

## egosphere-2026-682

Comments to the authors:

This manuscript reports the impacts of nitrogen + phosphorus (N+P) fertilization on the saplings of tropical rainforest after 8 years of fertilisation. The authors measured soil nutrients, sapling stem, height growth and volume, sapling leaf N and P concentrations, sapling photosynthetic capacity and overstorey leaf area index. Their findings showed that the combined N+P fertilisation increased soil P availability, increased sapling leaf N and P in some species but had no observable effect on photosynthetic capacity, stem growth and volume. Fertilization also increased overstorey leaf area thereby reducing light availability to the saplings, which in response increased in height and specific leaf area. This study is indeed relevant in understanding the responses of saplings to elevated nutrient inputs in tropical forest. Generally, the manuscript reads well but a few recommendations for improvement are provided below.

I am wondering why the authors excluded the N fertilisation only and P fertilization only from the study. This would have been helpful in disentangling the effects of the individual nutrient additions on the sapling parameters measured.

L187-190. What constituted the six plots used in this study, if there were 12 plots for N, P, and N+P (L. 172), I'm guessing the number of replications were four. Did you study six plots in total or six plots per topographic location? Clarify.

I find the description of statistical analysis section insufficient and rather general. The section lacks information on how the different parameters were handled. These are important to ensure transparency and reproducibility.

L. 162 “..(sometimes ANOVA, when overstorey LAI had no statistically significant)”. It is unclear what the authors mean here.

L186. Is there a reason why height and not diameter was used as a criterion of what a sapling is?

L. 135. ‘..around the world’ yet all the references were mainly neotropical. Either rephrase or include references from other tropical regions.

L.451. what does “deeply mean”?

L468. “leaded” do you mean led?