

Soil Foodweb Insights

March 2010

This Month

With the March Equinox just behind us, much of the Northern Hemisphere is busy gearing up for spring. Meanwhile, in the South, the living is easy - except where it isn't. Nearly every part of the world has been getting some reminders, in this year's weather and climate trends, about the value of resilience.

Our workshops here in February were a great success, with over 30 attendees gathered from far and wide. Next up: 19-23 April, once again here in Corvallis, Oregon. 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 Kuester at Sustainable Studies Institute: 541-257-2614. He'll get you all the information you need.

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I. Soil Foodweb Oregon News

A. New area for our educational efforts

We invite you to visit our newly established Soil Foodweb channel on the YouTube (perhaps you've heard of it). We don't yet have many videos of our own. In fact, so far we have only two, although we plan to add more.

For now, our focus is to serve as curators for some of the best content available on the subjects of soil science, sustainable and organic agriculture, microbiology, general science, and a few other sources of inspiration and useful information for all of us

working to make the world a healthier place for all living things, including, but not limited to, all human beings. To see the kind of material we are talking about, visit our channel and have a look at our list of "Favorites." Here is the link:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/SoilFoodweb>

If you know of good information we should add to our channel, we welcome recommendations and other comments.

B. Reminder: be sure you have our current testing forms!

Soil Foodweb Oregon was recently able to lower the prices for our main testing packages:

Full Foodweb	\$120.00 (down from \$152.00)
Full Foodweb plus	
Mycorrhizal Colonization	\$150.00 (down from \$190.00)
Basic Foodweb	\$60.00 (down from \$76.00)

We did need to increase our prices on testing for pH and Electrical Conductivity. Each of these tests is now \$15.00 per sample (up from \$5.00 per sample before the review). Prices for all of our other testing services, including E. coli testing and Leaf Surface Foodweb testing, remain the same as before. Newly revised forms with our current prices are available on our web site: <http://www.oregonfoodweb.com>

C. U.S. holiday schedule

The offices and laboratory at Soil Foodweb Oregon were closed on:

Friday 26 March 2010

We plan to be open during regular business hours for the remainder of March, and all of April. ■

II. Sustainable Studies Institute News

A. Upcoming workshops

1. Oregon: April 19 - 23

The first set of workshops being presented by Matt Slaughter from the start. Still solidly based on the ground-breaking research of Dr. Elaine Ingham, and now with a renewed emphasis on her vision of practical, hands-on experiences in addition to the classroom lecture setting.

19 - 20 April - Introduction to the Soil Foodweb

21 April - Compost Technology

22 April - Compost Tea Technology

23 April - Light Microscope Techniques - presented by Tiffany Bolman, Lab Technician at Soil Foodweb Oregon and a trained educator; the focus of this class will be on qualitative assessment, primarily of compost tea.

Each student must bring their own visible-light microscope for use in this class.

Classes will be held at Corvallis, Oregon. Location and further details will be included in confirmation letters. Register online at <http://www.soilfoodweb.com/calendar.html> - by calling David Kuester at 541-257-2614 - or by email: info@sustainablestudies.org

2. Oregon: early July or late August

The venue we have been using for our Corvallis workshops, the Benton County Fairgrounds, is a busy place in the summer. At the moment we are tentatively looking at early July or late August as the nearest possible candidates for the next set of workshops. As soon as the dates are firmly set, we will bring you the updated information.

B. Soil Science News

1. Recent debates on the effects of synthetic nitrogen use

Dr. Ingham brings our attention to a recent example of the slow progress toward real understanding of soil health that is occurring in many large institutions. The linked article clearly shows growing awareness of the damage caused by synthetic nitrogen fertilizers, when used in the large amounts common in "conventional" agriculture. And yet, when read carefully, we can see there is still an incomplete understanding of why this damage occurs. In several paragraphs, the problem is blamed on "soil microbial activity." No clear distinction is explained between the groups of microbes that deplete soil carbon and nitrogen, and the beneficial groups that help to retain and build these essential elements.

Here is the link (shortened to fit in this newsletter!):

<http://www.grist.org/article/2010-02-23-new-research-synthetic-nitrogen-destroys-soil-carbon-undermines-/index>

The good news is that the researchers are calling for more thorough evaluation of what really happens in the soil when fertilizers are used. A better understanding can emerge from such efforts. With, perhaps, some help from those of us who already knew about all this.

2. Can organic farming feed the world?

In this brief interview with Dan Barber, many tired critiques of organic and sustainable farming are deftly shown to be incorrect, and the solid arguments for continuing on this path are laid out with clarity and humor.

http://blog.ted.com/2010/03/qa_with_chef_da.php

Chef Dan Barber also recently gave a thought-provoking talk on the benefits of sustainable fish production, and how it needs to inform the future of all efforts to feed the world's people, calling it "a recipe for the future of good food." Here's the link:

http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_barber_how_i_fell_in_love_with_a_fish.html

(Thanks to Aaron Lucich and his ongoing project, We Are What We Eat (<http://wearewhatweeatthemovie.com>) for the tip to check out this talk.) ■

III. From Earthfort

A. Thanks for reviews

Visitors to the new Earthfort site have already started writing reviews for some of our products. We appreciate all the new information being shared in this way - thanks! We recently had

some technical problems with the review handling system, but we think those have been resolved now. If you tried to post a review and it failed to go through, we hope you will give it another try,

and please let us know if it gives you any further trouble. And of course, our invitation remains open for informed reviews from anyone.

B. Organic certification imminent for Solu-PLKS

In a long awaited development, we are happy to announce that our newest product, Solu-PLKS, appears to be on the verge of becoming certified for organic growing by the Washington State Department of Agriculture. We expect to have all the necessary documentation on file and available for any customers who need it within a matter of days. We will keep you updated as we learn more.

For questions on Solu-PLKS or any other specific product, you can always call us at 541-257-2612. ■

From all of the staff, happy daylight saving, and happy sustainable growing!

