

**ZINC REQUIREMENTS OF TRANSPLANTED OILSEED RAPE**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	ix
LIST OF TABLES	xvii
LIST OF FIGURES	xxi
LIST OF PLATES	xxiii
LIST OF APPENDICES	xxiv
ABBREVIATIONS	xxv
GLOSSARY OF PLANT SPECIES	xxvi
<b>CHAPTER 1 : LITERATURE REVIEW AND THESIS AIMS</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1. Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.2. Zinc in soils</b>	<b>3</b>
1.2.1. Geographical distribution of low zinc soils	3
1.2.2. Zinc forms and behaviour in soils	4
1.2.3. Zinc sorption and desorption	6
1.2.4. Factors affecting the forms and availability of zinc	7
1.2.4.1. Soil pH	7
1.2.4.2. Soil organic matter	8
1.2.4.3. Clay minerals	9
1.2.4.4. Interaction with other elements	10
<b>1.3. Zinc in plants</b>	<b>11</b>

1.3.1.	The functions of zinc	11
1.3.1.1.	Morphological effects	11
1.3.1.2	Physiological and biochemical effects	12
a.	Zinc in enzyme function	13
b.	Zinc in carbohydrate metabolism	15
c.	Zinc in protein metabolism	16
d.	Zinc in membrane integrity	16
1.3.2.	Mechanism of zinc uptake	18
1.3.3.	Factors affecting zinc uptake by plants	20
1.3.3.1.	Temperature	20
1.3.3.2.	Soil water content	21
1.3.3.3	Light	22
1.3.4	Zinc distribution and redistribution	23
1.3.5.	Soil-root interface	25
1.3.5.1.	Change in rhizosphere pH and redox potential	26
1.3.5.2	Excretion of organic acids and chelators	28
1.3.5.3	Mycorrhizal symbiosis	29
1.3.6	Diagnosis and prognosis of zinc deficiency	30
1.3.6.1	Diagnosis	30
1.3.6.2.	Prognosis	32
<b>1.4.</b>	<b>Transplanted crops</b>	<b>36</b>
1.4.1	Physiology of transplanted crops	37
1.4.2	Nutrition of transplanted crops	39
1.4.3.	Zinc requirement of transplanted crops	41

<b>1.5. Introduction to the present study</b>	42
<b>CHAPTER 2 : EFFECT OF TRANSPLANTING AND ROOT PRUNING ON EXTERNAL ZINC REQUIREMENTS OF OILSEED RAPE (<i>Brassica napus</i> L.)</b>	
<b>2.1 Abstract</b>	46
<b>2.2, Introduction</b>	47
<b>2.3. Materials and methods</b>	49
2.3.1. Zinc treatment	49
2.3.2. Plant culture	49
2.3.3. Harvest procedure	51
2.3.4. Plant and soil analysis	51
2.3.5. Data analysis	52
<b>2.4. Results</b>	53
2.4.1. Growth and symptom development	53
2.4.2. Root and shoot dry matter production	56
2.4.3. Root length	62
2.4.4. Relative growth rate and relative absorption rate	62
2.4.5. Zinc concentration in plants	64
2.4.6. Soil pH and zinc concentration	67
<b>2.5. Discussion</b>	68
2.5.1. External and Internal zinc requirements of transplanted oilseed rape	68
2.5.2. Mechanisms of increased external zinc requirement	70
2.5.3. Levels of root pruning	75

<b>2.6. Conclusion</b>	75
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**CHAPTER 3 : RESPONSE OF DIRECT SOWN AND TRANS-PLANTED OILSEED RAPE TO ZINC-HEDTA CONCENTRATION IN CHELATE-BUFFERED NUTRIENT SOLUTION**

<b>3.1. Abstract</b>	78
<b>3.2. Introduction</b>	79
<b>3.3. Materials and methods</b>	81
3.3.1. Treatment	81
3.3.2. Plant culture	81
3.3.3. Harvest procedure	83
3.3.4. Analysis of plants and nutrient solution	83
3.3.5. Data analysis	84
<b>3.4. Results</b>	84
3.4.1. Growth and symptom development	84
3.4.2. Shoot and root dry weights	85
3.4.3. Shoot : root ratios, root length and root hairs	85
3.4.4. Relative growth rates	87
3.4.5. Shoot and root zinc concentrations	87
3.4.6. Phosphorus concentrations and contents	88
3.4.7. Nitrogen concentrations in solution	90
<b>3.5. Discussion</b>	93
<b>3.6. Conclusion</b>	97

**CHAPTER 4 : EFFECT OF SOLUTION Zn-HEDTA AND ROOT PRUNING ON GROWTH AND ZINC UPTAKE OF TRANSPLANTED OILSEED RAPE IN CHELATE-BUFFERED NUTRIENT SOLUTION**

<b>4.1. Abstract</b>	100
<b>4.2. Introduction</b>	101
<b>4.3. Materials and methods</b>	103
4.3.1. Treatment	103
4.3.2. Plant culture	103
4.3.3. Harvest procedure	104
4.3.4. Plant analysis	105
4.3.5. Data analysis	105
<b>4.4. Results</b>	106
4.4.1. Growth and symptom development	106
4.4.2. Shoot and root dry weights	106
4.4.3. Relative growth rates	108
4.4.4. Shoot : root ratio	111
4.4.5. Root length and root hair density	111
4.4.6. Nutrient concentration in plant parts	112
4.4.7. Solution pH	116
<b>4.5. Discussion</b>	118
4.5.1. Response of transplanted oilseed rape to external zinc	118
4.5.2. Response of transplanted oilseed rape to root pruning	119
<b>4.6. Conclusion</b>	123

**CHAPTER 5 : SEEDBED ZINC NUTRITION AFFECTS THE EARLY GROWTH OF TRANSPLANTED OILSEED RAPE IN CHELATE-BUFFERED NUTRIENT SOLUTION**

<b>5.1. Abstract</b>	126
<b>5.2. Introduction</b>	127
<b>5.3 Materials and methods</b>	129
5.3.1. Treatment	129
5.3.2. Plant culture	129
5.3.3. Harvest procedure	130
5.3.4. Plant analysis	131
5.3.5. Data analysis	131
<b>5.4. Results</b>	131
5.4.1. Plant in the seedbed	131
5.4.2. Post-transplanting growth response	132
5.4.3. Root length and root hairs density	133
5.4.4. Nutrient concentrations in plant parts	136
<b>5.5. Discussion</b>	138
5.5.1. Effect of seedbed zinc concentration	138
5.5.2. Effect of root pruning	141
<b>5.6. Conclusion</b>	144
<b>CHAPTER 6 : THE CHEMICAL CHANGES IN THE RHIZOSPHERE AND NON-RHIZOSPHERE SOIL OF OILSEED RAPE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO RECOVERY OF ROOT FUNCTION</b>	
<b>6.1. Abstract</b>	146
<b>6.2. Introduction</b>	147
<b>6.3. Materials and methods</b>	149

6.3.1.	Treatment	149
6.3.2.	Plant culture	149
6.3.3.	Harvest procedure	150
6.3.4.	Plant and soil analysis	151
6.3.5.	Organic acids determination	151
6.3.6.	Data analysis	152
<b>6.4.</b>	<b>Results</b>	153
6.4.1.	Symptoms and growth	153
6.4.2.	Root and shoot dry matter	153
6.4.3.	Shoot : root ratio	155
6.4.4.	Root tips	155
6.4.5.	Root length	156
6.4.6.	Zinc concentration in plant parts	158
6.4.7.	Organic acids in soil	159
6.4.8.	Rhizosphere and non-rhizosphere soil pH	165
6.4.9.	Zinc in soil	165
<b>6.5.</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	167
6.5.1.	Effect of zinc supply and root pruning on plant growth	167
6.5.2.	Changes in rhizosphere pH	172
6.5.3.	Organic acids in rhizosphere and non-rhizosphere soil	173
6.5.4.	Zinc concentration in rhizosphere and non-rhizosphere soil	174
<b>6.6.</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	175



<b>CHAPTER 7 : GENERAL DISCUSSION</b>	
<b>7.1. Effect of zinc application and root pruning on plant growth</b>	178
<b>7.2. Zinc requirement of transplanted crops</b>	183
<b>7.3. Mechanisms of increased external zinc requirement</b>	184
7.3.1. The temporary increases in shoot : root ratio	184
7.3.2. The time taken for the recovery of root function	185
7.3.3. Rhizosphere modification	186
7.3.4. Agronomic consequences	187
<b>7.4. Concluding remarks</b>	188
<b>REFERENCES</b>	192
<b>APPENDICES</b>	219

## **DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a higher degree at any Tertiary education institution.

Mulyati.

## ABSTRACT

Transplanting is a common practice for many horticultural crops and some field crops. Recently, transplanted oilseed rape (*Brassica napus* L.) crops have been reported to be sensitive to zinc (Zn) deficiency. However, Zn nutrition in transplanted field crops has not been investigated in detail. The objectives of this present research were to investigate whether transplanting increases external Zn requirements of transplanted oilseed rape, and the mechanisms of root function, growth and Zn uptake after transplanting including rhizosphere modification capacity by plant roots. The second objective was to examine the relative effects of root pruning and transplanting on Zn responses of oilseed rape, and the third objective was to determine external and internal Zn requirements of transplanted oilseed rape for diagnosing and predicting Zn deficiency.

An experiment on a low Zn sand (DTPA extractable Zn  $0.14 \text{ mg kg}^{-1}$ ) was set up to determine whether transplanted oilseed rape had a higher Zn requirement than that of direct-sown plants. Low Zn supply depressed shoot dry weight, however, root growth was relatively more strongly suppressed than shoots. Maximum root dry weight required much higher external Zn for transplanted plants compared to direct-sown plants, whilst shoot dry weight required a similarly low external Zn supply. In addition, transplanted plants were sensitive to zinc deficiency during the early post-transplanting growth, and the response weakened as the plants recovered from root injury or transplanting stress. However, the transplanted plants also experienced root

pruning before transplanting and so in this experiment the higher Zn requirement could have been due to root pruning or transplanting or both.

A further experiment was undertaken to determine the comparative external Zn requirements of direct-sown and transplanted plants in well-stirred chelate-buffered solution culture where a rhizosphere effect on plant availability of Zn forms is absent and the effects of poor root-soil contact on post-transplanting growth are minimized. In solution culture at the same level of Zn supplied, direct-sown plants produced higher shoot and root dry matter and greater root length than those of transplanted plants. However, since a higher external Zn requirement was found for transplanted plants in buffered solution culture than for direct-sown plants, it was concluded that the higher Zn requirement was not related to decreased rhizosphere modification, to greater demand for Zn or to poor root-solution contact, but rather to the time required for transplanted plants to recover from transplanting and root injury. The recovery of root function in solution culture was more rapid than that in soil culture and expressed as a higher Zn requirement for shoot as well as root growth. It suggested that the delay in root recovery in soil culture was due to slower absorption of Zn from the soil after transplanting than was the case in solution culture.

Chelate-buffered nutrient solution culture and harvesting plants successively at 5 day intervals until 25 days after transplanting was used to examine the mechanisms of the recovery of root growth and function. In this experiment, the external Zn requirement of transplanted plants was investigated with unpruned or pruned root systems. Plants with unpruned root system and sufficient Zn supply

exhibited faster recovery from transplanting than those with pruned root system plants. The results suggest that root pruning impaired Zn uptake by plant roots and slowed down the root and shoot growth after transplanting. Increased solution Zn partly alleviated the effects of root pruning and presumably this is a major reason why transplanted oilseed rape had a high external Zn requirement. However, root pruning also appeared to impair water uptake, and may have suppressed shoot growth through sequestering carbon for new root growth and through decreased phytohormone production by roots.

Since rapid root recovery of transplanted plants is essential for successful growth in the field, Zn application to the nursery bed was explored as a starter fertilizer to stimulate root growth after transplanting. The objective of this experiment was to determine whether increasing the seedbed Zn would stimulate new root growth of transplanted oilseed rape, and therefore would alleviate the need for increased external Zn for post-transplanting growth. Results showed that adequate Zn concentration in the seedbed promoted the post-transplanting growth by stimulating the new root growth especially increased root length, and also hastened the recovery of root systems. However, high Zn concentration at transplanting still had a more dominant effect in stimulating the new root growth of oilseed rape after transplanting.

The final experiment was set up using rhizobags with three rates of Zn supply and unpruned or pruned root systems. The purpose of this study was to investigate the chemical change in the rhizosphere and non-rhizosphere or bulk soil and its relationship to the recovery of root function after transplanting, and also to identify

and quantify the organic acids in soil extracts of direct-sown and transplanted plants. The rhizosphere soil pH was lower than that of non-rhizosphere soil, and the decrease of soil pH was suggested as the mechanism of the increase of Zn availability and mobility in the rhizosphere soil. Direct-sown plants were more efficient in utilizing Zn than those of transplanted plants especially compared to those of plants with pruned root system. Zinc deficient plants excreted higher concentration of organic acids particularly citric acid, suggesting this was a mechanism of Zn mobilization and Zn uptake by roots of oilseed rape.

The main implications of the present study for the management of Zn nutrition of transplanted crops were: the need to increase the Zn application to crops in the nursery and at transplanting compared to direct-sown plants; the possibility that external requirements of other nutrients will be greater in transplanted crops also requires further consideration; and in cropping systems where transplanting is practised, greater attention should be given to the avoidance of root damage during the transplanting.

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## LIST OF TABLES

		<u>Page</u>
Table 1.1.	Effects of Zn status on exudation of low-molecular-weight compounds by cotton roots during a 6 hr period in solution (Cakmak and Marschner, 1988).	17
Table 1.2	Effects of Zn supply to wheat plants on root exudates and Zn mobilization from calcareous soils (Adapted from Marschner <i>et al.</i> , 1987).	29
Table 1.3	The critical Zn concentrations (mg Zn kg <sup>-1</sup> dry matter) for diagnosing of Zn deficiency in canola (Adapted from Rashid <i>et al.</i> , 1994).	33
Table 1.4	Critical concentrations of Zn in soil for several crops and soil types in Australia from pot and field experiments (Adapted from Armour <i>et al.</i> , 1990).	35
Table 2.1	Effect of Zn supply on shoot : root ratio of direct-sown and transplanted plants of oilseed rape at 7 and 10- leaf stages.	62
Table 2.2	Effect of Zn supply on root length (m plant <sup>-1</sup> ) of direct-sown and transplanted seedlings of oilseed rape at 7- and 10-leaf stages.	63
Table 2.3	Effects of Zn supply on relative growth rates (RGR: g 100 g <sup>-1</sup> day <sup>-1</sup> ) of shoot and root and Zn absorption rate (RAR: μg g <sup>-1</sup> fresh root day <sup>-1</sup> ) of direct-sown and transplanted plants between 7- and 10-leaf stages.	63
Table 2.4	Effect of Zn supply on Zn concentration in the youngest mature leaf (mg kg <sup>-1</sup> dry matter) of direct-sown and transplanted oilseed rape at 7- and 10-leaf stages	67
Table 2.5.	Effect of Zn supply on shoot Zn content (μg plant <sup>-1</sup> ) of direct-sown and transplanted plants at 7- and 10-leaf stages.	68
Table 2.6.	Effect of Zn supply on soil pH (water 1:5) and DTPA-extractable Zn (μg kg <sup>-1</sup> soil) of soil supporting direct-sown and transplanted plants at 7- and 10-leaf stages.	69



Table 2.7.	Critical external Zn concentrations ( $\mu\text{g Zn kg}^{-1}$ ) for shoot and root dry weights and root length of direct-sown and transplanted oilseed rape at 7- and 10-leaf stages.	70
Table 3.1.	Effect of Zn-HEDTA supply on shoot: root ratios, root length ( $\text{m plant}^{-1}$ ) and root hair density (number $\text{g}^{-1}$ fresh root) of direct-sown and transplanted plants at 7-leaf stage.	87
Table 3.2	Effect of Zn-HEDTA supply on shoot and root zinc concentration ( $\text{mg kg}^{-1}$ dry matter) of direct-sown and transplanted plants at 7-leaf stage.	88
Table 3.3.	Effect of zinc-HEDTA supply on P concentration ( $\text{mg kg}^{-1}$ dry matter) and P content ( $\text{mg plant}^{-1}$ ) in the old leaves of direct-sown and transplanted plants.	90
Table 3.4.	Effect of Zn-HEDTA on $\text{NH}_4\text{-N}$ and $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ concentration ( $\text{mg N.L}^{-1}$ ) changes in solutions supporting direct-sown and transplanted plants at 7 days and at final harvest.	91
Table 4.1.	Effect of solution Zn-HEDTA concentration and root pruning on shoot and root dry weights ( $\text{g plant}^{-1}$ ) of transplanted oilseed rape at 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 days after transplanting (DAT) in chelate-buffered nutrients solution.	107
Table 4.2.	Effect of solution Zn-HEDTA concentration and root pruning on shoot : root ratio of transplanted oilseed rape at 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 days after transplanting (DAT) in chelate-buffered nutrient solution.	112
Table 4.3.	Effect of solution Zn-HEDTA concentration and root pruning on root length ( $\text{m plant}^{-1}$ ) and root hair density (number $\text{g}^{-1}$ root fresh weight) of transplanted oilseed rape at 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 days after transplanting (DAT) in chelate-buffered nutrient solution.	113
Table 4.4.	Effect of solution Zn-HEDTA concentration and root pruning on Zn concentration ( $\text{mg kg}^{-1}$ ) in shoots and roots of transplanted oilseed rape at 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 days after transplanting (DAT) in chelate-buffered nutrient solution.	115
Table 4.5.	Effect of solution Zn-HEDTA concentration and root pruning on Zn absorption rate ( $\text{mg kg}^{-1}$ root fresh weight $\text{day}^{-1}$ ) by transplanted oilseed rape at 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 days after transplanting (DAT) in chelate-buffered nutrient solution.	116

Table 4.6.	Effect of solution Zn-HEDTA concentration and root pruning on phosphorus (P) concentration in the two oldest leaves ( $\text{g kg}^{-1}$ ) of transplanted oilseed rape at 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 day after transplanting (DAT) in chelate-buffered nutrient solution.	117
Table 5.1.	Effect of seedbed Zn, Zn supply in solution and root pruning on shoot and root dry weights ( $\text{g plant}^{-1}$ ) of transplanted oilseed rape at 20 days after transplanting.	134
Table 5.2.	Effect of seedbed Zn, Zn supply in solution and root pruning on root length ( $\text{m plant}^{-1}$ ), specific root length ( $\text{m g}^{-1}$ root fresh weight) and root hair density (number $\text{g}^{-1}$ root fresh weight) of transplanted oilseed rape at 20 days after transplanting.	137
Table 5.3.	Effect of seedbed Zn, Zn supply in solution and root pruning on shoot and root Zn concentrations ( $\text{mg kg}^{-1}$ dry weight) of transplanted oilseed rape at 20 days after transplanting.	138
Table 6.1.	Effect of Zn supply and root pruning on root and shoot dry matter ( $\text{g plant}^{-1}$ ) of transplanted and direct-sown oilseed rape at 5 and 7- leaf stages.	154
Table 6.2.	Effect of Zn supply and root pruning on shoot : root ratio of transplanted and direct-sown oilseed rape at 5 and 7-leaf stages.	156
Table 6.3.	Effect of Zn supply and root pruning on number of root tips ( $\text{number plant}^{-1}$ ) and root length ( $\text{m plant}^{-1}$ ) of transplanted and direct-sown oilseed rape at 5 and 7-leaf stages.	157
Table 6.4.	Effect of Zn supply and root pruning on zinc concentration in old leaf (OL) and youngest mature leaf (YML) ( $\text{mg kg}^{-1}$ ) of transplanted and direct-sown oilseed rape at 5- and 7-leaf stages.	159
Table 6.5.	Effect of Zn supply and root pruning on zinc concentration in shoots and roots ( $\text{mg kg}^{-1}$ dry matter) of transplanted and direct-sown oilseed rape at 5- and 7-leaf stages.	160
Table 6.6.	Effect of Zn supply on organic acids ( $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$ ) in rhizosphere soil of direct sown oilseed rape at 5 and 7-leaf stages. Organic acids were presented according to the time retention.	162

Table 6.7.	Effect of Zn supply and root pruning on organic acids ( $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$ ) in non-rhizosphere soil of direct sown oilseed rape at 5- and 7- leaf stages. Organic acids were presented according to the time retention.	163
Table 6.8.	Effect of Zn supply with root had not been pruned on organic acids ( $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$ ) in rhizosphere soil of transplanted oilseed rape at 5- and 7-leaf stages. Organic acids were presented according to the time retention.	164
Table 6.9.	Effect of Zn supply and root pruning on rhizosphere and non-rhizosphere soil pH-H <sub>2</sub> O and pH-CaCl <sub>2</sub> of transplanted and direct-sown oilseed rape at 5-leaf stages.	166
Table 6.10.	Effect of Zn supply and root pruning on rhizosphere and non-rhizosphere soil pH-H <sub>2</sub> O and pH-CaCl <sub>2</sub> of transplanted and direct-sown oilseed rape at 7-leaf stages.	167
Table 6.11.	Effect of Zn supply and root pruning on rhizosphere and non-rhizosphere soil zinc concentration ( $\mu\text{g Zn kg}^{-1}$ air dry soil) of direct- sown and transplanted oilseed rape at 5-leaf stages.	169
Table 6.12.	Effect of Zn supply and root pruning on rhizosphere and non-rhizosphere soil zinc concentration ( $\mu\text{g Zn kg}^{-1}$ ) of transplanted and direct-sown oilseed rape at 7-leaf stages.	170

## LIST OF FIGURES

		<u>Page</u>
Figure 1.1.	Relationship between plant growth and nutrient concentration in the plant for diagnosing or predicting nutrient deficiency and toxicity (Adapted from Smith and Loneragan, 1997).	31
Figure 2.1.	Effect of Zn supply on root dry matter of direct-sown and transplanted plants at 7-leaf stage. The critical value at 90 % of maximum root dry matter was 90 $\mu\text{g Zn kg}^{-1}$ soil (a) and 240 $\mu\text{g Zn kg}^{-1}$ soil (b).	57
Figure 2.2.	Effect of Zn supply on root dry matter of direct-sown and transplanted plants at 10-leaf stage. The critical value at 90 % of maximum root dry matter was 107 $\mu\text{g Zn kg}^{-1}$ soil (c) and 114 $\mu\text{g Zn kg}^{-1}$ soil (d).	58
Figure 2.3.	Effect of Zn supply on shoot dry matter of direct-sown and transplanted plants at 7-leaf stage. The critical value at 90 % of maximum shoot dry matter was 70 $\mu\text{g Zn kg}^{-1}$ soil (a) and 80 $\mu\text{g Zn kg}^{-1}$ soil (b).	59
Figure 2.4.	Effect of Zn supply on shoot dry matter of direct-sown and transplanted plants at 10-leaf stage. The critical value at 90 % of maximum shoot dry matter was 107 $\mu\text{g Zn kg}^{-1}$ soil (c) and 110 $\mu\text{g Zn kg}^{-1}$ soil (d).	60
Figure 2.5.	The relationships between shoot dry matter ( $\text{g plant}^{-1}$ ) and Zn concentrations ( $\text{mg Zn kg}^{-1}$ dry matter) in youngest mature leaf of direct-sown oilseed rape at 7- and 10-leaf stages.	65
Figure 2.6.	The relationships between shoot dry matter ( $\text{g plant}^{-1}$ ) and Zn concentrations ( $\text{mg Zn kg}^{-1}$ dry matter) in youngest mature leaf of transplanted oilseed rape at 7- and 10-leaf stages.	66
Figure 3.1.	Effect of Zn-HEDTA supply on shoot (a) and root (b) dry weights of direct-sown (DS) and transplanted (TR) plants in chelate-buffered nutrient solution at 7-leaf stage.	86
Figure 3.2.	Effects of Zn-HEDTA supply on relative growth rates of shoot (a) and root (b) of direct-sown (DS) plants at 18 DAS and transplanted (TR) oilseed rape at 9 DAT, respectively.	89
Figure 3.3.	Effect of Zn-HEDTA supply on temporal changes in pH of nutrient solutions in which direct-sown (DS) and transplanted	92

(TR) plants of oilseed rape were grown for 18 and 9 days, respectively.

- Figure 3.4. Effect of Zn-HEDTA supply on root length (m) per unit mass of direct- sown (DS) and transplanted (TR) plants. (a). on a root fresh weight basis ( $\text{m g}^{-1}$  root fresh weight) and (b). on a root dry weight basis ( $\text{m g}^{-1}$  root dry weight). 95
- Figure 4.1. Effect of solution Zn-HEDTA concentration and root pruning on relative growth rates of roots ( $\text{g } 100 \text{ g}^{-1} \text{ day}^{-1}$ ) of transplanted oilseed rape, harvested successively on day 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25. 109
- Figure 4.2. Effect of solution Zn-HEDTA concentration and root pruning on relative growth rates of shoots ( $\text{g } 100 \text{ g}^{-1} \text{ day}^{-1}$ ) of transplanted oilseed rape, harvested successively on day 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25. 110
- Figure 4.3. Effect of solution Zn-HEDTA concentration on pH change after growing oilseed rape for up to day 25 after transplanting. 117
- Figure 5.1. Effect of seedbed zinc concentration, zinc level and root pruning on relative growth rates of shoots and roots of transplanted oilseed rape for the 20 day post-transplanting growth period. 135

## LIST OF PLATES

	<u>Page</u>
Plate 2.1. Direct-sown oilseed rape cv. Hyola 42 plant grown with a low Zn supply for 15 days : (a) purpling pigmentation developed in the youngest leaf ; (b) brown spots developed in the older leaves and leaf tips developed necrotic patches.	54
Plate 2.2. Symptoms of Zn deficiency in oilseed rape cv. Hyola 42 grown for 15 days with 10 $\mu\text{g Zn kg}^{-1}$ soil : (a) Younger leaf displaying chlorosis and the development of light brown spots ; (b) Older leaves displaying discolouration at the margins and between the main veins.	55

## LIST OF APPENDICES

		<u>Page</u>
Appendix 2.1.	The soil chemical properties of Lancelin sand	220
Appendix 2.2.	Effect of Zn supply on Zn uptake ( $\text{mg kg}^{-1}$ root dry matter) of direct-sown and transplanted plants at 7- and 10-leaf stages.	221
Appendix 3.1	Effect of Zn-HEDTA supply on shoot and root fresh weights of direct- sown and transplanted plants.	222
Appendix 4.1	Effect of solution Zn-HEDTA concentration and root pruning on relative growth rate of shoots and roots ( $\text{g } 100 \text{ g}^{-1} \text{ day}^{-1}$ ) of transplanted oilseed rape at 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 days after transplanting in chelate-buffered nutrient solution.	223
Appendix 4.2.	Effect of solution Zn-HEDTA concentration and root pruning on Zn content ( $\mu\text{g plant}^{-1}$ ) of transplanted oilseed rape at 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 days after transplanting in chelate-buffered nutrient solution.	224
Appendix 5.1.	Effect of seedbed Zn concentration on shoot and root fresh and dry weights ( $\text{g pot}^{-1}$ ) in seedlings growth at 32 days after sowing.	225
Appendix 5.2.	Effect of seedbed Zn, Zn supply in solution and root pruning on phosphorus concentration (%) dry matter and content ( $\text{mg plant}^{-1}$ ) in older leaves of transplanted oilseed rape at 20 days after transplanting.	226
Appendix 5.3.	Effect of seedbed Zn, Zn supply in solution and root pruning on shoot and root dry weights ( $\text{g pot}^{-1}$ ) of transplanted oilseed rape at 20 days after transplanting.	227
Appendix 6.1.	Effect of Zn supply and root pruning on root and shoot fresh weight ( $\text{g plant}^{-1}$ ) of transplanted and direct-sown oilseed rape at 5- and 7-leaf stages.	228
Appendix 6.2.	The retention times of each standard organic acid measured by high pressure liquid chromatography .	229

## ABBREVIATIONS

DAS	day after sowing
DAT	day after transplanting
DDI-H <sub>2</sub> O	double deionised water
DM	dry matter
DNP	dinitrophenol
DS	direct-sown
DTPA	diethylene triamine pentaacetic acid
HEDTA	hydroxyethyl ethylenedinitrotriacetic acid
ICP	inductively couple plasma
RAR	relative absorption rate
RGR	relative growth rate
ROS	reactive oxygen species
SOD	superoxide dismutase
TDI-H <sub>2</sub> O	triple deionised water
TR	transplanted
YEB	youngest emerged blade
YFEL	youngest fully expanded leaf
YML	youngest mature leaf
YOL	youngest opened leaf



## GLOSSARY OF PLANT SPECIES

Common name	Botanical name
Apple	<i>Malus domestica</i>
Barley	<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>
Bean	<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i>
Bell pepper	<i>Capsicum annuum</i>
Broccoli	<i>Brassica oleracea var</i>
Cabbage	<i>Brassica oleracea var capitata</i>
Canola	<i>Brassica napus</i>
Cauliflower	<i>Brassica oleracea var. botrytis</i>
Chickpea	<i>Cicer arietinum</i>
Cotton	<i>Gossypium hirsutum</i>
Cucumber	<i>Cucumis sativus</i>
Corn	<i>Zea mays</i>
Grape	<i>Vitis vinifera</i>
Muskmelon	<i>Cucumis melo</i>
Oilseed rape	<i>Brassica napus</i>
Orange	<i>Citrus spp.</i>
Peach	<i>Prunus persica</i>
Peanut	<i>Arachis hypogaea</i>
Pine	<i>Pinus radiata</i>
Rice	<i>Oryza sativa</i>

Rye	<i>Secale cereale</i>
Sorghum	<i>Sorghum vulgare</i>
Sub-clover	<i>Trifolium subterranean</i>
Sunflower	<i>Helianthus annuus</i>
Tobacco	<i>Nicotiana tabacum</i>
Tomato	<i>Lycopersicum esculentum</i>
Wheat	<i>Triticum aestivum</i>
White clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>
White lupin	<i>Lupinus albus</i>

