygen diffusion to the roots and permits gaseous exchange between the roots and atmosphere outside the root substrate (Abad *et al.*, 2002). Seedlings obtained from a quality nursery significantly influences re-establishment and ~~the~~ eventual productivity in the main field (Baiyeri, 2006).

The soil is generally used as a basic medium because it is ~~the~~ cheapest and easily available. Essentially perlite and vermiculite are used in the horticultural industry because they both

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provide good aeration and drainage, they can retain and hold a substantial amount of water and later release it as per the requirement. These are sterile and free from diseases, having a fairly neutral pH (especially perlite which is neutral), non-toxic, safe to use, and relatively inexpensive. Vermiculite absorbs large quantities of water and also holds positively charged nutrients like potassium, magnesium and calcium because of its plate-like structure.

Cocopeat or coir, an agricultural by-product obtained after the extraction of fibre from the coconut husk is considered a growing medium component with acceptable pH, EC and other chemical attributes (Abad *et al.*, 2002) as it has good physical properties, high total pore space, high water content, low shrinkage, low bulk density and slow biodegradation (Evans *et al.*, 1996 and Prasad, 1997) provides phosphorous and potassium and can hold water up to nine times its weight.

vermicompost has a good structure, moisture-holding capacity, relatively large amounts of available nutrients, and microbial metabolites that may act as plant growth regulators.

A pre-sowing inoculation of planting material as well as the planting medium with the consortia of beneficial microorganisms is an innovative approach for the production of quality and healthy seedlings in horticultural production in general and transplanted vegetables in particular. A microbial consortium is a carrier-based product containing nitrogen fixing, phosphorus and potassium solubilising and plant growth promoting microorganisms in a single formulation.

Early cauliflower (*Brassica oleracea* var. *botrytis*) is a popular and remunerative crop for the farmers of Assam as it catches the early market. The present investigation was carried out to evaluate the effect of growing media on quality seedling production with healthy roots of early cauliflower and the performance of those seedlings afterwards in the main field.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The experimental site was conducted in the Experimental Farm, Department of Horticulture, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat (26.47 °N latitude and 94.12 °E longitude and at 86.8 m above MSL) during the month of July-November in two consecutive years, 2018 and 2019. The soil was sandy loam soil having pH 5.00, organic carbon 0.55% and available N, P and K were 212.52 kg ha⁻¹, 40.45 kg ha⁻¹ and 110.64 kg ha⁻¹.

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The experiment composed of four Nursery Media compositions [M₁- Cocopeat (60): Vermiculite (20): Perlite (20); M₂-Cocopeat (50): Vermicompost (50); M₃-Cocopeat (50): Vermicompost (50): Microbial consortium and M₄: Conventional nursery (soil: sand: FYM)] and two variety (V₁- White Diamond and V₂- CFL 1522). Thus, eight treatment combinations were laid out in factorial Randomized block design (RBD) with three replications. The pro-trays were used for nursery raising with cocopeat, vermiculite, perlite, vermicompost and microbial consortium as growing media and seeds of early cauliflower hybrid variety 'White Diamond' and 'CFL-1522' which are popular and commercially available in Jorhat were sown in protrays (one seed per cell) under protected conditions in the second week of July. One conventional nursery was also raised for sowing the same seeds with soil, sand and FYM as growing media. Microbial Consortium consisting of *Azotobacter*, *Azoospirillum* and Phosphate Solubilising Bacteria (PSB) was mixed with respective media at a ratio of 1:100 and mixed properly and sprinkled and heaped. Coco peat was soaked and washed before mixing with other media.

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After a deep ploughing, well-rotten cow-dung manure was applied at the rate of 20 t/ha in the soil for 20 days before transplanting. Plots of 3.6 m x 2.7 m dimension were prepared and the treatments were allocated randomly. Healthy seedlings of 22-28 days old were selected and transplanted on the 2nd week of August at a spacing of 45 cm x 45 cm accommodating 48 plants per plot in both the years. Recommended cultural and plant protection measures were followed equally in all the plots as and when required.

Different seedling attributes namely root length, root fresh and dry weight were recorded just before transplanting. In the main field, the observations were recorded from six randomly selected plants from each plot on root length, root volume and root dry weight at the time of harvesting. Root length was measured from the base of the plant to the tip of the roots using a scale, and the value was expressed in centimeter. Root volume was measured by the water displacement method suggested by Raja and

Bishnoi (1990) and it was expressed in cubic centimeters (cc). Roots of sampled plants were washed with water and oven dried at 65 ± 5 °C until a constant weight was reached and expressed as root dry weight in gram. For recording the days for curd initiation the number of days taken from transplanting to the days when the curds were visible in 50 % of plants in a plot was recorded. Similarly, the numbers of days taken from the date of transplanting to the day when the curds become fully developed, compact or mature in 50 % of the plants in a plot were recorded for days to harvesting. After removing the stalk and leaves, sample curds were weighed in physical balance and the average was taken and expressed in curd weight in kilogram. The diameter of cauliflower curd was measured at the point of maximum width from two different sides (equatorial length) after cutting the sample curds into two equal halves longitudinally and average was expressed in centimeter. Compactness was determined by following the index method modified by Pearson (1931). The shelf life of cauliflower was measured in the number of days taken to become non-marketable curd or refused curd (due to shrinkage and physiological deterioration in shape, size and colour) when they are stored at room temperature

Pooled data of two years was taken (2018 & 2019) which are presented here for drawing conclusions after subjecting the same to statistical analysis using the statistical package SPSS (20.0) at 5% critical difference (CD) for testing the significant differences among the treatment means.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Effect on root parameters of seedlings in nursery

The data presented in Table 1 clearly revealed that different sowing media had a significant effect on root length and fresh and dry weight of roots of early cauliflower seedlings. However, variety had a significant influence only on root length.

Table 1: Effect of sowing media, variety and their interaction on root parameters of cauliflower seedling in the greenhouse conditions (pooled-mean of two years, 2018 & 2019)

Media	Root length (cm)	Root Fresh Weight(mg)	Root Dry Weight (mg)
M ₁ (3Cocopeat: 1Vermiculite : 1Perlite)	3.66	0.06	0.01
M ₂ (1Cocopeat: 1Vermicompost)	4.76	0.12	0.04
M ₃ (1Cocopeat:1Vermicompost:Microbial consortium)	4.94	0.26	0.07
M ₄ (Soil:Sand: FYM)	2.72	0.05	0.02
S.Ed.(±)	0.14	0.01	0.01
CD(0.05)	0.28	0.02	0.01
Variety			
V ₁ (White Diamond)	4.24	0.13	0.03
V ₂ (CFL 1522)	3.80	0.12	0.04
S.Ed.(±)	0.10	0.01	0.00
CD(0.05)	0.20	NS	NS
Interaction (MXV)			
T ₁ (M ₁ V ₁)	3.26	0.07	0.02
T ₂ (M ₁ V ₂)	4.07	0.05	0.01
T ₃ (M ₂ V ₁)	5.83	0.14	0.02
T ₄ (M ₂ V ₂)	3.69	0.11	0.06
T ₅ (M ₃ V ₁)	5.28	0.28	0.08
T ₆ (M ₃ V ₂)	4.60	0.24	0.07
T ₇ (M ₄ V ₁)	2.60	0.04	0.01
T ₈ (M ₄ V ₂)	2.83	0.06	0.03
S.Ed.(±)	0.20	0.01	0.01
CD(0.05)	0.40	0.03	0.02

The longest roots (4.94cm) were produced in the treatment M₃ i.e cocopeat (50): vermicompost (50): microbial consortium which was at par with M₂ i.e cocopeat (50): vermicompost (50) and the shortest roots (2.72 cm) were produced in M₄ (conventional nursery). The highest root length recorded in M₃ might be due to the beneficial effect on root growth by cocopeat, vermicompost and microbial consortium. This

is in agreement with Hartmann and Kester, 1997 who reported improvement of root parameters in a medium consisting of soil + sand + vermicompost + vermiculite + cocopeat (1:1:1:1:1) with *Azotobacter* might be due to improved soil texture, structure, porosity, water holding capacity, the activity of useful soil micro-fauna and flora, maintained soil temperature and improved soil health and nutrient status of medium. Further, the vermicompost also provides close contact between seed and media; increases steady moisture supply that facilitates root respiration and encourages overall root growth (Chatterjee and Choudhuri, 2007). Cocopeat also provides better aeration in the root zone. This result gets support from Venkata Subbaiah *et al.* (2018) who attributed increased root length of brinjal with 6g Arka microbial consortium per 1kg cocopeat to production of plant growth promoting substances by plant growth-promoting microbes which were known to cause enhanced cell division and root development.

In the case of variety, V₁ (White Diamond) recorded the longer roots (4.24 cm) between the two varieties which might be attributed to its varietal character.

The interaction effect between sowing media and variety, significant variations were recorded. M₂V₁ recorded the highest root length (5.83 cm) which was followed by M₃V₁, M₃V₂ and M₁V₂. The shortest roots (2.60 cm) were produced in M₄V₁. The combined influence of both media and variety might have resulted in the longest roots in M₂V₁.

The highest fresh weight of roots (0.26 mg) was recorded in M₃, followed by M₂ (0.12 mg) and M₁ (0.06 mg) and the lowest in M₄ (0.05 mg). Significant interaction effects among the media and variety were observed in regards to root fresh weight. The highest fresh weight (0.28 mg) was recorded M₃V₁, followed by M₃V₂ and M₂V₁. The lowest (0.04 mg) was recorded in M₄V₁. Increased fresh weight in M₃ might be due to the direct plant growth promotion by microbial consortium solubilizing or mobilizing important nutrients (phosphorous, potash, zinc, sulphur and iron) or fixing atmospheric nitrogen for the uptake of plants. These are also known to produce various plant growth-promoting hormones like indole acetic acid, gibberellin, gibberellic acid, cytokines and ethylene (Arshad and Frankenberger, 1993). Vermicompost increases the humic acid content which is known to increase the total and available nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium and organic matter along with the good qualities of cocopeat in improving water retention capacity and porosity might have increased the fresh of roots. Similar result was also reported by Mirabi and Hasanabadi (2012) and Yadav, *et al.* (2012).

The highest dry weight (0.07 mg) of the root was recorded in M₃ followed by M₂ (0.04 mg). The lowest was recorded in M₁ (0.01 mg) but was at par with M₄ (0.02 mg). The interaction among the media and variety also showed significant variation. The highest dry weight (0.08 mg) was recorded M₃V₁ which was at par with M₂V₂ and M₃V₂ followed by M₄V₂. The lowest was recorded in M₄V₁ but not statistically superior to M₁V₁, M₁V₂ and M₂V₁.

Increased dry weight in M₃ was due to increased fresh weight of roots. Tsui (1984) stated that because of the indirect production of the indole acetic acid (auxin), the effect on zinc and considering that vermicompost is a rich environment of nutrition, resulting in the root growth increase with the effect in the hormone production and the dry material increase. Overall, the cocopeat attendance according to the appropriate porosity results in the better root system improvement and consequently results in the dry material increase (Casenave *et al.*, 1990). This result is in line with Mirabi and Hasanabadi, 2012.

3.2. Effect on root parameters of cauliflower plants in the field as affected by seedlings grown in different media

Root parameters like root length, root volume and root dry weight were significantly influenced by seedlings grown in different media as evident from Table 2. The effect of variety was not found to be significant for the root volume. The maximum root length (21.94 cm) was noticed in M₃ which was followed by M₂ (19.58 cm) and M₁ (17.00 cm) and the minimum (9.97 cm) was recorded in the traditional sowing media with soil, sand and FYM (M₄). Maximum root length (17.76 cm) was noticed in variety V₂. The longest roots in M₃ can be attributed to the increased root length of seedling which was also revealed in field conditions. The interaction effects were statistically significant with a maximum length (22.01 cm)

was noticed in M₃V₂ but was at par with M₃V₁ and followed by M₂V₂. The minimum length (9.87 cm) was showed-shown by M₄V₂ and at par with M₄V₁.

Table 2: Effect of sowing media, variety and their interaction on root parameters of cauliflower plants in the field (pooled mean of two years 2018 & 2019)

Media (M)	Root length (cm)	Root volume (cm ³)	Root Dry Weight (g)
M ₁ (3Cocopeat: 1Vermiculite : 1Perlite)	17.00	66.48	2.03
M ₂ (1Cocopeat: 1Vermicompost)	19.58	59.49	3.28
M ₃ (1Cocopeat:1Vermicompost:Microbial consortium)	21.94	74.59	3.21
M ₄ (Soil:Sand: FYM)	9.97	44.88	1.66
S.Ed.(±)	0.39	0.91	0.12
CD(0.05)	0.79	1.84	0.24
Variety (V)			
V ₁ (White Diamond)	16.49	61.50	2.41
V ₂ (CFL 1522)	17.76	61.22	2.68
S.Ed.(±)	0.28	0.64	0.08
CD(0.05)	0.56	NS	0.17
Interaction (MXV)			
T ₁ (M ₁ V ₁)	15.21	70.22	1.64
T ₂ (M ₁ V ₂)	18.80	62.73	2.42
T ₃ (M ₂ V ₁)	18.80	56.30	3.43
T ₄ (M ₂ V ₂)	20.36	62.69	3.13
T ₅ (M ₃ V ₁)	21.87	72.73	2.94
T ₆ (M ₃ V ₂)	22.01	76.46	3.48
T ₇ (M ₄ V ₁)	10.07	46.77	1.63
T ₈ (M ₄ V ₂)	9.87	43.00	1.69
S.Ed.(±)	0.55	1.28	0.17
CD(0.05)	1.12	2.60	0.34

The media, M₃ maintained the superiority with the highest root volume of 74.59 cm³ and the lowest was obtained in M₄ (44.88 cm³). Significant interaction effects of media and variety was-were observed where M₃V₂ recorded maximum root volume (76.46 cm³) followed by M₃V₁ and minimum with 43.00 cm³ in M₄V₂. Because of the vigorous production of leaves and longer roots, more carbohydrate assimilation and nutrient took place, for which it might have increased the root volume in M₃.

Maximum root dry weight (3.28 g) was recorded in M₂ which was at par with M₃ (3.21 g) and the lowest dry weight (1.66 g) was recorded in the treatment M₄. In the case of variety, the maximum dry weight (2.68 g) was recorded in V₂. The increased root dry weight might be due production of an improved root system by cocopeat and vermicompost in the seedling stage also might have been carried over by plants and increased the fresh weight of roots in the field and consequently, the dry weight. A similar observation was mentioned by Matsubara *et al.* (2002) in Welsh onion seedlings raised in plug trays which produced maximum shoot dry weight (532 mg plant⁻¹) and highest root dry weight (94 mg plant⁻¹) in the main field after eight weeks of transplanting.

The interaction effect was also found significant. The highest dry weight (3.48 g) was recorded in M₃V₂ which was at par with M₂V₁. The lowest was recorded in M₄V₁ (1.63 g) but not statistically superior from M₁V₁ and M₄V₂.

3.3. Effect on yield attributes of cauliflower in the field as affected by seedlings grown in different media

Yield attributes like days to curd initiation, days to curd harvesting, curd compactness, curd diameter, curd weight, and curd shelf life were significantly influenced by seedlings grown in different media (Table 3).

Table 3: Effect of sowing media, variety and their interaction on yield attributes of cauliflower in cauliflower in the field (pooled mean of two years, 2018 & 2019)

Media(M)	Days to curd initiation	Days to curd harvesting	Curd compactness (g/cm ³)	Curd diameter (cm)	Curd weight (kg)	Curd shelf life (days)
M ₁ (3Cocopeat: 1Vermiculite : 1Perlite)	41.84	57.47	47.85	11.22	0.32	6.78
M ₂ (1Cocopeat: 1Vermicompost)	38.90	53.96	50.84	11.49	0.35	7.56
M ₃ (1Cocopeat:1Vermicompost: Microbial consortium)	37.09	53.26	53.05	12.84	0.41	8.89
M ₄ (Soil:Sand: FYM)	45.42	62.75	43.61	10.38	0.27	5.17
S.Ed.(+)	0.31	0.54	0.49	0.22	0.01	0.15
CD(0.05)	0.64	1.09	1.00	0.45	0.01	0.31
Variety (V)						
V ₁ (White Diamond)	41.04	56.08	49.09	10.98	0.33	6.63
V ₂ (CFL 1522)	40.58	57.63	48.59	11.99	0.34	7.57
S.Ed.(+)	0.22	0.38	0.35	0.16	0.01	0.11
CD(0.05)	0.45	0.77	NS	0.32	NS	NS
Interaction (MXV)						
T ₁ (M ₁ V ₁)	43.32	57.34	47.76	10.98	0.29	6.22
T ₂ (M ₁ V ₂)	40.36	57.59	47.93	11.45	0.35	7.33
T ₃ (M ₂ V ₁)	38.91	53.05	50.99	10.50	0.37	7.06
T ₄ (M ₂ V ₂)	38.89	54.88	50.69	12.49	0.33	8.06
T ₅ (M ₃ V ₁)	36.55	52.32	53.15	12.18	0.40	8.28
T ₆ (M ₃ V ₂)	37.62	54.20	52.96	13.51	0.41	9.50
T ₇ (M ₄ V ₁)	45.39	61.62	44.46	10.28	0.27	4.95
T ₈ (M ₄ V ₂)	45.46	63.87	42.77	10.49	0.27	5.39
S.Ed.(+)	0.44	0.76	0.70	0.32	0.01	0.21
CD(0.05)	0.90	1.55	1.41	0.64	0.02	0.43

Days to curd initiation, days to curd harvesting and curd diameter were found to be significantly influenced by variety. Days to curd initiation ~~was~~ ~~were~~ the minimum in M₃ with 37.09 days ~~and~~ the maximum ~~number of days~~ ~~days~~ was taken by M₄ (45.42). The seedlings which were grown in M₃ also took minimum days for curd initiation which might be the result of increased plant vigour, better and early establishment in the field. This finding is in conformity ~~to~~ with Chatterjee and Mal (2016) who opined that the seedling which received vermicompost and biofertilizer as growth media significantly influenced the main crop performance and recorded the minimum days for head formation in cabbage.

In the case of variety, minimum days (40.58) ~~was~~ ~~were~~ taken by V₂. Because of its varietal character, V₂ revealed its' potential to produce curd in minimum days when grown in a suitable substrate in the nursery and carried over the character to the field.

Significant interaction effects were observed for days to curd initiation. The least number of days was observed in M₃V₁ (36.55) immediately followed by M₃V₂ and the maximum in M₄V₂ (45.46) which was at par with M₄V₁.

Days to curd harvesting was the minimum (53.26 days) in the treatment M₃ but was found to be at par with M₂, while the maximum was found in M₄ (62.75). As the M₃ took minimum days for curd

formation, consequently the days for curd harvesting ~~is-were~~ also minimum. ~~A similar Similar~~ result was reported by Chatterjee and Mal (2016) in cabbage.

Regarding variety minimum days (56.08) were recorded in V_1 which might be because of- its' genetical and environmental effect

There was a significant effect of interaction on days ~~to-of~~ curd harvesting. M_3V_1 took minimum days (52.32) and was at par with M_2V_1 and the maximum days (63.87) were recorded in M_4V_2 .

The most compact curd (53.05 g/cm^3) was noticed in M_3 which was significantly different from M_2 , M_1 and M_4 . The lowest ~~—~~compactness was recorded in M_4 (43.61 g/cm^3). ~~The poor Poor~~ quality seedling cannot be improved by any means of management after being transplanted to the field and the genetic inheritance of a given variety will be revealed if and only if it is supplemented by proper seedling management practices (Abdissa *et al.*, 2010). ~~The proper Proper~~ nourishment in the nursery with nutrients and better water retention by media M_3 might have led to compact curd formation by plants.

The effect of variety on curd compactness was found to be non- significant.

The interaction effects were statistically significant with maximum compactness (53.15 g/cm^3) was noticed in M_3V_1 but at par with M_3V_2 and the minimum (42.77 g/cm^3) was recorded in M_4V_2 .

~~A significant Significant~~ effect of media on curd diameter was recorded. The highest diameter (12.84 cm) was recorded ~~in~~ M_3 and the lowest (10.38cm) was found in M_4 . ~~An increase Increase~~ in root length and root volume might have led to more absorption of nutrients and water in the plants grown in M_3 in ~~the~~ nursery. Moreover, more carbohydrate production in leaves due to improved vigour might have led to increased curd diameter- which ~~serves serve~~ as the sink of the food materials produced by plants.

Variety had a significant influence on curd diameter with ~~the~~ maximum diameter (11.99 cm) in V_2 .

~~A S~~ significant interaction effect of media and variety was found for curd diameter. The highest diameter (13.51 cm) was observed in M_3V_2 and the lowest (10.28 cm) was recorded in M_4V_1 . The combined influence of M_3 and V_2 might have led to a higher diameter in M_3V_2 .

The observations recorded at ~~the~~ curd harvest stage revealed that media had a significant influence on curd weight. The highest curd weight (0.41 kg) was obtained in M_3 and was found to be statistically superior to all other treatments. The lightest curds (0.27 kg) were harvested in M_4 plots. Among various essential plant nutrients, nitrogen is ~~an~~ essential for plant growth, development and reproduction. Nitrogen is associated with vigorous vegetative growth. It is helpful in ~~the~~ production of large and compact curds. ~~A p~~ Proper use of nitrogen improves the curd size, nutrient value and reduces the chances of buttoning. Phosphorus is a constituent of nucleic acid, phytin and protein. So, an adequate supply of phosphorus in ~~the~~ early stage of plant life is ~~an~~ important in laying down the primordia for the reproductive parts of the cauliflower. It is also an essential constituent of ~~the~~ majority of enzymes which are of great importance in the transformation of energy in carbohydrate and fat metabolism and also in respiration in plants. Proper nourishment of seedlings through uniform utilization of the light, water and nutrients among all the plants might have led to an increased weight of curd. This finding is in line with Chatterjee and Mal (2016) who reported quality plantable seedlings have encouraged vigorous growth of the field crop and subsequently helped in achieving maximum marketable head with maximum yield in cabbage. Chatterjee and Mal (2016) found maximum head weight with vermicompost and biofertilizer as nursery media.

Varieties did not bring about a significant effect on the curd weight

Significant interaction effects were observed among different treatments Maximum curd weights (0.41 kg) were observed in M_3V_2 which were at par with M_3V_1 . Both M_4V_1 and M_4V_2 recorded the smallest curd (0.27 kg).

It is evident from ~~the data Data~~ in Table 3 that media had significant effect on shelf life of curds. The highest number of days (8.89) was recorded in M_3 , followed by M_2 (7.56 days) and then M_1 (6.78

days). The lowest the shelf life (5.17 days) was recorded in M₄. Better physiological conditions as manifested in the plants might have reduced the storage loss of weight, colour, and compactness of curds which in turn increased the shelf life of curd.

There was a significant effect of interaction between sowing media and variety on curd shelf life. Curds had the highest shelf life (9.50 days) in M₃V₂ and followed by M₃V₁ and the lowest shelf life (4.95 days) was recorded in M₄V₁.

CONCLUSION:

The present investigation highlighted significant variations in root length, root fresh weight and root dry weight of seedlings due to different media in the nursery as well as in the field after transplanting. The effect of variety was not significant for all the parameters. The interaction interaction-effect between media and variety was also significant. The curd characters were also affected by different media. The varietal Varietal-effect was not seen for all the parameters. Therefore it can be concluded that for producing quality seedlings in the nursery which will further show good performance in the field seedling can be raised in media(M₃) i.e. cocopeat (50): vermicompost (50): microbial consortium @ 1:100 under protected condition.

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