

No ordinary cup of tea –

The fall is a good time to nourish your outdoor plants and lawn, particularly in our area of the country. As the cool weather approaches there is something comforting about a nice cup of tea. But had you considered brewing some “compost tea” to nourish your lawn? Yes, compost tea, it is an old time solution to improving plant health, and these days it is used on lawns.

How do you make compost tea? You will need to scoop some compost or aged manure in a burlap bag, old nylon stockings, or a mesh bag. Some garden stores sell tea brewing kits. The bag is placed in a full bucket of cold water; you can soak the bag for a week, with daily agitation of the bag. If you are using a tea brewing kit, the pump that comes with the kit will distribute air into the tea mixture; this provides an environment that enables beneficial organisms to grow. It will take approximately 36 hours to brew the tea if you use the kit.

Once the tea is brewed, it is now ready to be sprayed on your lawn. If you don't have a backpack sprayer or spray attachment to your hose, you can get the tea out of the bucket by using the hose as a siphon. One quart per 1,000 square feet (about 1/5 of an acre) is a good rule of thumb, especially when applied during the first two years of using natural products on your lawn. According to Paul Tukey, author of *The Organic Lawn Care Manual*, “Spraying the solution [of compost tea] on your lawn accomplishes two primary objectives: It spreads beneficial microbial life into the soil or onto the foliage of plants and it extracts nutrients from the compost and suspends them immediately available to the grass plants. Dry compost, by comparison, must be consumed by microorganisms in the soil before the nutrients become available. That's part of the reason why top-dressing with compost and spraying compost tea are both recommended as part of a good natural lawn program, especially in the first few years in the transition from synthetic lawn care program to a natural one.” Now that your lawn has had a nice large gallon of compost tea, you can sit down, relax, and enjoy your own cup of hot tea.

The article is submitted by NOFA Organic Land Care Program. CT NOFA (Connecticut Chapter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association) promotes methods of farming, gardening, and land care that respect biodiversity, soil, water, air and the needs of future generations through education, support, and advocacy. This seasonal lawn care article is meant to introduce homeowners to a more organic based care of lawns. Using organic methods will benefit lawns and gardens, as well as helping to protect our lakes, rivers, oceans, and sources of drinking water from being contaminated by synthetic pesticides and fertilizers that run off from our lawns or seep into ground water.

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