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## Teas to Nourish Your Plants-

# Manure Tea

### #2 in a Series

**This series is to help you sort out fertilizer “teas” for your growing operations.**

If you are someone rich in a livestock manure source, you can make manure tea to fertilize your garden plants. (By livestock, I mean 4-legged mammals, not poultry.) Note that this is not compost. It's poop from cows, horses, rabbits, llamas, goats, and such. You'll want to avoid cat and dog manure.

You've probably heard me harp about “Compost that manure before spreading!” But here is a different strategy--make a tea of that manure. You'll save yourself the problems that come with applying manure directly on your soil, namely:

- raw manure takes a few weeks to compost in a heap.
- raw manure can be so fresh that it burns plants if applied directly to soil,
- raw manure contains lots of weed seeds,
- raw manure robs soil of nitrogen while it decomposes.

So try the tea of manure as a liquid fertilizer. No waiting for decomposition, no introducing weeds.

How? Fill a mesh bag with manure. Place this gigantic tea bag in a bucket or barrel of water. No need to boil water for this tea; just use air-temperature water that's de-chlorinated. Use 2/3 water to 1/3 manure. Let it soak a day or three, stirring it occasionally if you have time. This steep lets soluble nutrients dissolve into the water. You are also culturing anaerobic bacteria. Oh, oh...will it stink? Yep, somewhat. That's from those beneficial bacteria at work.

Next, pull out your tea bag and dispose of the solid contents on your compost pile. Now dilute your home-made liquid fertilizer so that it is the color of a weak tea you'd drink. Apply this onto the base of your plants (a drench.) Make batches every week and apply manure tea to feed your vegetables, flowers, shrubs, berry bushes, trees, and lawn. Since manure tea is high in nitrogen, you may want to avoid applying it to root crops, which do not require much of this nutrient.

Medication Caution: you'll need to know if de-wormer and/or antibiotics have been administered to the livestock or horses recently. If they have, your manure tea may be less effective or perhaps counter-productive. Why? De-wormers and antibiotics are still present in the manure, and harm the beneficial nematodes and bacteria in the soil food web. It is this soil biology that you want to feed. It is the soil food web that feeds your plants. The soil food web is a complex community of bacteria, fungi,

protozoans, nematodes, earthworms, etc. These beneficial organisms are underground chemists. They magically transform minerals to forms that plants can use. If you harm the beneficial bacteria with antibiotics, for example, most of these workers die. They cannot do their jobs of supplying food and water to your vegetation. I recommend that you collect manure that was produced a several days after the medicines were stopped.

How does this compare with actively aerated compost tea?

Manure tea is inexpensive and easy to make. It takes a couple days to steep. It's stinky, but it is effective as a fertilizer. It is only partially effective to suppress plant diseases when sprayed.

By comparison, compost tea (the actively aerated kind), when brewed properly, is ready in 24 hours and does not stink. In fact, it smells earthy and sweet. It has an exponentially larger soil food web representation, and the fungi members in compost tea are highly effective in warding off most all plant diseases.

Actively aerated compost tea is available fresh from May through August, 2016 at:

--Alaska Mill & Feed Thursday noon – Sunday.

--Anchorage Farmers Market on 15th & Cordova on Saturdays 9am-2pm. Call on Fridays 907- 222 7714 or (907) 350-1663 to see if Alaska Community Action on Toxics (ACAT) is brewing.

--Palmer at Good Earth Garden School on Thursdays. Call 745 0758.

--Anchorage/Mat-Su for special bulk orders for farms please call 745 0758.

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For definitions of drench & foliar feed, please see **Nourishing Teas #1—Worm Tea** article.