

# Soil Foodweb Insights

October 2009

## Requesting all your comments

Hello subscribers! We are happy to announce Soil Foodweb Insights, our revived newsletter. Each new issue will provide valuable information, news, and practical ways to nurture the living soil ecosystems that help our planet consistently top the list of best

places in the entire solar system for humans to live. Whether you come to us from Sustainable Studies workshops, from the "SFI E-Zine," or from Earthfort, we welcome all your comments, suggestions, and questions.

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# I. Soil Foodweb Oregon News

## A. NEW MAILING ADDRESS!

We are now in Suite C. Yes, "C as in Compost," but that's not why we moved. We just didn't fit into our old suite anymore, and Suite C recently became available in the same building. Full current address:

1750 SW 3rd St Suite C  
Corvallis, Oregon 97333-1796  
USA

As before, the same mailing address will reach:

Soil Foodweb, Inc.  
Soil Foodweb Oregon  
Sustainable Studies Institute, and  
Earth Fortification Supplies Company (Earthfort).

## B. Fall testing season (in the southern hemisphere, spring!)

"When to test?" is a frequent soil biology question. "When can we not test?" has a simpler answer. It was once thought that microbiology testing could be done only in spring and fall. More recent experience strongly indicates only three conditions are likely to prevent useful test results:

1. Extreme cold (frozen solid or snow covered)
2. Extreme wet (standing water)
3. Extreme dry (sun baked soil)

For example, in climates where the ground freezes every year, winter may prevent useful test results.

But in warmer climates useful information can be derived from samples taken at any time of year. If care is taken when comparing data from different seasons, many people can do soil biology testing year round. When tracking progress of a soil improvement effort, the simplest comparisons come from testing done at about the same time each year.

If you have already set a pattern of spring/fall tests, it's getting to be that time again. To locate a Soil Foodweb lab near you, visit [www.soilfoodweb.com](http://www.soilfoodweb.com) for the worldwide list.

## C. New lower prices for testing

If you haven't looked into our testing in the last year or so, you'll be pleasantly surprised to learn how much we have been able to lower the prices on our testing packages. Right now the Oregon lab has an even better deal for Insights subscribers. If you are sending samples that will reach Soil Foodweb Oregon before the end of October, mention this revival issue of our newsletter on your forms, for a 10% discount on the total cost of your testing.

Updated forms with our current mailing address are always available at [www.oregonfoodweb.com](http://www.oregonfoodweb.com). ■

## II. Sustainable Studies Institute News

### A. Upcoming workshops

Dr. Elaine Ingham continues traveling to teach workshops on behalf of Sustainable Studies Institute. There is still time to register for the following:

#### California:

The Regenerative Design Institute in Bolinas, California has a course called Broadacre Permaculture: Effective Land Management in a Carbon Economy. The full course will cover 12 days, October 9-21, and is offered in two parts. On October 16-18, Dr. Ingham will be teaching the first portion of the second part, Soil Food Web Analysis.

For details on how to register and more information on RDI courses, visit:

<http://www.regenerativedesign.org/courses-events/carbon-farming>

#### Oregon:

Corvallis, November 9-13: Dr. Ingham will be in town just long enough to teach the two day Introduction to the Soil Foodweb course, Nov. 9-10. Matt Slaughter, lab director for Soil Foodweb Oregon, will teach the single day courses on Compost and Compost Tea, Nov. 11-12. The microscope class will not be held this time. November 13 has been tentatively set aside for individual or group consulting questions. We expect to have more details, plus registration forms, posted online within several days.

Additional workshops and classes are being scheduled for Oregon and other locations. As each new workshop is finalized we will update our main site at [www.soilfoodweb.com](http://www.soilfoodweb.com).

### B. Recent research on soil biology

Dr. Ingham calls our attention to papers in the journal *Plant and Soil*, "Special Issue: Rhizosphere: achievements and challenges, Volume 321, Numbers 1-2 / August 2009." Links to individual articles and abstracts can currently be found at the following link:

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/m73806051v87/>

Click article titles to view abstracts. "PDF" and "HTML" links go to the full articles, requiring a paid subscription.

### C. Matt's visit to Mexico

Matt Slaughter visited Mexico in August, spending two days just outside Culiacan with Agricola BelHer, growers of mesh house tomatoes, open field tomatoes, and corn. They are in the early stages of learning to apply the Soil Foodweb approach to reduce use of chemical fertilizers, augment their current Integrated Pest Management practices, and increase yields.

To get them started, Matt helped build a properly mixed compost pile with local materials, mostly right from their own farm. Old corn waste, fresh cut corn and some manure from a neighbor formed a well balanced pile. They will test the finished compost with the Soil Foodweb Mexico Lab in Culiacan. They

hope to scale up quickly and apply 4 tonnes per hectare (on about 180 ha) by next summer. Meanwhile, they aim to begin compost tea production this fall to help control foliar disease.

To refine their systems they will work directly with the Lab staff, as well as with Matt, and with a university professor in Mexico City who specializes in nematodes.

Matt also helped them identify necessary equipment and further training to begin integrating all the different aspects of their operation into a more holistic approach to managing the farm.

## D. Special offer for consulting visits

Matt Slaughter is available for onsite visits, and would like to reduce the cost for Insights subscribers. Mention this newsletter item when booking him for a two day consulting visit, and you'll receive a substantial discount, plus free testing on your first sample of soil from one area of interest discussed

during the visit. This offer is for visits booked and confirmed between now and the end of October.

For more details on how to bring Matt to your area, email [info@sustainablestudies.org](mailto:info@sustainablestudies.org) or call 541-257-2614. ■

## III. From Earthfort

### A. Dirt Simple Brewers

Brewing good compost tea has always been a challenge. Many brewer designs can produce quality tea if the machine is clean, but are so difficult to clean, they simply cannot be used for volume production without the tea suffering a decline in quality.

At Earthfort we spent several years developing, testing, and refining a new design to improve this situation. We settled on the brand name "Dirt Simple" to convey our goal of making these machines as easy as possible to use and to clean. Earlier this year we realized the first Dirt Simple design had reached maturity.

So we formed a new partnership with Green Pro Solutions, located in Pennsylvania, to handle manufacturing and distribution of the Dirt Simple Brewers. Gary Maurer at Green Pro is an extremely valuable resource, very knowledgeable about the machines, tea recipes, and other soil amendments. If you have any questions feel free to contact Gary through their site (<http://www.greenprosolutions.com/contact.htm>).

And of course you can always contact us through [www.earthfort.com](http://www.earthfort.com) to learn more about the Dirt Simple Brewers, including prices for the most commonly used sizes.

### B. Audio CD on sale for September and October

If you cannot travel to a workshop, or simply want to review key concepts of the Soil Foodweb approach, Dr. Ingham's audio CD on Plant Production may be just what you need. Of course, 77 minutes is not enough time to present the research background in as much depth, or explore as many specialized details on managing particular plant and crop types, as she does in the Full Set of 11 CDs. This single CD can only highlight the most important requirements for managing soil biology to maximize plant production.

To get this knowledge to more people, Earthfort has temporarily reduced the price. Until the end of October, the Plant Production audio CD is on sale at US\$9.95 (half price) if ordered at this link:

<http://www.earthfort.com/store/shopexd.asp?id=44>

Or, if ordering by phone, be sure to mention this newsletter item for the reduced price. Telephone orders can be placed at 541-257-2612. ■

We hope you've enjoyed this first issue of Soil Foodweb Insights. Until next time, from all of our staff, happy sustainable growing! ■ ■ ■