

## Effect of soil amendments and nutrient management on growth and growth attributes of tannia (*Xanthosoma sagittifolium* (L.) Schott) in the South-Central Laterites (AEU 9) of Kerala, India

### ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to assess the effect of soil amendments and nutrient management on growth and growth attributes of tannia during the period from Feb-Dec 2021 in a farmer's field (AEU 9) at Kollam district. The experiment was laid out in RCBD with 13 treatments (4 x 3 + 1) and three replications. The treatments included soil amendments [ $a_1$ : Dolomite ( $80 \text{ g plant}^{-1}$ ),  $a_2$ : Phosphogypsum ( $50 \text{ g plant}^{-1}$ ),  $a_3$ : Compost ( $1 \text{ kg plant}^{-1}$ ) + dolomite, and  $a_4$ : Compost ( $1 \text{ kg plant}^{-1}$ ) + phosphogypsum] and nutrient management [ $n_1$ : RDN + borax ( $10 \text{ kg ha}^{-1}$ ) at 4 MAP + solubor (0.1%) at 5, 6 and 7 MAP,  $n_2$ : RDN +  $\text{ZnSO}_4$  ( $20 \text{ kg ha}^{-1}$ ) at 4 MAP +  $\text{ZnSO}_4$  (1%) at 5, 6 and 7 MAP and  $n_3$ : RDN + borax ( $10 \text{ kg ha}^{-1}$ ) +  $\text{ZnSO}_4$  ( $20 \text{ kg ha}^{-1}$ ) at 4 MAP + solubor (0.1%) +  $\text{ZnSO}_4$  (1%) at 5, 6 and 7 MAP] and control (KAU POP). The soil was sandy loam in texture, strongly acidic in reaction (surface soil-5.45 and sub soil-5.05). Cormel pieces ( $100 \text{ g}$ ) of local variety planted with a spacing of  $90 \times 90 \text{ cm}$ . The plant height and number of leaves per plant increased up to 6 MAP, and after that it declined in all the treatments up to harvest. The treatment  $a_4$  and  $n_3$  resulted in the tallest plants ( $114.37 \text{ cm}$  and  $100.06 \text{ cm}$ ) with more number of leaves per plant ( $8.34$  and  $7.20$ ) at 6 MAP. The treatment combination  $a_4n_3$  recorded higher dry matter production ( $4.92 \text{ t ha}^{-1}$ ) which was on par with  $a_4n_2$ ,  $a_3n_3$ , and  $a_4n_1$  and found superior to KAU POP. Subsoil acidity is the most chemical impediment in tuber development. Therefore, improving acidic soil with the right amendments and nutrients was essential for tannia's growth and development.

*Keywords: Soil amendments; subsoil acidity; dolomite; phosphogypsum, dry matter production*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Tuber crops are typically grown in marginal lands with low native soil fertility [1] mainly in lateritic soils (acidic ultisols) of India. Tannia prefers warm humid climate with high rainfall, it can also adapt to areas receiving  $100 \text{ cm}$  to  $200 \text{ cm}$  rainfall [2]. The temperature range of  $20^\circ\text{C}$  to  $35^\circ\text{C}$  and a pH range of  $5.5$  to  $6.5$  is suitable for growing tannia [3]. Subsoil acidity has been identified as a significant yield limiting factor in hot, humid, tropical climate regions. [4, 5, 6]. It is the acidification below the plough layer, usually below  $20 \text{ cm}$  due to the presence of  $\text{H}^+$  and  $\text{Al}^{3+}$  and restricted Ca. Thus, the two main factors impeding crop growth in acid soil were the toxicity of Al and lack of Ca. Acid soils frequently exhibit poor root penetration and multiplication, as shown by [7,8]. By attaching to the phosphate section of DNA in the nuclei of the root cells, trivalent aluminium in acid soil impeded the growth of the roots by reducing the activity of the template and cell division [9]. Acidity in subsurface soil is largely

caused by plant roots generating acid due to excessive cation uptake during nutritional requirements [10].

The acidity of surface soil is typically reduced by liming. Whereas, reducing the acidity of subsurface soil is extremely challenging as the lime moves slowly through soil profiles. This necessitates application of high rates of lime as top dressing to improve the subsoil [11]. It may also negatively impact other crops in the rotation [12] or result in nutrient deficiencies. It was found to be impractical to apply lime deep into the soil. Therefore, an alternative for lime with improved mobility could be a feasible option [13, 14, 15, 16, 17]. Dolomite was identified as the most suitable soil amendment for the Ultisols of Kerala because of its good response in tannia growing soils [18]. The problem was resolved, and crop output and vegetative growth were enhanced by standardising the application rate at  $1 \text{ t ha}^{-1}$  or  $80 \text{ g plant}^{-1}$  [19]. Similarly, for phosphogypsum applications the pH of the soil in the dark red latosol was found to rise by 0.8 units [20] and raised the soil's capacity for cation exchange [21]. Phosphogypsum is cheap and widely available industrial byproduct, hence lime could be easily replaced with phosphogypsum [22,23]. Likewise, nutrient management also plays a vital role in improving the growth and yield of tannia. As the crops are more productive, there is a significant amount of nutrient loss from the soil due to their high nutrient uptake [24]. Hence to improve the growth of tannia, proper nutrient management and soil acidity correction is inevitable to stabilise the crop cultivation.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in a farmer's field at Ambalathumkala in Kollam district which is situated at  $9.02^\circ\text{N}$  latitude and  $76.7^\circ\text{E}$  longitude at an altitude of 57 m above mean sea level. This area comes under South Central Laterites (AEU 9). The field experiment was conducted during the period from February to December 2021. The objective was to analyse the effect of soil amendments and nutrient management on growth attributes and growth of tannia.

The field experiment, laid out in RCBD comprised 13 treatments ( $4 \times 3 + 1$ ), replicated thrice. The treatments consisted of combinations of four soil amendments [ $a_1$ : Dolomite,  $a_2$ : Phosphogypsum,  $a_3$ : Compost + dolomite, and  $a_4$ : Compost + phosphogypsum] and three nutrient management practices [ $n_1$ : Recommended dose of nutrients (RDN) + borax ( $10 \text{ kg ha}^{-1}$ ) at 4 MAP + solubor (0.1%) at 5, 6 and 7 MAP,  $n_2$ : RDN +  $\text{ZnSO}_4$  ( $20 \text{ kg ha}^{-1}$ ) at 4 MAP +  $\text{ZnSO}_4$  (1%) at 5, 6 and 7 MAP and  $n_3$ : RDN + borax ( $10 \text{ kg ha}^{-1}$ ) +  $\text{ZnSO}_4$  ( $20 \text{ kg ha}^{-1}$ ) at 4 MAP + solubor (0.1%) +  $\text{ZnSO}_4$  (1%) at 5, 6 and 7 MAP] and control (Kerala Agricultural University Package of Practices - KAU POP). The soil of the experimental site was sandy loam in texture, strongly acidic in reaction (surface soil with a pH of 5.45 and sub soil with a pH of 5.05). A local variety procured from the farmer's field was used for the study. Cormel pieces weighing 100 g each were planted at a spacing of 90 cm x 90 cm. Dolomite ( $80 \text{ g plant}^{-1}$ ) and phosphogypsum was applied 20 days before planting. The requirement of phosphogypsum, was computed as  $46.77 \text{ g plant}^{-1}$  (rounded off to  $50 \text{ g plant}^{-1}$ ) based on the lime requirement of the soil. Compost ( $1 \text{ kg plant}^{-1}$ ) was applied as basal before planting. The RDN (N, P, K) was supplied as Urea (46 per cent N), Rajphos (20 per cent  $\text{P}_2\text{O}_5$ ) and Muriate of potash (60 per cent

K<sub>2</sub>O) respectively at the rate of 80:50:150 kg NPK ha<sup>-1</sup> was given equally to all treatments as per KAU POP [2]. The entire dose of P and FYM (25 t ha<sup>-1</sup>) were applied as basal, whereas N and K were given as split doses at 2MAP, 4 MAP, and 6 MAP. Green manure cowpea (sown at 20 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>), biofertilizer (*Azotobacter chroococcum*) at the rate of 10 g per plant, neem cake (375 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>), and green leaf mulching (*Glyricidiasepium*) at 15 t ha<sup>-1</sup> were also applied in each treatment. Timely operations of earthing up and weeding were also carried out after fertilizer applications. The crop was harvested at the 10 months of age when all the leaves showed yellowing and drying.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1 Growth and growth attributes**

Plant height and number of leaves were observed at monthly interval from 5 MAP up to harvest. Total dry matter production during harvest was also recorded.

##### **3.1.1 Plant height**

Soil amendments, nutrient management and their interaction had significant effect on the plant height of tannia at all stages of observation (Table 1).

Plant height was observed to increase up to 6 MAP and then decreased in all the treatments till harvest. Application of compost and phosphogypsum (a<sub>4</sub>) recorded taller plants at 5 MAP (97.00 cm), 6 MAP (114.37 cm), 7 MAP (112.71 cm), 8 MAP (94.57 cm), and harvest (83.33 cm). Shorter plants were observed in treatments without compost. At 6 MAP, the effect of a<sub>3</sub> (compost + phosphogypsum) was 34.33 per cent greater than that of a<sub>1</sub> (dolomite) in terms of plant height. Similarly, compared to a<sub>2</sub>, a<sub>4</sub> resulted in 28.74 per cent taller plants. Among the three nutrient management treatments, application of RDN + borax (10 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>) + ZnSO<sub>4</sub> (20 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>) at 4 MAP + solubor (0.1%) + ZnSO<sub>4</sub> (1%) at 5, 6 and 7 MAP (n<sub>3</sub>) resulted in taller plants at all stages of observation followed by n<sub>2</sub> and n<sub>1</sub>. Considering the interaction effect of soil amendments and nutrient management (A × N) on plant height of tannia, the treatment combination a<sub>4</sub>n<sub>3</sub> recorded the tallest plants (102.70 cm) among the treatments followed by a<sub>4</sub>n<sub>2</sub> and a<sub>4</sub>n<sub>1</sub>, at 5 MAP. While comparing treatments against control (KAU POP), the treatment combination a<sub>4</sub>n<sub>3</sub> was superior to control with respect to plant height at all growth stages, except at 8 MAP and harvest.

Plant height was observed to increase up to 6 MAP and later it decreased. Similar findings have been reported in taro, which exhibited a grand growth period up to 20- 24 weeks and thereafter declined [25]. The photosynthates produced are mostly used to produce corm and cormels afterwards, thus the plant height decreased after 180 DAS [26]. Dolomite and phosphogypsum performed well along with compost application. Compost might have provided an alkaline condition in the soil as it supplied additional Ca and increased the soil pH and made the soil condition ideal for crop growth [27].

##### **3.1.2. Number of leaves per plant**

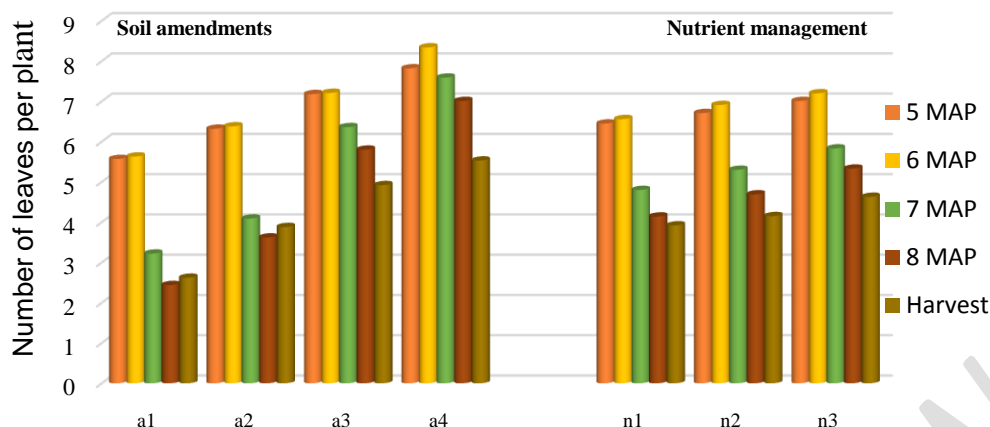
Irrespective of treatments, the number of leaves per plant increased up to 6 MAP and declined later till harvest. Soil amendments and nutrient management had a significant effect on the

number of leaves per plant at 5 MAP, 6 MAP, 7 MAP, 8 MAP and at harvest (Fig. 1). Application of compost + phosphogypsum ( $a_4$ ) recorded the highest number of leaves at all stages of observation. It was followed by  $a_3$ ,  $a_2$  and  $a_1$ . At 6 MAP,  $a_3$  and  $a_4$  produced 2.81 and 3.07 times more number of leaves per plant

**Table 1. Effect of soil amendments, nutrient management, and its interaction on plant height of tannia, cm**

Treatment	Plant height				
	5 MAP	6 MAP	7 MAP	8 MAP	Harvest
<b>Soil amendments (A)</b>					
$a_1$ – dolomite	42.22 <sup>d</sup>	74.93 <sup>d</sup>	73.32 <sup>d</sup>	52.94 <sup>d</sup>	37.83 <sup>d</sup>
$a_2$ –phosphogypsum	68.78 <sup>c</sup>	88.84 <sup>c</sup>	84.57 <sup>c</sup>	58.98 <sup>c</sup>	47.17 <sup>c</sup>
$a_3$ -compost + dolomite	76.98 <sup>b</sup>	100.65 <sup>b</sup>	98.07 <sup>b</sup>	84.08 <sup>b</sup>	76.13 <sup>b</sup>
$a_4$ - compost + phosphogypsum	97.00 <sup>a</sup>	114.37 <sup>a</sup>	112.71 <sup>a</sup>	94.57 <sup>a</sup>	83.33 <sup>a</sup>
SEm ( $\pm$ )	0.50	0.47	0.61	0.79	0.93
CD (0.05)	1.471	1.391	1.791	2.32	2.723
<b>Nutrient management (N)</b>					
$n_1$ -RDN + borax (10 kg ha <sup>-1</sup> ) at 4 MAP + solubor (0.1%) at 5,6 and 7 MAP	64.42 <sup>c</sup>	90.15 <sup>c</sup>	87.01 <sup>c</sup>	65.87 <sup>c</sup>	53.78 <sup>c</sup>
$n_2$ -RDN + ZnSO <sub>4</sub> (20 kg ha <sup>-1</sup> ) at 4 MAP + ZnSO <sub>4</sub> (1%) at 5, 6 and 7 MAP	69.47 <sup>b</sup>	93.89 <sup>b</sup>	92.49 <sup>b</sup>	73.67 <sup>b</sup>	61.17 <sup>b</sup>
$n_3$ -RDN + borax (10 kg ha <sup>-1</sup> ) + ZnSO <sub>4</sub> (20 kg ha <sup>-1</sup> ) at 4 MAP + solubor (0.1%) + ZnSO <sub>4</sub> (1%) at 5,6 and 7 MAP	79.84 <sup>a</sup>	100.06 <sup>a</sup>	97.01 <sup>a</sup>	78.39 <sup>a</sup>	68.41 <sup>a</sup>
SEm ( $\pm$ )	0.43	0.41	0.53	0.69	0.80
CD (0.05)	1.274	1.205	1.551	2.009	2.358
<b>Soil amendment (A) x Nutrient management (N)</b>					
$a_1n_1$	40.67 <sup>j</sup>	73.00 <sup>i</sup>	70.33 <sup>h</sup>	51.44 <sup>i</sup>	32.63 <sup>e</sup>
$a_1n_2$	41.33 <sup>j</sup>	74.00 <sup>i</sup>	73.48 <sup>g</sup>	52.00 <sup>i</sup>	37.52 <sup>f</sup>
$a_1n_3$	44.67 <sup>j</sup>	77.80 <sup>h</sup>	76.15 <sup>g</sup>	55.37 <sup>h</sup>	43.33 <sup>e</sup>
$a_2n_1$	56.33 <sup>h</sup>	80.35 <sup>g</sup>	74.10 <sup>g</sup>	50.40 <sup>g</sup>	38.04 <sup>e</sup>
$a_2n_2$	60.00 <sup>g</sup>	86.88 <sup>f</sup>	85.26 <sup>f</sup>	61.03 <sup>g</sup>	49.15 <sup>d</sup>
$a_2n_3$	90.00 <sup>c</sup>	99.30 <sup>d</sup>	94.33 <sup>e</sup>	65.51 <sup>f</sup>	54.33 <sup>d</sup>
$a_3n_1$	70.00 <sup>f</sup>	95.23 <sup>e</sup>	93.30 <sup>e</sup>	75.57 <sup>e</sup>	65.44 <sup>cd</sup>
$a_3n_2$	78.93 <sup>e</sup>	99.59 <sup>d</sup>	97.66 <sup>d</sup>	85.33 <sup>d</sup>	75.33 <sup>c</sup>
$a_3n_3$	82.00 <sup>d</sup>	107.14 <sup>c</sup>	103.26 <sup>c</sup>	91.33 <sup>c</sup>	87.63 <sup>ab</sup>
$a_4n_1$	90.67 <sup>c</sup>	112.03 <sup>b</sup>	110.29 <sup>b</sup>	86.04 <sup>d</sup>	79.00 <sup>b</sup>
$a_4n_2$	97.62 <sup>b</sup>	115.07 <sup>a</sup>	113.57 <sup>a</sup>	96.33 <sup>b</sup>	82.67 <sup>ab</sup>
$a_4n_3$	102.70 <sup>a</sup>	116.00 <sup>a</sup>	114.28 <sup>a</sup>	101.33 <sup>a</sup>	88.33 <sup>a</sup>
SEm ( $\pm$ )	0.87	0.82	1.06	1.37	1.61
CD (0.05)	2.548	2.41	3.102	4.018	4.716
Control (KAU POP)	82.40	107.48	98.30	70.48	70.48
Treatment vs Control	S	S	S	NS	NS

S - Significant; NS - Not Significant



**Fig. 1 . Effect of soil amendments and nutrient management on number of leaves per plant**

than  $a_1$  and  $a_2$ . In the case of nutrient management,  $n_3$  [RDN + borax ( $10 \text{ kg ha}^{-1}$ ) +  $\text{ZnSO}_4$  ( $20 \text{ kg ha}^{-1}$ ) at 4 MAP + solubor (0.1%) +  $\text{ZnSO}_4$  (1%) at 5, 6 and 7 MAP] recorded more number of leaves at all stages of observation. The interaction effect (A x N) on number of leaves per plant was observed to be significant at all stages except at 6 MAP (Table 2).

**Table 2. Effect of A x N interaction on number of leaves per plant in tannia**

Treatment	Number of leaves per plant				
<b>Soil amendment (A) x Nutrient management (N)</b>					
$a_1n_1$	5.25 <sup>i</sup>	5.30	3.08 <sup>h</sup>	2.15 <sup>i</sup>	2.84 <sup>e</sup>
$a_1n_2$	5.57 <sup>h</sup>	5.59	3.25 <sup>h</sup>	2.25 <sup>i</sup>	2.12 <sup>f</sup>
$a_1n_3$	5.88 <sup>g</sup>	6.01	3.33 <sup>h</sup>	2.92 <sup>h</sup>	2.90 <sup>e</sup>
$a_2n_1$	6.01 <sup>g</sup>	6.14	3.85 <sup>g</sup>	3.48 <sup>fg</sup>	3.17 <sup>e</sup>
$a_2n_2$	6.29 <sup>f</sup>	6.34	3.92 <sup>g</sup>	3.44 <sup>g</sup>	4.18 <sup>d</sup>
$a_2n_3$	6.65 <sup>e</sup>	6.67	4.52 <sup>f</sup>	3.95 <sup>f</sup>	4.27 <sup>d</sup>
$a_3n_1$	6.78 <sup>e</sup>	6.80	5.61 <sup>e</sup>	5.12 <sup>e</sup>	4.48 <sup>cd</sup>
$a_3n_2$	7.28 <sup>d</sup>	7.31	6.26 <sup>d</sup>	5.77 <sup>d</sup>	4.74 <sup>c</sup>
$a_3n_3$	7.49 <sup>cd</sup>	7.53	7.19 <sup>c</sup>	6.50 <sup>c</sup>	5.53 <sup>ab</sup>
$a_4n_1$	7.76 <sup>b</sup>	8.01	6.69 <sup>d</sup>	5.80 <sup>d</sup>	5.20 <sup>b</sup>
$a_4n_2$	7.70 <sup>bc</sup>	8.42	7.78 <sup>b</sup>	7.28 <sup>b</sup>	5.57 <sup>ab</sup>
$a_4n_3$	8.00 <sup>a</sup>	8.60	8.30 <sup>a</sup>	7.93 <sup>a</sup>	5.81 <sup>a</sup>
SEm ( $\pm$ )	0.08	0.10	0.16	0.17	0.14
CD (0.05)	0.223	NS	0.462	0.506	0.402
Control (KAU POP)	6.60	7.57	5.11	4.50	4.05
Treatment vs Control	NS	S	NS	NS	NS

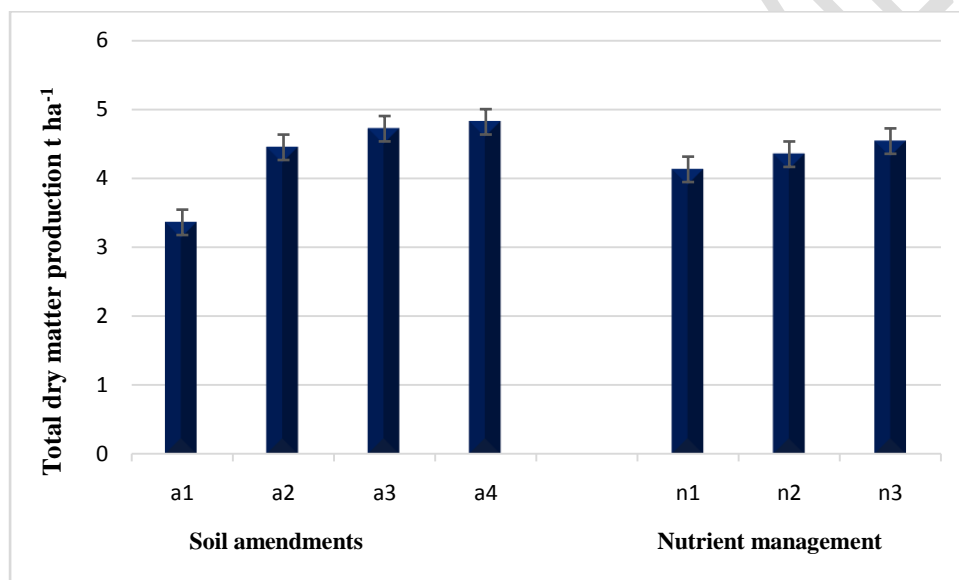
S - Significant; NS - Not Significant

The treatment combination  $a_4n_3$  recorded more number of leaves per plant at 5 MAP (8.00), 7 MAP (8.30), 8 MAP (7.93) and at harvest, (5.81). The treatment combinations  $a_4n_2$  and  $a_4n_3$  were observed to be superior to control and  $a_4n_1$ ,  $a_3n_3$  and  $a_3n_2$  were found to be at par with control. The

decline in leaf number after 6 MAP was in conformity with the findings of [28] and reduction in leaf number up to harvest might be due to the drying out of the existing leaves. Application of phosphogypsum along with compost resulted in more number of leaves. Considering the strongly acidic soil of the experimental site, phosphogypsum might have ameliorated the soil acidity and increased the soil pH, and thereby promoted the growth of tannia as suggested by [21].

### 3.1.3. Total dry matter production

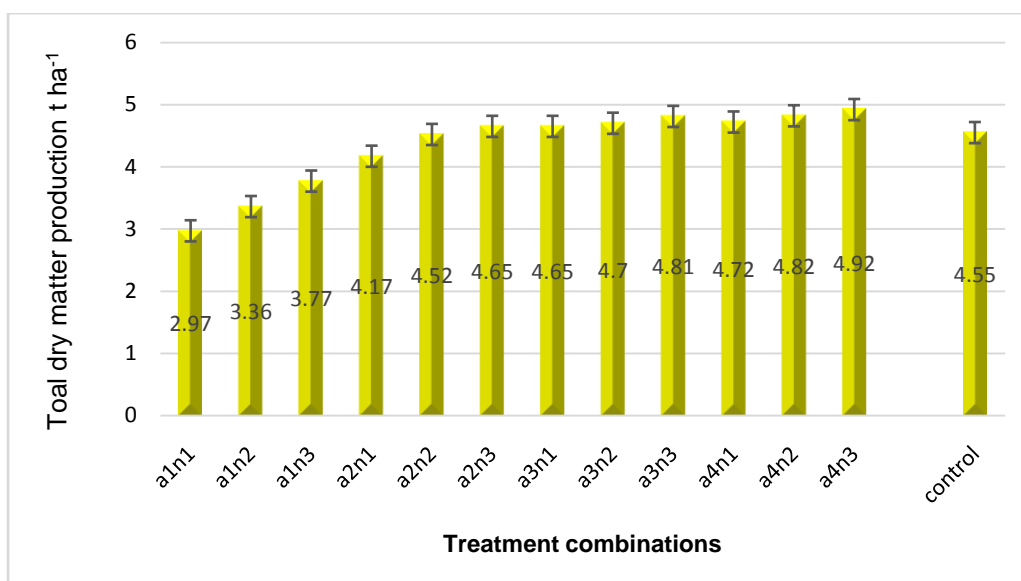
Significant difference was noticed in dry matter production in response to soil amendments and nutrient management and its interaction (Fig. 2). The total dry matter production at harvest was observed to be higher ( $4.82 \text{ t ha}^{-1}$ ) in  $a_4$  (compost + phosphogypsum) and was on a par with  $a_3$  (compost + dolomite) ( $4.72 \text{ t ha}^{-1}$ ), followed by  $a_2$  and  $a_1$ . In the case of nutrient management,  $n_3$  recorded the highest dry matter production ( $4.54 \text{ t ha}^{-1}$ ) followed by  $n_2$  ( $4.35 \text{ t ha}^{-1}$ ) and  $n_1$  ( $4.13 \text{ t ha}^{-1}$ ).



**Fig. 2. Effect of soil amendments and nutrient management on total dry matter production  $\text{t ha}^{-1}$**

The treatment combination,  $a_4n_3$  recorded higher dry matter production ( $4.92 \text{ t ha}^{-1}$ ) which was on par with  $a_4n_2$  ( $4.82 \text{ t ha}^{-1}$ ),  $a_3n_3$  ( $4.81 \text{ t ha}^{-1}$ ) and  $a_4n_1$  ( $4.72 \text{ t ha}^{-1}$ ) (Fig. 3). The treatment combination  $a_4n_3$  proved superior over control. Other treatments viz.,  $a_2n_2$ ,  $a_2n_3$ ,  $a_3n_1$ ,  $a_3n_2$ ,  $a_3n_3$ ,  $a_4n_1$ , and  $a_4n_2$  were at par with KAU POP.

The soil amendment, phosphogypsum performed well over dolomite in acidic soil conditions as the mobility of Ca ion in phosphogypsum might have been rapid compared to dolomite. This might have afforded a better amelioration of soil acidity. Hence the dry matter accumulation was higher in plants supplied with phosphogypsum [16]. In the case of nutrient management, combination of Zn and B recorded the highest dry matter production. This could be attributed to the synergistic effect of Zn and B in the uptake of nutrients as reported by [29] which in turn increased the dry matter production than the application of Zn and B in isolation. The combination of these treatments showed its superiority in total dry matter production to other treatments and control.



**Fig. 3. Effect of A x N interaction on total dry matter production t ha<sup>-1</sup>**

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Combination of compost along with soil amendments recorded better growth in tannia. Plant height and number of leaves generally increased up to 6 MAP in tannia and later it decreased. Application of phosphogypsum as soil amendment was observed to improve the growth of tannia than dolomite. Compost and phosphogypsum along with Zn and B, both as soil and foliar application resulted in better growth of tannia in the South-Central Laterites of Kerala.

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