

[Free] Teaming with Microbes: A Gardener's Guide to the Soil Food Web

# Teaming with Microbes: A Gardener's Guide to the Soil Food Web

*Jeff Lowenfels, Wayne Lewis*

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**Jeff Lowenfels, Wayne Lewis : Teaming with Microbes: A Gardener's Guide to the Soil Food Web** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Teaming with Microbes: A Gardener's Guide to the Soil Food Web:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Teaming with Microbes: A Gardener's Guide to the Soil Food Web By OldRosesI was disheartened to read in the Preface to "Teaming with Microbes: A Gardener's Guide to the Soil Food Web" that the first part of the book would be difficult to get through. I pressed on. Very science-y. An excellent sleep inducer. No joke. I did fall asleep while reading it one warm afternoon. But it was definitely worth it. Like the authors, I urge you to read the entire book and not just the second part which is the heart of the book. Their argument boils down to one sentence: "No one ever fertilized an old-growth forest". Think about all the wild places you have ever seen, lush with growth. How did they get that way without the help of Scott's or Miracle-Gro? And if Scott's and Miracle-Gro are so superior, why don't our yards and gardens look better than those wild places? The authors' thesis is that we should garden like Nature gardens, working with the flora and fauna in the soils rather than against it through the use of compost, organic mulches and actively aerated compost tea. Best of all, they provide precise instructions and call for materials that most of us have on hand anyways. No need for expensive ingredients or equipment! I was thrilled to discover that I am not a "lazy composter" as I have always thought. Instead, I practice cold composting (not turning the compost), a method that produces the most "nutritious" compost! And what I jokingly refer to as "composting in situ", using the mower to shred up leaves and dumping them with the grass clippings onto my beds in the fall is actually a recommended mulch. As are the leaves I leave in my gardens over the winter. The only thing I am

doing wrong is removing the leaves in the spring. And my deepest, darkest secret is nothing to be ashamed of. Instead of carefully working my compost into the soil, I just spread it on top. Again, a recommended method for amending the soil! Of course, there are things that I have to do differently. Such as leaving the leaves on my beds. And even though I don't roto-till, I should still stop "loosening" the soil in the spring when I plant my seeds. The soil should be disturbed as little as possible. Planting in individual holes or narrow furrows is fine. I should learn to make and use actively aerated compost teas. Perhaps most importantly instead of throwing anything and everything into my composter, I should pay closer attention to the individual ingredients and their proportions, maybe go so far as to have different composters to make compost tailored to the needs of the various plants in my gardens. This is a wonderful book that I will be referring to again and again.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Detailed and Understandable  
By kaukaty I live in Hawaii and have been struggling with my garden for two years now. Some of the gardeners in the area have turned to the method in this book. They are very successful. I am changing over and will be ready by next spring to go with this guide. I can't say that it works for me as it will be a year or so for me to really know, however, I am more than anxious to begin. I feel positive about the method from what I have seen with the successful gardeners nearby.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This book will change your life  
By K. JEFFREYS From the first page through the last, this book is interesting. All of the little gardening mysteries that plagued me for so long are finally revealed in this book. I've heard the phrase "fixing nitrogen" for so long but never had it explained to me in a way that convinced me it wasn't just mumbo jumbo. This book explains what that means and why it is so important. I question everything until it makes perfect sense to me. This book really makes sense. Read the instructions on a bag of organic fertilizer and it often says something like scratch the fertilizer into the top inch of soil around the plant. I always questioned this, because I knew my plants roots went way deeper than one inch and very few of them resided in the top inch of soil. If the product is really water soluble then maybe it will eventually soak into the root zone but most aren't. This book explains that you're not really feeding your plant directly. You are feeding the microbes that reside in that top inch of soil and they interact with one another in many fascinating ways that end up feeding your plant. If you are a gardener with an inquisitive mind, you will love this book I promise. I think the author is also working on a second edition. I can't wait.

Smart gardeners know that soil is anything but an inert substance. Healthy soil is teeming with life—not just earthworms and insects, but a staggering multitude of bacteria, fungi, and other microorganisms. When we use chemical fertilizers, we injure the microbial life that sustains healthy plants, and thus become increasingly dependent on an arsenal of artificial substances, many of them toxic to humans as well as other forms of life. But there is an alternative to this vicious circle: to garden in a way that strengthens, rather than destroys, the soil food web—the complex world of soil-dwelling organisms whose interactions create a nurturing environment for plants. By eschewing jargon and overly technical language, the authors make the benefits of cultivating the soil food web available to a wide audience, from devotees of organic gardening techniques to weekend gardeners who simply want to grow healthy, vigorous plants without resorting to chemicals.

"All good gardeners know healthy plants start with healthy soil. But why? And how? In *Teaming with Microbes* Lowenfels and Lewis reveal the new research in the most practical and accessible way." Kym Pokorny, *The Oregonian*