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Nanotechnology in Floriculture

*Aniketkumar L. Bijewar[1], Aishwarya Ingole[2] and Bhakti Baburao Paryekar[3]
[1]Ph. D. Research Scholar, Department of Floriculture and Landscaping, Post Graduate Institute, Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh Krishi Vidyapeeth, Akola, Maharshtra
[2]Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Floriculture and Landscaping, Post Graduate Institute, Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh Krishi Vidyapeeth (PDKV), Akola, Maharashtra
[3]Ph. D. Research Scholar, Department of Floriculture and Landscaping, Post Graduate Institute, Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh Krishi Vidyapeeth, Akola, Maharshtra
*Corresponding Author's email: aniketbijewar@gmail.com

The ornamental crop industry is a dynamic part of world agriculture, with the floricultural industry alone generating billions of dollars in international trade. Advances made in nanotechnology in the recent past are set to change production, post-harvest handling, and sustainability regimes in this sector. The article surveys recent developments in nanomaterials, nano facilitated fertilizers, controlled release systems, disease control, and quality improvement strategies for floricultural crops. Information from recent studies, international market scenarios, and case studies highlights the potential of nanotechnology to promote precision cultivation, longer vase life, and minimized environmental impacts.

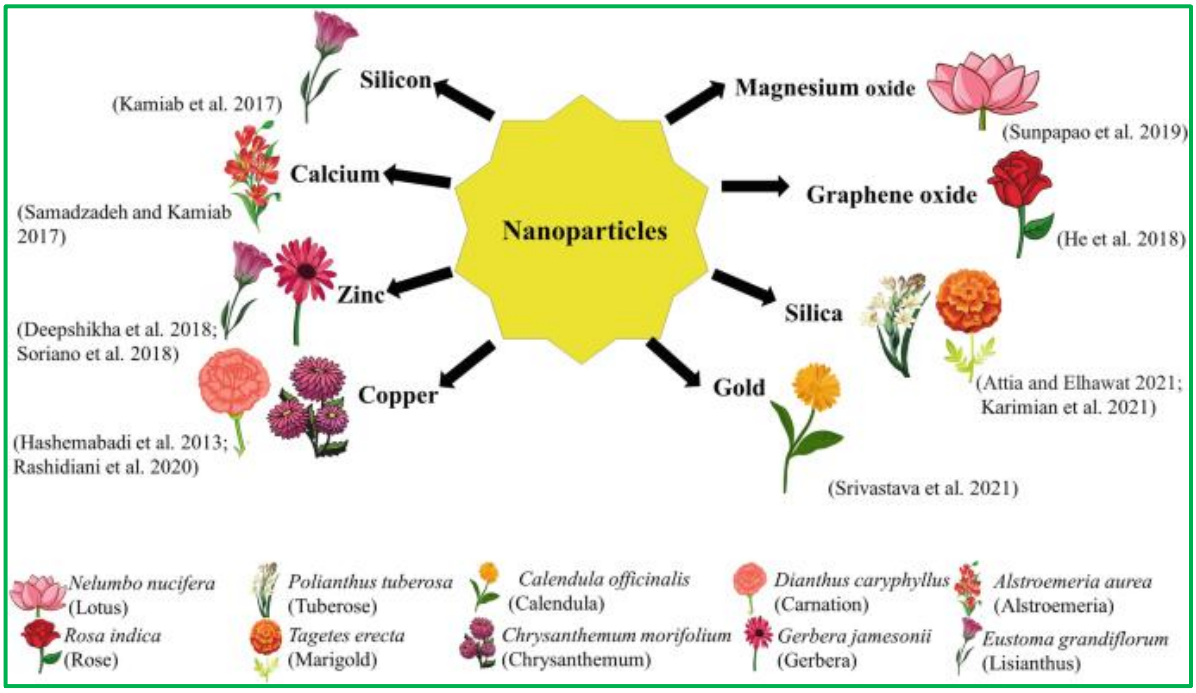
Introduction

Floriculture, the art and business of producing flowering and ornamental crops, has grown dramatically in the last ten years as a result of increased urbanization, heightened consumer demand for appearance-oriented foliage, and spreading global cut flower markets. As reported by the Food and Agriculture Organization, 2024; total floriculture trade worldwide accounting for USD 45.7 billion in 2023, of which cut flowers accounted for almost 54%. In spite of the advancement, inefficiency in nutrient management, large post-harvest losses (as much as 30% in some areas), and vulnerability to pests and disease remain. Nanotechnology, the control and use of materials at a size of 1-100 nm, presents innovative solutions to the above limits. Nanomaterials, thanks to their physicochemical peculiarities, demonstrate increased reactivity, targeted delivery, and adjustable release mechanisms, essential for input optimization and plant physiology improvement. The term "nano" is derived from the Greek word meaning "one-billionth." The conceptual origins of this field can be traced back to a seminal address by Nobel laureate Richard P. Feynman, which laid the intellectual foundation for developments in nanoscale science and engineering. Broadly speaking, nanotechnology includes a range of techniques for engineering, measuring, and assembling materials at the nanoscale. These materials may exist in one, two or three dimensions and can be composed of various compounds, including metal oxides, sulfides, nitrides and pure metals.

Nanotechnology in Nutrient Delivery for Floriculture

Nano-fertilizers for Floricultural Crops

Traditional fertilizers often lead to nutrient leaching and poor nutrient-use efficiency, which is particularly problematic in high-value floriculture crops like *Rosa hybrida* (rose), *Chrysanthemum morifolium*, and *Gerbera jamesonii*. Nano-fertilizers encapsulate nutrients within nanoparticles (e.g., nano-zeolite, nano-hydroxyapatite) and release them gradually, ensuring sustained nutrient availability (Prasad *et al.*, 2023).



Incorporation of nanoparticles in floriculture, imparting improved varieties **(Kapoor *et al.*, 2024)**

A controlled trial in greenhouse roses in Pune, India, reported that nano-nitrogen formulations increased flower yield by 18% and stem length by 12% compared to conventional urea applications. Similarly, nano-silicon fertilizers in chrysanthemum production improved stem rigidity and reduced lodging incidence by 16% during pre-monsoon rains (Almeida & Costa, 2024).

Micronutrient Nano-chelation

Micronutrient deficiencies, especially of zinc, boron, and iron, limit flower pigmentation and longevity. Recent studies demonstrated that nano-zinc oxide (ZnO) foliar sprays (at 50 ppm) significantly enhanced chlorophyll density and anthocyanin synthesis in gerbera, resulting in brighter inflorescences (Li *et al.*, 2024).

Nanotechnology in Pest and Disease Management

Nano-pesticides and Encapsulation

Ornamental crops are particularly vulnerable to sucking pests such as aphids, thrips, and whiteflies, which directly affect marketability. Conventional pesticide use often leaves residues, threatening export standards. Nano-pesticides encapsulate active ingredients in polymers or liposomes, enabling targeted delivery with reduced dosage.

For instance, a chitosan-based nano-fungicide (encapsulating carbendazim) tested on carnation crops in Bengaluru resulted in a 60% reduction in “Botrytis blight” incidence with half the recommended dose (Saha *et al.*, 2023). Such advances not only mitigate phytotoxicity but also prolong plant shelf life.

Silver Nanoparticles for Disease Suppression

Silver nanoparticles (AgNPs) exhibit broad-spectrum antimicrobial properties. A 2024 study in the Netherlands on tulip bulb treatment showed that dipping bulbs in 20 ppm AgNP solution reduced Fusarium wilt prevalence by 70%, ensuring higher post-harvest bulb viability (Van Dijk *et al.*, 2024).

Post-Harvest Management with Nanotechnology

Nano-coatings to Prolong Vase Life

One of the most promising applications is nano-coating technology. Edible nano-films containing silver or silica nanoparticles form a thin, invisible layer on cut flowers, minimizing transpiration and microbial growth in vase solutions. In a recent trial, nano-silica coated roses maintained 85% turgidity after 10 days, compared to 50% in uncoated controls (Ghosh *et al.*, 2024).

- **Modified Atmosphere Packaging with Nano-sensors**

Incorporating nano-sensors in packaging allows real-time monitoring of ethylene and humidity levels, which are critical for long-distance export. Floriculture hubs in Kenya and Ethiopia have begun using nano-composite films that absorb excess ethylene, extending shelf life by 4–6 days during air freight to Europe.

Sustainability and Environmental Footprint

- **Reduced Chemical Load**

Nano-enabled inputs are often applied at 30–50% lower dosages than conventional chemicals, directly reducing runoff and soil contamination. This aligns with global sustainability goals, especially within high-input ornamental greenhouses that historically overuse fertilizers and pesticides.

- **Energy Efficiency in Greenhouses**

Nano-coated greenhouse films are another innovation. Titanium dioxide (TiO_2) nanoparticles embedded in polyethylene films enhance light diffusion and UV filtration. Trials in Japanese chrysanthemum greenhouses showed a 10% reduction in cooling energy consumption and a 15% increase in photosynthetically active radiation utilization (Yamada *et al.*, 2024).

Tabular Representation of Recent Advances

Nanotechnology Application	Crop Example	Key Outcome	Reference
Nano-nitrogen fertilizer	*Rosa hybrida* (rose)	↑ Flower yield by 18%, ↑ stem length by 12%	Kumar *et al.*, 2024
Nano-silicon foliar spray	*Chrysanthemum morifolium*	↓ Lodging by 16%, stronger stems	Almeida & Costa, 2024
Chitosan nano-fungicide	*Dianthus caryophyllus* (carnation)	↓ Botrytis blight by 60%	Saha *et al.*, 2023
Silver nanoparticle bulb dip	Tulip bulbs	↓ Fusarium wilt by 70%	Van Dijk *et al.*, 2024
Nano-silica coating	Cut roses	↑ Vase life (85% turgidity after 10 days)	Ghosh *et al.*, 2024

Future Directions

- **Smart Nanocomposites:** Emerging research focuses on integrating nanoparticles with biopolymers for eco-friendly, biodegradable nano-capsules that release nutrients in synchronization with plant developmental stages.
- **Gene Delivery Systems:** Preliminary experiments in transgenic ornamentals explore nano-vectors for gene editing, particularly for introducing traits like delayed senescence and enhanced fragrance profiles (Tanaka *et al.*, 2024).
- **Nano-enabled Digital Floriculture:** Combining nanosensors with Internet of Things (IoT) platforms allows real-time data collection on soil moisture, nutrient levels, and plant health, paving the way for precision floriculture. Pilot projects in Bengaluru and Addis Ababa demonstrate up to 25% savings in irrigation water with such systems.

Conclusion

Nanotechnology offers a transformative pathway for addressing persistent challenges in floriculture, from input efficiency and pest control to post-harvest management and sustainability. Evidence from recent studies highlights its role in enhancing flower quality, yield, and marketability while minimizing environmental impacts. However, scaling these technologies requires harmonized regulations, multidisciplinary research, and farmer-friendly cost structures. The synergy between cutting-edge nanoscience and the aesthetics of floriculture heralds a future where ornamental plants are not just beautiful, but also sustainably cultivated with scientific precision.

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