

WHAT IS COMPOST TEA?

Good water, quality aerobic compost and “foods” that help the microorganisms grow and reproduce all go into making compost tea. Compost tea is a liquid produced by leaching soluble nutrients and extracting bacteria, fungi, protozoa and nematodes from compost. Good quality, aerobic compost contains a huge diversity of organisms. Making sure only beneficial species are present in the compost is therefore critical, at DeSantis Landscapes we have our tea tested by a professional laboratory so that we know what we are spraying will have a beneficial effect on your landscape.

Benefits of using quality compost tea include:

- Improvement of plant growth as a result of protecting plant surfaces with beneficial organisms which occupy infection sites and prevent disease-causing organisms from finding the plant.
- Improvement of plant growth as a result of improving nutrient retention in the soil, and therefore reducing fertilizer use, and loss of nutrients into ground and surface waters.
- Improvement of plant nutrition by increasing nutrient availability in the root system as biological interactions increase plant available nutrients in the right place, at the right time and in amounts that the plant needs.
- Reintroducing beneficial microorganisms in soil ecosystems where they have been previously killed off by chemical-based pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers.
- Increasing the water-holding capacity of the soil while reducing evaporative loss from the leaf surface which can reduce water consumption of the plants by up to 70%.
- Improving tillage by building better soil structure. Only the biology builds soil structure, and ALL the groups in the soil foodweb are required to be successful— bacteria, fungi, protozoa, nematodes and microarthropods all play their own role!
- More nutrients are made available to the plant reducing disease, weeds & pest problems- eliminating the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, leading to healthier food and environment.
- Increased plant rooting depth, better soil structure thereby reducing erosion.

WHY USE COMPOST TEA?

Compost tea is used for two reasons:

1. To inoculate microbial life into the soil or onto the foliage of plants.
2. To add soluble nutrients to the foliage or to the soil to feed the organisms and the plants present.

The use of compost tea is recommended any time the organisms in the soil or on the plants are not at optimum levels. You can have your soil professionally tested to see how the biology in your soil is doing.

DOES IT SMELL BAD?

NO! Quality compost and compost tea should never smell bad when they are properly made.

Poorly made “compost” usually smells bad and is truly just putrefying organic matter. If the compost smells bad it is anaerobic, contains harmful organisms, and very few beneficial organisms, so do not put it out on your soil!

WHY CARE ABOUT SOIL BIOLOGY?

With the right set of organisms, disease organisms will not have unrestricted access to your plants. Nutrients will be cycled into the proper forms at the proper pH, at the proper time, for the growth requirements of your desired plant, if the right biology is present. Nutrients will be retained in your soil, instead of accumulating to toxic levels into our drinking water, rivers, lakes and the oceans. Soil structure will be improved, and typically, pesticide use decreases dramatically when the biology sets the conditions in your soil to select for the growth of your desired plant. Water use decreases, because you retain water in the soil instead of having it wash right through the soil. Organic matter is important, but the biology living on that organic matter is the real key to good soil structure and plant nutrition.

Chemical-based pesticides, fumigants, herbicides and some synthetic fertilizers kill a range of the beneficial microorganisms that encourage plant growth, while compost teas improve the life in the soil and on plant surfaces. High quality compost tea will inoculate the leaf surface and soil with beneficial microorganisms, instead of destroying them.