

December 2006 SFI E-zine

I was in South Africa for most of the month of December, so I'm sorry this is late, as usual.

Exciting things are happening in South Africa, Australia, Canada and England!

The Canada East lab is open and working! Their website link should be up soon, so you can check on them and learn more about who they are and where they are located.

Canada West is open after a change in management. Please give them a call if you are interested in learning more about the changes.

The lab at Laverstoke Park in England has a new director, and will be servicing England and Europe from now on! Please contact Laverstoke Park for more information!

Really incredible data are coming from ZZ2 in South Africa on their production with the biological system. We are in the process of double checking, confirming and making sure these numbers are absolutely correct, so it will be another couple months before I will be willing to share them, but! Stay tuned!

Data from Australia are also proving to be really great, but there as well, I need to let the people on the ground double and triple check. I do so want to share this information with everyone! But, I have to let the people we are working with make sure there is no problem with the solid facts.

We have the next set of workshops happening in less than a month at SFI in Corvallis. I'm talking out east again at the landscaping conference this spring, but several other folks who have worked with me are giving talks as well. It is best to go to the SFI website and then link on the lab nearest you to see what their activities are.

The newsletter this month is short, otherwise. Just one question, below, but the January newsletter will be forth-coming soon!

1. Notes from Elaine!

a. Potting Mix and Anaerobic Conditions

From: Stephen Hayden
Sent: Sunday, November 19, 2006 9:29 PM
To: info@soilfoodweb.com
Subject: Microorganisms and Potting Soil

Dear SFW,

Can you offer me some suggestions on how to keep my potting soil from being turned into compost by microorganisms? It seems after a few months the potting soil begins to drain poorly and the plants get water-logged.

Also, most of my plants in containers don't seem to grow as fast with organic fertilizers as with synthetic types. Any suggestions on how to make the organic fertilizers work better, without breaking down my potting soil. Thanks.

Regards,
Steve Hayden

Hi Steve -

What you are really telling me here is that you are water-logging the potting mix and it is becoming anaerobic.

Aerobic decomposition will result in improvement in air passageways, hallways, and pore structure in the soil. This structure is built by good, aerobic organisms.

But, if the plant pots are allowed to get water-logged, if the potting mix is compacted, then the beneficial organisms will be lost, and the plant diseases will be able to gain an upper hand.

Organic fertilizers don't work well without the proper set of organisms in the potting mix.

To maintain the right set of aerobic organisms, you may have to initially inoculate the potting mix with the right set of organisms, and make sure you don't over-water.

For more details on how to get the proper biology in the medium, you might want to check the SFI website for an advisor near you, or call Joe Whaley, at 541-257-2614, with the Sustainable Studies Institute, or Matt Slaughter at 541-257-2612.

Hope this helps!

Elaine