

Chapter 6

A simulation experiment on the effectiveness of trees and pasture in reducing lateral nutrient movement

6.1. Results

6.1.1. Growth responses of trees and pastures

6.1.1.1. Tree growth

Seven measurements of tree height were conducted since the time of planting to age 22 weeks, when the trees were pruned because they reached the glasshouse roof. Both *E. camaldulensis* and *C. cunninghamiana* seedlings were about 50 cm high when planted (Figure 6.1). The young trees grew slowly during the first 13 weeks and their growth rate increased during the following 6 weeks. For the last 4 weeks of the measuring period, trees grew very fast, reaching an average growth rate of 1 - 1.5 cm per day.

The height growth of *E. camaldulensis* was not significantly different with *C. cunninghamiana* for all the measuring events (Figure 6.1a; Table 6.1). In contrast, the two different planting densities affected tree height significantly (Table 6.1), but only for *E. camaldulensis*. *E. camaldulensis* in the 2-tree treatment grew significantly taller ($P < 0.05$) than the 4-tree treatment at 13 weeks after planting, and average height difference reached some 40 cm at 22 weeks. The height differences of *C.*

cunninghamiana between the 2-tree and 4-tree planting were not significantly different for all measurement periods, although the height was taller for the 2-tree treatment in comparison with 4-tree treatment (Figure 6.1b).

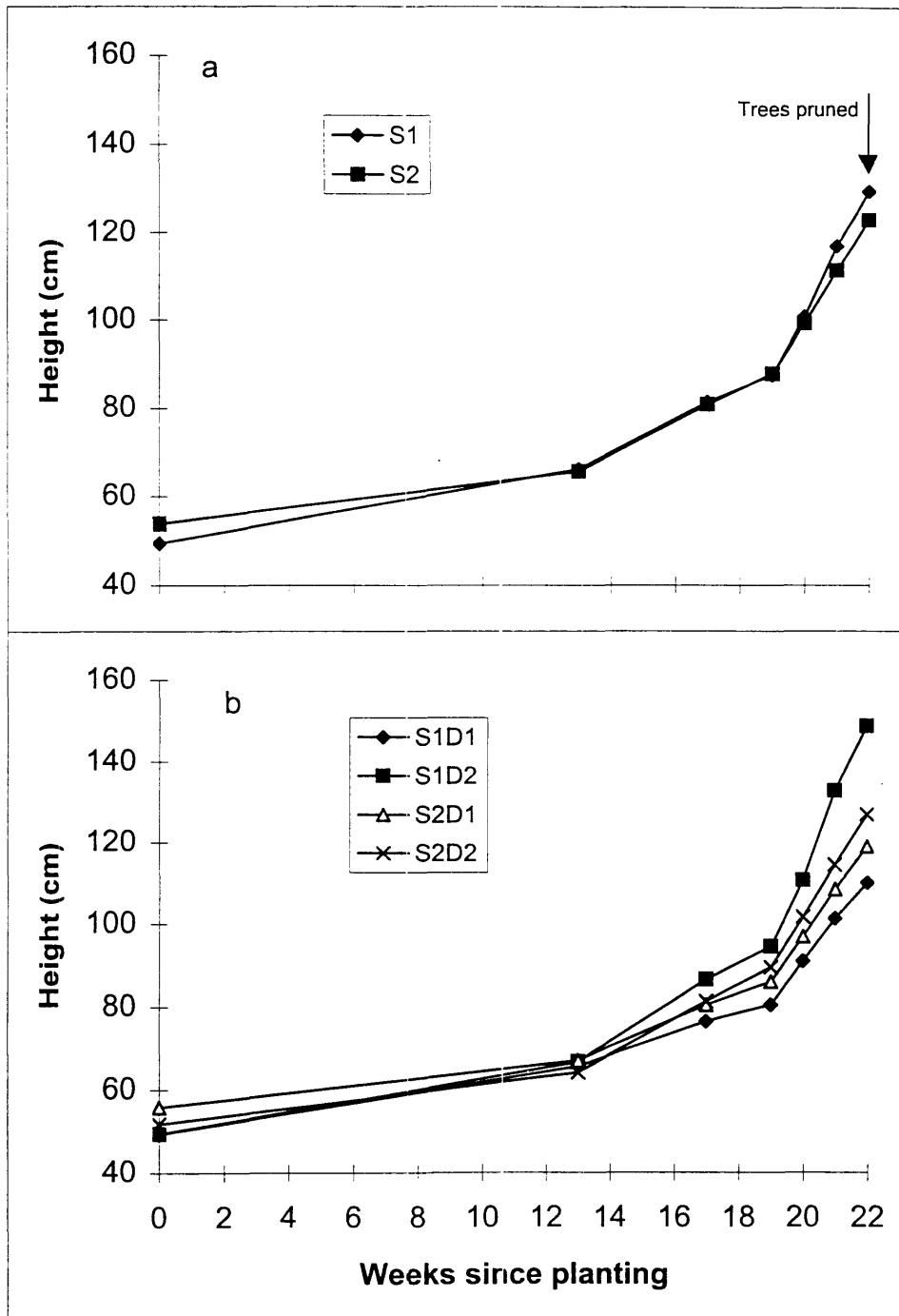


Figure 6.1. The effect of species and density treatments on tree height growth in the glasshouse experiment. S1: *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*; S2: *Casuarina cunninghamiana*; D1: 4 trees plot⁻¹; D2: 2 trees plot⁻¹. Significance is indicated in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1. Analysis of variances for the effect of treatments on tree height growth. #Species=tree species: *E.camaldulensis* and *C. cunninghamiana*. ##Density=tree densities: 4 trees plot⁻¹ and 2 trees plot⁻¹. *=significantly different at P<0.05, **at P<0.01, *** at P<0.001, ns=not significantly different.

Weeks since planted	Main effects		Interaction (species x density)
	#Species	##Density	
13	ns	ns	ns
17	ns	ns	ns
19	ns	*	*
20	ns	*	*
21	ns	**	**
22	ns	***	***

Measurements of tree diameter growth did not commence until 19 weeks after planting and ended at 42 weeks. Both the effects of species and planting density treatment significantly contributed to the differences in tree diameter growth (Table 6.2). *C. cunninghamiana* had significantly greater (P<0.05) diameter growth than *E. camaldulensis* since 24 weeks after planted both for the 2-tree and 4-tree plots (Table 6.2 and Figure 6.2a). At the last measurement, the average diameter of *C. cunninghamiana* (18.3 mm) was 16.6% greater than that of *E. camaldulensis* (15.7mm). At 42 weeks after planted, the average diameters of trees for the 2-tree plots were 33.6% and 35.5% larger than the 4-tree plots for *E. camaldulensis* and *C.*

cunninghamiana respectively (Figure 6.2b). The diameter growth of the four treatments against time (weeks) since 19 weeks after planting were all linearly related with $R^2 > 0.98$, although the trees were pruned at 22 weeks.

Table 6.2. Analysis of variances for the effects of treatments on tree diameter growth. #Species=tree species: *E.camaldulensis* and *C. cunninghamiana*. ##Density=tree densities: 4 trees plot⁻¹ and 2 trees plot⁻¹. *=significantly different at P<0.05, **at P<0.01, *** at P<0.001, ns=not significantly different.

Weeks since planted	Main effects		Interaction (species x density)
	#Species	##Density	
19	**	ns	*
20	**	ns	*
24	*	*	**
30	**	*	***
34	*	*	***
38	*	*	***
42	*	**	***

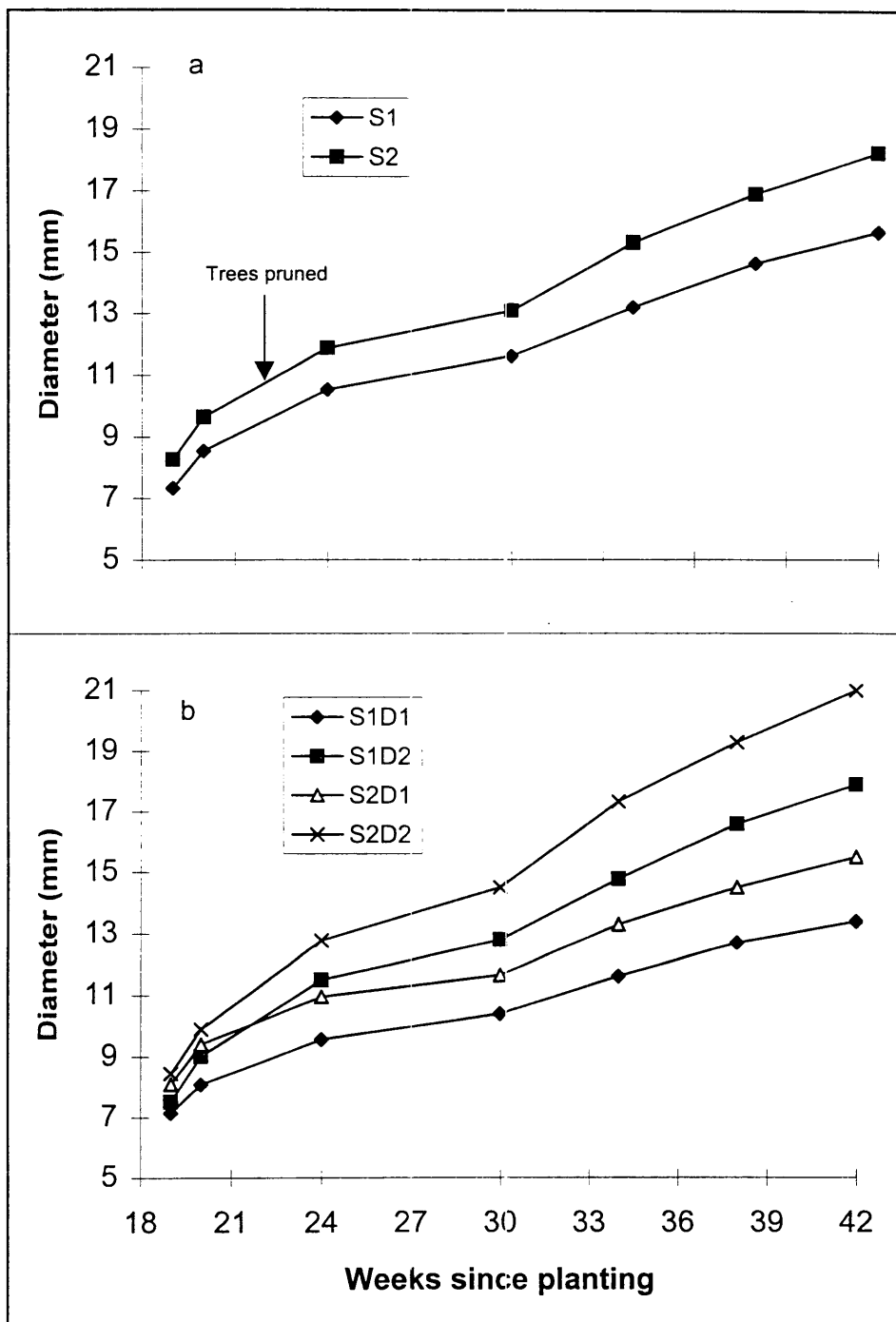


Figure 6.2. The effect of species and density treatments on tree diameter growth in the glasshouse experiment. S1: *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*; S2: *Casuarina cunninghamiana*; D1: 4 trees plot⁻¹; D2: 2 trees plot⁻¹. Significance is indicated in Table 6.2.

6.1.1.2. Above and below ground biomass

Both species and density treatments significantly affected tree above-ground biomass (Table 6.3). Total above-ground biomass of *C. cunninghamiana* was significantly ($P < 0.01$) higher than *E. camaldulensis* for both the 2-tree and 4-tree treatments. Four-tree plots had higher above-ground biomass than 2-tree plots for both species, but the difference was only significant for *C. cunninghamiana*. Foliage biomass, expressed as a proportion of the total above-ground biomass was significantly ($P < 0.001$) greater for *C. cunninghamiana* in comparison with *E. camaldulensis*, while the proportion was significantly affected by the different densities only for *E. camaldulensis*.

Total below-ground biomass was not significantly different between the species and density treatments (Table 6.3), although the amount was generally larger for *C. cunninghamiana* in comparison with *E. camaldulensis*, and was larger for the 4-tree plots than the 2-tree plots for both species. *C. cunninghamiana* had significantly ($P < 0.05$) more fine roots (diameter < 0.3 cm) (also see Plate 3b) and fewer lateral roots (diameter ≥ 0.3 cm) than *E. camaldulensis* (also see Plate 3a). The density treatment did not affect the amount of fine roots, but the 4-tree plots had significantly ($P < 0.05$) more lateral roots than the 2-tree plots for these two species.

The ratio of below-ground/above-ground biomass was greater for *E. camaldulensis* than *C. cunninghamiana*, but only significant ($P < 0.05$) for the 2-tree treatments (Table 6.3). Density affected the ratio differently for the two species. The

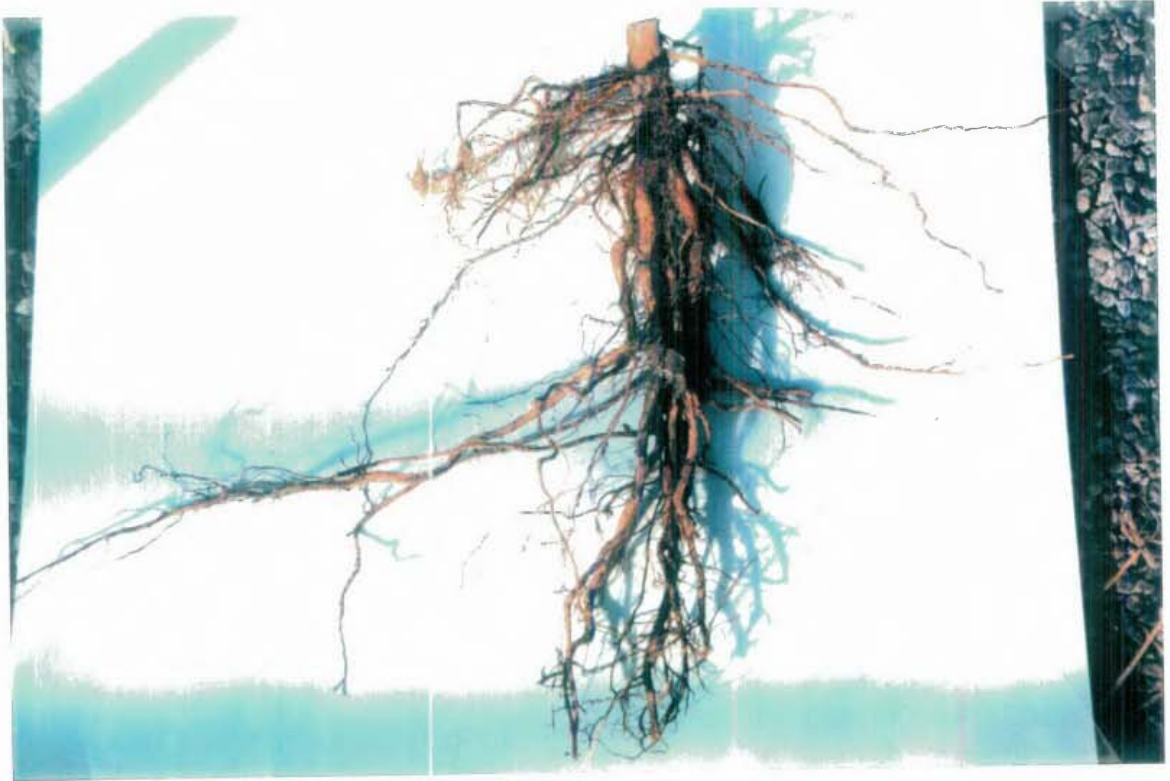


Plate 3a. Showing the deep root system of *E. camaldulensis*.



Plate 3b. Showing the surface dominant root system of *C. cunninghamiana*.

ratio was significantly greater ($P < 0.05$) for the 2-tree plots in comparison with the 4-tree plots for *E. camaldulensis*, while the ratio was significantly higher ($P < 0.05$) for the 4-tree plots than the 2-tree plots for *C. cunninghamiana*. The ratio of root distribution in the soil B horizon to A horizon, however, was significantly greater ($P < 0.05$) for *E. camaldulensis* in comparison with *C. cunninghamiana*. The ratio, however, was not significantly affected by the density treatment.

At harvest, the 4-month pasture produced similar amount of foliage to the 11-month trees, although the trees had significantly ($P < 0.001$) greater total above- and below-ground biomass than the pasture (Figure 6.3). The grass roots penetrated the soil B horizon, but the biomass proportion in the B horizon was negligible by comparing with that in the A horizon.

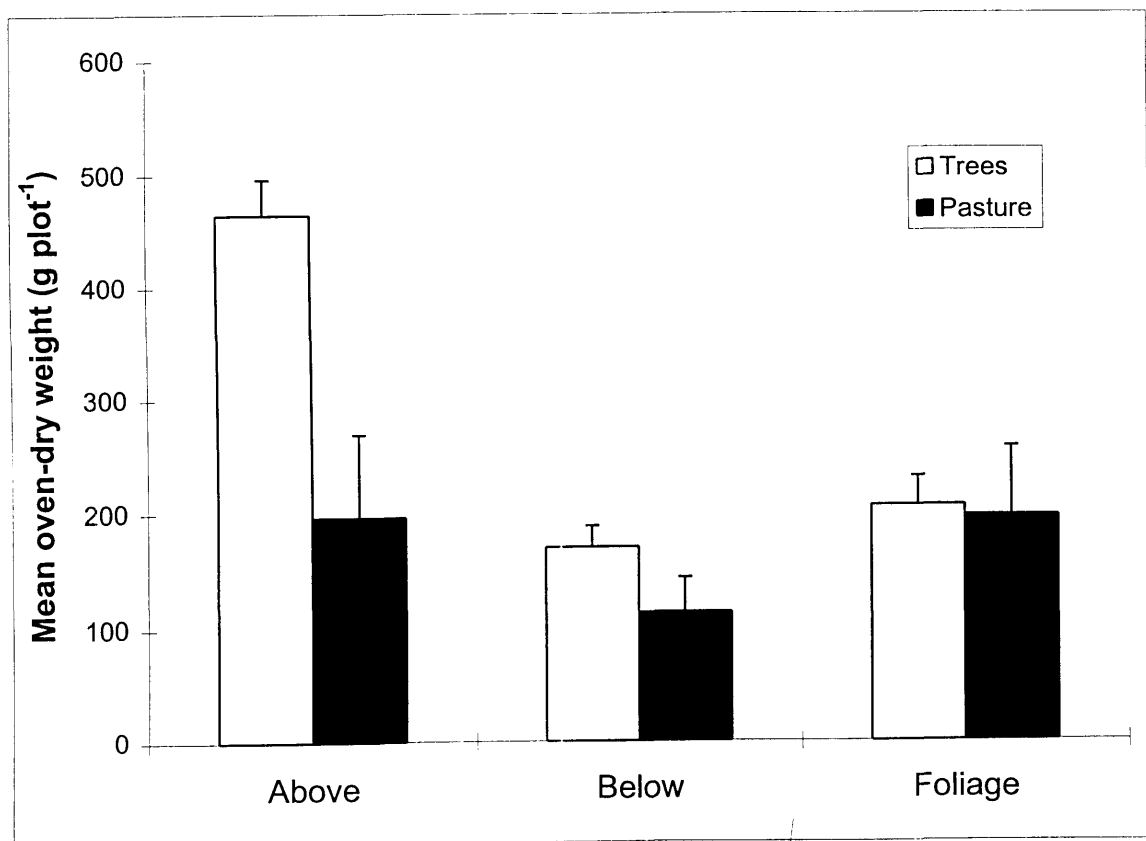


Figure 6.3. Comparison of biomass for trees and pastures in the glasshouse experiment.

Table 6.3. Biomass (g plot⁻¹) of the trees growing in glasshouse. #significance: *=significantly different at P<0.05; **P<0.01; ***<0.001; ns=not significantly different. The means in a row with the same letters are not significantly different. ^sB/A=the ratio of root distribution in soil B and A horizon.

		<i>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</i>		<i>Casuarina cunninghamiana</i>		
		4 trees plot ⁻¹	2 trees plot ⁻¹	4 trees plot ⁻¹	2 trees plot ⁻¹	#Significance
Above-ground	Stem+branch	238.1a	249.9a	300.1b	251.5a	*
	Foliage	185.0ab	159.4a	259.5c	217.5b	*
	Total	423.1a	409.3a	559.6b	469.0c	**
	Foliage/Total	0.437a	0.389b	0.464c	0.464c	***
Below-ground	Fine root	40.9a	40.5a	56.2b	55.7b	*
	Lateral root	66.7a	58.6b	54.0b	48.4d	*
	Tap root	67.4	58.2	70.4	63.8	ns
	Total	175.0	157.2	180.6	167.9	ns
	^s B/A	0.090a	0.075a	0.030b	0.040b	***
Below/Above	0.383a	0.427b	0.363a	0.319c	*	

6.1.1.3. Nitrogen and phosphorus accumulation in trees and pastures

Mean concentration of nitrogen and phosphorus in the tissues of *E. camaldulensis*, *C. cunninghamiana* and pastures are given in Table 6.4. N concentration of grass foliage was higher than trees, but the difference was not significant. The stems and branches of *E. camaldulensis* had significantly (P<0.01) higher N concentration than *C. cunninghamiana*. Pasture roots concentrated

significantly ($P<0.001$) more N than both tree species. The concentration of P was not significantly different in the foliage between the two tree species and pasture, and was same in stems and branches for the trees. However, P concentration was significantly higher ($P<0.001$) in roots of pasture in comparison with trees.

Although *E. camaldulensis* and *C. cunninghamiana* with two density treatments had around double total above- and below-ground biomass in comparison with the pasture (Table 6.5), their N accumulation was only higher by 8% to 18%, and P accumulation was similar or higher by 44% than the pastures respectively. The average rates of N and P accumulation were 0.79 and 0.10 g plot⁻¹ month⁻¹ for the tree plots respectively, while the rates were 2.01 and 0.23 g plot⁻¹ month⁻¹ for the pasture plots. The ratio of N accumulation in above-ground biomass to below-ground biomass was significantly greater ($P<0.001$) for trees than pasture, while the ratio was significantly greater for *E. camaldulensis* by comparison with *C. cunninghamiana*. The ratio of P accumulation in above-ground biomass to below-ground biomass was significantly greater ($P<0.001$) for the trees in comparison with pasture, while the ratio was significantly higher for *C. cunninghamiana* than *E. camaldulensis*.

Table 6.4. Mean concentration of N and P in the tissue of *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, *Casuarina cunninghamiana* and pasture in the glasshouse experiment. #significance: **=significantly different at $P<0.01$; *** <0.001 ; ns=not significantly different. The means in a row with the same letters are not significantly different.

Tissue	<i>E. camaldulensis</i>	<i>C. cunninghamiana</i>	Pasture	#Significance
N (% oven-dry wt.) Foliage	3.21	2.82	3.44	ns
Stem and branches	0.92a	0.49b		**
Roots	0.32a	0.40a	1.14b	***
P (% oven-dry wt.) Foliage	0.29	0.33	0.29	ns
Stem and branches	0.11	0.11		ns
Roots	0.10a	0.10a	0.32b	***

Table 6.5. Comparison of total biomass, and N and P stored in the above- and below-ground biomass for trees and pastures in the glasshouse experiment. #significance: *=significantly different at P<0.05; ***<0.001; The means in a row with the same letters are not significantly different.

	<i>E. camaldulensis</i>		<i>C. cunninghamiana</i>		Pasture	#Significance
	4 trees plot ⁻¹	2 trees plot ⁻¹	4 trees plot ⁻¹	2 trees plot ⁻¹		
Mean oven-dry matter (g plot ⁻¹)	598.1a	566.5a	740.2b	636.9c	309.9d	***
N (g plot ⁻¹)	8.69a	7.92b	9.51c	8.77a	8.05b	*
Average N accumulation (g plot ⁻¹)			8.72a		8.05b	*
N accumulation rate (g plot ⁻¹ month ⁻¹)			0.79a		2.01b	***
N above-/below-ground	14.52a	14.73a	12.29b	9.23c	5.22d	***
P (g plot ⁻¹)	0.98a	0.89a	1.34b	1.11c	0.93a	*
Average P accumulation (g plot ⁻¹)			1.08a		0.93b	*
P accumulation rate (g plot ⁻¹ month ⁻¹)			0.10a		0.23b	***
P above-/below-ground	4.44a	4.58a	6.50b	5.89b	1.60c	***

6.1.2. Nutrient removal by trees and pastures from lateral groundwater flow

6.1.2.1. Evidence from the 'soil nutrient depletion period'

The experimental time for the 'soil nutrient depletion period' covered 10 weeks, in which NO₃-N, PO₄-P, EC and pH were collected and measured in the soil solution. Average values for the soil solution collected from the 5 sampling pipes were used to

compare differences between the treatments. NO₃-N concentrations were consistently lower during the 10-week period for the tree treatment in comparison with the bare ground control, but the difference was significant (P<0.05) only at 2, 4 and 6 weeks. (Figure 6.4a). On average, tree plots retained more NO₃-N than bare ground plots by 39.9% (Table 6.7). The curve of NO₃-N change for tree plots was fitted a polynomial function $y = 0.3768x^2 - 4.1292x + 11.996$ with $R^2 = 0.9875$ (Figure 6.4a). A dramatic decrease (about 50% of total amount) in NO₃-N concentration of tree treatment was measured for the first 2 weeks, with the rate declining thereafter. On average, tree plots retained more NO₃-N than bare ground plots by 39.9% (Table 6.7). The curve for the bare ground control was fitted a linear function $y = -1.6817x + 10.879$ with $R^2 = 0.9717$ (Figure 6.4). The mean NO₃-N content in the soil solution declined from about 8.0-9.0 to about 0.3-1.1 mg L⁻¹ for both tree and no-tree treatments during the 10-week period. The difference between tree species and densities was not significant (Figure 6.4b; Table 6.6).

Measurements of NO₃-N at soil A-B interface at 90 cm from water inlet (Figure 6.5a) showed similar NO₃-N patterns with that collected from the B horizon (Figure 6.5b) for the tree treatments and bare ground control. In both cases, the concentration of NO₃-N was significantly lower (P<0.05) at 2, 4 and 6 weeks for trees in comparison with bare ground.

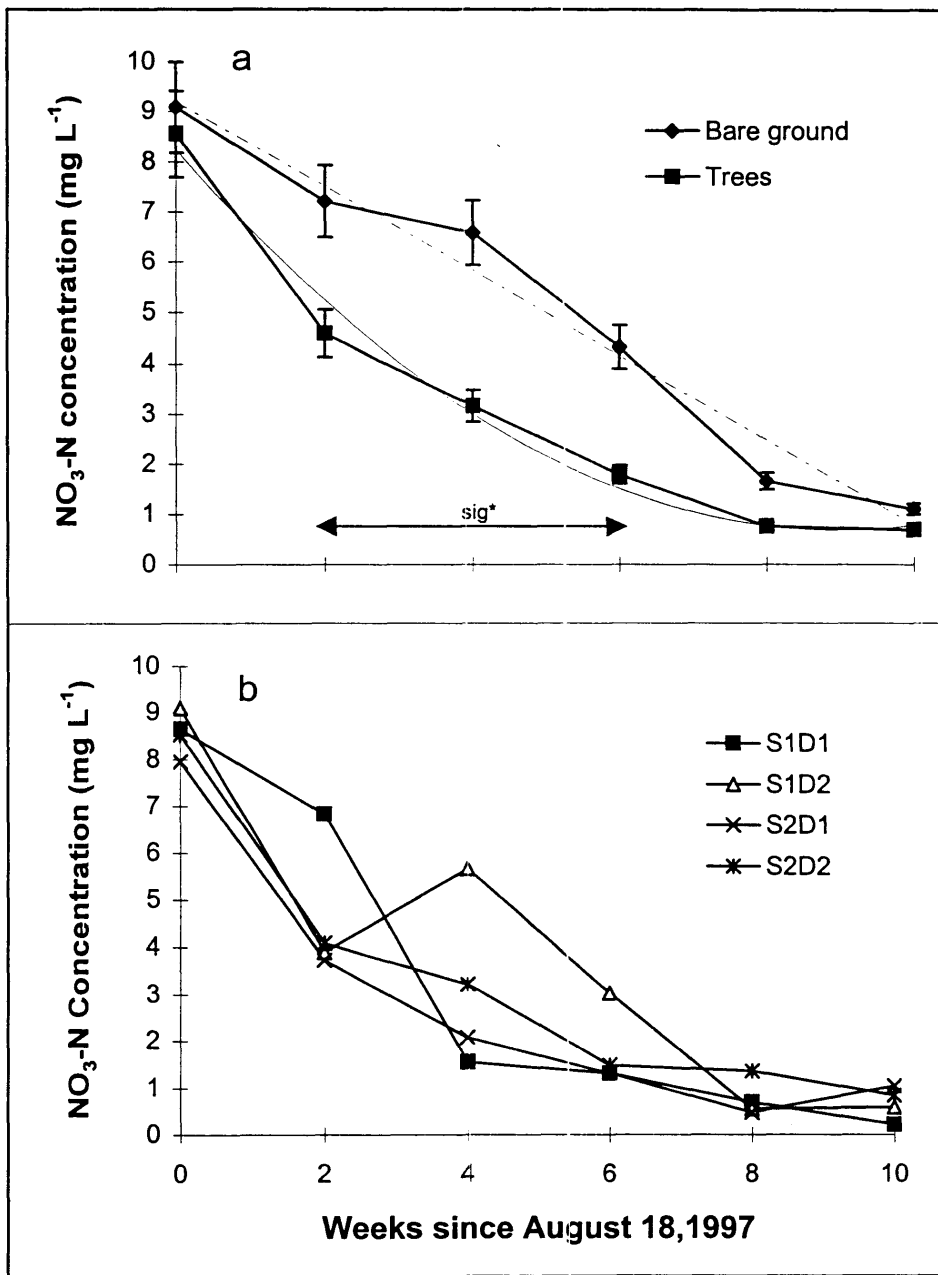


Figure 6.4. Comparison of $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ concentration in soil solution between (a) the tree treatment and bare ground control, and (b) among the tree treatments over the 'soil nutrient depletion period'. The curve for tree plots was fitted a polynomial function $y = 0.3768x^2 - 4.1292x + 11.996$ with $R^2 = 0.9875$. The curve for the bare ground control was fitted a linear function $y = -1.6817x + 10.879$ with $R^2 = 0.9717$. Average values were used from the soil solution collected from the 5 sampling pipes. S1: *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*; S2: *Casuarina cunninghamiana*; D1: 4 trees plot⁻¹; D2: 2 trees plot⁻¹. *sig= significantly different at $P < 0.05$.

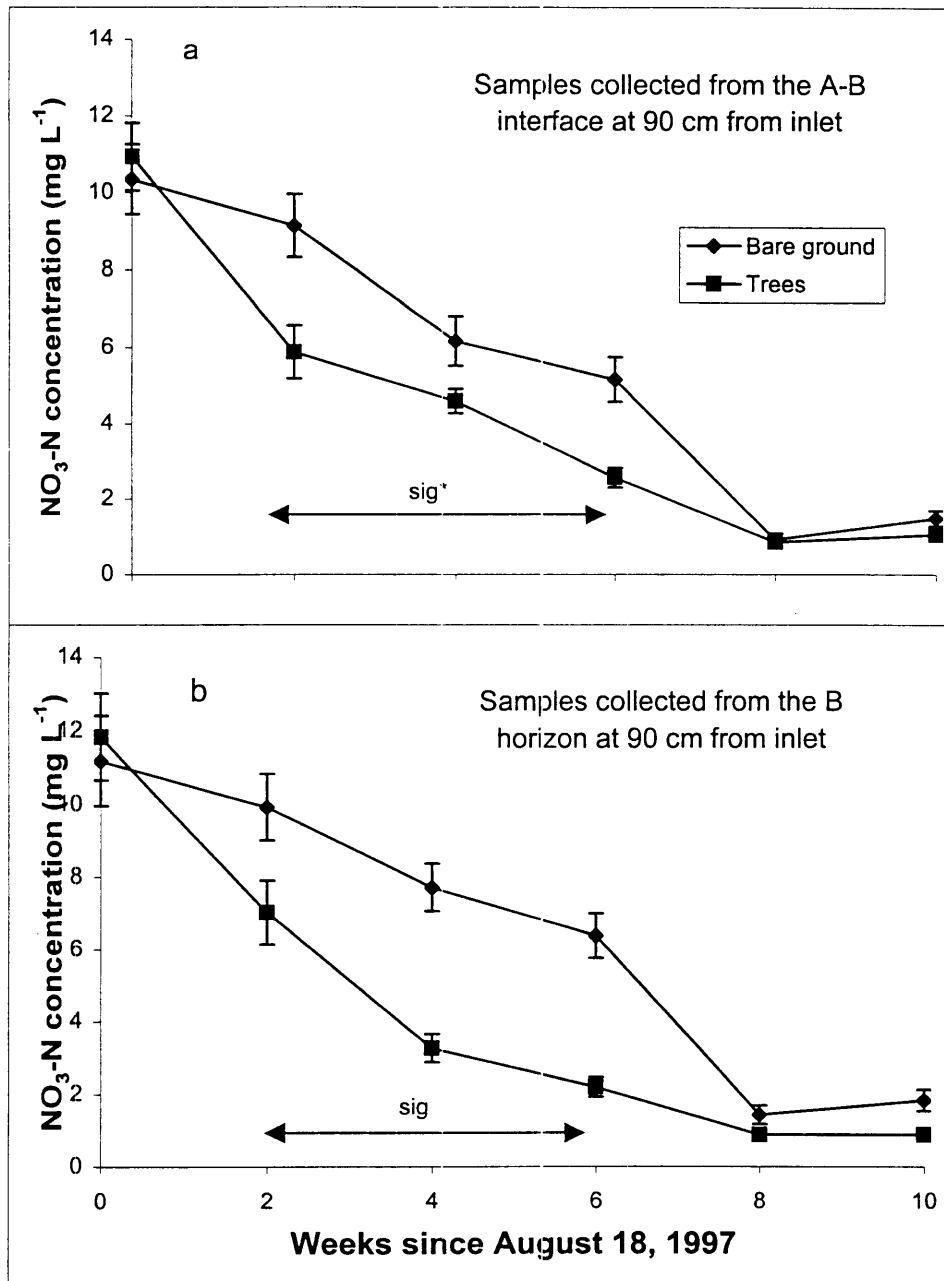


Figure 6.5. Comparison of $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ concentration in soil solution at (a) A-B interface and (b) B horizon for the tree treatments and bare ground control over the 'soil nutrient depletion period'. Measurements were taken from the soil solution collected at 90 cm from water inlet, ie sampling pipes upper 2 and bottom 2 respectively (see chapter 3). *sig=significantly different at $P < 0.05$.

Table 6.6. Levels of significance from the analysis of variances for the effect of treatments on NO₃-N concentration in soil solution between the tree treatments over the 'soil nutrient depletion period', 'low NO₃-N addition period' and 'high NO₃-N addition period'. #=tree species: *E. camaldulensis* and *C. cunninghamiana*. ##=tree densities: 4 trees plot⁻¹ and 2 trees plot⁻¹. *=significantly different at P<0.05, **at P<0.01, ns=not significantly different.

Periods		Main effects		Interaction (species x density)
		Species [#]	Density ^{##}	
Soil nutrient depletion period	Weeks since August 18, 1997			
	0	ns	ns	ns
	2	ns	ns	*
	4	ns	ns	ns
	6	ns	ns	**
	8	ns	ns	ns
	10	ns	ns	ns
Low NO ₃ -N addition period	Weeks since November 13, 1997			
	0	ns	ns	ns
	2	ns	ns	ns
	4	ns	ns	ns
High NO ₃ -N addition period	Weeks since March 3, 1998			
	0	ns	ns	ns
	2	ns	ns	ns
	4	ns	ns	ns

The difference in PO₄-P concentration was not significant at each measurement for the tree treatment and bare ground control (Figure 6.6a), and between the tree treatments (Figure 6.6b). The concentration of PO₄-P measured at the soil A-B interface and in the B horizon at 90 cm from water inlet was also not significant between the tree treatment and bare ground (Figure 6.7), although the general difference of PO₄-P concentration between the tree plots and bare ground control was larger in the B horizon than at the A-B interface.

Mean EC values from soil solution were similar for the tree treatment and bare ground over the 10-week experimental period (Figure 6.8a). EC values declined from 0.74 to 0.4 and from 0.7 to 0.38 for tree treatment and bare ground respectively over the period, and both curves fitted a linear function with $R^2 > 0.95$. There were also no significant differences in EC values measured at the A-B interface and in the B horizon at 90 cm from water inlet for the trees and bare ground (Figures 6.8b,c).

Mean pH values for soil solutions were similar for the tree treatment and bare ground (Figure 6.9a), and showed an increasing trend over time. The values of pH increased from 7.06 to 7.49 and from 7.09 to 7.52 for tree treatment and bare ground respectively over the period, and both curves fitted a linear function with $R^2 > 0.92$. The values of pH measured at A-B interface and B horizon at 90 cm from water inlet were also not significantly different for the trees and bare ground (Figures 6.9b,c).

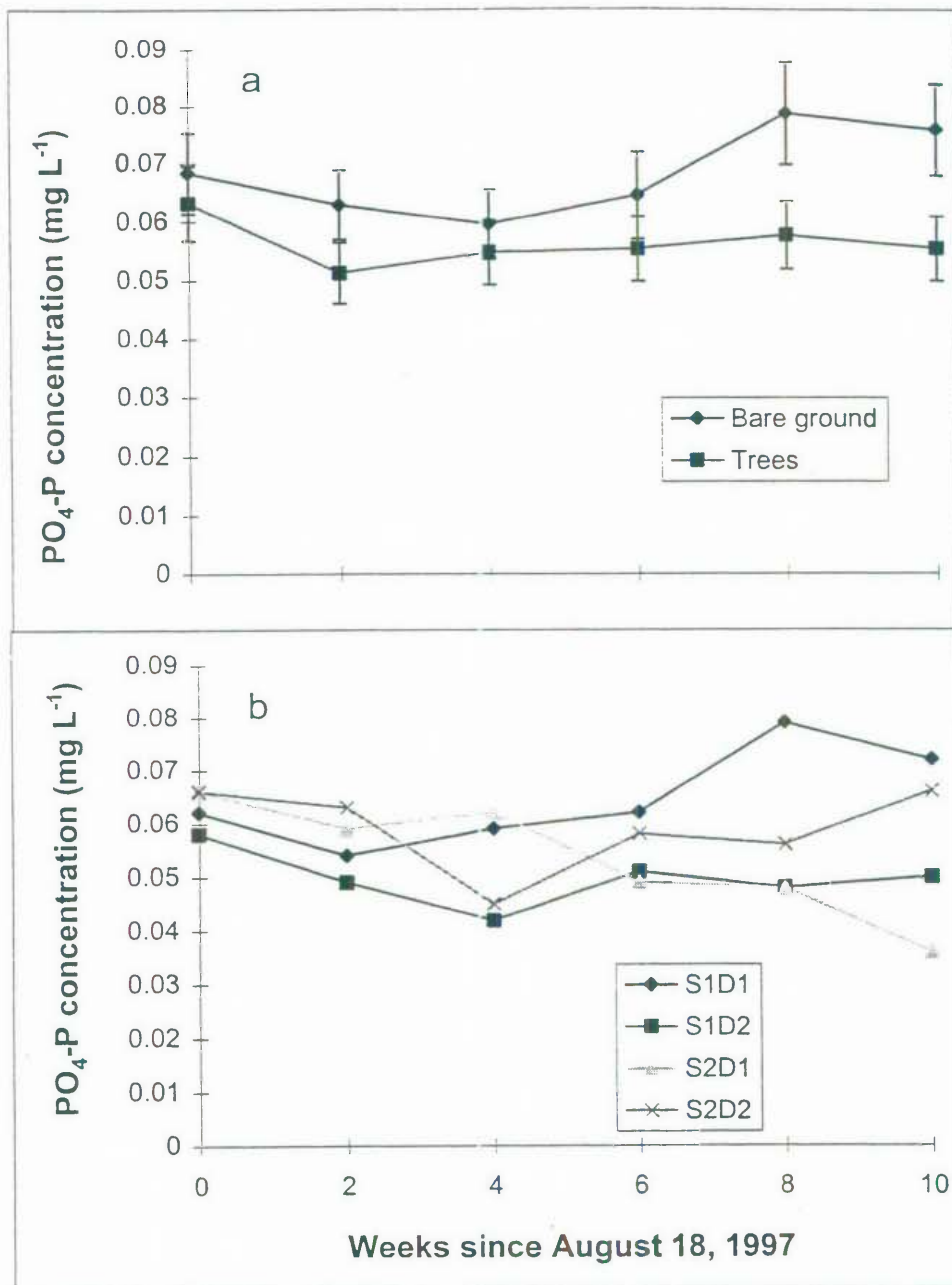


Figure 6.6. Comparison of PO₄-P concentration in soil solution between (a) the tree treatment and bare ground control and (b) among the tree treatments over the 'soil nutrient depletion period'. Average values were used from the soil solution collected from the 5 sampling pipes. S1: *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*; S2: *Casuarina cunninghamiana*; D1: 4 trees plot⁻¹; D2: 2 trees plot⁻¹. The differences were not significant.

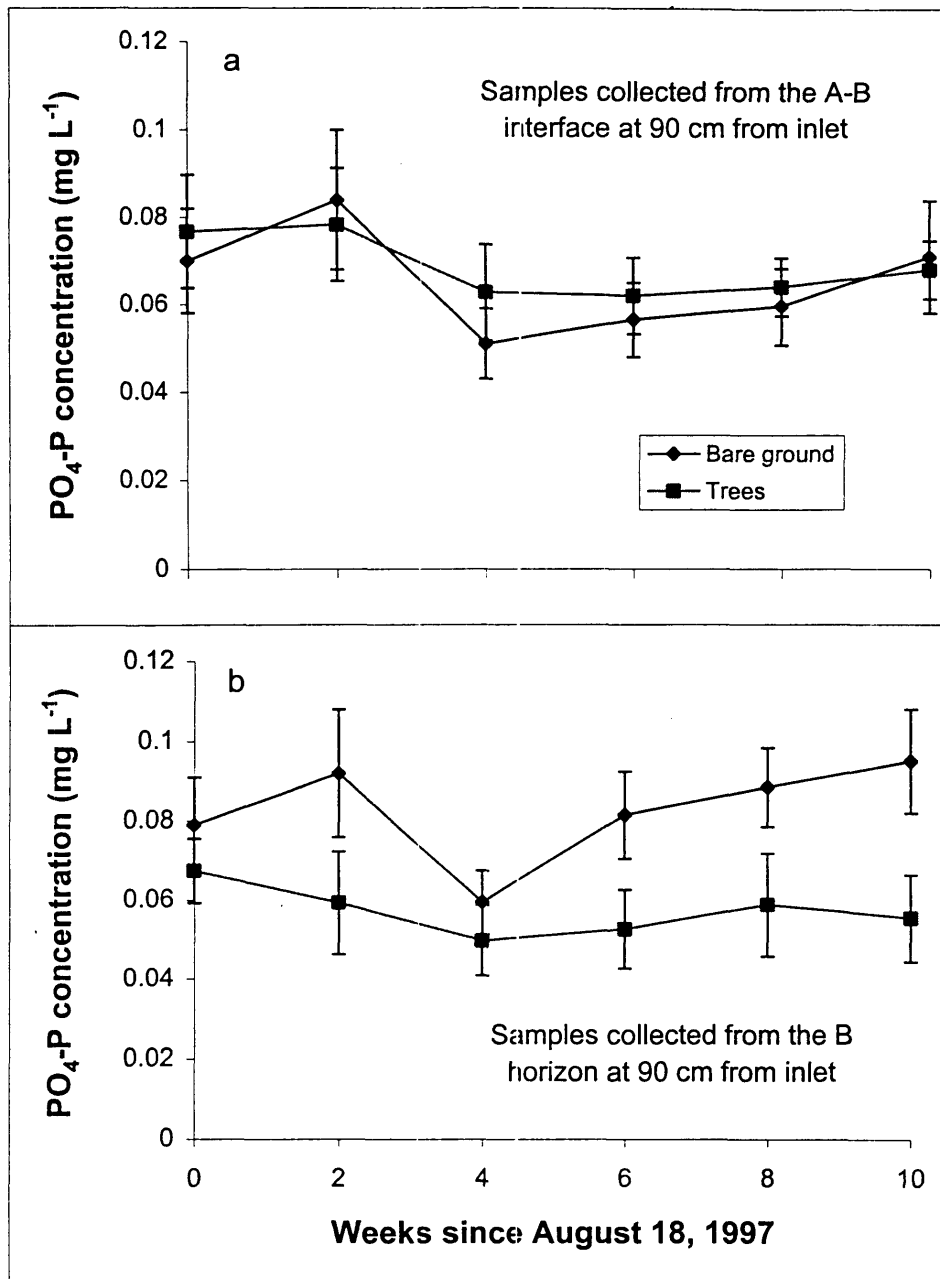


Figure 6.7. Comparison of PO₄-P concentration in soil solution at (a) the soil A-B interface and (b) in the B horizon for the tree treatments and bare ground control over the 'soil nutrient depletion period'. Measurements were taken from the soil solution collected at 90 cm from water inlet, ie sampling pipes upper 2 and bottom 2 respectively (see chapter 3). No significant differences were observed.

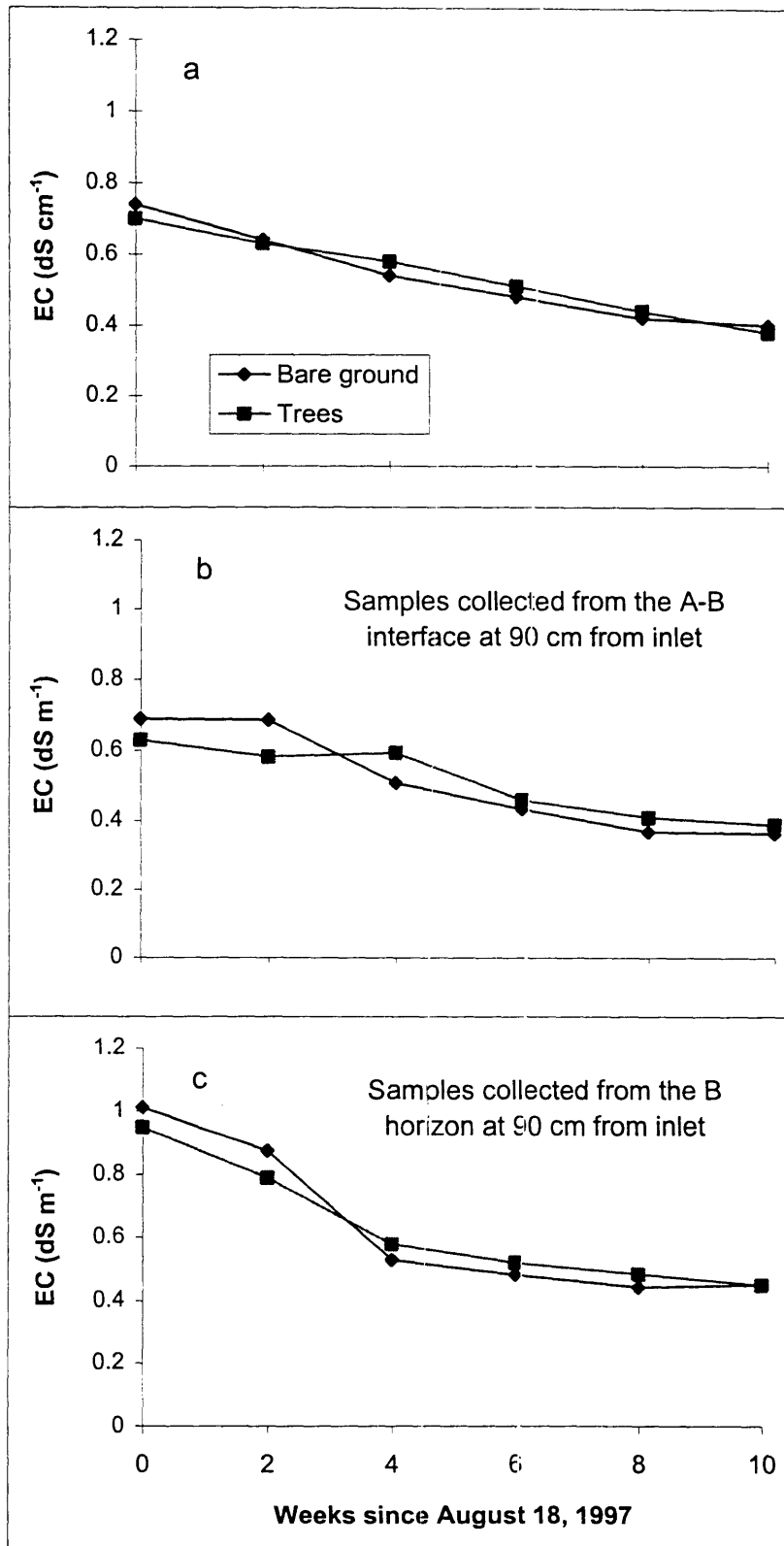


Figure 6.8. Comparison of EC values in soil solution for the tree treatments and bare ground control over the 'soil nutrient depletion period'. The values were calculated from the measurements in soil solution collected from the 5 sampling pipes (upper 1 and 2, bottom 1 and 2 and outlet), and at 90 cm from water inlet (sampling pipes upper 2 and bottom 2) respectively (see chapter 3). The differences were not significant.

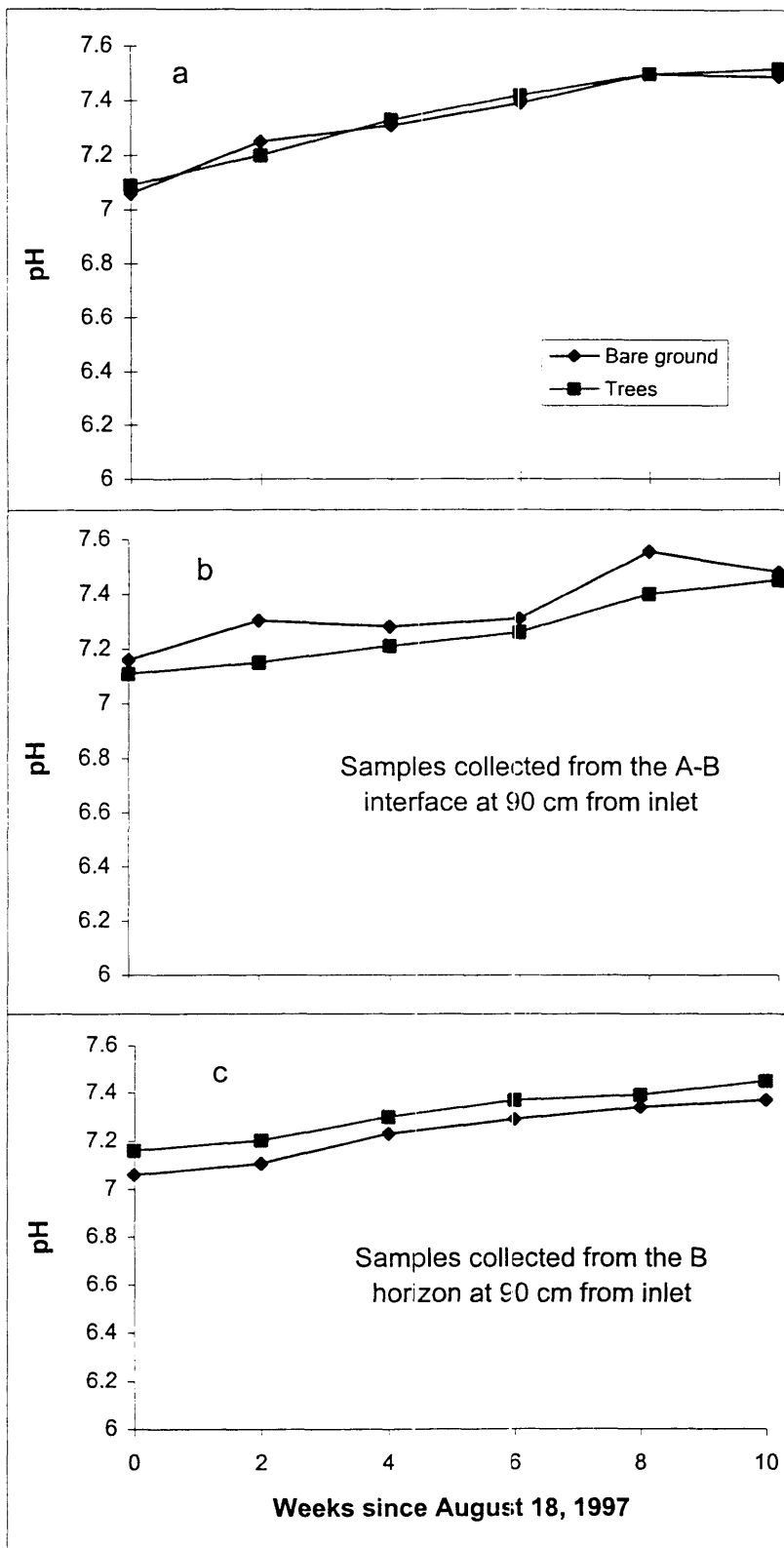


Figure 6.9. Comparison of pH values in soil solution for the tree treatments and bare ground control over the 'soil nutrient depletion period'. The values were calculated from the measurements in soil solution collected from the 5 sampling pipes (upper 1 and 2, bottom 1 and 2 and outlet), and at 90 cm from water inlet (sampling pipes upper 2 and bottom 2) respectively (see chapter 3). The differences were not significant.

6.1.2.2. Evidence from the 'low NO₃-N addition period'

Removal of NO₃-N by trees from lateral groundwater flow was examined in this period by adding 10 mg N L⁻¹ of KNO₃ solution at the rate of 5 litres per day. The values of NO₃-N concentration were averaged for the 3 measurements at 2, 4 and 6 weeks since November 1, 1997 because the differences over time were not significant. The NO₃-N concentrations in soil solutions were not significantly different among the tree treatments (Table 6.6), while the tree plots, on average, retained more NO₃-N than the bare ground plots by 33.1% (Table 6.7).

The concentration of NO₃-N was significantly ($P < 0.01$) lower in the soil solution collected above and below the tree zone at A-B interface flow (sampled through sampling pipes upper 1 and upper 2) for tree plots in comparison with the bare ground plots (Figure 6.10a). The level of NO₃-N decreased from 10 mg L⁻¹ at the inlet to 3.19 mg L⁻¹ and 6.91 mg L⁻¹ at 90 cm from inlet for the tree plots, and for the bare ground plots respectively. However, the differences in NO₃-N concentration for the B horizon flow were not significant between the tree and bare ground plots (Figure 6.10b). The level of NO₃-N concentration in soil solution was consistently lower than 1.5 mg L⁻¹ in the B horizon both for tree and bare ground plots.

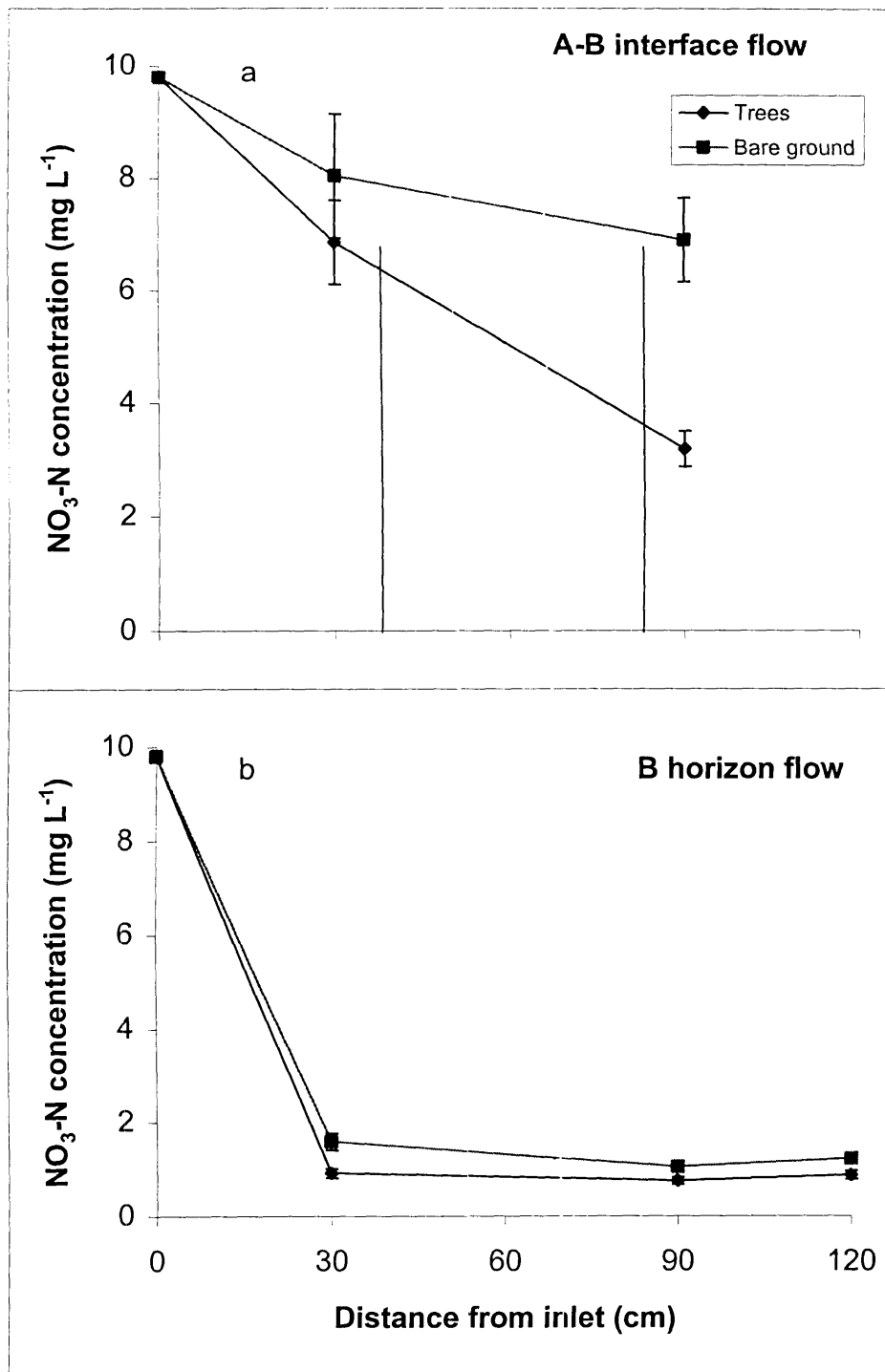


Figure 6.10. The effect of tree treatments on $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ concentration in lateral (a) A-B interface flow and (b) B horizon flow compared with bare ground control during the 'low $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ addition period'. The values of $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ concentration were the averages of 3 measurements at 2, 4 and 6 weeks since November 1, 1997.

6.1.2.3. Evidence from the 'high NO₃-N addition period'

Prior to this period, the bare ground controls were planted with pasture and grown for 7 weeks before the experimental conditions were applied. The NO₃-N concentration in the added solution was increased to 20 mg L⁻¹. The values of NO₃-N concentration were the averages of 3 measurements at 2, 4 and 6 weeks since February 20, 1998. The NO₃-N concentration in the soil solution was not significantly different among the tree treatments (Table 6.6) and between the tree plots and pasture plots (Table 6.7). The effect of trees and pasture on NO₃-N concentration in soil solution was not significantly different both for the lateral A-B interface flow (Figure 6.11a) and B horizon flow (Figure 6.11b). The level of NO₃-N concentration decreased from 20 mg L⁻¹ at the inlet to about 4 mg L⁻¹ at 90 cm from inlet in the A-B interface flow for both tree and pasture treatments. The NO₃-N concentration in the soil solution was consistently lower (<1.0 mg L⁻¹) in the soil B horizon both for the tree and pasture plots.

6.1.2.4. Summary of the experiment

Considering both the low and high NO₃-N addition experimental periods together, NO₃-N concentrations at the A-B interface flow were reduced to a similar level (around 4 mg L⁻¹) (Figure 6.12a) for the tree plots as soil solutions flowed past the trees. This suggests that the efficiency of NO₃-N removal by trees was higher when the soil solution concentration was high. The level of NO₃-N concentration in

the B horizon flow was not significantly different for the higher and lower NO₃-N addition (Figure 6.12b).

The efficiency of trees in removal of NO₃-N by comparison with pastures and bare ground in the glasshouse experiment is summarised in Table 6.7. NO₃-N concentration values are the averages of three measurements in each period. The measurements at 2, 4 and 6 weeks since August 18, 1997 during the nutrient depletion period are selected for this calculation because the trees still grew slowly during the days around August 18, 1997, about 12 weeks since planted (see Figure 6.1), and NO₃-N concentration in soil solution became very low after 8 weeks since August 18, 1997 both for tree plots and bare ground control (see Figure 6.4).

In summary, using NO₃-N concentration in soil solution as an indicator, trees exhibited higher efficiency in removal of NO₃-N in comparison with bare ground control and pastures, but significantly only when compared with bare ground. Trees reduced significantly more NO₃-N from lateral A-B interface flow than bare ground during the 'nutrient depletion period' and the 'low NO₃-N addition period'. The reduction was also significant for lateral B horizon flow during the 'nutrient depletion period'.

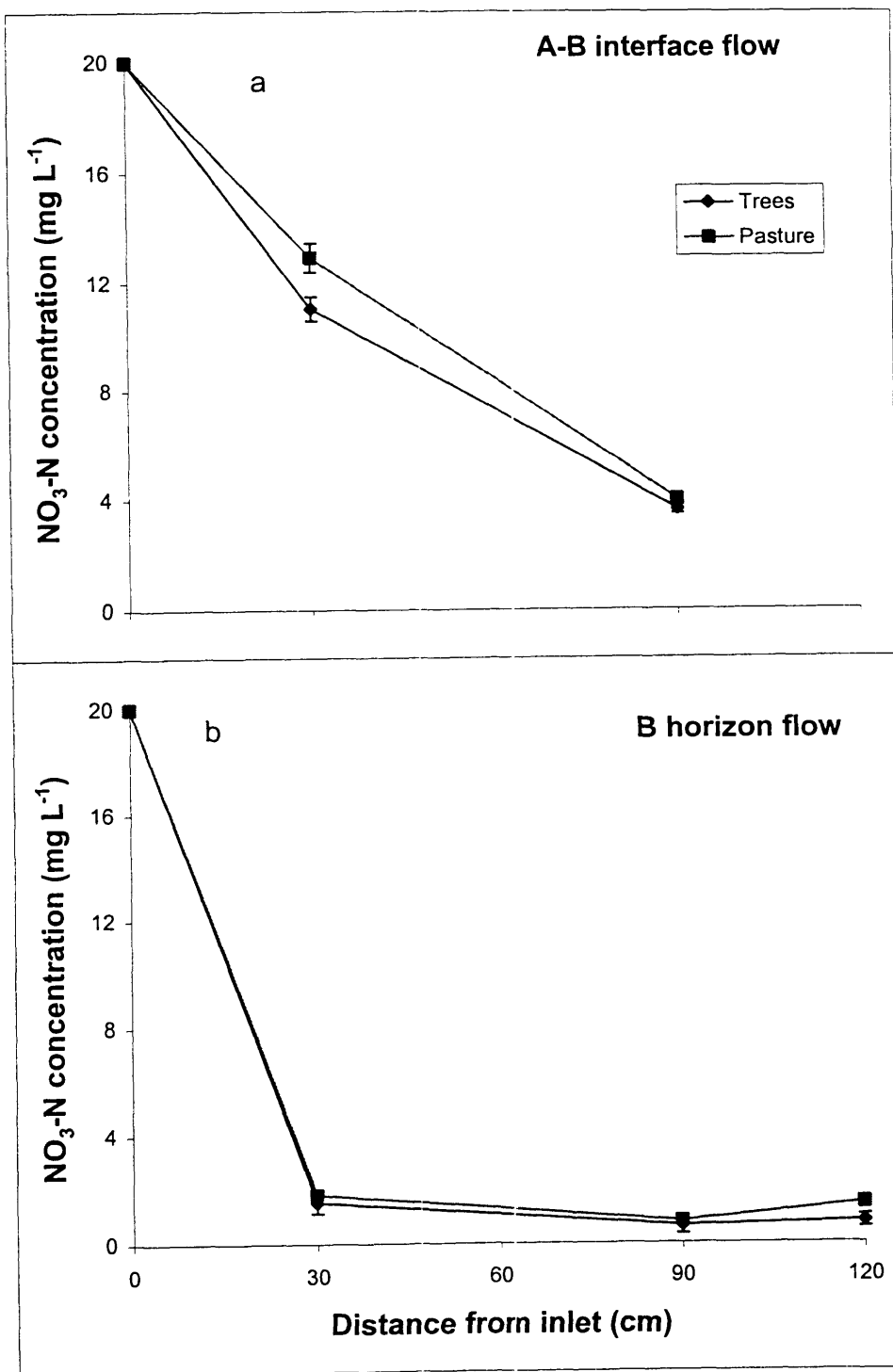


Figure 6.11. Effects of trees and pastures on $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ concentration in lateral A-B interface flow and B horizon flow during the 'high $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ addition period'. The values of $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ concentration were the averages of 3 measurements at 2, 4 and 6 weeks since February 20, 1998. The differences were not significant.

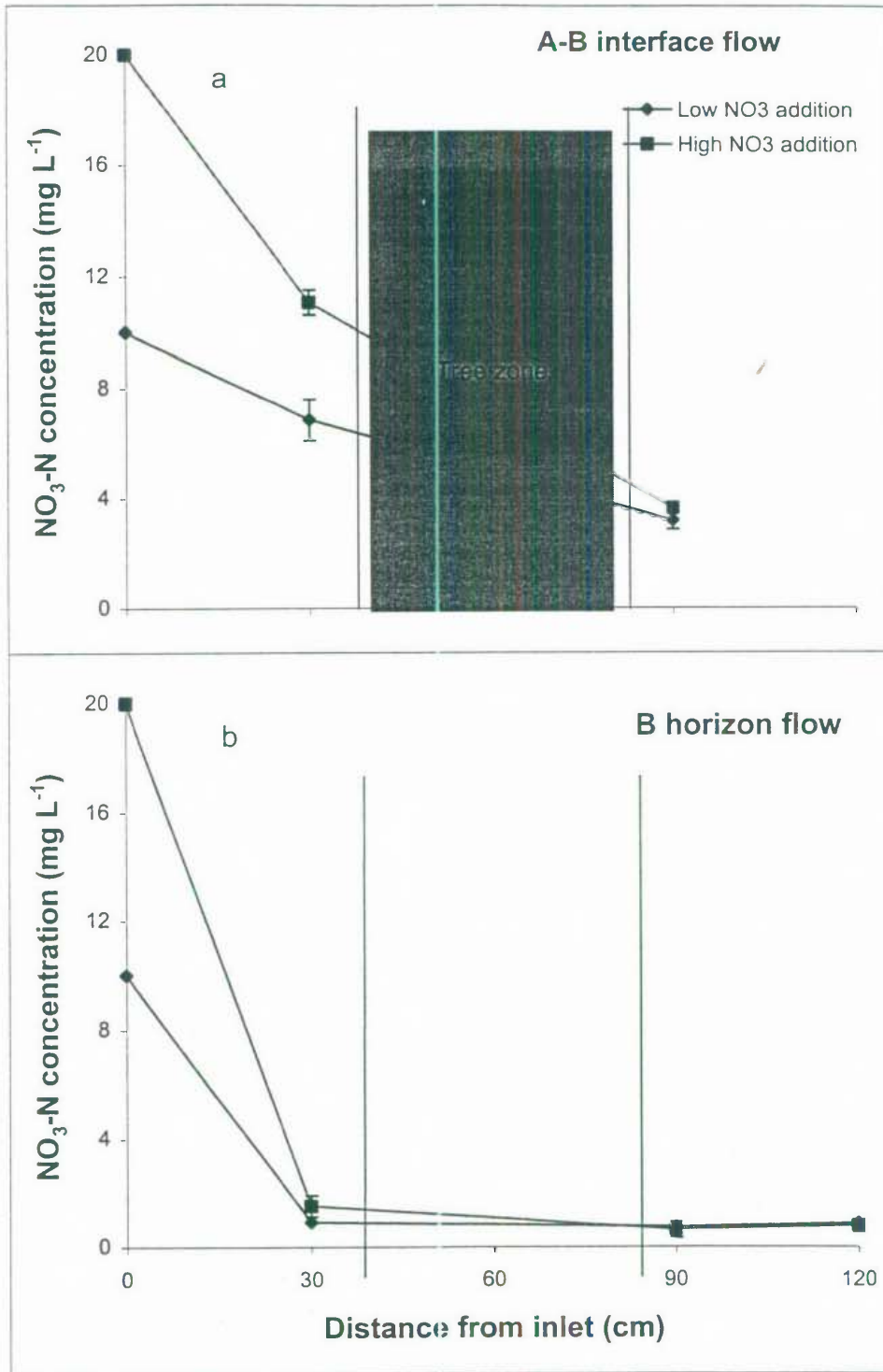


Figure 6.12. Comparison of the efficiency of tree zone in NO₃-N removal (a) for the A-B interface flow and (b) the B horizon flow during the low and high NO₃-N addition periods.

Table 6.7. The efficiency of trees in removing NO₃-N from soil solution in comparison with pastures and bare ground in the glasshouse experiment. NO₃-N concentration values are the average of three measurements in each period. The measurements at 2, 4 and 6 weeks during the nutrient depletion period were selected for this calculation (see text for explanation). [#]Average: each value is the average of 5 values measured from the solution samples collected from the 5 sampling pipes respectively. ^{##}Upper 2=values from the solution sample collected from the sampling pipe Upper 2 that was located at the soil A-B interface at 90 cm from inlet. ^{###}Bottom 2= values from the solution sample collected from the pipe Bottom 2 that was located at the soil B horizon at 90 cm from inlet. [§]significance: *=significantly different at P<0.05; **P<0.01; ***<0.001; ns=not significantly different. Unit: mg L⁻¹.

Periods	Trees	Bare ground	Pasture	[§] Significance	Difference due to trees	%
Nutrient depletion period						
[#] Average	3.16	5.26		***	2.10	39.9
^{##} Upper 2	4.34	6.82		**	2.48	36.3
^{###} Bottom 2	4.17	8.01		***	3.84	47.9
Low NO ₃ addition period						
Average	2.52	3.77		*	1.25	33.2
Upper 2	3.19	6.91		***	3.72	53.8
Bottom 2	0.75	1.05		ns	0.30	28.6
High NO ₃ addition period						
Average	3.52		4.20	ns	0.68	16.2
Upper 2	3.62		3.99	ns	0.37	9.3
Bottom 2	0.69		0.80	ns	0.11	13.3

6.1.3. Comparison of water use by trees and pasture

The water use of the treatments is shown in Figure 6.13. *E. camaldulensis* and *C. cunninghamiana* trees with two densities were not significantly different in water use over the 4-week measured period. The tree plots, however, used significantly more ($P < 0.001$) water (about 40% more, on average) than the pasture plots.

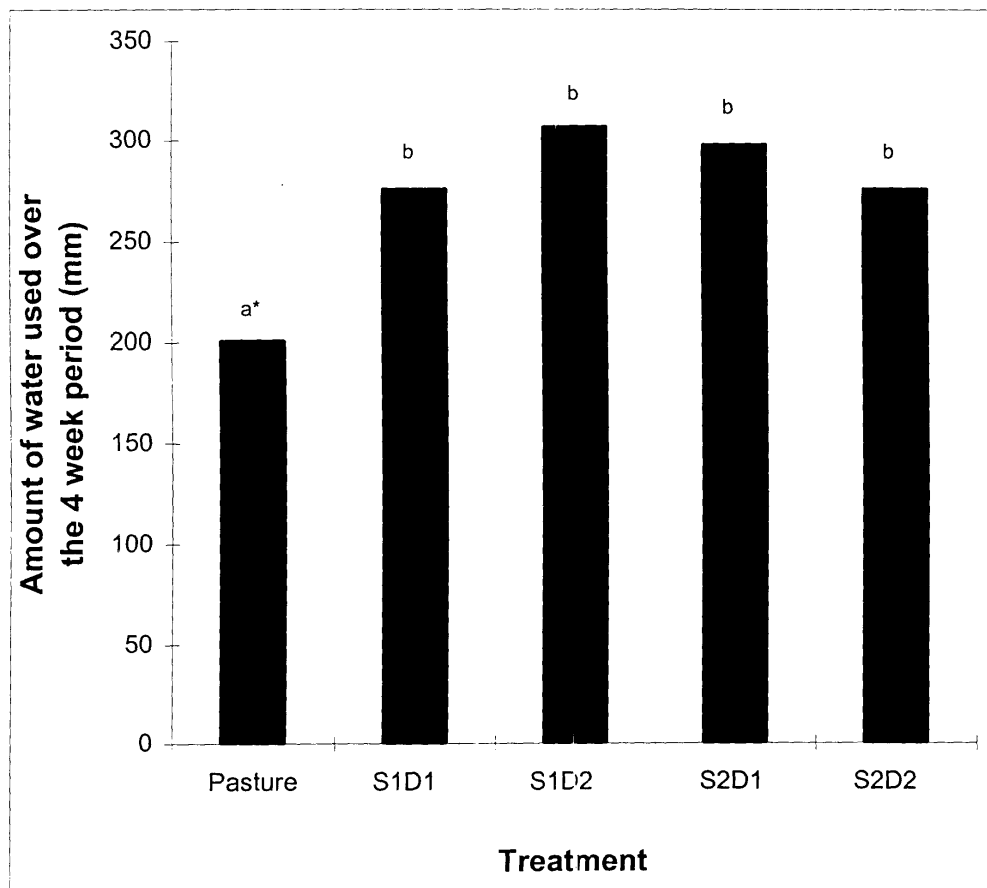


Figure 6.13. Comparison of water use between the tree and pasture treatments during the 4 weeks since April 1, 1998. S1: *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*; S2: *Casuarina cunninghamiana*; D1: 4 trees plot⁻¹; D2: 2 trees plot⁻¹. *The means with different letters are significantly different at $P < 0.001$.

6.2. Discussion

6.2.1. Growth responses of trees and grasses

Both *E. camaldulensis* and *C. cunninghamiana* trees grew slowly during the first 13 weeks after planting (Figure 6.1) primarily due to winter conditions and low temperatures in the glasshouse frequently went down to 5 °C at night. As trees were pruned at 22 weeks, comparison of height growth was limited to the early experimental period. The difference in height growth was not significant between *E. camaldulensis* and *C. cunninghamiana* during this period (Figure 6.1a), while the 2-tree treatment was taller than the 4-tree treatment for both species, although the difference was significant only for *E. camaldulensis* (Figure 6.1b). The diameter growth was linearly related for all the tree treatments (Figure 6.2). The 2-tree treatment resulted in significantly higher diameter growth rates for both *E. camaldulensis* and *C. cunninghamiana*. This suggests that the trees were too dense so that their growth in diameter was limited to some extent. Consequently the 4-tree treatment restricted growth in both height and diameter, and this was reflected in individual tree biomass.

Previous studies (Awe *et al.* 1976; Jacobs 1955) recorded that *E. camaldulensis* has a particularly high root/shoot ratio, an attribute contributing to its success in an arid environment and its ability to tap into deep groundwater. Awe *et al.* (1976) measured the root/shoot ratios for 6 provenances of *E. camaldulensis* and found they were between 0.35 and 1.21 under different water regimes. Bell *et al.* (1993) reported

that the root/shoot ratios of 2 provenances and 5 clones of *E. camaldulensis* were from 0.44 to 0.78. In this study, the root/shoot ratios of *E. camaldulensis* were 0.38 and 0.43 respectively for the 4-tree and 2-tree treatment (Table 6.3), which were at the lower level in comparison with other published results. However, the soil for the above two experiments were sand or partly sand with clay, while the soil used in this study was a strongly duplex soil with a sandy clay loam horizon over clay. Soil type may have decreased the development of the root system to some degree.

Tree root habit is reflected in the distribution of roots in the soil profile. *E. camaldulensis* has a strong tap root system (Plate 3a) and also develops sinker roots from major lateral roots (Jacobs 1955), while *C. cunninghamiana* has a more fibrous root system with a weaker tap root (Plate 3b). Consequently, *E. camaldulensis* had more roots growing in the soil B horizon in comparison with *C. cunninghamiana* (Table 6.3), which suggests that *E. camaldulensis* could more efficiently use sub-surface soil water and tolerate drier environmental conditions. *C. cunninghamiana* is likely to use the surface soil moisture more efficiently than *E. camaldulensis* because it has a higher proportion of fine roots in the surface soil. Both tree species had much greater above- and below-ground biomass than the pasture (Figure 6.3).

The pasture accumulated N and P more efficiently than the trees, although the trees accumulated absolutely larger amount of the nutrients by having greater biomass than the pasture (Table 6.5). This suggests that pasture could more efficiently filter N and P, provided that proper management methods, such as harvesting on time, were adopted. This is based on the hypothesis that removal of nutrients due to nutrient

assimilation by plants is one of the main processes for vegetated filter strips in reducing nutrient transport (Lowrance 1992; O'Neill and Gordon 1994).

6.2.2. Nutrient removal in soil solution by trees and pasture

The tree treatments demonstrated significantly higher capacity in retain $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ in the vegetation-soil system in comparison with bare ground through the measurements in the 'nutrient depletion period' and the 'low NO_3 addition period'. During the 'nutrient depletion period', tree treatments on average retained more $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ than bare ground by 39.9% (Figure 6.4; Table 6.7). Retention by trees for the A-B interface flow was 36.3 higher than bare ground, while for the B horizon flow it was 47.9% (Figure 6.5; Table 6.7). During the 'low NO_3 addition period', a loss of $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ was recorded as nutrient rich water migrated through the soil. The loss was significantly greater with tree treatments than bare ground (Figure 6.10a; Table 6.7). In a similar study, O'Neill and Gordon (1994) also demonstrated that trees (Carolina poplar) were effective in lowering subsurface $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ concentrations as soil solution flowed through the rooting zones of trees.

The trees did not show a significantly greater ability in retaining lateral moving $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ in comparison with pasture (Table 6.7). During the 'high $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ addition period', the loss of $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ was not significantly different with the tree and pasture treatments as $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ enriched water flowed through the soil (Figure 6.11). The two tree species with two different planting densities also did not show significant influences in reducing $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ associated with lateral moving water for any of the experimental periods (Figure 6.4b; Table 6.6).

Considering the three soil solution collection and analysis periods overall, the efficiency of NO₃-N removal from lateral ground flow by trees was greater when NO₃-N concentration was relatively higher in the soil (Figures 6.4b, 6.5 and 6.12a). This response may be due to trees taking up more NO₃-N when more NO₃-N is available in the soil solution (Lowrance 1992; O'Neill and Gordon 1994) or that denitrification was higher when the NO₃-N content in soil was higher (Hill 1996; Nelson *et al.* 1995).

The result from the high NO₃-N addition period showed that the 3-month-old pasture took up comparable amount of NO₃-N as the 10-month-old *E. camaldulensis* and *C. cunninghamiana* trees under glasshouse conditions. This suggests that pasture can be used in designing and implementing vegetative buffer strips to remove NO₃-N from laterally moving shallow groundwater. This result is, however, to some extent, in conflict with some published results. Osborne and Kavacic (1993) suggested that a forest riparian zone in Illinois, USA was more efficient in removing NO₃-N from shallow groundwater than an adjacent grass riparian area. A poplar vegetated riparian zone in England was found to retain more NO₃-N from groundwater than a grass riparian strip (Haycock and Pinay 1993). Verchot *et al.* (1997a,b) reported that nitrate attenuation in a grass-vegetated field edge was lower compared to a forest.

Nevertheless, all these studies were based on real matured forest. Therefore, it must be very cautious to make some reasonable interpretation based on the comparison. A limitation of this glasshouse experiment was that the surface soil (15 cm deep) and particularly the subsoil (20 cm deep) were relatively shallow by

comparison with the field experiment site, which might have had some effects on the experiment results. Denitrification might also be lower under field condition.

Despite the fact that many different types of vegetated buffer strips have been reported as having the ability to remove $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ from subsurface water (e.g. Osborne and Kovacic 1993; Paterson *et al.* 1993), there is still considerable uncertainty about the relative importance of removal mechanisms. Most researchers have suggested that the major processes are vegetation uptake (e.g. Lowrance 1992; O'Neill and Gordon 1994; Paterson *et al.* 1993) and denitrification (e.g. Haycock and Pinay; Jacobs and Gilliam 1985; Verchot *et al.* 1997b). Monitoring and analysing soil solutions during the 'soil nutrient depletion period' and the 'low NO_3 addition period' in this glasshouse experiment indicated that the both processes are likely to contribute to the $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ reduction. The significantly lower $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ levels in soil solutions from the tree treatments in comparison with the bare ground control (Figures 6.4a, 6.5 and 6.10) may be due largely to tree uptake. The fact that the $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ levels declined from 10 mg L^{-1} at the inlet to 6.91 mg L^{-1} at 90 cm from inlet (Figure 6.10a), however, might due largely to the process of denitrification.

The comparison of $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ concentration dynamics for the A-B interface flow and B horizon flow in the low and high $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ addition periods (Figures 6.10, 6.11 and 6.12) demonstrated that the removal of $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ by trees and pasture mainly occurred in lateral A-B interface flow. The results from the low and high $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ addition periods also showed that $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ concentrations were all significantly lower for the soil solutions collected from the bottom sampling pipes (Figures 6.10, 6.11 and 6.12). This indicated that the clay subsoil had dramatically intercepted the vertical

NO₃-N leaching, and that an important pathway of NO₃-N loss would be through the lateral shallow groundwater flow when the soil was saturated.

In the 'nutrient depletion period', the PO₄-P concentration did not significantly change both for tree plots and bare ground. Phosphorus is relatively immobile and is usually held by the soil in complex forms (LWRRDC, 1993; Myers *et al.* 1995). The PO₄-P concentration in the soil solution from the glasshouse experiment was comparable to that collected from the deep observation wells, but was much lower (up to 5 times) than that collected from the shallow wells in the field experiment site at Tullimba (see Chapter 5). The difference might be partly due to the phosphorus additions to the field site through effluent irrigation and fertilizer application. The values of pH increased and EC decreased in the 10-week nutrient depletion experimental period, reflecting nutrient removal during the leaching process.

6.2.3. Water use by trees and pasture

The *E. camaldulensis* and *C. cunninghamiana* trees were densely planted in the glasshouse experiment. Thus, it was in expectation that the results of water use for the trees and pasture growing in the glasshouse would be different from that in the field site (see Chapters 4 and 5). On average, the tree plots used about 40% more water than the pasture plots under the glasshouse condition, while the water use by the tree and pasture plots were basically similar and the pastures even used more water than the trees in some periods in the field experiment. The result from the glasshouse experiment suggests that the trees in the field may use significantly more water than pasture when the trees develop in the field to occupy the site both in terms of roots and crown.

6.3. Conclusion

The height growth was not significantly different between *E. camaldulensis* and *C. cunninghamiana* during the early 22 week period of this experiment. *E. camaldulensis* in the 2-tree treatment grew significantly taller than the 4-tree treatments after 13 weeks since planting. During 11-month experimental period, *C. cunninghamiana* had significantly higher growth rate in diameter and total biomass in comparison with *E. camaldulensis*. The growth of *E. camaldulensis* was affected by the density treatments more than *C. cunninghamiana*. *E. camaldulensis* had more roots growing in the soil B horizon in comparison with *C. cunninghamiana*, while *C. cunninghamiana* had more fine roots growing in the surface soil, which reflects the rooting habit of both species.

The tree treatments retained significantly more NO₃-N associated with shallow (A-B interface flow) groundwater movement than bare ground. NO₃-N reduction was not significantly different between trees and pasture, and among the tree treatments. However, the pastures took up and accumulated NO₃-N more efficiently than the trees. The average rates of N and P accumulation were 0.79 and 0.10 g plot⁻¹ month⁻¹ for the tree plots respectively, while the rates were 2.01 and 0.23 g plot⁻¹ month⁻¹ for the pasture plots. The experiment also showed that the efficiency of NO₃-N removal by trees was greater when NO₃-N concentration was relatively higher in the soil.

Trees used more water than the pasture plots by about 40%, while the water used among the tree treatments was not significantly different. This suggests that the trees in the field may use significantly more water than pasture when the trees develop in the field to occupy the site both in terms of roots and crown.

Chapter 7

General discussion and conclusions

The overall objective of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of established buffer strips with the trees of *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* and *Casuarina cunninghamiana* and improved pasture in intercepting lateral groundwater flow and nutrients from the effluent disposal area associated with a beef cattle feedlot on the Northern Tablelands of NSW. For this study, survival and growth of the trees and pasture were measured, their water use was estimated, and their potential to decrease water table, reduce groundwater movement and remove nutrients, particularly NO₃-N from groundwater and soil were determined. This field study was complemented with a simulated glasshouse experiment on the ability of trees and pastures to intercept nutrients.

This chapter integrates the results and discussion from the preceding chapters and generally address the following questions: 1) The perspective of using the two tree species as components in VBSs for the Northern Tablelands which is closely related to their survival, growth and effectiveness at intercepting lateral groundwater and nutrients; 2) The comparison of tree and pasture VBSs; 3) The main mechanisms involved in NO₃-N removal from lateral moving groundwater by VBSs; 4) The design options of VBSs for the Northern Tablelands. Two integrated VBS models will be presented.

7.1. The perspective of using the two tree species as components in VBSs for the Northern Tablelands

The results from this project demonstrate the potential use of *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* and *Casuarina cunninghamiana* for establishing VBSs on the Northern Tablelands. Survival rates of the both species were high, although they were damaged to some extent by frost and by rabbit/hare browsing respectively (Chapter 4). Their growth rates were among the highest in comparison with results from other experiments conducted with the same species in the region. These results show that *E. camaldulensis* and *C. cunninghamiana* can be successfully established as tree species for a VBS in this area. However, establishing *E. camaldulensis* may have difficulty in the higher altitudes of the Northern Tablelands, and thus some protective measures and management should be adopted during earlier developed stages (Chapter 4).

Because the trees were young (<3 years) and the planting densities were low in relation to maximising water use, the tree treatments under the field condition did not show significant effects at intercepting lateral groundwater movement and nutrients from the effluent disposal area (Chapter 5). The tree plots even had a lower capacity for extracting soil water than the improved pasture in some periods (Chapter 4). However, the fact that the soil water deficit at 60-100 and 100-140 cm depths increased for the tree plots under dry conditions experienced between January and March 1998 showed that the trees may extract soil water from deeper in the profile and hence have the potential to trap and take up nutrients from deeper groundwater. Consequently the trees are able to tolerate dry condition. In the glasshouse experiment, the tree plots used significantly more water (by about 40%) than the

pasture plots, and showed significant potential to deplete NO₃-N from soil solution (Chapter 6). This indicates that trees, when used in VBSs, will have a potential role in trapping NO₃-N (by using more water) and removing NO₃-N (by plant uptake) from adjacent effluent disposal areas or croplands.

In the field experiment, *Casuarina cunninghamiana* was significantly taller than *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* at the end of the third growing season, while the crown cover of *E. camaldulensis* was significantly greater than that of *C. cunninghamiana*. At this stage, the high density plots had large crown cover and greater basal area than the thinner ones (Chapter 4). However, the growth differences due to the different treatments did not produce significantly consequent effects on lateral groundwater and nutrient interception (Chapters 4 and 5). The possible cause is that the tree development and planting densities were such that they were unable to express their potential in water and nutrient relationships at this stage of growth and development (Chapter 5).

In the glasshouse experiment, *C. cunninghamiana* showed greater growth in height, diameter and total biomass than *E. camaldulensis*. Also, they had some differences in root structure. *C. cunninghamiana* had more fine roots (<0.3 cm dia.) and fewer dominant lateral roots (≥0.3 cm dia.) than *E. camaldulensis*, whereas *E. camaldulensis* distributed more roots in the soil B horizon and had storage tap root development by comparison with *C. cunninghamiana*. These two tree species, however, did not demonstrate significant differences at depleting NO₃-N and PO₄-P from lateral flowing soil solutions and in water consumption (Chapter 6). *E. camaldulensis* has a strong tap root system and also develops sinker roots from major

lateral roots, while *C. cunninghamiana* has a more fibrous root system with a weaker tap root. Consequently, *E. camaldulensis* had more roots growing in the soil B horizon in comparison with *C. cunninghamiana* (Chapter 6), which suggests that *E. camaldulensis* could more efficiently use sub-surface soil water and tolerate drier environmental conditions. *C. cunninghamiana* is likely to use the surface soil moisture more efficiently than *E. camaldulensis* because it has a higher proportion of fine roots in the surface soil. Considering the results from the field experiment and glasshouse experiment together, it can be concluded that the two tree species have similar potential roles to play in intercepting lateral groundwater movement and nutrients when they are used in VBSs.

These results, however, are observed from the field experiment over a relatively short time frame during development stages and partly based on the glasshouse experiment. Also, very limited information is available on the long term performance and potential of *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* and *Casuarina cunninghamiana* or other native tree species in plantations, shelterbelts or windbreaks on the Northern Tablelands. Therefore, further long time investigation and observations are necessary on both the growth of these species and their influence on the removal of contaminants from groundwater and soil.

7.2. Tree vs. pasture vegetated buffer strips

The fundamental function of VBSs is to reduce pollutants moving from adjacent areas and ultimately into receiving waters. Thus the basic standard of judging the efficiency of VBSs lies in their effectiveness in trapping and removing pollutants.

A basic question concerning the efficiency of VBSs is: are forested VBSs more effective than pasture VBSs at reducing nutrients in groundwater? Many researchers prefer grasses to trees or shrubs when considering mainly the ability of VBSs to remove nutrients and sediment in surface runoff. For example, Dillaha *et al.* (1989) suggested using grasses or legumes and advised against shrubs for vegetated filter strips, principally because grasses or legumes are more effective than shrubs at removing nutrients and sediments in surface runoff. Kumar *et al.* (1992) reported that five common riparian weeds had an important role in protecting soil from water erosion and in promoting phosphorus removal.

Some studies have compared the effectiveness of forests and pastures in reducing nutrients from lateral groundwater flow. Osborne and Kovacic (1993) reported that the forested VBS in Illinois, USA was more effective at reducing NO₃-N concentration than was the pasture VBS, but was less efficient at retaining total and dissolved phosphorus. A poplar vegetated riparian zone in England was found to retain 99% of the NO₃-N input in groundwater, while a pasture VBS retained 84% of the NO₃-N during the winter months (Haycock and Pinay 1993).

Because the trees were relatively young, the present study was unable to conclusively compare the effectiveness of the trees and pastures at reducing nutrient contamination in groundwater. However, some suggestions can be summarised through analysing their growth, water use in the field experiment and through the glasshouse experiment.

In the field experiment, the improved pasture commenced growth earlier in spring and stopped growth later in autumn when compared with the trees, provided that soil moisture conditions were not limiting (Chapter 4). The longer growing period for pasture may be an advantage when used in VBSs, both in terms of water consumption and nutrient depletion. Comparison of the measured soil water deficit in the improved pasture and the plantation demonstrated that the pasture had greater potential to use soil water than the plantation at this early stage of growth and developments (Chapter 4.).

The amount of 279.4 kg ha⁻¹ of N and 25.0 kg ha⁻¹ of P were removed from the pastures by harvest during the growing seasons of 1996/1997 and 1997/1998, while no any nutrients were removed from the tree plots, except for the accumulation of 49.1 kg ha⁻¹ of N and 9.4 kg ha⁻¹ of P in above-ground biomass (Chapter 5). This demonstrated that the improved pasture may be used to take up and remove N and P more efficiently than the plantation at early stage of development, provided that appropriate management adopted (such as harvesting on time). However, the trees were able to tolerate dry condition better than the pasture (Chapter 4 and above section). During the glasshouse experiment, the trees, on average, accumulated 8.72 g/plot of N and 1.08 g/plot of P in about 11 months, while the pastures accumulated 8.05 g/plot of N and 0.93 g/plot of P in only about 4 months (Chapter 6). This clearly showed that pastures can more efficiently assimilate and accumulate NO₃-N than *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* and *Casuarina cunninghamiana* trees. However, the tree plots used about 40% more water than the pasture plots. Therefore, integrating all the results together, a combination of trees and pasture is likely to produce an effective design for VBSs.

7.3. The main mechanisms involved in NO₃-N removal from lateral moving groundwater by VBSs

Most previous studies have suggested that the major processes in removing NO₃-N from subsurface water by VBSs are vegetation uptake and denitrification (e.g. Groffman *et al.* 1991; Groffman *et al.* 1992; Jordan *et al.* 1993; Simmons *et al.* 1992). However, there is considerable uncertainty as to the relative importance of these two processes (Hill 1996). Peterjohn and Correll (1984) reported that 33% of the NO₃-N loss from groundwater in a Maryland (USA) riparian zone was attributed to the forest uptake. O'Neill and Gordon (1994) suggested that Carolina poplar trees effectively reduced NO₃-N concentration in soil solution by increasingly taking up NO₃-N enriched subsurface solution.

In contrast, Verchot *et al.* (1997b) reported that NO₃-N attenuation in forest soils was almost exclusively through denitrification and that plant uptake was insignificant. Lowrance (1992) concluded that denitrification could remove large amounts of NO₃-N from riparian forest groundwater if the water table was within 60 cm of the soil surface where denitrification rates were highest. Haycock and Pinay (1993) have suggested that vegetation uptake is the major retention mechanism in summer because this is the season of maximum plant growth and denitrification may be less important because soils become more aerated as the watertable declined. In contrast, denitrification is the major NO₃-N mechanism in winter because plants are inactive.

The results from the glasshouse experiment in this present study demonstrated that N uptake by trees and pastures was a main mechanism in the processes of NO₃-N removal from lateral moving soil solution. The trees took up and accumulated from 7.9 to 9.5 g of N in their above- and below-ground biomass in each plot on average during the 11-month growing period (Chapter 6). This N uptake by trees significantly reduced the NO₃-N concentration in soil solution at the soil A-B interface in the tree treatments in comparison with the bare ground control. The pastures accumulated about 8 g of N in each plot during the 4-month growing period. The uptake of N both by trees and pastures resulted in the NO₃-N concentration levels in lateral moving A-B interflow were not significantly different between the tree and pasture treatments.

The N and P accumulation in biomass were not measured for the tree treatments in the field experiment at Tullimba, but were estimated to be on average 49.1 0 and 9.4 0 kg ha⁻¹ respectively during the 28 month growing period, according to the result of Stewart *et al.* (1990) (Chapter 5). For this period, 279.4 and 25.0 kg ha⁻¹ of N and P respectively, were removed from the pasture treatments by harvest. Nevertheless, the N and P removal did not significantly affect NO₃-N concentration both in deep and shallow groundwater, although the significantly lower P concentration level in the surface soil of the pasture plots might have resulted from P removal.

In this present study, no attempt was made to measure denitrification in the NO₃-N removal processes both in the field and glasshouse experiments. The results from the glasshouse, however, indicated that denitrification might be one of the main mechanisms contributed to the NO₃-N reduction from the soil solution (Chapter 6). During the 'low NO₃ addition period', the consistently lower NO₃-N level in soil

solution of the tree treatments in comparison with the bare ground control was largely due to tree uptake. However, the substantial reduction of $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ in soil solution in the bare ground treatment was likely to result from denitrification.

Many authors (e.g. Groffman *et al.* 1992; Haycock and Pinay 199; Lowrance 1992) have suggested that the presence of vegetation in VBSs is necessary for higher rate of denitrification because vegetation can provide available soil carbon for the bacterial process. Vegetation may affect denitrification by providing energy to denitrifying bacteria through litter decomposition and root exudates. Therefore, the C cycle associated with the type of surface vegetation within a riparian buffer strip may have an effect on the retentive efficiency of the strip. Further research is needed, not only to separate and quantify the two $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ reduction processes, ie N uptake by vegetation and denitrification, but also to understand the interactions between vegetation and the denitrifying microorganisms.

7.4. Design of VBSs for the Northern Tablelands

7.4.1. Requirements for design of VBSs

In the field experiment of this study, the planted trees and improved pasture were designed as a VBS to reduce nutrient loss from the liquid effluent disposal area associated with the beef cattle feedlot. However, in practice, VBSs must be considered as just one component of best management practice (BMP) for catchment management. VBSs can be used to control non-point source pollution from croplands, grazing lands as well as liquid or solid waste disposal areas. VBSs include natural

forms such as wetlands, grasslands, floodplain vegetation and natural forests, and artificial forms such as plantations, pastures and artificial wetlands. In agricultural regions, most of the natural systems have been seriously disturbed (eg. Cullen 1991; Schultz *et al.* 1995) or removed, and consequently, non-point source contamination to our water system has become a serious environmental, economical and social problem. Therefore, artificial VBSs can be used as one eco-engineering technique to attenuate the problem. The issue then becomes as to how to design and install VBSs to achieve the desired goals.

7.4.2. Specific factors influencing the design and installation on the Northern Tablelands

In designing and installing VBSs, a range of factors should be considered, including aims, soil physical and chemical properties, topography of the site, hydraulic load, pollutant load, climate, cost etc (Chapter 2). Specific factors affecting the design and installation of VBSs under conditions experienced on the Northern Tablelands will be addressed. Firstly, because the relatively short growing period, low temperatures and high incidence of frosts, tree growth is restricted even under high inputs of fertiliser, irrigation, protection from damage by insects, wildlife etc. (Reid *et al.* 1996; and Chapter 4). To some extent, these components limit the usefulness and effectiveness of trees in VBSs but careful species selection can address many of these issues. Therefore, tree species should be used in combination with perennial grasses in designing VBSs to reduce surface runoff run-off and soil erosion and to minimise nutrient movement in surface and subsurface water flow. Except for where there

already exist natural tree zones, the development of a tree VBS should include a grass zone, at least in the earlier stages of tree development.

Secondly, tree species to be used in a VBS for the Northern Tablelands area should include following characteristics: 1) relatively higher survival and growth rates, 2) tolerance to frost and cold temperatures, 3) tolerance to waterlogging and drought, and in some case 4) tolerance to salinity. Besides, species with different rooting habitats also should be considered. For examples, trees tend to be deeper rooting and penetrate into soil B horizon in some condition. Pasture species (including legumes), in general, should be selected to be compatible with the goals of agriculture. This means that the selected grasses should be targeted to produce forages as well as serving the prime functions of a VBS.

Finally, cost-effectiveness of VBSs must be considered. Any proposed strategy, regardless of its ecological merits, needs to be economically feasible and socially acceptable if it is to be implemented at the landscape level (Osborne and Kovacic 1993). As economic costs of establishing and maintaining VBSs can be high, it is imperative that the design and installation be based on both economic feasibility as well as sound scientific information.

7.4.3. Two integrated VBSs models for Northern Tablelands

7.4.3.1. Model 1: a tree zone combined with a pasture zone

Based on the results of the field and glasshouse experiment in this study and considering all the factors affecting functional efficiencies, an integrated model (Figure 7.1) is recommended for VBSs used on the Northern Tablelands. This model includes some tree species with good deep root systems such as *E. camaldulensis* and others with surface dominant root system such as *C. cunninghamiana* and improved pasture. The total width of the VBS is generally designed to be 20 m, which is arbitrarily determined according to published studies (e.g. Barling and Moore 1994; Osborne and Kovacic 1993; Schultz *et al.* 1995; and Chapter 2). However, widths of VBSs can vary according to the size of the adjacent field, the slope of the area, rainfall and evaporation (ie how much water it is likely to handle), run-on catchment area, soil properties and economic considerations.

In this VBS model, both trees and pastures are used. The buffer strip consists of two zones: a pasture zone and a tree zone. The pasture zone is designed to be 10 m wide but it can vary depending on local conditions, and is directly adjacent to the field where surface runoff and lateral groundwater flow are generated. Perennial species including grasses and legumes are recommended in this zone to reduce soil erosion, filter sediment and its associated chemicals, and help surface water infiltrate into the soil. This pasture zone can help protect the immediately downslope tree zone and sets the stage so the tree zone can perform at its maximum potential. Effective sediment trapping in the tree zone requires that runoff enter that portion of the zone in the form of sheet flow (Dillaha and Hayes 1992). The pasture zone is designed to spread out the flow and prevent runoff (once it occurs) from adjacent land uses forming eroded channels into the tree zone. Meanwhile, the pasture zone can reduce, to some extent, nutrient level in shallow groundwater by taking up nutrients for their growth. The

pasture filter zone needs periodic maintenance including removal of sediment, re-establishment of vegetation, and filling in channels that form.

The tree zone is located immediately downslope of the pasture zone. This tree zone is also designed as 10 m wide but can vary according to local circumstances, where two lines of trees with good deep root systems and another two lines of trees with surface dominant root system are interplanted. This design can maximise their function in trapping nutrients transported by shallow groundwater because some trees have relatively deeper root system, while others have more fine roots in surface soil (Chapter 6). The density for the trees in this design is 2 m x 2 m, but can vary according to local conditions. The primary function of the tree zone is to remove, transform, or store nutrients, sediments and other pollutants flowing through the groundwater as well as over the soil surface. Where shallow groundwater flows through the root zones of trees, large amounts of nitrate can be reduced by plant uptake and denitrification in the soil before the groundwater enters a stream or drains into deep groundwater.

This integrated VBS model is designed to consider both short- and long-term effectiveness of VBSs, and to integrate the advantages of both trees and pastures in removing nutrients and reducing water flow from adjacent fields. The pasture zone can be established and function in the short term, while tree zone can be more efficient in the longer term. The pasture zone is more effective in removing surface sediments and associated nutrients, while tree zone is more beneficial at intercepting water and nutrients flowing through groundwater. The proposed VBS model is also designed to consider both ecological and economic aspects of VBS

development and management. Improved pastures are generally more productive and compatible with the goal of agriculture by produce quality hay (Pang 1996; Osborne and Kovacic 1993). Trees also can be used for producing timber, and in some case, for producing nuts, fruit and berries etc.

7.4.3.2. Model 2: a tree zone with pasture understorey layer

This model is designed according to the same philosophy used in the Model 1 which is to integrate the advantages of trees (both with deep root systems and surface dominant root systems) and pastures, but the pattern of installation is different. The width of this model is also designed as 20 m, but it can vary according to local conditions. Two lines with surface dominant root systems and three lines with deep root systems are planted as alternate rows with pasture strips in between. Tree density will be 4 m x 3 m with distance between lines being 4 m. Pastures will be established between the tree lines as ground cover.

In comparing with Model 1 with Model 2, the latter has advantages for long-term management because of the low tree density design. The pasture between the tree lines will function in removing nutrients from soil surface runoff and from lateral moving shallow groundwater at early stage of development. The disadvantage is that the pastures between the tree lines will be more difficult to manage and the production of the pasture will be lower in comparison with Model 1.

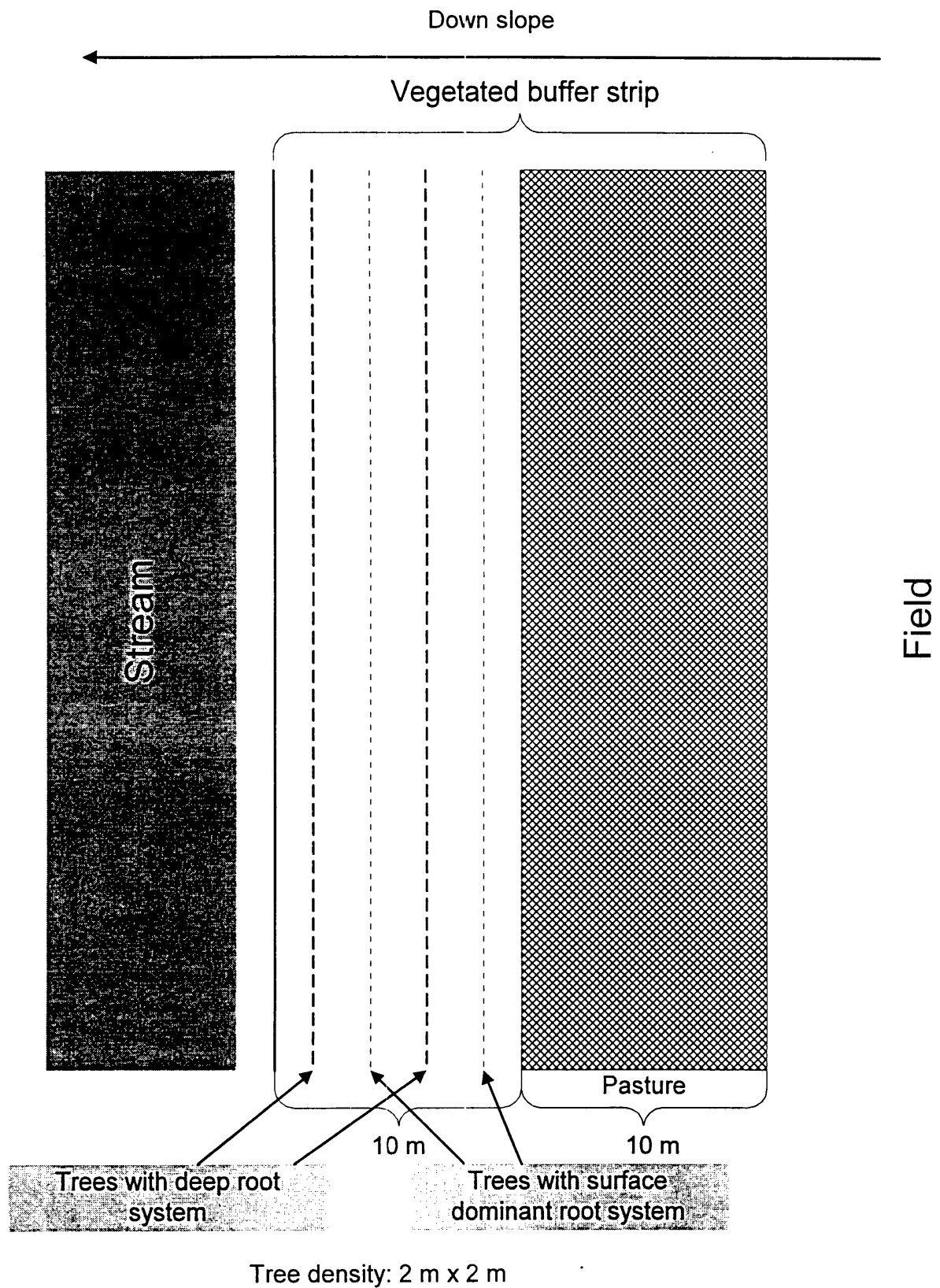


Figure 7.1. Integrated VBS model 1 for use on the Northern Tablelands, NSW by designing a tree zone using trees with deep root systems and the trees with surface dominant root systems, combined with a improved pastures zone.

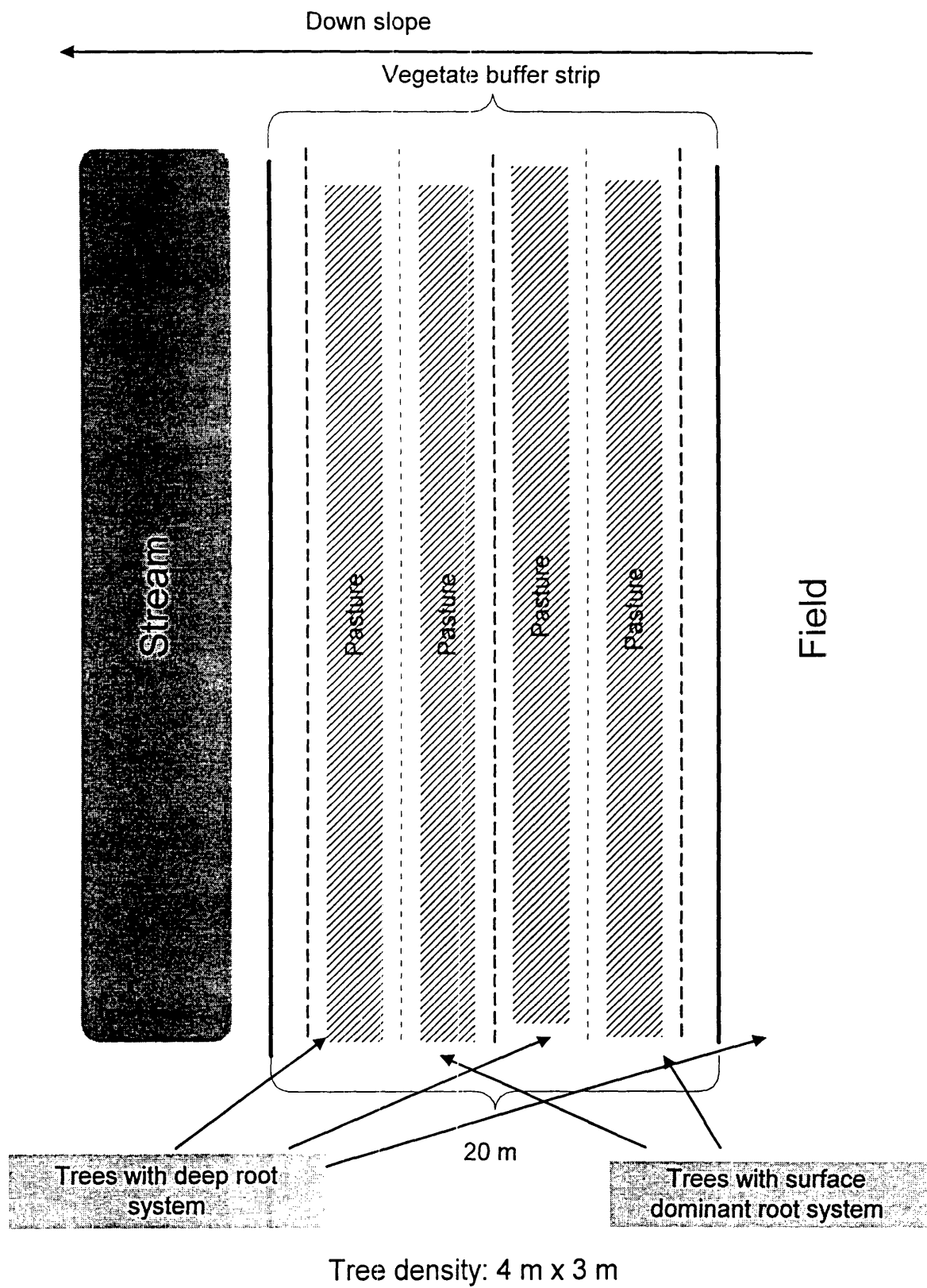


Figure 7.2. Integrated VBS model 2 for use on the Northern Tablelands, NSW by interplanting the trees with deep root systems, the trees with surface dominant root systems and improved pastures.

7.5. Limitations associated with this study and the questions that needs further research

There are two limitations in this study. Firstly, the trees of *E. camaldulensis* and *C. cunninghamiana* were relatively young in the field experiment and the measurements and results reflect the fact that trees had not dominated the water and nutrient relationships in the plantation plots. Therefore, the results drawn from the experiment are difficult to extrapolate to the longer-term role of trees at intercepting lateral groundwater flow and nutrients, although the results are valuable to demonstrate the general water and nutrient relations for the trees at this stage of development. The glasshouse experiment was used to compliment the field experiment and demonstrated that nutrient removal by trees and pastures occurs from lateral flow. Secondly, the observation time was relatively short. The conclusions drawn from shorter-term observation provide valuable results for early development but need to be supplemented with longer-term observations.

There are still many unanswered questions regarding the utility and efficiency of VBSs. These general questions have been discussed in Chapter 2. Here, several questions relating to this study and to the conditions in Australia generally are elucidated. First, information available on the performance of VBSs in Australia is surprisingly limited. Most research on VBSs has been carried out in the United States and Europe and is not directly transferable to many of the environments in Australia (Barling and Moore 1994). Therefore, basic research on potential roles, mechanisms of reducing contamination from surface and subsurface water, and design of VBSs is still needed in Australia. The second important aspect is that research must involve long-

term observations on the performance of VBSs to determine their functional efficiency and ecological sustainability. The experiment at Tullimba is designed to extend over 15-20 years, which is appropriate for the long-term goals for VBSs. Continuing observations will provide more detailed information on the performance of trees and pastures in VBSs. Thirdly, there is an need to determine the appropriate dimensions of VBSs under conditions for regions throughout Australia, but particularly for Northern Tablelands. Fourthly, modelling study needs to describe and predict the performance of VBSs and to help in the design of VBSs. Finally, cost-effectiveness studies of VBSs need be conducted particularly to ensure VBSs are both ecologically and economically viable.

7.6. Conclusion

1. In the field experiment, the survival and height growth rates for both *E. camaldulensis* and *C. cunninghamiana* were high in comparison with the results from the same region, although they were damaged, respectively, by frost and by rabbit/hare browsing to some extent. At the end of the third growing season, *C. cunninghamiana* was significantly taller than *E. camaldulensis*, but the crown cover of *E. camaldulensis* was significantly greater than that of *C. cunninghamiana*. The planting density treatment had no significant effect on height growth for the both species, while the high stocking rate plots had significantly larger crown cover and greater basal area in comparison with the lower stocking rate. The pasture started growth earlier in spring and ended growth later in autumn than the trees when the soil moisture conditions were not limiting. Both tree species, however, could tolerate very dry condition compared with the pasture.

2. Water deficit and water use among the tree treatments was not significantly different over the first three growing seasons. The improved pastures generally had larger water deficit than the tree plantation at this stage of development. However, water use by pastures, in comparison with plantations, was more dependent on soil moisture conditions, growing seasons, and management.

3. The tree and pasture treatments did not produce significant effects on water tables beneath the experimental zone and in the strips immediately above and below the plantation zone. Using soil water storage as an indicator, trees and pastures did not show a significant effect on intercepting lateral groundwater flow overall at this stage of development.

4. The results from the field experiment showed that tree and pasture treatments did not significantly affect the interception of lateral $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ and $\text{PO}_4\text{-P}$ movement at this stage of growth and development. The different tree treatments also did not show significant difference in reducing lateral nutrient movement. However, the analysis of soil N and P balance shows that improved pastures may take up and remove N and P more efficiently than trees at this stage provided that proper management, such as harvesting on time, is adopted.

5. In the glasshouse experiment, *C. cunninghamiana* had higher growth rates in diameter and total biomass in comparison with *E. camaldulensis*. The growth of *E.*

camaldulensis was affected by the density treatments more than *C. cunninghamiana*.

E. camaldulensis had more roots penetrated into the soil B horizon than *C.*

cunninghamiana, while *C. cunninghamiana* had more fine roots in the surface soil

than *E. camaldulensis*, which reflects the rooting habit of both species.

6. In the glasshouse experiment, trees used more water than the pasture plots by about 40%, while the water used among the tree treatments was not significantly different. This suggests that the trees in the field may use significantly more water than pasture when the trees develop in the field to occupy the site both in terms of roots and crown.

7. In the glasshouse experiment, trees effectively removed $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$, but not $\text{PO}_4\text{-P}$, associated with soil A-B interface flow. $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ reduction was not significantly different between trees and pastures and among the tree treatments. However, the pastures took up and accumulated $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ more efficiently than the trees. The average rates of N and P accumulation were 0.79 and $0.10 \text{ g plot}^{-1} \text{ month}^{-1}$ for the tree plots respectively, while the rates were 2.01 and $0.23 \text{ g plot}^{-1} \text{ month}^{-1}$ for the pasture plots. The experiment also showed that the efficiency of $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ removal by trees was greater when $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ concentration in soil solution was higher in the soil under the experimental conditions

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