

Soil Foodweb Insights

June 2010

This Month

Our next workshops on the Soil Foodweb will be held from 16-19 August. Registration forms are now available at <http://www.soilfoodweb.com/calendar.html> - if you have any difficulty finding or downloading the forms from there, call David at Sustainable Studies Institute: 541-257-2614, or send email to info@sustainablestudies.org - he will make sure you get the information you require.

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Newsletter format changes

We at Soil Foodweb Insights have been receiving some really excellent feedback & constructive criticism about the content/format of our newsletter. We've made some significant changes to how we do things, but they aren't reflected in this issue, as we had already written it before deciding to change! The next issue (July 2010) will be different, with more specific, helpful info for growers, articles about individuals & institutions we're working with (with a monthly theme like nematodes, for instance) and more visuals! We're really looking forward to hearing from you when the next issue goes out. Thanks for reading!

I. Soil Foodweb Oregon News

A. U.S. holiday schedule

The offices and laboratory at Soil Foodweb Oregon will be open during regular business hours for the rest of June and most of July, with one exception. The U.S. Postal Service and other package carriers will not make deliveries (and our offices will also be closed) for:

Monday, 5 July 2010 (U.S. Independence Day weekend)

B. Testing for nematodes

We are often asked to explain the nematode testing performed at Soil Foodweb labs. We identify nematodes to the genus level, but not individual species. Species identification often requires electron microscopy, which would make it prohibitively expensive for most growers.

Fortunately, genus level identification still allows us to place them into meaningful categories, which we list on the testing report, along with the number of nematodes identified in each category (per gram of soil or compost, or per milliliter of liquid). The categories include:

- Bacterial feeders
- Fungal feeders
- Predatory nematodes
- Fungal/Root feeders (also known as "switchers")
- Root feeders

All genera and species in the first three categories are always beneficial nematodes. The "switchers" category is mostly beneficial under most conditions, but each genus includes some species which may be cause for concern under stressed conditions. The root feeders should ideally be absent. However, if there are abundant beneficial nematodes, a very small count of root feeders is not too much cause for concern. ■

II. Sustainable Studies Institute News

A. Upcoming workshops

1. Oregon: 16-20 August 2010

Our next set of workshops here in Corvallis are scheduled for the 16th through the 19th of August. These include an introduction section, compost and compost tea technologies section, an onsite visit to compost operations, and finally instruction using light microscopy to analyze soil samples and compost materials. Classes are taught by Soil Foodweb Oregon director Matt Slaughter with the microscope class taught by lab technician Tiffany Bolman. Registration forms are now available at <http://www.soilfoodweb.com/calendar.html> - or by calling David Kuester at 541-257-2614 - or by email: info@sustainablestudies.org

2. Oregon: October 2010

This is a tentative scheduling. More details will be revealed as they become available.

B. Soil Science News

1. Compost shown to filter toxins from runoff water

Research recently published in the Journal of Environmental Quality shows new evidence that composted organic material can serve as an effective filter to remove toxins such as fertilizers and herbicides from agricultural runoff water. The material used is described as "composted bark and wood chips." Future studies will investigate adding other materials to the compost in an effort to improve its effectiveness as a filter. A summary of this study can be read here:

<https://www.agronomy.org/news-media/releases/2010/0621/369/>

2. Spray irrigation systems may gain wider use

The May/June issue of the Journal of Environmental Quality reveals another significant advantage for spray irrigation. Compared to older flood irrigation techniques, spray irrigation appears to reduce transport of pathogens into drinking water wells. This is especially a concern for livestock farming operations, which are increasingly worried about liability from E. coli and similar cases of infection that might occur among their neighbors. One implication not mentioned in the study: a rise in sprayer system construction would also increase the number of areas that can be easily reached for the application of compost tea.

Here is a summary of the research:

<http://news.sciencemag.org/sciencenow/2010/06/keeping-feces-on-the-farm.html> ■

III. From Earthfort

A. Product updates

1. Earthfort Alaskan Humus is back in stock and has been branded as “Denali Gold”. Other than the name, there aren’t any other differences. It is still the same great soil amendment/compost tea base. The bag is prettier, though!



2. Our Plant Production Overview CD is still on sale for \$3.95! In case you were wondering, this CD actually does have different content than the regular Plant Production CD (and how!). We have a limited supply so hurry while supplies last!
<http://www.earthfort.com/products/literature/cds/plant-production-overview.html> ■

That’s all for now. Look for those big changes next month! From all of the staff here at Earthfort, happy sustainable growing! ■ ■ ■