



JOHN'S CORNER

Organic Fertilizers and Nutrients – 4 Arbor Gate Organic Blend 4-4-3 + Calcium

By John Ferguson

This week I want to talk about another very good organic fertilizer that I have used with great results. It is sold by the Arbor Gate Nursery in Tomball and called the "Arbor Gate Organic Blend 4-4-3 + Calcium" and made by NRG (Natural Resource Group) for the Arbor Gate.

Historically all bird manures have been used as a natural fertilizer with good results, and this includes poultry. However, with the modern factory farms and the unsanitary conditions, the farms feed the birds large amounts of antibiotics and arsenic to make them grow faster. As a result, the poultry manure used in most products today is contaminated with these toxic ingredients along with very high salt levels. Last week I gave you some examples of how plants can hyper accumulate heavy metals. Hence when we use modern poultry manure fertilizers on our gardens, we add arsenic to our soil. When we grow fruits or vegetables, they will absorb the arsenic, and then we get it when we eat them. Arsenic besides being poisonous is a known carcinogen. The antibiotics lead to resistant bacteria and other superbugs that cause health problems. This is why I warn people about the dangers of these type of products.

The Arbor Gate blend is an exception to the normal poultry manure products and the only one I would recommend. First the Arbor Gate blend only uses manure from organically raised chickens hence there is no antibiotics or arsenic in them.

Secondly the type of chickens is "Layers" for egg production not "Broilers" for meat production. As a result the chickens are given different types of feed. For Layers they are fed extra nutrition to keep the birds healthy for a long productive egg laying life versus Broilers which are given feed that makes them just gain weight fast and where the bird health is not important.



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For example, Layers are fed extra calcium (Ca) and magnesium (Mg) so that the eggs will have strong shells. Some of this extra Ca and Mg ends up in the manure. This extra calcium addresses a common problem in Gulf Coast soils called "Blossom End Rot" on tomatoes due to a lack of calcium. Also many of the beneficial fungi in the soil require calcium. Note: All bird manures have higher salt levels than other animals but manure from Layers have less than from Broilers.

The Arbor Gate goes further and adds; Humates, 11 species of Mycorrhizae fungi and Molasses for an additional carbon source. These additions make the product work better than the cheap low quality brands.

SUMMARY:

This is a good well rounded product, reasonable priced and available locally. It is a general purpose fertilizer that works on any well drained soil where one wants to grow plants from turf grass to flowers, fruits or vegetables.

PROS:

- contains extra calcium and magnesium needed for most soils
- naturally slow release
- contains carbon as an energy source for the microbes
- nitrogen is in a readily available form for plants and microbes
- increases microbial diversity
- recycles manure waste products from poultry farms
- has Mycorrhizal fungi for plant health



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CONS:

- higher salt levels than some other types of organic fertilizers
- limited availability (Arbor Gate only)
- may have short lived odors when wet
- may attract animals

ALSO: THE ANSWER TO LAST WEEK'S QUESTION BELOW IS: **CARBON**.

QUESTION FROM LAST WEEK:

"Which nutrient or element does a plant require the most of?"

Hint - It is not water (H₂O).

Congrats to Jennifer Companik, Ruth Flournoy, Susan Parish and Becky Houston for getting the answer right and winning a bag of leaf mold compost.

Stay tuned for more garden trivia questions!