

The Influence of Irrigation Depths in the Growth of Chrysanthemum, Cultivated in Pots, in a Greenhouse in the Northwest Region of Espírito Santo

ABSTRACT

Chrysanthemum is one of the most important plants in the national and international market of ornamental plants since it has relevant commercial value and presents short cycle and extensive diversity of inflorescences and colors. The present work aimed to evaluate the productive performance of the Puritan cultivar grown in pots under different irrigation depths, in greenhouse conditions in the northwest region of Espírito Santo. The experiment was set up in a completely randomized design with 6 treatments defined by crop evapotranspiration daily replacements (ETc) of 50% 75%, 100%; 125%, 150% and 175%, with 20 repetitions (pots) each treatment. An auto compensating trickle irrigation system was used, a dripper per pot, flowing 1.3 liters per hour. The evaluations were made at 90 days after planting, when measurements of fresh and dry mass of roots, fresh and dry mass of shoot system, plant height, stem diameter, dry mass of the flowers and flowers diameter were performed. Under the conditions of the study, daily replacements of 175% of the crop evapotranspiration, which corresponded to daily average depths of 12.25 mm, conferred the best results in all evaluated parameters.

Keywords: *Crop evapotranspiration, irrigation management, Dendranthema grandiflora, analysis of growing, Floriculture.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The worldwide commercialization of flowers is in constant growth and development, making that the floriculture stops characterizing itself like secondary activity in the national market. The flower trade has been growing in recent years.

In Espírito Santo, the production of ornamental plants occupies the area of 163 hectares and is highlighted in seventeen cities. The sector promotes the creating of approximately 8,000 jobs throughout the production chain and mobilizes more than 10 million reais per year. Santa Teresa and Guaçuí are the most notorious cities in this activity [1].

Floriculture is a widely competitive sector, ranging from flower cultivation, cutting, potting or gardening, to the production of seedlings of large ornamental trees, seeds and bulbs [2]. The production cycle of some ornamental plants is short, guaranteeing the rapid turn of capital. The cultivation of flowers requires the use of technological innovations, technical understanding, and a competent system of trade and distribution [3].

Chrysanthemum (*Dendranthema grandiflora*, Tzevelev) is among the most relevant in the international and Brazilian market of ornamental plants. It is a short-cycle flower that manifests an extensive diversity of colors and types of inflorescences, allowing versatility of use [4].

The cultivation of chrysanthemums is an excellent possibility of revenues that mainly involves family farming, which normally has small properties, insufficient for the production of other crops, but suitable for the use of protected environment [5]. In addition, it is a flower of relevant commercial value that requires photoperiodism and extensive technology for its production. For this reason, their cultivation is usually conducted in protected environments for guaranteeing flowers throughout the year [6].

Despite its agronomic relevance, the technical-scientific knowledge about the management of irrigation for the chrysanthemum growth is still incipient and requires dedication and study to understand its water needs.

In irrigated agriculture, growth and definition of water use efficiency levels are copiously complex and demand interdisciplinary understanding and thinking [7]. On the other hand, the lack of adequate management contributes to the failure of plant development, losses in production and in the quality of the final product. Although it is cultivated in smaller areas, when it is oversized, water consumption of chrysanthemum cultivation can contribute to the reduction of scarce water sources, evidencing the need for accurate scaling [8].

Considering the questions above, this study aimed to evaluate the productive performance of chrysanthemum Puritan cultivar grown in pots under different irrigation depths in greenhouse conditions, in the northwestern region of Espírito Santo, in order to increase and enhance the quality of the flowers produced in this location.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The experiment was conducted in the experimental field of the Federal Institute of Espírito Santo - Campus Itapina, located in Colatina - ES (19°29' South; 40°45' West; 62 m). The climate of the region is Tropical Aw, according to the climatic classification of Köppen [9], characterized by the irregularity of rain and high temperatures.

The experiment was carried out from 04/08/2018 to 07/06/2018, in an agricultural greenhouse with an area of 125 m² and 3 meters high, arranged in the east west direction, covered in an arc with transparent plastic of 150 microns and black polypropylene fabric with 50% shading. External weather conditions were by an ONSET® weather station installed next to the experiment and internal conditions recorded by a WatchDog® Model 200 Data Logger.

Through the climatic variations registered by the weather station, the reference evapotranspiration (ET_o) was estimated using the Penman-Monteith method FAO-56 Standard [10], Equation 01.

$$ET_o = \frac{0.408\Delta(Rn - G) + \gamma \frac{900}{T + 273} u_2(e_s - e_a)}{\Delta + \gamma(1 + 0.34 u_2)} \quad (1)$$

in which ETo is the daily reference evapotranspiration ($mm.d^{-1}$); Rn is the daily radiation balance ($MJ.m^{-2}.d^{-1}$); G is the daily flow of heat in the soil ($MJ.m^{-2}.d^{-1}$); T is the daily average air temperature ($^{\circ}C$); u_2 is the daily average wind speed at 2 m in height ($m.s^{-1}$); e_s is the saturation pressure of the daily average water vapor (kPa); e_a is the daily average water vapor pressure (kPa); Δ is the slope of the vapor pressure curve at the point of T ($kPa.^{\circ}C^{-1}$) and γ is the psychrometric coefficient ($kPa.^{\circ}C^{-1}$).

The cultivar of the chrysanthemum chosen was the Puritan, which has a large inflorescence and white coloration with compound petals. The cuttings were planted, four per pot, equally spaced, into number 13 pots ($0.8 dm^3$) previously filled with the mixture of 70% substrate Tropstrato HT Vegetables and 30% of subsoil inert soil.

For the rooting, the pots were arranged side by side, irrigated and covered with transparent polyethylene plastic for 7 days, to maintain the moisture of the pots during the rooting period. On the 14th day after planting, when the plants presented around 5 to 6 developed leaves, the pinch (apex removal) was performed to stimulate the development of the lateral branches.

From planting to the 21st day, for better vegetative growth, the cuttings received 4 hours of artificial lighting a day from 8:00 pm to 0:00 am. For this, 25 W fluorescent lamps were spaced 1.5 x 1.5 m at a height of 2 m.

The treatments started on the 22nd day after planting, when the pots were kept on ceramic bricks, spaced 0.3 m x 0.3 m, to avoid fixation and root contact with the soil and contamination by diseases.

The treatments corresponded to daily replacements of 50% (T1), 75% (T2), 100% (T3), 125% (T4), 150% (T5) and 175% (T6) of the crop evapotranspiration (ETc) assembled in a completely randomized design with 20 repetitions (pots) each treatment.

The crop evapotranspiration (ETc) was determined daily through six selected pots by the drainage lysimeter method. At the end of the day, a known volume was added in each pot and after the drainage was complete, the stored volume, which corresponds to the crop evapotranspiration (ETc), could be determined by Equation 2.

$$ETc = \frac{Av - Dv}{A} \quad (2)$$

where

ETc : crop evapotranspiration ($mm d^{-1}$);

Av : applied volume (L);

Dv : drained volume (L);

A : Pot area (m^2).

The average ETc , determined at the end of the day, was applied the next day through an auto compensating trickle irrigation system flowing 1.3 liters per hour, with a dripper per pot. The irrigations were automated and performed with a single daily pulse, in which each sector represented a corresponding treatment. In order to calculate the irrigation time, the volume (liters per pot) was considered in relation the pot surface area (m^2), the treatment level and the dripper flow ($L h^{-1}$).

Fertilization and other cultural treatments were done according to the recommendations for this crop [4] and growth regulators were not used.

The evaluations were done 90 days after planting (DAP), when the plants had all the inflorescences open. Fresh mass of the root system (FMRS), dry mass of the root system (DMRS), fresh mass of shoot system (FMSS) and dry mass of shoot system (DMSS), plant height (PH), stem diameter (SD), dry mass of the flowers (DMF) and flower diameter (FD) were measured.

The data obtained were submitted to analysis of variance at 5% probability using the R software [11]. When significant, by the F test, regression models were adjusted to demonstrate the influence of the depths applied in each treatment on the development of the chrysanthemum.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the whole crop cycle, the average evapotranspiration in the external environment of the agricultural greenhouse, estimated by the FAO 56 Penman-Monteith model, was 2.70 mm d⁻¹, while the maximum and minimum temperatures recorded were 34.20°C and 13.11°C, respectively, with an average range of 22.9°C (Fig. 1).

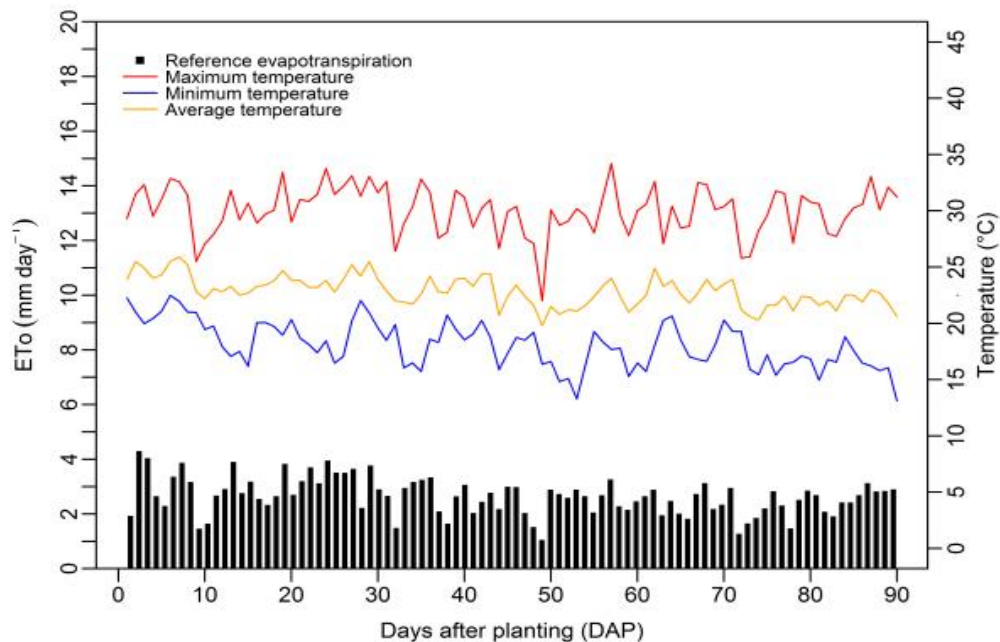


Fig. 1. Daily values of reference evapotranspiration (ETo), maximum, average and minimum temperatures (°C) occurred outside the greenhouse during the period of production of the Chrysanthemums.

The air temperature inside the greenhouse reached a maximum value of 46.4°C, minimum of 14.1°C, with an average value for the growing period of 30,25°C (Fig. 2A). The maximum relative humidity was 91.5% and the minimum was 20.7%, with an average range of 57.5% throughout the period (Fig. 2B).

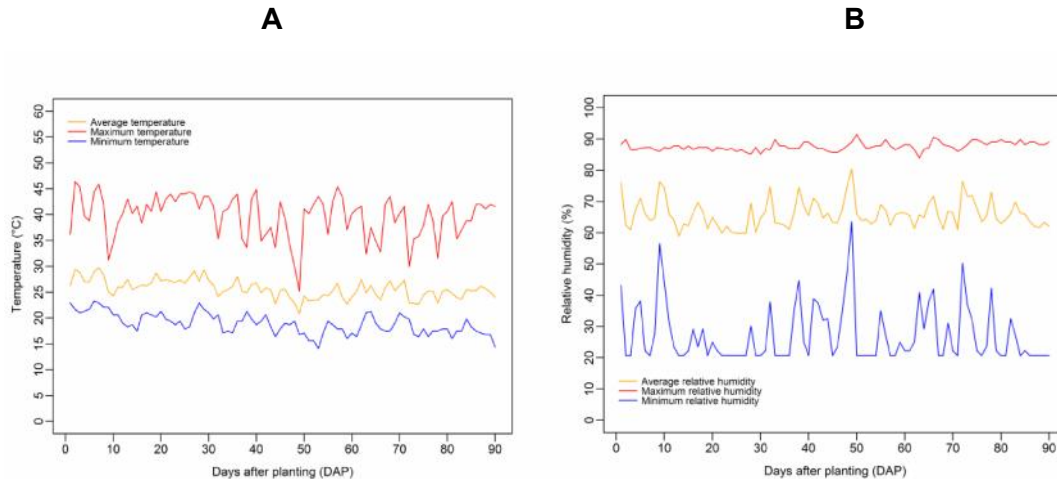


Fig. 2. Daily values of maximum, average and minimum temperature (°C) (A) and maximum, average and minimum humidity (%) (B) occurred inside the greenhouse during the production period.

According to Petry [12], the ideal temperature range for chrysanthemum cultivation is from 18°C to 25°C. High temperatures, between 27°C and 32°C, according to Whealy *et al.* [13], may influence the growth of some cultivars, as well as promote delay in induction, unevenness and floral anomalies, depending on the time of exposure to these temperatures and the tolerance presented by the cultivars submitted to them. Even with the average temperature recorded during the crop cycle being elevated and averaging 8.75°C above the ideal, the plants remained apparently unaffected.

The average daily evapotranspiration (ETc) recorded by lysimeters (100% ETc) during this period was 7.00 mm, as can be observed in Table 1.

Table 1. Daily average depth, daily average volume and total depth applied during the production period

Treatments (% ETc)	Daily average depth applied (mm d ⁻¹)	Daily average volume applied (ml d ⁻¹)	Total depth applied during the cycle (mm)
50	3.50	46.55	196
75	5.25	69.83	294
100	7.00	93.11	392
125	8.75	116.38	490
150	10.5	139.66	588
175	12.25	162.95	686

However, an observation is made about the unique frequency of irrigation adopted in this study, for the replacement of the depths that composed the treatments that, according to Pereira *et al.* [14], studying the consumption of water by the chrysanthemum cultivated in a protected environment, verified that irrigation applied once a day demands the application of larger volumes of water, which causes more percolation when compared to the frequency of divided irrigation behavior attributed in part to the nature of the substrate. This fact, according to the same authors, generated a non-supply of water needs of plants, even with the integral water replacement.

Farias & Saad [15], in order to analyze the growth of potted chrysanthemum, Puritan cultivar, irrigated at different water stresses in protected environment, applied daily average depths superior to those found in this work, so that the substrate reached its maximum water retention condition, reaching a maximum total depth during the cultivation cycle of 1,428 mm for the tension of -4 KPa. This shows the low retention capacity of the substrate, thus requiring high water replacement through irrigation so that plants are not subjected to water stress.

Pereira *et al.* [14], point out the existence of differences in sensitivity to water application among chrysanthemum cultivars. The use of an average amount of crop consumption during irrigation throughout the crop cycle tends to generate water waste in the vegetative phase and, consequently, a possible increase in the occurrence of pests and diseases and unnecessary waste of energy and replacement of leached nutrients and water deficit in the flowering stage, tending to reduce the final quality of the product.

Through the analysis of variance (Table 2), a significant positive linear effect was observed for all the evaluated characteristics and a quadratic effect for dry matter of the aerial part and plant height ($P < 0.05$), in response to the application of the water depths.

Table 2. Regression analysis for growth variables of chrysanthemum 'Puritan' in pots, conducted in an agricultural greenhouse. Colatina - ES, 2018

	FMSS	DMSS	FMRS	DMRS	FD	DMF	SD	PH
Linear effect	0*	0*	0*	0*	0*	0*	0*	0*
Quadratic effect	0.082 ^{NS}	0.019*	0.549 ^{NS}	0.534 ^{NS}	0.690 ^{NS}	0.323 ^{NS}	0.645 ^{NS}	0.04*
Cubic effect	0.083 ^{NS}	0.153 ^{NS}	0.451 ^{NS}	0.850 ^{NS}	0.831 ^{NS}	0.602 ^{NS}	0.270 ^{NS}	0.268 ^{NS}
Regression Deviations	0.028*	0.167 ^{NS}	0.154 ^{NS}	0.199 ^{NS}	0.410 ^{NS}	0.736 ^{NS}	0.636 ^{NS}	0.299 ^{NS}
CV (%)	15.28	14.86	16.85	17.8	9	21.03	21.33	11.25

FMSS: fresh mass of shoot system, DMSS: dry mass of shoot system, FMRS: Fresh mass of the root system, DMRS: dry mass of the root system, FD: flower diameter, DMF: dry mass of the flowers, SD: stem diameter, PH: plant height. *: Significant at 5% probability. ^{NS}: Not significant.

For the adjusted quadratic regression model, with coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.96, the highest estimated response in relation to the height of the chrysanthemum plants would occur in the 191% depth, 22.92 cm high (Fig. 3). This value corresponds to the minimum height of 18 cm and maximum of 30 cm of the chrysanthemum plants, presented by Holambra [16], for plants grown in number 13 pots. For the plant height, only the applied depth corresponding to 50% of ETc presented a response lower than the minimum value (18 cm) established by Holambra [16].

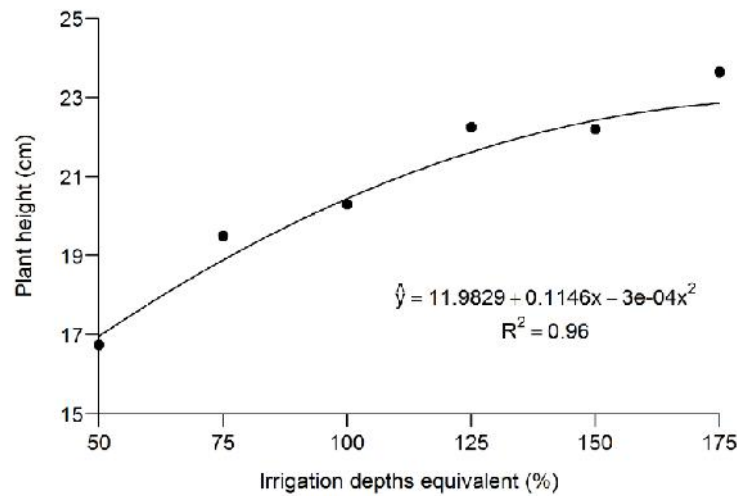


Fig. 3. Plant height variation (PH) in response to different irrigation depths in the production of chrysanthemum 'Puritan' in pots, conducted in greenhouse, Colatina / ES, 2018

The value of the highest height, estimated by the regression, represents a 12.13% increase in plant growth if compared to the 100% ETc replacement and 35.14% replacement of the half of this one (50% ETc), evidencing a stimulus in the growth of the plants with the increase of the irrigation depths. Rêgo *et al.* [3], also found a quadratic model as the height response of cut chrysanthemum plants, in which the best was obtained in the treatment corresponding to the depth of 100% evaporation in Class "A" tank.

The linear model for stem diameter presented the best fit and significance at 5% probability according to the response of the different depths applied, with R^2 value of 0.89 (Fig. 4).

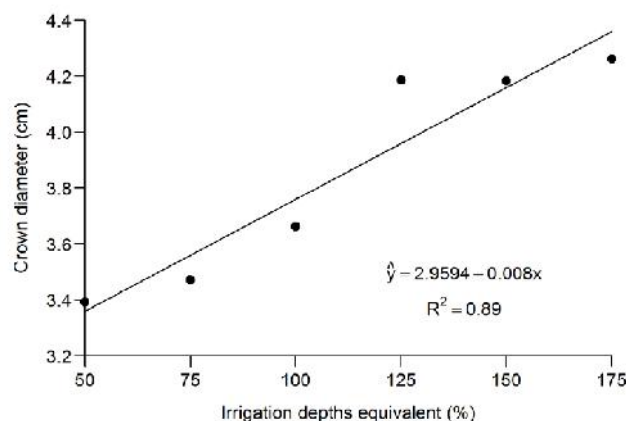
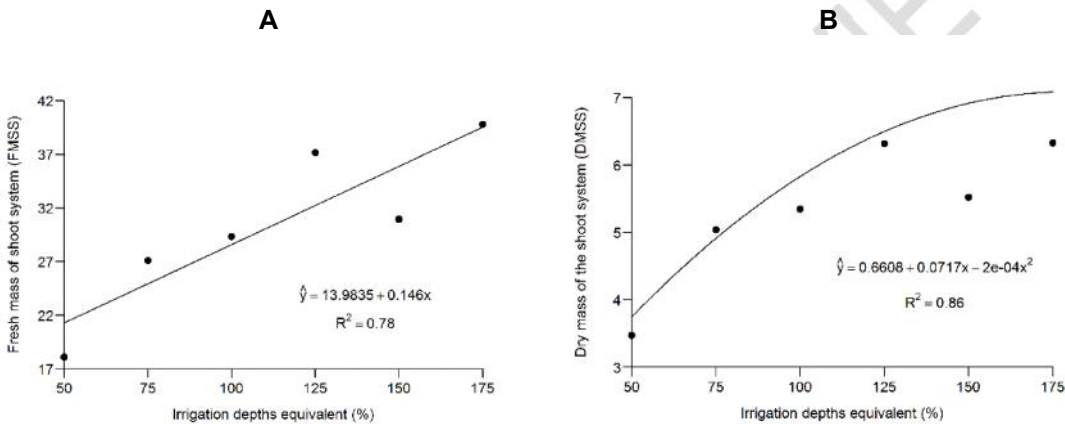


Fig. 4. Variation of stem diameter (SD) in response to different irrigation depths in the production of chrysanthemum 'Puritan' in pots, conducted in greenhouse, Colatina / ES, 2018

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The quality standard stipulated by Holambra [16], emphasizes the firmness and good support of the branches of the chrysanthemum plants in pots, being able to infer the importance of the plants to present stems with larger diameters, since, consequently, they present better sustentation. It is noted that the volume of the largest depth applied in the experiment was not enough to cause negative responses when the water excess is applied, according to Rêgo *et al.* [3], as lower efficiency of photo assimilated transformation in the diameter of the stem, although such answers evidenced in the lower growth of the plants.

In addition to height and diameter, the increase of the irrigation depths provided a considerable increase in fresh and dry matter of the aerial part of the plants. The fresh matter of the aerial part (Fig. 5A) presented regression with linear behavior and coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.78, while dry matter of the aerial part (Fig. 5B) showed as best fit a quadratic polynomial with R^2 of 0.86, both significant at 5% probability.



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Fig. 5. Variation of the fresh mass of shoot system (FMSS) (A) and dry mass of the shoot system (DMSS) (B) of chrysanthemum 'Puritan' cultivated in pots, conducted in greenhouse, in response to different irrigation depths, Colatina, 2018

Both FMSS and DMSS presented a positive tendency to development with the increase of the depths applied by the treatments in question. However, it is observed that in the dry mass of the shoot system, this increase tends to a stabilization, reaching its maximum response in the 179.25 mm depth with 7.1 g. Such quadratic behavior of the dry mass in contrast to the linear behavior of the fresh mass plus the behavior of the height and diameter characteristics may be due to a greater contribution of the mass of leaves, more tender and with more water than the branches, in the fresh mass of the shoot system in the upper depths, which would fit the plants grown on these depths as well formed and with good foliar mass.

About the root system in relation to the applied depths, both fresh and dry mass of the root system showed adjusted linear regression models, with determination coefficients (R^2) of 0.93 and 0.86, respectively (Fig. 6A; Fig. 6B).

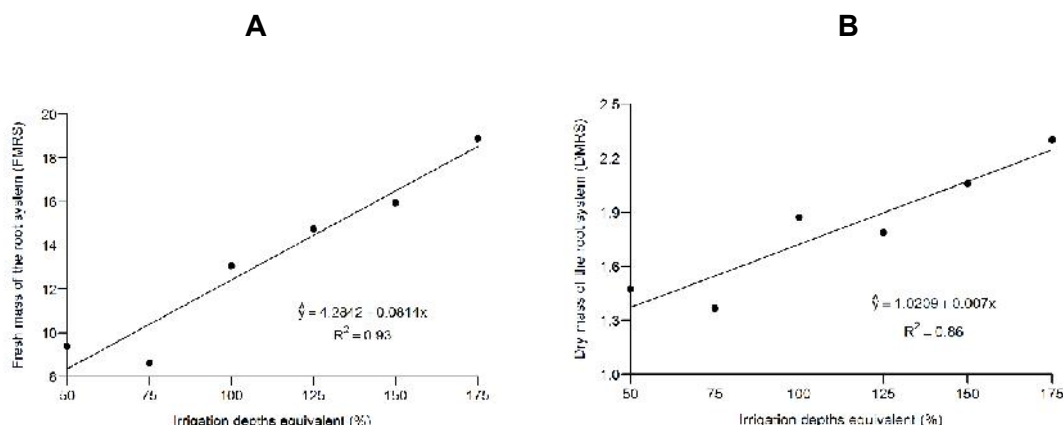


Fig. 6. Variation of fresh mass of the root system (FMRS) (A) and dry mass of the root system (DMRS) (B) of chrysanthemum 'Puritan' grown in pots, conducted in greenhouses, in response to different irrigation depths, Colatina / ES, 2018

Based on the models, it was observed that the highest estimated dry mass of the root system gain was found when 175% of the daily ETc was restored, presenting a 2.25 g weight in the root system. This represents a 30.50% increase when 100% of the total daily ETc is replaced and 62.76% when half of the evapotranspired depth is replaced by the crop (50% ETc).

The increasing linear behavior in both the fresh and dry masses of the root system shows that these factors are influenced positively by the increase of irrigation, as well as, it also shows that there was no restriction of the root development due to the cultivation in pots, by the restricted volume of substrate contained in them, which could lead to less development of both root and the shoot system, as Pinto *et al.* [17], pointed out.

Possibly, the inferior irrigation depths did not meet the physiological needs of the plants, causing water stress, which justifies the low growth and development. Spadeto [18], studying the development and production of chrysanthemum submitted it to different levels of water deficit in the soil, observed that there was a considerable decrease in height and dry mass of plants with increased water deficit, reaching the highest absolute growth rate when there was no water deficit. According to Taiz *et al.* [19], when plants are submitted to water deficit, cell dehydration occurs and that directly affects several basic physiological processes, causing reduction of cell and leaf expansion, photosynthetic inhibition, abscission and leaf death. These factors are undesirable in the commercial production of flowers, as they directly affect the plants of chrysanthemums, reducing the quality demanded by the market.

The flowers also presented positive responses with the increase of the applied depths. An increasing linear behavior for the diameter, fresh and dry matter of the flowers was observed, presenting R^2 of 0.94, 0.95 and 0.92, respectively (Fig. 7).

The flowers showed better development in the larger depths, with the highest result, among those studied, in the replacement of 175% of the daily ETc, reaching 55.3 g of fresh mass (Fig. 7A), 5.76 g of dry mass (Fig. 7B) and 6.9 cm in diameter of flowers (Fig. 7C). That is, the flowers grew 34.9% in dry weight and 16.95% in diameter in relation to the 100% replacement of ETc. In addition, the flowers showed greater uniformity of opening, which is favorable and increases the quality gain of the plants to be commercialized.

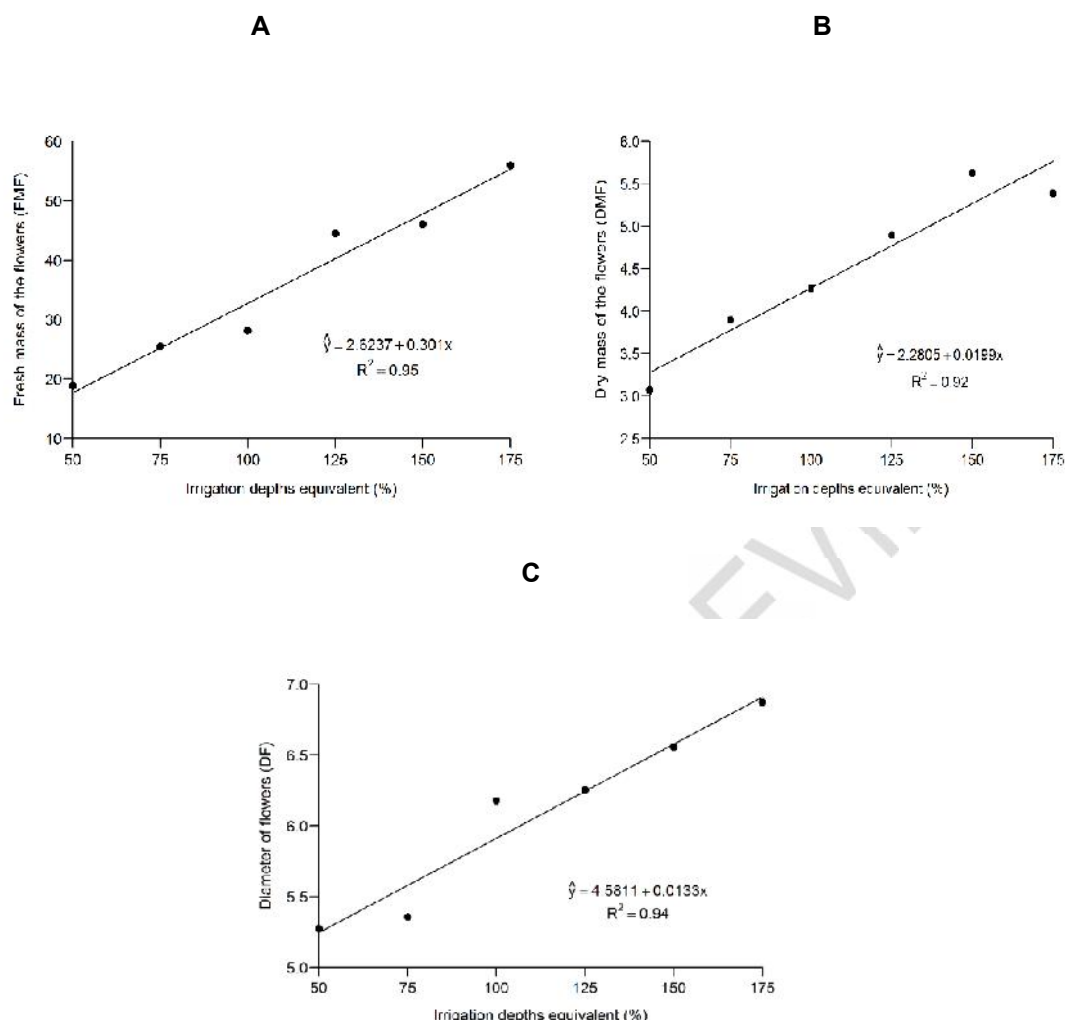


Fig. 7. Variation of fresh mass of the flowers (FMF) (A), dry mass of the flowers (DMF) (B) and diameter of flowers (DF) (C) of chrysanthemum 'Puritan' grown in pots, conducted in greenhouses, in response to different irrigation depths, Colatina / ES, 2018

Analyzing the fresh and dry mass responses of the flower buds, it is worth to highlight the increasing development in their fresh mass, cause of the water mass present in them, with the increase of the applied depths, which corroborates with the higher water demand noticed by Pereira *et al.* [14], in flowering.

Considering the results obtained, being the city of Colatina-ES a region that presents high temperatures, it is suggested that new studies be done in different climatic conditions and with daily water supplies in a parceled way.

4. CONCLUSION

Irrigation management with daily replacements of 175% of the crop evapotranspiration, corresponding to a daily average irrigation depth of 12.25 mm, showed the best results for all evaluated morphological parameters under the conditions of this study, that is primordial for the increase of the chrysanthemums quality.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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