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JOHN'S CORNER

Organic Fertilizers and Nutrients – 5 Why Organic Fertilizers?

By John Ferguson

In visiting with customers this week, the subject of organic fertilizers came up. The question of "WHY?" came up many times. So I am going to list a few of the reasons WHY?

- Organic fertilizers contain trace minerals which are often critical to plant health and growth and missing in artificial fertilizers.
- Organic fertilizers do not leach out of the soils as compared to water soluble artificial chemical fertilizers.
- Organic fertilizers do not contain harmful salts that contaminate soil and create hardpan as is the case with artificial chemical fertilizers.
- Organic fertilizers last longer in the soil hence are cheaper in the long term (on turf grass only two applications of an organic fertilizer gives better results than 4 applications with an artificial fertilizer).
- Organic fertilizers do not burn the roots of plants.
- Organic fertilizers do not destroy beneficial microorganisms and earthworms.
- Organic fertilizers increase a plant's resistance to disease and insects! (Artificial fertilizers do the opposite which works out nicely for the manufacturers since they sell more insecticide, fungicides and other chemical poisons. Plants become addicted to the chemicals.)
- Many brands contain Mycorrhizal fungi for plant health
- Organic fertilizers are naturally slow release
- Organic fertilizers contains carbon as an energy source for the microbes
- Organic fertilizers increase microbial diversity
- Organic fertilizers recycles waste products from many industries
- Organic fertilizers build soils humus and improve the soil quality

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- Organic fertilizers increase nutrients like Vitamin C content compared to synthetic nitrogen fertilizers (USDA).
- -Organic fertilizers nourish AND improve the soil. Feeding your plants nothing but nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium (artificial fertilizers) is like feeding your children nothing but cookies. Plants need a balance of nutrients; macro, minor, and trace.
- Research at Cornell University has shown that corn fertilized with cow manure suffered less corn rootworm damage than control plots fertilized with the same amount of nutrients from synthetic chemical fertilizers.
- Similar research in Minnesota showed that Alfalfa fertilized with cow manure gave larger yields than control plots fertilized with synthetic chemical fertilizers. Synthetic fertilizers create weak growth that actually attracts pest insects (remember the example - lace bugs on azaleas).
- Organic fertilizers are easier to use as we are feeding the soil and let the soil feed the plants. When using artificial fertilizers we need many types (hibiscus, azalea, rose, palm tree, violet, lawn, citrus, houseplant, etc.).

SUMMARY: The advantages are so overwhelming, the real question is "WHY NOT".

QUESTION: For a coupon for a free bag of "Composted Native Mulch" to the first five respondents with the correct answer:

"Some of the algae that live on the surface of the soil have shown the ability to fix nitrogen from the air into the soil, IF there is a certain nutrient (element) present. What is that nutrient?"

Hint: It is used as a catalyst in the process.