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JOHN'S CORNER

ORGANIC FERTILIZERS AND NUTRIENTS 18 - AZOMITE

by John Ferguson

In horticulture and agriculture there is a principle called Liebig's "Law of The Minimum" which states that a plant's growth and health is limited by the nutrient in shortest supply.

For years our agricultural universities have told us that a plant only needs 16 elements to grow. However many doctors and sustainable horticulturists (organic farmers and gardeners) started questioning this advice since the human body has over 90 elements in it as do many animals. If these elements (nutrients) are not in the soil, then the plants cannot absorb them, and we do not get all the nutrients that we need to be healthy. Today it is believed that hundreds of our health problems are caused and aggravated by the poor quality (nutrient deficient) of our food supply. As our soils became depleted of trace elements, commercial agriculture practitioners began hybridizing food crops to grow on these nutrients deficient soils. This practice has led many gardeners to start growing their own fruits and vegetables with heirloom varieties.

We have several methods available to add these critical trace elements to our soil including fish emulsion and seaweed products, greensand, and some rock dusts. Today I want to talk about another product that is rich in trace minerals called Azomite.

Azomite has been mined in Utah for over 60 years as a mineral supplement . These mineral rich deposits were formed millions of years ago when a volcanic eruption dumped mineral rich volcanic ash into an ancient seabed which was also contained minerals. The name Azomite was coined from "A to Z Of Minerals Including Trace Elements".

For the geologists that might be reading, mineralogically, Azomite is a rhyolitic tuff breccia, and chemically Azomite is a hydrated sodium calcium aluminosilicate that contains over 70 elements.

When Azomite is used in animal feed it greatly improves livestock's resistance to disease and leads to faster weight gain, better quality meat and reduced mortality. It also increases milk production and higher butterfat

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content. When added to poultry feed, it leads to thicker and stronger egg shells, increased total egg production and improved bird health.

Azomite is easy to use as it comes in a powder or granular form. A few typical applications are:

- 2.5 tablespoons per gallon of water for a soil drench
- 2 tablespoons per gallon for use in compost tea
- 1 tablespoon per 2 inch pot diameter sprinkled over a container
- 2-3 tablespoons per 4-6 inch diameter transplant hole
- one pound per 10 square feet of garden row
- one tablespoon per pound of food waste in a vermi-compost bin

SUMMARY:

Azomite is another natural tool for gardeners to use in improving their soil. It is approved for use in organic agriculture and for use in animal feed from cows to aquaculture.