

Compost Tea Brewers Workshop – Michele Hebert

Compost tea directions for home system:

Have water between 70-75 degrees during brewing.

Put 2 cups of compost per 5 gallons of water/ NO MORE compost than that.

Add 1 tablespoon of unsulfured molasses per 5 gallon of water

Turn on aerator and aerate for 24 hours. Use immediately and keep aerating till solution is used.

Give each plant 1-2 cups solution.

Frequently Asked Questions from a commercial Composting Solutions Maker:

What is compost tea? Compost tea is an aerobic water solution that has extracted the microbe population from compost along with the nutrients. In simple terms, it is a concentrated liquid created by a process to increase the numbers of beneficial organisms as an organic approach to plant/soil care.

Why use compost tea? Compost tea has many benefits. It will make our environment healthier and safer and will put the microbe biology back onto the plants and soil. It recreates the natural environment that plants have evolved through millions of years to thrive.

How long does it take to make compost tea in a 5-gallon brewer? It takes 12 hours at 70 degrees or longer if the temperatures are colder. The warmer the temperature (not to exceed 95 degrees), the faster the brew (with a minimum of 12 hours).

When do I apply compost tea? The tea must be used within 4 hours after you have turned the motor off and it has finished brewing. The best time to apply in the day is early morning or early evening. Hot day time temperatures are not as effective.

How often should I apply it? For foliar disease prevention, you can spray the plants just before you would usually have the onset of disease occurring. Then you would spray every 10 days to 2 weeks for about a month. You should monitor what you are seeing on your plants to determine if further spray is needed. For soil application we recommend two times a year spring and fall. For promoting growth, you could spray once a month during the growing season. Frequency and scheduling of applications will vary depending on individual environmental conditions.

How do I know if I have applied enough? You can't apply too much, although normally you would try to spray both sides of the leaf with the liquid dripping off the leaf. Total coverage is very important. Whatever drips off the leaves will actually help the soil.

How do I apply the compost tea to plants\soil? You can use a sprinkler can for applying to the soil or use a backpack sprayer to do a foliar spray.

What happens if the tea isn't used within 4 hours? The population of microbes decreases and it becomes less effective.

What happens if the brewing process is interrupted? It really depends on how long the process has been interrupted. Generally, you would just start the process again.

What happens if temperatures are too cold?

The air temperature determines the water temperature because the air is moving through the pump into the water. If the temperatures are too cold (below 70 degrees), it will take longer for the microbes to produce and you will need to run your brewer for a minimum of 3 hours longer.

What equipment do I use to apply the compost tea? You may use a watering can or a backpack sprayer.

Why do I have to use a backpack sprayer? The backpack sprayers have a different type of nozzle that will not clog when applying compost tea.

Can I spray this through a hose canister sprayer? Generally, no. If you have untreated water then you can. It has to do with the chlorine in the water that will kill all the microbes.

What time of year is best to use the compost tea? During the growing season or anytime when night time temperatures are above 40 degrees.

How long do the microbes live after I apply them? If the living conditions are right, the microbes will continue to live and reproduce.

Can I apply too much tea and do damage to my soil or plants? No.

Can it hurt my pets? No.

What happens if I put the teabag in and forgot to put the food in? Then you need to add it and start your brewing process again.

Does it make a difference of what kind of water I use? (tap, bottled, pond, etc.) Yes, it needs to be water that doesn't have chemicals in it. If you are using treated water, you need to follow the instructions and run the brewer for 20 minutes before adding the compost and food. This will degas (remove the chlorine from) the water.

How do I take care of my machine?

Remove the coil from the bottom of the bucket and pull out the rubber stopper prior to turning the air pump off. This keeps the tea out of the pipes, so biofilm does not buildup. With biofilm buildup, the next time a brew is made, it would contaminate the integrity of the tea. Hose off the coil and plastic pipes or put them in the dishwasher. Pour the tea into a backpack sprayer or sprinkler can for application. Rinse the inside of the bucket and the lid. Let dry.

Can I use my own compost? Yes, you can use your own compost, but because the quality of your has not been tested, we don't know the biology that you have. The machines replicate only the biology they start with which can be beneficial or not.

What do I do with all of the items contained in the bag for the food (for 5-gallon brewer size)? The compost is in the mesh bag, while the other ingredients are in plastic bags. Drop the mesh bag in the water after dechlorination. Then open the plastic bags and pour contents into the water solution.

For further information:

http://soils.usda.gov/sqi/concepts/soil_biology/soil_food_web.html

http://www.dirtdoctor.com/view_question.php?id=152

<http://www.landscapesbylillabeth.com/compost-tea-organics/>

For an opposing viewpoint: [http://www.puyallup.wsu.edu/~Linda%20Chalker-](http://www.puyallup.wsu.edu/~Linda%20Chalker-Scott/Horticultural%20Myths_files/Myths/magazine%20pdfs/CompostTea.pdf)

[Scott/Horticultural%20Myths_files/Myths/magazine%20pdfs/CompostTea.pdf](http://www.puyallup.wsu.edu/~Linda%20Chalker-Scott/Horticultural%20Myths_files/Myths/magazine%20pdfs/CompostTea.pdf)

http://www.acresusa.com/toolbox/reprints/Dec03_Compost%20Teas.pdf

<http://www.attra.org/attra-pub/PDF/compost-tea-notes.pdf>