Varying intra-row spacing and mulching effect on growth and yield of parthenocarpic cucumber (*Cucumis sativus* L.) under protected condition

**Abstract**

A field experiment was conducted during two consecutive seasons 2023 and 2024 at the Horticultural Research Farm, Department of Horticulture, Naini Agricultural Institute, SHUATS, Prayagraj to assess the effect of different mulching materials and plant spacings on growth, flowering, and yield of cucumber. The experiment was laid out in a Randomized Complete Block Design (RCBD) with three replications and fifteen treatment combinations comprising five mulches- Double Shaded Mulch (M1), Transparent Mulch (M2), Black Mulch (M3), Straw Mulch (M4), and No Mulch (M5)-and three spacings: 70 × 30 cm (S1), 70 × 45 cm (S2), and 70 × 60 cm (S3). The results revealed significant differences in all observed parameters. Among mulches, straw mulch (M4) showed superior performance in most traits, recording the highest fruit length (14.874 and 18.870 cm), fruit girth (12.498 and 14.477 cm), fruit weight (123.998 and 124.206 g), and yield (15.800 and 16.923 q/1000 m²). In terms of spacing, 70 × 45 cm (S2) spacing significantly improved vegetative and yield traits, yielding the highest vine length (3.64 and 4.87 m), fruit length (16.767 and 21.145 cm), and yield (16.740 and 17.863 q/1000 m²). The interaction of M4S2 (Straw Mulch + 70 × 45 cm) consistently produced the best results across both years, with maximum vine length, fruit size, and yield (18.00 and 19.123 q/1000 m²).

**Keywords:** Black Mulch, Cucumber, Double shaded mulch, Mulching and Transparent Mulch.

**Introduction**

Cultivated cucumber is botanically known as *Cucumis sativus* L. and is native to India. It has the diploid chromosome number of 2n=14 and *Cucumis hardwickii* is the probable progenitor of cultivated cucumber. Cucumber is one of the important monoecious annual vegetable crops in the Cucurbitaceae family that has been cultivated by man for over 3000 years. Cucumber is an essential and commercially popular cucurbitaceous vegetable crop holding a coveted position in the vegetable market. They are the largest producer of biological water among the vegetables crops and are easily digestible and therefore are recommended even to patients suffering from weakness or other illnesses It is a rich source of valuable nutrients and bioactive compounds used not only as food but also in therapeutic medicine and cosmetology. Cucumber is very popular vegetable throughout the world for its crispy taste and texture. The immature fruits of cucumber are used as salad and for making pickles, raita and brined on commercial scale (Tewari *et al.* 2024). Cucumber is used for different purpose like as salad, table purpose and pickling but mostly used as salad purpose. The fruit of cucumber is said to have cooling effect, prevents constipation and checks jaundice and indigestion. It contains (96.3g) water, (0.4g) protein, (0.1g) fat, (0.3g) minerals, (0.4g) fibre, (2.5g) carbohydrate, (13Kcal) energy, (10mg) calcium, (25mg) phosphorus, (1.5mg) iron, (0.33mg) thiamine, (0.2mg) niacin, (7mg) vitamin C per (100g) edible portion. Protected cultivation technology is the advance cultivation technique wherein the micro climate surrounding the crop is partially or fully controlled and modified as per the requirement of the crop (Tejaswini *et al*., 2024). Protected cultivation technology is based on the principle of greenhouse effect. Greenhouse effect is the phenomenon of increase in the ambient temperature, due to the production of excess greenhouse gas like carbon dioxide. The covering material of the green house structure acts in a similar way, as it is transparent and permeable to shorter wave radiation but does not allow the longer wave radiation to escape outside. During the day time, solar radiations with the shorter wavelength enters and penetrate through the greenhouse covering material and gets reflected from the ground surface. The reflected radiation becomes long wave radiation and gets entrapped inside the greenhouse structure by the covering material. This causes the increase in the greenhouse temperature. A comparative study revealed that the protected cultivation of high value crop like cucumber is highly remunerative as compared to open field 3 cultivation. Even though the cost of cultivation is higher under protected cultivation, the higher yield of cucumber with high net return can be achieved under polyhouse condition as compared to open field condition (Kumar *et al*., 2014). Protected cultivation of vegetable has emerged as an alternate production technology to overcome several biotic and abiotic stresses and to break the seasonal barrier to production. It gives a boost to the nutrient and irrigation use efficiency along with the proper utilization of natural resources. This technology is being employed popularly for the year round and off-season production of high value commercial crops like capsicum, tomato and cucumber. Increased yield with high photosynthetic efficiency and reduction in transpirational loss are some of the added advantages associated with this technology. The performance of cucumber grown inside the shade net was comparatively superior in comparison to open field condition and total fruit yield recorded from shade net with 35, 50 and 75 per cent shading were 238.4, 245.2 and 273.2 q/ha, respectively which were 8 to 10 times more than open field condition i.e. 36.3 q/ha (Kaur et al., 2017). In addition to that, the infestation by pest and diseases under protected condition is scaled-down as compared to open field condition as it is covered and isolated structure from outside environment. Infestation of sucking pests like aphids and white fly was subsided considerably under the shade net house of 35% (Kaur *et al*., 2021). Success in the cultivation of cucumber under polyhouse condition during the off season can be attained by the use of suitable cucumber hybrid like parthenocarpic variety or gynoecious hybrid along with adequate incorporation of nutrient which becomes indispensable for the growth and development. Cucumber gynoecious varieties are those which produce pistillate flowers predominantly and have the ability to set fruit without pollination and fertilization even under lower temperature and in short day condition (Khadka *et al.*, 2017) making efficient utilization of the land, water, nutrient and other resources. These plants produce fruit that are mild in flavour, soft seeded to seedless in nature, and have a thin edible skin that requires little peeling. However, use of gynoecious hybrids for cultivation under tropical climatic condition is not recommended as they are highly unstable at high temperature condition. Sex modification is a major constraint associated with the cultivation of gynoecious hybrid under tropical climatic condition and will produce deformed and bitter fruit which will result in a reduced marketable value as it is not preferred by the consumer. Cucumber is well grown in warm, temperate and cool tropical regions of the world. The growth and development of crop are favoured by temperature above 20°C, however it can also survive at 32°C temperature. It grows well under high light intensity and humidity conditions but is susceptible to frost. Due to various biotic and abiotic factors the cucumber cultivation is more successful under protected conditions. The protected cultivation technology is utilized for the production of high quality and high yield. It increases the harvesting efficiency with greater yield of straight fruits exhibiting more plants per acre due to closer rows and adequate spacing (**Singh and Aulakh 2018**). Cucumber yield and quality is characterized by many factors including genetic, agronomic and environmental factors. There is very less information available on the production of cucumber under protected condition in India (Zurbano *et al.,* 2021). Both spacing and mulching greatly effects the cucumber production Mulching is one of the profitable agronomic measures of protecting crop from the vagaries of weather. It helps in conserving soil moisture, controlling weed infestations, regulate soil temperature and most importantly control soil borne diseases of crop. The use of plastic mulch is one of the measures of protecting vegetable crops from the attack root-knot nematode (*Meloidogyne spp.*), posited that beneficial yield of some vegetable crops to plastic mulches have traditional been attributed to altered soil temperatures, enhanced moisture conservation and weed control under the plastic mulch. Black plastic is often used in the spring to warm root zone temperatures (Torres-Olivar *et al*., 2018). Management of proper density under polyhouse boost up the production per unit area by utilizing the available space and nutrients applied. The response of crops to mulch includes earlier production (Jha et al, 2018), greater total yield and reduced insect and disease problems. Use of mulches provides suitable microclimatic conditions for producing superior branch characteristics, number of fruits per plant, fruit size, total yield and marketable yield of cucumber. The type of mulching material used and color of plastic also effects the yield and quality parameters of cucumbers. In recent years a great deal of research work has been reported on the uses of mulching in vegetable crops. Plant density contributes to marketable yield in the various ways such as plant’s ability to obtain the sun light needed for growth and adequate air movement around the plant to reduce risk of fungus and insect problems. And has been identified as key management practices for getting maximum marketable yields from greenhouse crops (Kishor *et al.,*2010). The main objectives of mulching are weed control; conservation of soil moisture and modification of soil temperatureMulching is a non-chemical weed control crop production technique which is effective alternatives to herbicides

**Method & Material**

The field experiment was conducted during thetwo consecutive seasons *at* Horticultural Research Farm, Department of Horticulture, Naini Agricultural Institute, SHUATS, Prayagraj. The experiment was laid out into Randomized Complete Block Design (RCBD) with 3 replications with following treatments T1=M1 X S1, T2=M2 X S1, T3=M3 X S1, T4=M4 X S1, T5 =M5 X S1, T6=M1 X S2,T7 =M2 X S2, T8 =M3 X S2, T9=M4 X S2, T10=M5 X S2 T11=M1 X S3 T12=M2 X S3, T13= M3 X S3, T14=M4 X S3 T15=M5 X S3. Standard culture practices recommended for cucumber were followed uniformly in all experimental plots, Where M1= Double Shaded Mulch, M2 = Transparent mulch, M3= Black Mulch, M4 = Straw Mulch M5= No Mulch, S1 = 70 cm X 30 cm, S2= 70cm X 45 cm and S3= 70 cm X 60 cm.

**Parameters observed**: Vine length (m), Days to 50 % flowering, Internodal length, Days to first fruit harvest, Fruit Length, Fruit girth, Fruit weight, Yield per hac.

**Result and Discussion**

**Vine Length**

As data presented in table 4.6 A and B in a displayed in Fig 4.6 A and B. It is clear from the data that among the various mulches maximum vine length was noticed in M5 (4.059 and 5.294m). It was followed by M4 (4.041 and 5.276 m) both year of experiment. Whereas minimum vine length was reported in M1 (3.188 m). In case of spacings maximum vine length was noticed in S3 (3.64 and 4.87 m) followed by S2 (3.61 m 4.840) and S1 (3.57 m and 4.803m). In case of Interaction maximum vine length was noticed M5S1 (4.4143m 5.378m) followed by M4S1 (4.130 and 5.365 m) and M5S3(4.123 and 5.358m) whereas minimum in M1S1 and M3S3(3.000m and 4.235m) during both year of experiment.

**4.2 Days to 50% flowering**

It is clear from the data that among the various mulches minimum Days to 50% flowering was noticed in M4 (40.667 and 43.659) It was followed by M1 (42.00 and 44.632) and M3 (42.333 and 46.241) whereas maximum (43. 889 and 47.780) during both year of experiment. In case of spacings minimum Days to 50% flowering was noticed in S2 (39.333 and 43.406) followed by (42.867 and 45.993) whereas maximum during both year of experiment (46.067 and 48.044). In case of Interaction minimum Days to 50% flowering was found in treatment combination (37.667 and 39.750) M3S2 was followed by 39.333 and 42.253 (M2S2) whereas maximum M2S1 (48.333 and 50.233) during both year 2023 and 2024 respectively. These findings are accordance with Singh *et al.,* (2007**)**.

**Table 1: Effect of spacing and mulching effect on growth and yield**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  **Treatments** | **Vine length (m)** |  **Days to 50 % flowering**  | **Internodal length**  | **Days to first fruit harvest**  |
| **Mulching**  | **2023** | **2024** | **2023** | **2024** | **2023** | **2024** | **2023** | **2024** |
| M1 | 3.188 | 4.423 | 42.000 | 44.632 | 9.720 | 14.060 | 57.778 | 58.978 |
| M2 | 3.407 | 4.642 | 43.889 | 47.780 | 9.927 | 14.201 | 53.889 | 55.089 |
| M3 | 3.33 | 4.568 | 42.333 | 46.241 | 9.440 | 13.508 | 51.889 | 53.089 |
| M4 | 4.041 | 5.276 | 40.667 | 43.659 | 9.300 | 13.481 | 50.333 | 51.533 |
| M5 | 4.059 | 5.294 | 43.889 | 46.760 | 10.077 | 14.477 | 54.111 | 55.311 |
| **SE(m)** | 0.493 | 1.110 | 0.385 | **0.385** | 0.097 | 0.123 | 2.243 | 0.431 |
| C.D. | 1.435 | 3.231 | 1.120 | **1.120** | 0.281 | 0.357 | N/A | 1.255 |
| **Spacing** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| S1 | 3.57 | 4.803 | 42.867 | 45.993 | 9.688 | 13.933 | 53.000 | 54.200 |
| S2 | 3.61 | 4.841 | 39.333 | 43.406 | 9.870 | 13.344 | 45.000 | 46.200 |
| S3 | 3.64 | 4.877 | 46.067 | 48.044 | 10.520 | 14.558 | 56.800 | 58.000 |
| **SE(m)** | 0.382 | 0.859 | 0.385 | 0.075 | 0.075 | 0.095 | 1.737 | 0.334 |
| **C.D.** | 2.485 | 0.859 | 1.120 | 0.218 | 0.218 | 0.277 | 5.058 | 0.972 |
| **Spacing** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| M1 X S1 | 3.000 | 4.235 | 43.333 | 44.437 | 9.760 | 14.073 | 53.000 | 54.200 |
| M2 X S1 | 3.112 | 4.347 | 48.333 | 50.230 | 9.800 | 14.244 | 54.667 | 55.867 |
| M3 X S1 | 3.457 | 4.692 | 42.333 | 43.777 | 9.500 | 13.566 | 52.000 | 53.200 |
| M4 X S1 | 4.130 | 5.365 | 40.667 | 42.750 | 9.400 | 13.305 | 50.667 | 51.867 |
| M5 X S1 | 4.143 | 5.378 | 43.667 | 46.773 | 9.980 | 14.478 | 54.667 | 55.867 |
| M1 X S2 | 3.132 | 4.367 | 39.309 | 44.693 | 9.900 | 13.626 | 53.333 | 54.533 |
| M2 X S2 | 3.444 | 4.679 | 39.333 | 42.253 | 9.600 | 13.116 | 49.000 | 50.200 |
| M3 X S2 | 3.543 | 4.778 | 39.333 | 46.210 | 9.700 | 12.950 | 47.667 | 48.867 |
| M4 X S2 | 4.000 | 5.235 | 37.667 | 39.750 | 9.500 | 13.139 | 45.667 | 46.867 |
| M5 X S2 | 3.912 | 5.147 | 40.667 | 44.123 | 9.850 | 13.891 | 49.333 | 50.534 |
| M1 X S3 | 3.432 | 4.667 | 46.333 | 49.710 | 10.50 | 14.480 | 57.000 | 58.200 |
| M2 X S3 | 3.665 | 4.900 | 47.667 | 50.857 | 10.980 | 15.243 | 58.000 | 59.200 |
| M3 X S3 | 3.000 | 4.235 | 45.333 | 48.737 | 10.120 | 14.007 | 56.000 | 57.200 |
| M4 X S3 | 3.993 | 5.228 | 43.667 | 41.533 | 10.000 | 14.000 | 54.667 | 55.867 |
| M5 X S3 | 4.123 | 5.358 | 47.333 | 49.383 | 11.000 | 15.062 | 58.333 | 59.533 |
| **SE(m)** | **0.493** | 1.922 | 0.385 | 0.666 | 0.167 | 0.212 | 3.884 | 2.173 |
| **C.D.** | **2.485** | 5.596 | 1.120 | 1.939 | N/A | N/A | N/A | 0.746 |

 **Continued…..**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Treatments** |  **Fruit Length**  |  **Fruit girth**  |  **Fruit weight**  |  **Yield per hac.**  |
| **Mulching**  |  **2023** |  **2024** |  **2023** | **2024** | **2023** | **2024** | **2023** | **2024** |
| M1 | 14.131 | 18.000 | 11.330 | 13.311 | 114.997 | 115.717 | 14.833 | 15.956 |
| M2 | 13.527 | 17.896 | 10.663 | 12.644 | 105.665 | 109.960 | 14.566 | 15.689 |
| M3 | 14.387 | 18.857 | 11.397 | 13.377 | 119.998 | 122.571 | 15.233 | 16.356 |
| M4 | 14.874 | 18.870 | 12.498 | 14.477 | 123.998 | 124.206 | 15.800 | 16.923 |
| M5 | 13.101 | 17.087 | 10.665 | 12.646 | 100.665 | 102.647 | 14.333 | 15.456 |
| **SE(m)** | 0.206 | 0.147 | 0.074 | 0.116 | 0.945 | 1.002 | 2.044 | 1.180 |
| C.D. | 0.600 | 0.427 | 0.216 | 0.338 | 2.751 | 2.916 | N/A | 3.437 |
| **Spacing**  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| S1 | 13.341 | 16.832 | 9.038 | 11.019 | 112.198 | 114.908 | 14.900 | 16.023 |
| S2 | 16.767 | 21.145 | 12.898 | 14.878 | 136.398 | 138.307 | 16.74 | 17.863 |
| S3 | 11.905 | 16.449 | 11.996 | 13.976 | 90.597 | 91.845 | 13.180 | 14.303 |
| **SE(m)** |  | 0.114 | 0.057 | 0.090 | 0.732 | **0.776** | 0.914 | 0.914 |
| **C.D.** | 0.600 | 0.331 | 0.167 | 0.262 | 2.131 | 2.259 | 2.662 | 2.662 |
| **Spacing**  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| M1 X S1 | 10.996 | 16.980 | 10.996 | 12.977 | 53.000 | 114.287 | 15.000 | 16.123 |
| M2 X S1 | 10.000 | 15.843 | 10.000 | 11.980 | 54.667 | 113.130 | 14.700 | 15.823 |
| M3 X S1 | 7.197 | 17.967 | 7.197 | 9.177 | 52.000 | 119.880 | 15.200 | 16.323 |
| M4 X S1 | 8.000 | 18.830 | 8.000 | 9.980 | 50.667 | 120.190 | 15.500 | 16.623 |
| M5 X S1 | 8.999 | 14.540 | 8.999 | 10.980 | 54.667 | 107.053 | 14.300 | 15.423 |
| M1 X S2 | 14.995 | 21.260 | 14.995 | 16.977 | 53.333 | 136.180 | 16.500 | 17.623 |
| M2 X S2 | 13.997 | 20.430 | 13.997 | 15.980 | 49.000 | 135.160 | 16.200 | 17.323 |
| M3 X S2 | 11.997 | 21.647 | 11.997 | 13.977 | 47.667 | 146.440 | 17.00 | 18.123 |
| M4 X S2 | 13.500 | 22.250 | 13.500 | 15.477 | 45.667 | 149.540 | 18.00 | 19.123 |
| M5 X S2 | 10.000 | 20.137 | 10.000 | 11.980 | 49.333 | 124.217 | 16.00 | 17.123 |
| M1 X S3 | 8.000 | 21.260 | 8.000 | 9.980 | 57.000 | 96.683 | 13.00 | 14.123 |
| M2 X S3 | 7.993 | 20.430 | 7.993 | 9.973 | 58.000 | 81.590 | 12.799 | 13.922 |
| M3 X S3 | 14.997 | 21.647 | 14.997 | 16.977 | 56.000 | 101.393 | 13.500 | 14.623 |
| M4 X S3 | 15.993 | 22.250 | 15.993 | 17.973 | 54.667 | 102.887 | 13.900 | 15.023 |
| M5 X S3 | 12.996 | 20.137 | 12.996 | 14.977 | 58.333 | 76.670 | 12.699 | 13.822 |
| **SE(m)** | 0.128 | 0.254 | 0.128 | 0.201 | 3.884 | 1.735 | 2.044 | 2.044 |
| **C.D.** | 0.373 | 0.739 | 0.373 | 0.585 | N/A | 5.051 | N/A |  |

**Internodal length (cm)**

It is clear from the data that among the various mulches minimum Internodal length (9.300 and13.481 cm) was noticed in M4. It was followed by M3 (9.300 and 13.508 cm) and M1 (9.720 and 13.508 cm) whereas maximum internodal length (10.077 and 14.477 cm) was noticed in M5. In case of Spacings minimum Internodal lengthwas noticed in S2 8.870 and 13.344 cm) treatment combination was followed S1 (9.688 and 13.933cm ) and S3 (10.520 and 14.558 cm). In case of Interaction minimum Internodal length was noticed in M4S1 (9.400 and 13.305) followed by M3S1 (9.500 and 13.305 cm) whereas maximum in M5S3 (11.000 and 15.062) during both year of trail 2023 and 2024 respectively. These results are accordance with Arshad *et al.,* (2014) and Kumar (2014).

**Days to first fruit Harvest (Days after Sowing)**

It is clear from the data that among the various mulches minimum days to first fruit harvest was noticed in M4 (50.333 and 51.533) followed by M3 (51.889 and 53.089) and M2 (53.889 and ab53.089) whereas maximum in M1 (57.778 and 58.978) during both year of experiment. In case of spacings minimum days to first fruit Harvest was noticed in S2 (45.00 and 46.200) followed by S1 (53.00 and 54.200) and S3 (56.800 and 58.00) in both trail. In case of Interaction minimum Days to first fruit Harvest was noticed in M5S2 (45.00 and 46.867) followed by M4S2 (45.667 and 46.867) and M3S2 (47.667 and 48.867) and maximum in M4S3(58.333 and 59.533) during both year of experiment.

**Fuit length**

It is clear from the data that among the various mulches maximum fruit length (14.874 and 18.870 cm) was noticed in It was followed by M3 (14.387 and 18.857 cm) and minimum in M5 (13.101 and 17.087 cm) during both year of experiment. In case of spacings maximum fruit length was noticed in S2 (16.767 and 21.145 cm) followed by S1 (13.341 and 16.832 cm ) whereas minimum in S3 (11.905 cm) during both year of experiment. In case of Interaction maximum fruit length was recorded in M4S2 (17.927 and 22.250 cm) it was significantly at par with M1S2 (7.077 and 21.260 cm) and M3S2 (16.970 and 21.647cm) and minimum in M1S3 (11.847 and 5.760 cm) during both year of experiment. These results are accordance with Dhillon *et al.,* (2017).

**Fruit girth (cm)**

It is clear from the data that among the various mulches maximum fruit girth was noticed in M4 (12.498 and 14.477 cm) It was followed by M3 (13.377 and 13.377 cm) and M1 (11.330 and 11.330) during both year of experiment. In case of spacings maximum fruit girth was noticed in S2 (12.898 and 14.878 cm) was followed by S3 and S1 (9.038 and 11.019 cm) . In case of Interaction maximum fruit girth was noticed in treatment combination was found in M4S3 (15.993 and 17.973 cm) followed by M3S3 (14.997 and 14.997 cm) M5S3 ( 12.996 and 14.977 cm) and whereas minimum in M3S1 (7.197 and 9.177 cm ) during both year of experiment. Similar result were found in the findings of Prabhu *et al.,* (2006).

**Fruit weight**

It is clear from the data that among the various mulches maximum fruit weight was noticed in (123.998 and 124.206 gm) It was followed by M3 (119.998 and 122.571 gm) and M1 (114.997 and115.717) both year of experiment. In case of spacings maximum fruit weight was found in (136.398 and 138.307 gm) followed by S1 (112.198 and 114.908 gm) and S3(90.597 and 114.908gm) during both year of experiment. In case of Interaction maximum fruit girth was noticed was found in M4S2 (149.997 and 114.908) followed by M3S2 (144.00 and 119.880) and M3S2 (144.00 and 146.400gm) in treatment combination was followed by whereas maximum during both year of experiment. These results are similar with the Aiyelaagbe *et al.,* (2007).

**Yield per 1000m2**

It is clear from the data that among the various mulches maximum yield per 1000 m2 was noticed in combination M4 (15.800 and 16.923 q) It was followed by M3 (15.233 and 16.356) and M1 (14.833 and 15.956 q) whereas minimum in M5 (14.333 and 15.456) during both year of experiment. In case of spacings maximum yield per 1000 m2 (16.74 and 17.863 q) was noticed in treatment S2 followed by S1 (14.900 and 16.023q) and S3 (13.180 and 14. 303 q). In case of Interaction maximum yield was noticed in M4S2 (18.00 and 19.123 q) followed by M3S2 (17.00 and 18.123 q) and M1S2 (16.500 and 18.123 q) treatment combination was followed by whereas it was minimum in M5S3 (12.699 and 13.822 q) during both year of experiment. Similar findings were reported by Narayanamma *et al.,* (2010).

**Conclusion**

The present study revealed that the application of different mulching materials and plant spacing significantly influenced vine growth, phenological traits, and yield attributes of the crop across both years of experimentation (2023 and 2024). Among mulching treatments, M4 consistently performed the best, resulting in maximum vine length, earlier flowering, reduced internodal length, early fruit harvest, and superior fruit traits such as length, girth, weight, and yield per 1000 m². Spacing treatment S2 (medium spacing) proved to be optimal, exhibiting better plant architecture, early flowering, higher fruit quality, and superior yield performance compared to S1 and S3.

The interaction effects between mulch and spacing treatments further highlighted the synergistic impact on crop performance. The combination M4S2 emerged as the most effective treatment, significantly enhancing vine length, early flowering and fruiting, fruit size, weight, and overall yield per 1000 m². This was closely followed by M3S2 and M1S2 in most parameters. Conversely, the lowest performance in growth and yield traits was observed in combinations like M5S3 and M1S1.

**References**

1. Aiyelaagbe, I.O., Adegbite, I.A. and T.A. Adedokun 2007. Response of cucumber to composted city refuse in South-Western Nigeria. *African Crop Science Conference Proceedings*, 8: 333-37.
2. Arshad, I., Ali, W. and Khan, Z. A. 2014. Effect of different levels of NPK fertilizers on the growth and yield of greenhouse cucumber (*Cucumis sativus* L.) By using drip irrigation technology. *Innternational Journal of Ressearch,* 1(8): 650-60.
3. Dhillon, N. S., Sharma, P., Sharma, K. D., & Kumar, P. (2017**)**. Effect of plant density and shoot pruning on yield and quality of polyhouse grown cucumber. *Environment and Ecology*, *35*(4), 3023-3026. *9*(5), 634-642.
4. Jha, R. K., Neupane, R. B., Khatiwada, A., Pandit, S., & Dahal, B. R. (2018). Effect of different spacing and mulching on growth and yield of Okra (Abelmoschus esculentus L.) in Chitwan, Nepal. *Journal of Agriculture and Natural Resources*, *1*(1), 168-178.
5. Khadka, S., Paudel, S., Sapkota, S., & Shrestha, S. (2020). Effect of mulching materials and plant spacing on growth, sex expression and yield of bitter gourd (Momordica charantia) cv. Paalee in Chitwan, Nepal.
6. Kishor, S., Tomar, B. S., Singh, B. and Munshi, A. D. (2010). Effect of season, spacing and planting time on seed yield and quality in cucumber. *Indian Journal of Horitculture*, 67(1): 66-69.
7. Kumar, R., Sood, S., Sharma, S., Kasana, R. C., Pathania, V. L., Singh, B., & Singh, R. D. (2014). Effect of plant spacing and organic mulch on growth, yield and quality of natural sweetener plant Stevia and soil fertility in western Himalayas. *International Journal of Plant Production*, *8*(3), 311-334.
8. Narayanamma, M., Chiranjeevis, C.H., Ahmed, R., and Chaturvedi, A. 2010. Influence of integrated nutrient management on the yield, nutrient status and quality of cucumber (*Cucumis sativus* L.). *Vegetable Science*, 37(1): 61-63.
9. Prabhu, M., Natarajan, S., Srinivasan, K. and Pugalendhi, L. 2006. Integrated nutrient management in cucumber. *Indian Journal of Agrculture Research*, 40(2): 123-26.
10. Singh, B. & Kumar, M. 2007. Techno-economic feasibility of Israeli and indigenously designed naturally ventilated greenhouses for year-round cucumber cultivation. *Acta Hortic*., 710: 535-538.
11. Singh, L., & Aulakh, S. S. (2018). Effect of mulching on cultivation, weed control and moisture conservation in Bitter gourd (Momordica charantia L.). *Int. J. Curr. Microbiol. A Sci*, *7*(7), 3341-3350.
12. Tejaswini, T., Varma, L. R., Verma, P., Kumar, P. A., & Prajapati, R. I. (2018). Studies on interaction effect of plant spacing on different varieties with respect to growth and yield of broccoli (Brassica oleracea var. italica. L). *J. Pharmacogn. Phytochem*, *7*(5), 733-736.
13. Tewari, V., Behera, S. R., Pandey, R., & Panwar, P. (2024). Growth and Yield of Summer Squash (Cucurbita pepo L.) as Influenced by Different Coloured Plastic Mulches in the Tarai Region of Uttarakhand. *Journal of Scientific Research and Reports*, *30*(6), 157-164.
14. Torres-Olivar, V., Ibarra-Jiménez, L., Cárdenas-Flores, A., Lira-Saldivar, R. H., Valenzuela-Soto, J. H., & Castillo-Campohermoso, M. A. (2018). Changes induced by plastic film mulches on soil temperature and their relevance in growth and fruit yield of pickling cucumber. *Acta Agriculturae Scandinavica, Section B—Soil & Plant Science*, *68*(2), 97-103.
15. Zurbano, L., Bellere, A., & de Asis, G. (2021). Growth, yield and quality of bitter gourd (Momordica charantia L.) under organic fertilization schemes. *Journal of Applied Horticulture*, *23*(2), 193-199.