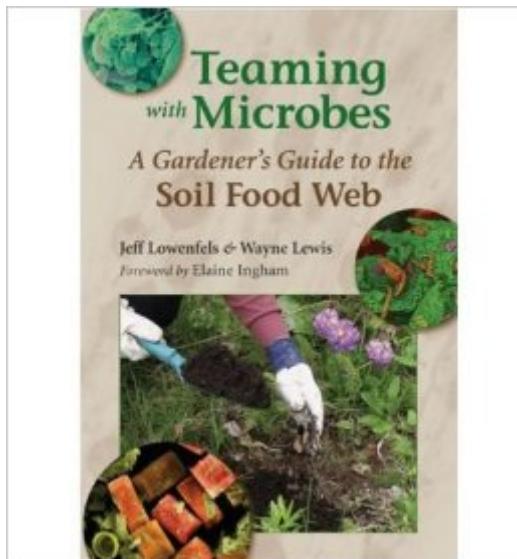


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Teaming With Microbes: A Gardener's Guide To The Soil Food Web



Synopsis

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.

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Customer Reviews

I've always known that there was more than meets the eye in all that dirt, and now I know what it is. It's life. Between the tiny pieces of rock (minerals) and the decaying plant matter, right next to the roots of plants and the above the clay level, lives billions of organisms. Each one, be it bacteria, fungi, nematodes, protozoa, worms, grubs or rodents, has a function in the soil. Teaming with Microbes: A Gardener's Guide to the Soil Food Web by Jeff Lowenfels and Wayne Lewis is bursting with information helpful to gardeners. Using a science-based approach they characterize the roll of each inhabitant and component of soil and explain its contribution to the "soil food web." They even

include 19 helpful rules to keep your soil fertile without fertilizers and to recover the life in damaged soil. Questions about the type of compost (brown or green) needed to rebuild damaged soil are fully answered. They make a compelling argument against rototilling soil have step by step recipes for producing healthful compost teas. I loved their thorough approach and because I've only been gardening for a few years, I finally feel like I have a place to go for definitive answers that eluded me before. My veggie garden needed something and I hope that the I can boost my soil and my output this year based on the information in this book. Time will tell, but this was a great book to point me in the direction that I hope fills my freezer and my stomach with food from my garden this summer.

When you start "teaming with microbes" you'll soon want a tomato patch that is "teeming with daffodils." This book will show you how I've heard about "no-till gardening" for years, but it seemed to be practiced by the slightly-flighty. This book explains in scientific terms why no-till is the best option for your garden. If you have an extensive knowledge of biology, you can skip to Part 2, but I recommend reading Part 1 so you can understand the biology of the soil. Don't be intimidated by this, though, the science is explained in an easy-to-understand manner (the authors weren't your high school teachers!). "Teaming with Microbes" has completely changed the way I think about my garden. When you follow their procedures, gardening becomes easier (no more turning the soil every spring) and cheaper (no need to buy fertilizers when you have almost everything you need right in your back yard!) and your garden, whether vegetable or flower or perennial, will become more productive. Best of all, you can plant daffodils in your tomato patch.

This book is revolutionizing the way I garden. I have learned so much about how to work with the soil and not be concerned about the bugs I see there. I am composting with knowledge and a purpose instead of composting just because. Highly recommend this book for beginners or long-term gardeners. This will challenge the way you have gardened...in a good way.

It would be difficult to resist the clarion call Jeff Lowenfels has issued on behalf of all the animated wealth he has unearthed at garden level. Ground zero is explosive with activity: diminutive, robust and markedly determined though vulnerable, hidden, silent. Microbes and Insects and Worms, oh my! Healthy plant life is dependent on healthy soil. Healthy soil is dependent on the interaction of a vigorous "soil web". That is a complicated tangle of simple life-forms vying for subsistence, existence or dominance. Out of this chaos come the energy, nutrients and protection that sustain a fertile root and leaf horizon. Who knew? The soil web has existed for eons but never in anticipation

of fertilizers, rototilling, genetic engineering or industrial agriculture. With innocent abandon we commit assault and battery on the land that feeds us [and it took a ^@*#\$ lawyer to point that out!]. Well...attention must be paid! This little book pays attention. It's a friendly affair replete with drawings, graphs, compost recipes, a helpful summary and homey photos provided by a pretty indulgent wife. You might enhance your appreciation by attending one of Jeff's lectures. He is probably on some promotional circuit. Consult the event calendar of your regional horticultural society. This just may be fertile soil for a new religious movement, a seminal hybrid of nature and science without the blight of divisional rancor. There's just no ground for hypocrisy, apostasy or MiracleGro.

This book is awesome for truly explaining organic gardening - both how and why. It tells you how to have an almost fertilizer-free lawn using microbes in compost tea and compost, and how to encourage the right kind of microbes for your various plants through the use of different kinds of mulches. It explains each step in the soil food web, how to identify any holes in your soil food web, and different steps you can take to improve the health and variety of microbes in your yard and garden. I was surprised at some common gardening practices which are actually bad for your yard!!! It was an enjoyable read with lots of interesting pictures, and made absolutely clear the importance of healthy soil when growing plants, and how to achieve it naturally and easily.

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