Online Extras

A Fresh Look at Insect and Disease Controls: Send Them Running
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Brewing your own aerobic teas and applying them on a weekly basis will help to keep your plants' roots, leaves, tissues and growing medium populated with many beneficial forms of life that help to repel and even treat diseases and insect infestations.

How much tea you need to brew depends on how many containers you need to water. Don't make too much, because the tea should not be kept or stored, and should be used within 24 to 36 hours after initiating the brewing process. The following will give you a basic method for brewing a five gallon batch of highly aerobic tea for the vegetative growth phase:

1. Fill a five gallon opaque pail with lid almost to the top with fresh water. Do not use chlorinated water for this process. Sometimes aerating the water overnight is enough to dissipate chlorine levels found in some municipal water supplies.
2. Add about two cups of dark rich earthworm castings. The castings should have a fine texture and smell earthy.
3. Add about ½ cup of finely ground, high quality dried kelp meal.
4. Give the mixture a quick stir.
5. Add three ounces of a concentrated digestive enzyme plant supplement (the more types of enzymes the product contains the better).
6. Add one ounce or full strength as per label of a 100 per cent organic B-vitamin supplement intended for plants.
7. Add full strength as per label humic acid extract; correct the pH with vinegar after adding if necessary to prevent pH levels from rising above 7.0.
8. Add one cup of a chitinase and salicylic acid based plant immune system activator.
9. Add .8 of an ounce of a concentrated liquid carbohydrate plant supplement.
10. Add ½ to full strength powdered beneficial bacterial innoculant.
11. Add ½ to full strength powdered beneficial fungal innoculant.
12. Add ½ to full strength 100 per cent organic vegetative growth base nutrient concentrate.

After adding all of the ingredients, give the solution a gentle stir with a clean instrument. Check that the final pH is not greater than 7.0; adjust with vinegar if necessary to lower the pH. Run an airline through your bucket lid and connect to two airstones. One airstone should be placed at the bottom of the bucket, while the other suspended about half way in the depth of the solution. Drop a fist-sized piece of sea sponge in the bucket, as this helps to provide an excellent mechanical substrate for the proliferation of beneficial microbes.

Connect the airline to your air pump, and aerate the solution continuously for 24 to 36 hours. Ensure that the temperature of the tea remains stable between 68 to 72°F through the entire brewing process.

The end result is a nutrient rich tea that is swimming with beneficial microbes. The tea should smell pleasant; if it smells rotten, something has gone wrong and you should brew a fresh batch. However, as long as you aerate the solution and keep the temperature stable, you should not have any problems.

Adjust the pH if necessary to below 7.0 with vinegar and apply to plants. A pH of about 5.8 seems best for most plants in the vegetative growth phase.