

# Compost Tea

*Masoud Hashemi and Samantha Glaze-Corcoran, University of Massachusetts*

You may ask, why bother brewing composting tea and not just applying compost to the soil? It is true that adding compost to the soil increases soil carbon and thus is important to soil health. But, comparing compost and compost tea is not really correct. While the direct use of compost provides carbon and nutrients to the soil, compost tea has several unique benefits. These benefits include:

- 1- Ease of use, and economy
- 2- Microbes in composting tea directly penetrate into leaves whereas you cannot apply compost to the foliage. Thus compost tea thus could be more efficient than traditional compost if this is a management goal.
- 3- Compost tea is composed of a more concentrated microbial community than compost.
- 4- Composts may not be fully finished and therefore may have high C: N which can harm plants.

## Step-by-Step Making of Compost Tea

- Prepare required materials, including high-quality compost, cheesecloth (or nylon mesh), a five-gallon bucket, an aquarium aerator, non-sulfured molasses (to enhance bacterial community), and kelp powder (to support the fungal community).
- Fill the bucket with water and leave it for at least 24 hours so chlorine dissipates. To make sure the water in the bucket is chlorine-free, you can add a tablespoon of vitamin C powder and/or run the aerator pump without compost for 1-2 hours.
- Add one teaspoon of Kelp powder and molasses. While you can make your tea without these components, these provide easy sources of energy to the microbes and help increase their activity and reproduction.
- Add about 5 cups of the compost to the cheesecloth, use the twisty tie to close the cheesecloth, and secure it to the bucket handle.
- Let the compost tea brew for about 24 hours in a shady area as the aerator pump is running.
- Ideally the compost tea should smell fresh and earthy, with no offensive odor.

- Strain out the compost and immediately apply your tea to the plants and/or the surrounding soil.
- Clean your compost tea brewing equipment as soon as you can.