

Anyone Fermenting Seawater?

by Al Chomica

If you are reading this, it is probably because you are wondering why on earth anyone would even consider fermenting seawater. And who on earth would have even thought of doing this unusual gardening activity? Well, it all has to do with natural farming techniques that were developed thousands of years ago by the Japanese and Korean cultures. Here in North America we went through an 'agricultural revolution' many decades ago by embracing chemical agriculture and applying it to all our food crops along with all its chemicals and poisons. We as farmers and growers have mostly lost the ability to see how applying beneficial natural amendments can positively affect our gardens and the food that we grow in a healthy way.

Seawater is one of the most interesting things to ferment because it completely transforms from clear water into a brownish, cloudy microbe soup within 36 hours. It's easy to make, it doesn't cost a dime and it inoculates large growing areas. Over the last year we have applied it to two little experimental garden plots on horse-depleted pasture that didn't seem to grow many things except several species of weeds. After mulching and applying the soup from fermented seawater to these plots, red currants and gooseberries were planted in them with some of them planted outside the plot for comparison.

Although we use it as a soil prep in the gardens, I've read it also works in combating canker on fruit trees. Trees in our garden that were severely stricken with canker last year were sprayed with this fermented seawater and have mostly survived so far.



Here's how we make it. First of all we collect seawater from the surface water in a tidal pool because that's where all the microbes live. The next step is to make some food for these microbes which is simply pasta, potato or rice wash water. Sometimes I will boil half a potato and run it through the blender to turn it into mush. It is placed in a 20 litre pail with rain water. Then a mesh bag containing microbe-rich compost or worm castings is suspended in this mix to inoculate the mix.

Then 3/4 of a litre of seawater is poured in (1:30 ratio) and an aquarium pump airstone is dropped in for about 36 hours. It goes through several stages during this time by forming bubbles, making foam and even scum that all disappears when it is ready. It does not store well and needs to be used up right away.

When the concoction is viewed through a microscope, it is like looking down at a busy street intersection with critters zooming around in every direction all over the place. It is a very busy soup and a handy little tool for introducing beneficial microbes into a depleted soil. We have a batch percolating right now that will be applied onto a cold compost heap to see if it will generate some microbial heat. In essence, we are inoculating the soil with a large quantity and a vast diversity of essential microbial life. Secondly, the complete minerals in the seawater provide all the trace minerals and micronutrients required for any plant's growth. It's all good. And it is all natural...