

# MAKING TEA FOR PLANTS

## What is this Action Sheet about?

It's about Compost Tea – a nutritionally rich, well-balanced, organic plant food made by soaking aged compost in water. This Action Sheet gives one recipe for compost tea, and describes how it can be used on crops and gardens.

## How do you make compost tea?

There are several different recipes for compost tea. For this one, you will need:

- 1 large container with lid (plastic drum works well)
- Enough aged, completed compost to fill an old pillow case  $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$  full. Use well-aged, finished compost - fresh compost can burn the plants or contain harmful pathogens, but compost which is too old will be nutritionally deficient. Compost containing some aged animal manure will make the tea effective for a longer period, but it isn't required.
- Enough water to fill the container

## Method:

1. Fill the container with the water. Place the compost into an old pillowcase (cheese cloth bag or fine nylon also works well), tie off the top and submerge in the container of water. Cover (to prevent bad smells and insect problems) and leave for a MINIMUM of 2 weeks
2. This steeping time is crucial to the formation of beneficial bacteria and the required fermentation process
3. When ready to apply to plants, use a dipper to take out the “tea” into a smaller container and dilute it to make it weaker. Use 3 parts water to 1 part compost tea. The remaining tea can continue to steep until needed

Compost tea and manure tea are not the same thing. Manure teas can be made in the same way but are not as nutritionally well-balanced.

## What can you use it for?

Water at the base of any plants with the diluted tea on a weekly or as-needed basis

Use a pump spray or misting bottle to spray on to leaves and young seedlings. Re-apply after rain, and do not spray on to leaves during the heat of the day. For this, most gardeners recommend additional dilution. Manure teas are not recommended as a leaf spray.

Compost tea can be used with buried clay pot irrigation (See Action Sheet 44).

## What is it good for?

Compost tea is a great root food for any plant. It can also help control various plant diseases (blights, moulds, wilts, etc. when used as a foliar spray), and to repel and control insect pests and their damage when used on a regular basis. By encouraging the growth of beneficial soil bacteria, compost tea helps gardeners to produce healthier, more stress-tolerant plants.

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