

**Handout #1 – CV Growers & Seed Savers Workshop on Compost Tea**  
**Presented by Peggy Carswell, Fertile Ground**  
**www.fertile-ground.org**

## **Some Suggested Compost Tea Ingredients**

You can add any number of ingredients to your compost tea to provide additional beneficial microorganisms and/or nutrients (also referred to as macro-nutrients, micro-nutrients, trace-nutrients ) for your plants.

Compost supplies most of the beneficial aerobic organisms (the good guys) and soluble nutrients. If you're not making good quality compost, worm castings are a great option. Some concerns have been raised about using compost made from animal manure, especially in compost tea which might be applied directly to salad greens, fruits or other edible plants

Any of the ingredients listed below may be added to your compost brew. Think about types of plants you are going to be applying the compost tea to, and take into consideration what those plants nutritional needs are before using any of the ingredients in your compost tea recipe.

### Additional Ingredients

1. **Unsulphured Molasses** feeds and breeds the aerobic bacteria. Sugar products are mostly carbon and will be consumed by bacteria very quickly. To extend the life of your tea, add a little more molasses. It supplies a good amount of minerals, including sulfur which acts as a natural fungicide. Molasses is also a natural deodorizer for your tea. For a more fungal tea, add less molasses to your tea. (don't use honey! It contains natural antibacterial & antifungal properties!)
2. **Fresh or tinned fish** supply extra NPK, fish oil for beneficial fungi, calcium from fish bones. Most commercial fish emulsions contain no fish oils and little to no aerobic bacteria. Fresh fish parts can be used, but because of offensive odors, it should be composted separately with browns like sawdust first before adding to the tea brew. *(NOTE: If you use canned fish products, you may want to let it decompose mixed with some finished compost, good garden soil, etc. in a separate closeable container for a few days before using. Since most canned meat products contain preservatives, this will guarantee that the good microbes in the tea will not be killed off or harmed in brew making.)*
3. 1-2 tblsp of **apple cider vinegar** adds extra trace minerals and increase the acidity present in commercial fish emulsions. Many fish emulsions contain up to 5% sulfuric acid to increase shelf life and add needed sulfur to the soil.
4. **Fish emulsions** – fish hydrolysate - don't use chemically deodorized liquid fish
5. **Kelp meal** - this adds additional trace elements
6. **Seaweed** - Supplies all the extra trace elements. Seaweed can contain up to 70 trace elements and lots of growth hormones. Seaweed is a beneficial fungal food source for soil microbes - liquid seaweed can be purchased or made by collecting fresh seaweed, washing the salt and sand off it, and running it through a blender or food processor.
7. **Corn meal** contains extra proteins and is a natural fungicide. It supplies food for the beneficial fungi in the soil.
8. **Alfalfa meal** also contains protein, and is a source of nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus. For organic gardeners who prefer vegetarian soil amendments, you can skip the fishy ingredients, it's not necessary. There is plenty of NPK in alfalfa meal and other grains that you can use.

9. **Good garden soil** is an excellent free bio-stimulant – full of beneficial aerobic bacteria, fungi and other great microbes.
10. **Forest soil** can be a good supply of beneficial fungi and humus.
11. You can add extra magnesium and sulfur by adding 1-2 tblsp of **Epsom salt** to the tea.
12. **Over-ripe fruits** are good fungal foods
13. **Green weeds** supply extra bacterial foods to the tea. As well as being a good source of N, P, and K, comfrey add extra potassium – and stinging nettles are a good source of enzymes and trace minerals, especially iron
14. A little **soft rock phosphate** assists with photosynthesis, supports plant growth, and helps produce healthy fruit or flowers

THANKS TO SOIL FOOD WEB CANADA for making this helpful information available online.

It's important to note that when using additives in your compost tea brew, it's possible that pathogens along with beneficial microorganisms may be produced. Investigate options for having tea tested in a laboratory environment.

Soil Foodweb Canada Ltd. [www.soilfoodweb.ca](http://www.soilfoodweb.ca)

Telephone: 403-485-6981

Email: [info@soilfoodweb.ca](mailto:info@soilfoodweb.ca)