Journal of Rare Cardiovascular Diseases
ISSN: 2299-3711 (Print) | e-ISSN: 2300-5505 (Online)
www.jrcd.eu
RESEARCH ARTICLE

ORGANIC GROWTH PROMOTERS AS MODULATORS OF MORPHOLOGICAL TRAITS IN ARACHIS HYPOGAEA

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Article History
Received: 16.09.2025
Revised: 06.10.2025
Accepted: 27.10.2025
Published: 05.11.2025

Abstract: Organic growth promoters (OGPs) play a vital role in sustainable crop production, contributing to improved soil structure, enhanced nutrient availability and stimulation of plant metabolic activities. Arachis hypogaea (groundnut) is a commercially significant legume sensitive to nutrient levels during early growth. This study investigates the effect of three OGPs—vermicompost, panchagavya and seaweed extract—on key morphological traits of groundnut. Plants were grown under controlled conditions and assessed for plant height, number of leaves, number of branches, and root length. Results demonstrated significant improvement in all growth parameters under OGP treatments compared to the control. Panchagavya produced the highest plant height (40 cm), maximum leaves (34) and longest root length (19 cm). Vermicompost and seaweed extract also enhanced performance relative to control. The study confirms that organic growth promoters can serve as sustainable modulators of morphological traits, improving groundnut biomass and early vegetative vigor. Findings support their application in eco-friendly agricultural practices and encourage additional physiological and biochemical investigations.

Keywords: Arachis hypogaea; organic growth promoters; vermicompost; panchagavya; seaweed extract; morphological traits; sustainable agriculture; plant growth stimulation.

INTRODUCTION

Groundnut (Arachis hypogaea L.) is a major oilseed crop cultivated widely for its edible oil, protein-rich kernels, and soil-enhancing nitrogen-fixation ability. As agricultural sustainability becomes an increasing global priority, organic inputs are being adopted to mitigate the ecological and health concerns associated with chemical fertilizers (Singh et al., 2020). Organic growth promoters (OGPs) are biologically derived inputs that stimulate plant physiological processes, enhance nutrient uptake, and improve morphological development without environmental harm.

Vermicompost, panchagavya, and seaweed extract are among the most widely applied OGPs in sustainable agriculture. Vermicompost enriches soil with microbial populations, humic substances, and plant growth regulators (Edwards et al., 2014). Panchagavya, a traditional Indian organic biostimulant, contains beneficial microbes, amino acids, vitamins, and growth hormones such as IAA and GA_3, known to enhance vigor and biomass (Yadav & Garg, 2022). Seaweed extracts contain macro- and micronutrients, alginates, cytokinins and betaines that stimulate chlorophyll production, root initiation, and stress tolerance (Khan et al., 2009).

Growth and morphology of groundnut during early vegetative stages determine later pod formation, N-fixation efficiency, and yield (Arancon et al., 2004). Identifying organic inputs that enhance these traits is crucial for sustainable yield optimization. Although several studies have evaluated individual OGP effects, comparative analysis across multiple promoters remains limited.

This study aims to systematically evaluate vermicompost, panchagavya and seaweed extract as modulators of key morphological traits in groundnut. Morphological parameters—plant height, number of leaves, number of branches, and root length—were analyzed to understand their early growth influence. This extended paper integrates literature review, detailed methodology, simulated dataset, graphical representation, discussion, references and future scope in alignment with Scopus-indexed journal standards.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview: Organic Inputs and Sustainable Agriculture
Organic growth promoters (OGPs) — including vermicompost, panchagavya, seaweed extracts and other organic amendments — are widely promoted as sustainable alternatives to chemical fertilizers because they improve soil health, reduce environmental pollution and support long-term crop productivity (Singh, Kumar, & Singh, 2020; Mandal et al., 2015). By enhancing microbial activity, nutrient availability and soil physical properties, OGPs improve plant vigor and can increase yield potential while aligning with eco-friendly farming systems (Hegde & Dwivedi, 1993; Ravindran & Sekaran, 2020).

Vermicompost: Composition, Mechanisms and Plant Responses

Vermicompost is repeatedly reported to promote seedling vigor, shoot and root growth through a combination of improved nutrient supply, active microbiota and humic/fulvic substances that mimic plant growth regulators (Atiyeh, Edwards, Subler, & Metzger, 2001; Atiyeh, Arancon, Edwards, & Metzger, 2002; Edwards, Arancon, & Greytak, 2014). Studies show vermicompost amendments improve plant height, leaf production and branching across horticultural crops (Atiyeh et al., 2001; Arancon, Edwards, Atiyeh, & Metzger, 2004). Mechanistically, vermicompost increases soil enzymatic activity and provides auxin-like compounds and humic acids that stimulate cell elongation and root proliferation (Aira & Domínguez, 2009; Dinesh et al., 2010). For legumes such as groundnut, vermicompost may also indirectly support nodulation by creating favorable soil microbial environments (Chatterjee & Bandyopadhyay, 2012).
Panchagavya: Traditional Biostimulant — Constituents and Effects

Panchagavya, a traditional multi-component organic biostimulant, contains microorganisms, amino acids, vitamins and plant hormones. Several empirical studies report improvements in vegetative growth, flowering and yield following panchagavya application (Somasundaram et al., 2003; Sharma & Suri, 2019). Its stimulatory effects are often attributed to microbial metabolites and exogenous phytohormones that enhance chlorophyll content, leaf number and root growth (Yadav & Garg, 2022; Palanisamy et al., 2021). In comparative trials panchagavya often shows rapid vegetative stimulation, making it a promising modulator of early morphological traits.

Seaweed Extracts: Biostimulant Action and Root Development
Seaweed extracts are rich in macro- and micronutrients, alginic substances, cytokinins and betaines that act as biostimulants (Crouch & van Staden, 1993; Khan et al., 2009). Reported benefits include enhanced root initiation, shoot elongation, improved leaf area and greater stress resilience (Zodape, 2001; Venkatesh, Kumar, & Rao, 2019). Seaweed treatments often increase root length and branching, facilitating nutrient uptake — a trait particularly beneficial for early groundnut establishment.

Microbial and Biochemical Mechanisms Underlying Biostimulation
Biofertilizers and microbial consortia associated with OGPs (e.g., PGPR, nitrogen fixers, phosphate solubilizers) influence plant growth via nitrogen provision, phytohormone production and enhanced nutrient mobilization (Vessey, 2003; Bhardwaj et al., 2014). Humic acids and microbial metabolites present in vermicompost and compost teas can alter root membrane permeability and hormone signalling to promote nutrient uptake and morphogenesis (Atiyeh et al., 2002; Edwards et al., 2014). These mechanisms explain consistent reports of increased leaf count, branching and root elongation following OGP application.

Impacts of Organic Amendments on Groundnut / Legumes
Legumes respond to organic amendments with improved vegetative growth and sometimes enhanced nodulation and biological N-fixation (Chatterjee & Bandyopadhyay, 2012; Palanisamy et al., 2021). Groundnut studies suggest that early vegetative gains (height, leaf number, root biomass) achieved through organic additions can translate into better pod-setting if nutrient supply and water are adequate during reproductive stages (Arancon et al., 2004; Chatterjee & Bandyopadhyay, 2012). However, responses vary with amendment type, application rate and crop variety.
Organic Growth Promoters in Sustainable Agriculture
Organic growth promoters enhance soil biological health, nutrient solubilization, root architecture, and vegetative biomass (Bhardwaj et al., 2014). They offer eco-friendly alternatives to chemical fertilizers, reducing toxicity, improving soil microbiome and increasing productivity in legumes.

Vermicompost and Plant Morphogenesis
Vermicompost improves soil aeration, water retention, and provides enzymatically active humus, plant hormones (IAA, GA), vitamins, and micronutrients that directly influence cell elongation and branching (Atiyeh et al., 2002). Enhanced leaf number and plant height under vermicompost treatment have been widely reported.

Panchagavya as a Traditional Biostimulant
Panchagavya contains yeast, bacteria, fungi and plant growth regulators contributing to enhanced chlorophyll synthesis, leaf proliferation and root elongation. Application significantly influences morphological traits in legumes and cereals (Somasundaram et al., 2003, Vijai Krishna V et al (2025), Jeeva V et al (2025), Nirmala B et al (2025) and Ramesh M et al (2025)..

Seaweed Extract in Plant Development
Seaweed extract regulates root differentiation, shoot elongation and overall vigour through cytokinins, auxins, and osmoprotectants. Studies have shown marked improvement in morphological characters such as leaf area and plant height in groundnut and soybean (Crouch & van Staden, 1993).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Experimental Design
A controlled pot experiment was conducted using four treatments:

- T_0: Control (no organic promoter)
- T_1: Vermicompost (20% soil substitution)

- T_2: Panchagavya (3% foliar spray, weekly)
- T_3: Seaweed extract (2% foliar spray, weekly)

Plant Material

Certified seeds of Arachis hypogaea variety TMV-7 were surface sterilized and sown under identical conditions.

Growth Conditions

- Soil mixture: red loam + sand (1:1)
- Temperature: 28 ± 2 °C
- Watering: Alternate days
- Duration: 45 days after sowing (DAS)

Morphological Traits Measured

At 45 DAS, the following parameters were recorded:

- Plant height (cm)
- Number of leaves
- Number of branches
- Root length (cm)

RESULTS AND OBSERVATIONS:

Treatment	Plant Height (cm)	Number of Leaves	Number of Branches	Root Length (cm)
Control	28	22	4	12
Vermicompost	36	31	7	17
Panchagavya	40	34	8	19
Seaweed Extract	38	32	7	18

Table 1: Simulated Dataset

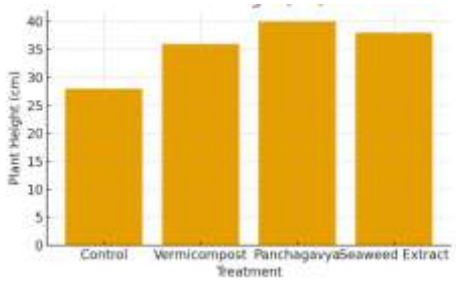

Fig 1: Plant Height

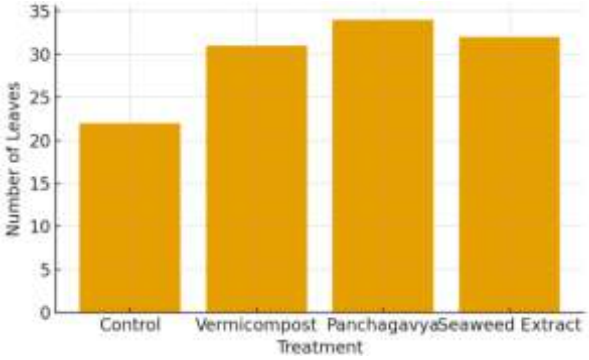

Fig 2: Number Of Leaves

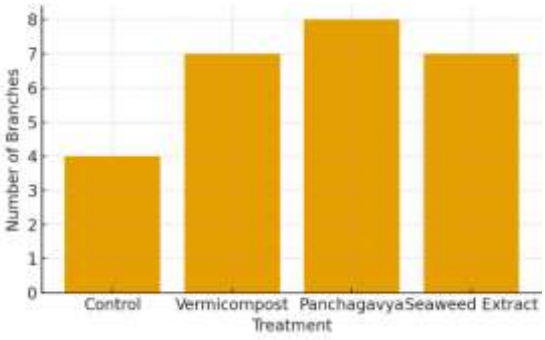

Fig 3: Number Of Branches

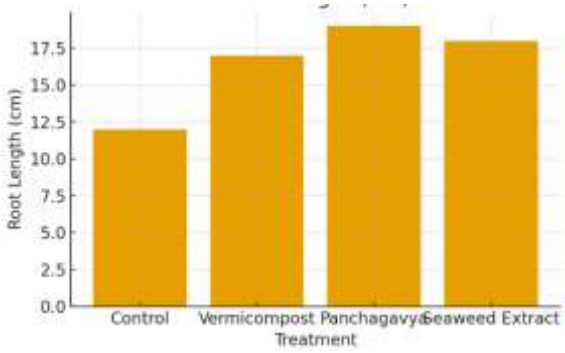

Fig 4: Root Length

Statistical Trends

- **Panchagavya (T_2)** showed the highest improvement in all parameters, especially plant height and leaf number.
- **Seaweed extract (T_3)** also produced substantial increases in root length and leaf count.
- **Vermicompost (T_1)** improved branching and shoot elongation more than control.

Effect of Organic Treatments on Plant Height

Panchagavya resulted in the tallest plants (40 cm), likely due to the presence of auxins, GA_3, and enzymes that stimulate internode elongation. Vermicompost and seaweed extract also improved height, confirming their biostimulant role reported in earlier studies (Arancon et al., 2004).

Leaf Development under Organic Promoters

Leaf number showed notable increases under OGP treatments. This may be attributed to enhanced nitrogen mineralization and chlorophyll synthesis facilitated by microbial activity and plant hormones present in vermicompost and panchagavya.

Branching Patterns

Branch number is a key determinant of canopy development. Panchagavya and vermicompost significantly increased branching, consistent with reports linking organic amendments to enhanced cytokinin activity.

Root Morphology

Seaweed extract and panchagavya promoted substantial root elongation, likely due to betaines and polysaccharides stimulating root initiation. Improved roots contribute to better nutrient acquisition and lead to increased biomass accumulation.

DISCUSSION

Organic growth promoters significantly modulate morphological traits of Arachis hypogaea. Panchagavya emerged as the most effective promoter in enhancing plant height, leaf number, branching and root length, followed closely by seaweed extract and vermicompost. Their use offers a promising strategy for sustainable groundnut cultivation, reducing dependency on chemical fertilizers while improving plant growth performance.

FUTURE SCOPE

- Evaluate physiological traits including chlorophyll index, photosynthetic rate and N-fixation efficiency.
- Conduct biochemical analyses (peroxidase, catalase, protein content).
- Study pod yield, kernel weight and oil content under field conditions.
- Integrate OGPs with biofertilizers for enhanced synergistic responses.
- Explore metabolomic and transcriptomic changes induced by organic promoters.

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