



Johnson Brothers Greenhouses

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Questions about **Compost Tea**

Q) What is Compost Tea?

A) Basically, compost tea is a liquid version of very high quality compost. It is a liquid infusion of micro-organisms (hundreds of types of nematodes, bacteria, fungi and protozoa), organic matter, humates and other soluble compounds that are beneficial to soil and plant health.

Q) How do you make it?

A) At Johnson Brothers Greenhouses, our Compost Tea is “brewed” by swirling non-chlorinated, extremely well aerated water around a premium blend of composts. A food source is added to encourage the micro-organisms into the solution, where they multiply rapidly for 24 hours.

Q) What are the benefits of Compost Tea?

A) Just like people and animals, plant leaves and roots have a skin that protects them. If that skin is damaged it can affect growth and create places for diseases and pathogens to infect the plant. Pouring Compost Tea directly into your soil (drenching) or spraying Compost Tea on their leaves can help to boost and build their microbial “skin” and help the plant ward off those pathogens. Regular use of Compost Tea can reduce or eliminate the need for costly chemicals or pesticides. It has been shown to be effective in preventing a variety of diseases on different crops and landscape materials. These include Blackspot, Powdery and Downy Mildew, Phytophthora Root Rot and acts as a booster for natural pest controls, such as beneficial nematodes. It also has been reported that it reduces the sizes and even occurrence of “yellow rings” on lawns when dogs & cats defecate. Commercial users include growers of wine grapes, apples, hazelnuts, golf greens and other turf, almonds, roses, rhododendrons, nursery containers, carrots, onions, and ornamental trees.

Q) Can Compost Tea hurt my plants?

A) Unlike other “booster” products on the market, Johnson Brothers Compost Tea will not burn your plants if you use too much. Our Tea starts with extremely well composted materials that contain mineralized ammonia, not a form of ammonia that can burn plants. The N-P-K analysis is also quite low, only 1.3-5-8. Compost Tea is primarily a way of introducing beneficial micro-organisms to improve the overall health of plants and soils, not a fertilizer.

Q) If I can't use too much, why do I need to dilute Compost Tea?

A) You don't need to dilute Compost Tea, it is perfectly safe and effective to use it full strength as a drench or diluted up to 10:1 for foliar spraying. We recommend that you dilute it so you can cover more area.

Q) How is Compost Tea applied?

A) Our product can be applied as a soil drench (direct from the container) or as a foliar spray. We recommend that Compost Tea be applied every 14 to 30 days during the growing season. This rotation may be increased to every week during times of plant stress (known disease, environmental stress, transplanting, etc...). The microbes are sensitive to UV light, so they should be applied before 10 am or after 4 pm. Foliar applications should be avoided when it's raining, but soil drenches can be done during light rain. Allow one week after last application to harvest and always use a clean container that has not been used for chemicals.

Q) Why do I have to use the finished Tea within 12-15 hours?

A) The beneficial micro-organisms are living, air-breathing creatures which can only survive as long as they have enough oxygen. When we make our Compost Tea, the beneficial microbes leave the compost particulates, circulate around the brewer and begin to reproduce rapidly. We induce and encourage this action by fortifying our mixture with several nutrients including humic acids and simple sugars, algal extracts and yeasts. The microbes feed on these nutrients, and since they're reproducing at such a high rate, they quickly deplete them. So the faster you spray or drench your plants, the more vigorous beneficial microbes, and, in turn, the more effective the tea will be.

Q) Can I extend the life of my tea?

A) You can support the microbial life by aerating the tea at home, but only for a short period of time (less than 24 hours). What are required are an aquarium air pump and a bubbler stone, which can be purchased at local pet stores. A note of caution, as the aeration decreases, anaerobic microbes can multiply rapidly, resulting in foul-smelling and potentially negative side-effects for your plants. Therefore, Johnson Brothers recommends the use of our Compost Tea within 12-15 hours of brewing. The brewing process is usually finished by 9 a.m. the day it is sold.