



**APPLICABILITY OF PHYTOREMEDIATION  
METHODS TO TREAT CHROMIUM  
CONTAMINATED WATERS**

MASTER OF SCIENCE (BY RESEARCH)

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## Abstract

Chromium is a hazardous metal available in both Trivalent (Cr +3) and Hexavalent (Cr+6) forms. Cr+6 is evidently toxic whereas Cr+3 is relatively less hazardous than Cr+6. Cr+6 and Cr+3 are extensively used in many industrial processes and causes industrial heavy metal pollution of surface and ground water. There are many already practiced methods to remove Chromium such as Chemical Precipitation and Ion Exchange etc. Very little research has been done on Phyto-remediation of Cr+6 and Cr +3

Currently there is a growing interest on research on the capacity of Ferns to extract heavy metals. The amazing uptake rate of *Pteris vitata* (Br. 'dk fern) gave the initial impetus to this study. *Nephrolepis exaltata* or Common Sword Fern is a commonly found hardy invasive fern. It is recorded to be a hardy plant with high moisture and acidity

In this study *N. exaltata* was comparatively assessed with few other species for the capability of chromium extraction. *N. exaltata* showed a good uptake rate. Ability of *Nephrolepis exaltata* to extract Cr+3 from an artificial solution was studied in detail separately under Hydroponic and Soil water systems. All the experiments were done in a controlled laboratory environment

*N. Exaltata* showed very high removal rates (about 91%) in a Hydroponic medium upto 50 ppm contamination of T-Cr. The mass balance shows that most of the Cr taken up by the plant is retained in the roots (about 75 % or 350 mg/kg). Little is translocated to above-ground tissues (4% or 120 mg/kg). Therefore the mechanism of removal is mainly Rizofiltration. The mechanism of uptake may be Bio-sorption or Active uptake by root cells. *N. Exaltata* hardly shows any symptoms of Phytotoxic affects upto 50 ppm of Cr +3, and 15 ppm of Cr+6.



But in a Soil water system mass balances show that 1110st of water soluble Cr<sup>+3</sup> is sorbed to soil (about 90%). *N. exaltata* is poor- in de-mineral izing, mobilizing and uptake of soil bound Cr <sup>+3</sup>. Sand has a remarkable capacity to immobilize Cr<sup>+3</sup> in water. More research should be done to identify the capacity of sand and gravel to bind chromium.

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person no material which, to substantial extent, has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institute of higher learning, except where an acknowledgement is made in the text.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Chromium in Industry and Environment .....	1
1.2 Health hazards of chromium .....	2
1.3 Methods available for remediation of chromium contaminated water and soils .....	3
1.4 Applicability of phytoremediation and natural attenuation for treatment of chromium contaminated sites .....	4
1.5 Objectives of the study .....	5
1.6 Scope of the study .....	5
<b>2. Literature Review</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 Basic theory of natural attenuation .....	6
2.2 Theory of Phytoremediation .....	13
2.4 Basic chemistry and natural attenuation of chromium.....	24
2.5 Suitability of <i>Nephrolepis exaltata</i> for attenuation of chromium contaminated waters .....	27
<b>3. Materials and Methods</b>	<b>29</b>
3.1 Preparation of plants .....	29
3.2 Initial comparative study of Plants (experiment A).....	31
3.3 Experiments with Sword fern ( <i>N. exaltata</i> ) .....	32
3.4 Chemical analysis of water and plant matter. ....	35
3.4 Statistical analysis of data .....	38
<b>4. Results and Discussion – hydroponic system</b>	<b>39</b>
4.1 Comparison of Chromium removal by Sword Ferns against Kankun & Water Lettuce (Experiment A) .....	39
4.2 Removal of T-Cr from $\text{Cr}_2(\text{SO}_4)_3$ solution with time in the Hydroponic System.....	41
4.2.1. Variation of concentration of T-Cr (Experiment B) .....	41

4.3 Mass Balance for Removal of T-Cr from $\text{Cr}_2(\text{SO}_4)_3$ solution in the Hydroponic System.....	46
4.4 Removal of T-Cr in a $\text{Cr}_2(\text{SO}_4)_3$ solution by a freshly cut root segments.....	49
4.5 Morphological changes observed in <i>N. exaltata</i> in chromium contaminated hydroponic system .....	51
4.6. Effects of pH and Salinity on removal of T-Cr by <i>N. exaltata</i> (Experiments C & E).....	52
4.7. Variation of T-Cr removal with plant weight in the hydroponic system.....	54
4.8 Removal of T-Cr from $\text{Cr}^{+6}$ compounds by <i>N. exaltata</i> (Experiment B) in the hydroponic system .....	55
4.9. Design parameters and flow diagram for a hydroponic phytoremediation unit to treat chromium contaminated water.....	57
4.9.1 Design assumptions.....	57
4.9.2 Design parameters.....	57
4.9.3 Flow diagram .....	58
4.10. Advantages of the hydroponic system over soil water system .....	59
<b>5. Results and Discussion – soil-water system</b> .....	<b>61</b>
5.1. Removal of T-Cr by <i>N. exaltata</i> in a soil water system.....	61
5.2. Morphological changes observed in <i>N. exaltata</i> in chromium contaminated soil water system.....	64
<b>6. Conclusions and Recommendations</b> .....	<b>65</b>
6.1. Use of <i>N. exaltata</i> for phytoremediation of chromium contaminated water .....	65
6.2. Recommendations for future research .....	66
<b>List of References</b> .....	<b>67</b>
<b>ANNEX 1</b> .....	<b>I</b>
<b>ANNEX 2</b> .....	<b>VII</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1.	Details of plant weights and contaminant concentrations used for the comparative study. ....	32
Table 3.2.	Comparison of different digestion methods.....	37
Table 4.1.	Results of comparison of percentage removal of T-Cr by Sword fern against, Water lettuce .....	39
Table 4.2.	Results of one way ANOVA test on variation of concentration of T-Cr with time in experiments B1, B2, B3 and B4. ....	42
Table 4.3.	Results of one way ANOVA test on variation of pH in experiments B1, B2, B3 and B4. ....	44
Table 4.4.	Concentrations of T-Cr in <i>N. exalata</i> biomass after 168 hrs.....	48
Table 4.5.	Bio Concentration Factors of T-Cr in <i>N. exalata</i> biomass after 168 hrs.....	48
Table 4.6.	Morphological changes observed in sword fern plants kept in $\text{Cr}_2(\text{SO}_4)_3$ solution in the hydroponic system (experiment B).....	51
Table 4.7.	Percentage removal of T-Cr by <i>N. exalata</i> from a $\text{Cr}_2(\text{SO}_4)_3$ solution under different pH levels.....	52
Table 4.8.	Percentage removal of T-Cr by <i>N. exalata</i> from a $\text{Cr}_2(\text{SO}_4)_3$ solution under different salinity levels.....	52
Table 5.1.	Concentrations of T-Cr in <i>N. exalata</i> biomass after 168 hrs.....	62



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	Evolution of reduction in remediation costs .....	9
Figure 2.2	Process schematic describing the various processes during phytoaccumulation of heavy metals. [adopted from Sudaresan, 2001] .....	19
Figure 2.3	$Cr^{+3}$ concentration in equilibrium with $Cr(OH)_3$ and $Fe_2CrO_4(OH)_2$ , based on data from Rai et al., (1987) [ adopted from Palmer and Plus, 1998] .....	25
Figure 2.4	Distribution of Cr(VI) species as a function of pH .[adopted from Palmer and Plus, 1998] .....	26
Figure 3.1	Cross section of the plant bed .....	31
Figure 4.2	Variation of concentration of T-Cr with time in the $Cr_2(SO_4)_3$ solution in the hydroponic system .....	42
Figure 4.4	Variation of pH with time in the hydroponic system.....	45
Figure 4.5	Concentrations of T-Cr after 96hrs in root and frond biomass of <i>N. exaltata</i> in the experiments B1(20ppm), B3(50ppm) and B4(100ppm) .....	47
Figure 4.6	Final mass balance of T-Cr in experiment B3 (50ppm) .....	48
Figure 4.8	Variation of percentage removal of T-Cr with time in the $Cr_2(SO_4)_3$ solution with different plant weights .....	54
Figure 4.13	Percentage removal of T-Cr by <i>N. exaltata</i> in a $CrO_3$ solution with time .....	56
Figure 4.14.	Schematic diagram of the proposed hydroponic system.....	58
Figure 4.15.	Flow diagram of the proposed hydroponic system .....	59
Figure 5.1	Variation of percentage removal of T-Cr with time in the soil water system .....	61
Figure 5.2	Final mass balance of T-Cr in Soil water system .....	62
Figure 5.3	Variation of concentration of T-Cr within 24 hrs in the soil water system .....	63
Plate A1.1	Isolated <i>N. Exalatata</i> plants .....	1

Plate A1.2	Isolated Water lettuce plants .....	I
Plate A1.3	Artificially illuminated covered cell .....	II
Plate A1.4	View inside the covered cell .....	II
Plate A1.6	<i>N. exaltata</i> plant kept in 15000 mg/l (as NaCl) salinity level for 96 hrs	III
Plate A1.5	<i>N. exaltata</i> plant kept in 50ppm Cr <sub>2</sub> (SO <sub>4</sub> ) <sub>3</sub> solution for 168 hrs in the hydroponic system.....	IV
Plate A1.7	BED 1 initially.....	V
Plate A1.8	Bed 2 after 12 replenishments.....	V
Plate A1.9	<i>N. exaltata</i> plant kept in 40ppm Cr <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> solution for 96 hrs in the hydroponic system .....	VI



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	- Analysis of Variation
ASTM	- American Standard Testing Methods
CW	- Constructed Wetland
DO	- Dissolved Oxygen
HDPE	- High Density Poly-Ethylene
IRZ	- Insitu Reaction Zones
MCL	- Maximum Concentration Limit
MNA	- Monitored Natural Attenuation
NAPL	- Non-Aqueous Phase Liquid
PAH	- Poly-Aromatic Hydrocarbons
PCB	- Poly-Chlorinated Bi-phenyls
PCE	- Poly-Cyclic Ethanes
ppm	- Parts Per Million
SOM	- Soil Organic Matter
T-Cr	- Total Chromium
TNT	- Tri-Nitro Toluene

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