

Bell County Master Gardeners  
Tip of the Week  
By G. Okeson  
“Compost Tea”

It is common knowledge that drinking green tea bestows many health benefits on people. But, it is not generally appreciated that plants derive multiple benefits from compost tea. Compost tea is a time-honored remedy for improving plant health and vigor, speeding seed propagation, and promoting the growth of seedlings.

Compost tea offers immediately available food to the plant and provides a quick pick-me-up for plants in the house and in the garden. Greenhouse operators have long used this method to insure that their crops grow rapidly and produce the greatest profit at market.

Compost tea is simple to make, especially if you already have a compost pile at your garden. If not, you can purchase a variety of commercial composts at your local garden store that can be used to make compost tea. Here are two easy ways of producing compost tea.

1. Fill a pail or other container about  $\frac{1}{4}$  full of compost, then fill the container with water. Stir it several times over the next 24 to 48 hours. Before using, dilute it with water until the color is a light amber color. Pour 1 pint around each plant to speed its growth. Applications can be repeated at 10-14 day intervals as needed.
2. Smaller volumes can be produced for feeding houseplants or small outdoor areas. Fill a small cotton or burlap bag with finished compost and place it in your watering can. Fill it with water. Agitate the solution or let it sit until the water assumes a light amber color before using it. The compost that remains in the bag can be reused until it no longer produces the amber color. When that happens, it can be mixed into the soil around your plants as mulch.

Start saving old gallon milk jugs and remember to use the tea within 48 hours. Give it a try – you’ll like it as well as your plants will!

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact [ask.bcmga@gmail.com](mailto:ask.bcmga@gmail.com)