

Fine living: Prepare your plants to perform

By PJ Bremier, IJ correspondent
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Compost tea to-go

Bill Falk and Tom Bowen were college friends in Oregon before Falk went off to work on Wall Street and Bowen built a career in commercial real estate. Now retired, the two friends share a love of gardening and, after some environmental landscape classes together at College of Marin, a new career.

"I read 'Teaming With Microbes,'" says Bowen, who heard about the book from Falk, "and it changed my whole outlook on healthy gardening and the use of chemicals." Soon they were making their own compost tea in 5-gallon buckets.

Now, the two are making their tea in a large tank and selling their Aerated Compost Tea through their new joint venture, Marin Soil Solutions, hoping to turn their liquid "black gold" into real gold, although profit isn't their only goal.

"We really want to educate people and schools about soil ecology," Falk says. "And if you've been composting and mulching, you might not need this, but if your soil is stressed, our aerated compost tea will really help. "

They brew the tea using castings from worms (fed on manure from Straus Family Dairy), neutralized water and a catalyst, and within 24 hours they have a tea "teeming with billions of live beneficial organisms," they say.

It can be applied as a root soak, soil drench or foliar spray on lawns and flower and vegetable beds by either the customer or Marin Soil Solutions, which will deliver it to residential and community gardens or commercial landscapes.

Their formula, they emphasize, has been tested for efficacy and safety and is actively aerated which supplies the necessary oxygen to the tea's bacteria.

The two have applied the tea to their own gardens and have seen tremendous results

Falk has been applying the tea to the roses lining the driveway of his San Rafael home. "They're usually exhausted this time of year, but they're vibrant and I haven't had one case of rust this year " His crepe myrtle, which suffers from powdery mildew every year, has escaped untarnished, too. "The only thing I can attribute it to is the compost tea and you should see my vegetable garden. The plants are lush. "

The cost for Aerated Compost Tea is \$18 a gallon with a 20-gallon minimum and a \$125 set-up fee. An average quarter-acre garden might take about 10 gallons.

For more information, call 215-2811 or go to [www. marinsoilsolutions.com](http://www.marinsoilsolutions.com).

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