

# “Putting Life into the Soil”

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At the time of this writing, snow is falling and the world outside is white. Take a step into the greenhouse, however, and the thoughts of spring are fully awake. I eagerly await the time when I can start the first transplants and work again in the rich, warm earth of the garden.

Whether starting for the first time with a couple of tomatoes or planning a full scale garden with all the veggies from A to Z, we all have one goal in mind - to grow a bounty of healthy and nutritious vegetables using a minimum of chemicals.

One of the most wonderful moments in the garden comes as the little plants emerge through the surface into the world. Perhaps this is only surpassed by the sheer wonder at harvest time that such bounty can grow out of the soil. We often overlook, however, that the wonder of the fruit we can see is all made possible by the remarkably diverse, invisible life within the soil.

Since the mid-1900's, people have focused on fertilizers to get their plants to grow and yield large harvests. Unfortunately, many of the fertilizers used can be harmful to the life in the soil. Large plants may be produced, but not the most healthy and nutritious ones.

Oftentimes our plants (whether flowers, veggies, or shrubs) are subjected to conditions far from those of their native habitat. This stress is felt the most at the time of germination or transplanting, making that the best time to add some well-made compost tea or earthworm castings. These supply a diversity of soil life, giving your plants a “taste of home” and helping them through the difficult periods of their lives. I like to use compost tea again whenever the plant will come under particular stress, such as transplant shock. It can even be sprayed on the leaves to give the plants a boost from the top down.

In their native habitats, shrubs and trees have developed with a large amount of beneficial soil fungi. Unfortunately, our soil conditions are often devoid of these native fungal species. A well-made compost tea, inoculated with selected forest fungi and other beneficial organisms, will help to put the fungi back into their root zone and ease the tree seedlings into their new surroundings.

Earthworm castings are another way to bring life and fertility to your soil. I use earthworm castings in the soil that I start all my transplants in. The castings provide soil biology and a starter fertilizer to get the transplants off to a great start.

One of my favorite summer pastimes is playing with my children in the backyard. It is so good not to worry about chemicals in the grass or on the flowers, trees, and shrubs. So in summary, I am glad that we are able to share these many benefits in the form of biologically active and environmentally friendly alternatives to chemicals. Not only will this help your customers' transplants to flourish in their gardens, it will set your garden center apart as a sustainable leader. With so many people looking to grow their own food, help them to be successful by offering them the ability to put life into their soils!

All the best!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim".



*Life in the soil...for the garden*



*...for the yard*



*...and for the berry patch.*

