



## COMPOST TEA

In my sustainable journey, the most exciting thing I have come across has been the idea of creating a healthy soil so you will have healthy plants. A great soil allows the plants to thrive and also moderates weed and disease infestations. I always say a thick, healthy lawn is the best herbicide out there. And the best way to achieve good soil health is through compost tea applications.

I'm going plant geek on you here but... The soil food chain is just as complex as our own: plants exude sugars from their roots which fungus just love to eat. Then a bacteria eats the fungus and produces nitrogen as a waste product. Delivered right there at the root zone by nature, not a truck.

What the compost tea does is brew up all the microorganisms that are naturally occurring in the soil and apply them, in liquid form, to the plant. It looks like we are spraying herbicides like Chem-Lawn but it couldn't be farther from truth. The turf responds almost immediately.

The best explanation can be found at...

[http://www.uos.harvard.edu/fmo/landscape/organic\\_landscaping/landscaping\\_video.shtml](http://www.uos.harvard.edu/fmo/landscape/organic_landscaping/landscaping_video.shtml). Harvard University's efforts and results from using compost teas are featured in an episode of "This Old House."

-TOM

## 'NATURAL' TURF CARE

A natural turf care program looks at all of the things that effect plant health: cutting height to conserve water, sharp blades to cut the plant and not tear, core aerating instead of de-thatching, compost tea applications instead of synthetic fertilizer, and yes, spot spraying of weeds. If you eliminate the competition the grass will fill in the holes.

One of the best things you can do is to spot seed the lawn in the spring. It fills in the bare spots so weeds can't get a foothold. You may have noticed the blue mulch we applied with the seed.

The very best thing you can do is a top-dress and over-seed. It adds organic material for the microbes to feed on and increases the biodiversity of the grass plants to fight disease.

## WEEDS

Speaking of which, wow, the weeds are a problem this year; the cold spring inhibited the plants uptake of the chemicals we spray to kill them. But things are getting warmer and you should notice a significant reduction in the number of weeds. The Yin to the weeds Yen was the cold also delayed and preserved the bloom sequence. It was beautiful for a couple of weeks. The Magnolias were magnificent. And how about the Tulips?

## PLANT UPDATE

All's quiet on the Western front but let's see what the summer brings. I think hot and dry which is bad for the plants but I'm usually wrong. Let's hope.