

Power Composting

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Commercial greenhouse growers, most of whom raise huge numbers of just a few plants, are turning from chemical to biological culture in a big way. Beneficial insects and soil organisms are standard production aids, and now the use of compost in both solid and liquid forms is proving to be the “power ingredient” that revs up the growing system.

Some of the largest greenhouse operations across the country are reporting great results from a one-two compost approach: vermicompost in the growing medium, plus regular applications of brewed compost tea.

Compost made by earthworms is the almost incredibly rich in nutrients and growth-promoting, disease-suppressing, and soil aggregating compounds. Vermicomposting can be done in home-size worm bins or in tons-a-day facilities. Numerous experiments have shown that adding 10% to 20% to container media improves the growth of seedlings to mature plants, often remarkably.

Bioactivated-aerated-fortified compost teas are made in special brewers, becoming widely available in many sizes. Using small amounts of fully mature compost with additions such as molasses, humic acids, powdered kelp and oat bran, and aerating the solution for one or two days produces a tea teeming with beneficial microbes. Applied as a soil drench or foliar spray, compost teas supplement the nourishing and health-protecting actions of solid compost. Research on compost teas is revealing some interesting facts. The University of Nevada has found “a very large presence of actinomycetes, indicating that anti-biotics could play a significant role in compost tea’s suppression of fungal disease”