

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast. Today's episode is all about compost tea and in case you're new to the idea, this is not a tea that you drink. Rather it's a homemade fertilizer you can use to nurture your garden plants or flowers. Stay tuned for all the INS and outs of compost tea and how you can easily make it yourself. I'm your host Jill winger. For the last 10 years I've been helping people just like you who feel a little uninspired by modern life. I'll show you how to leave the rat race and create the life you really want by growing your own food and mastering old fashioned skills. When I initially began my research on compost tea, I figured it'd be a pretty easy subject to tackle. No big deal. Cut and dried and boy, oh boy, did I ever underestimate that one.
- Speaker 1: [01:06](#) It's not a secret or new information that compost is one of the very best fertilizers you can possibly add to your garden. And whether you're using composted animal manure or worm castings or kitchen compost or you're composting in a pile or composting in a tumbler in the backyard. There are lots of ways you can use compost to help your garden. Well compost tea kind of takes it to a different level because it's basically just a brew made from water and finished compost. Compost tea has a wide range of benefits, but basically I like to just think of it as a natural alternative to the, shall we say, miracle growing products sold at the grocery stores in town. In short, it will give your plants a boost, increase the microbes in your soil, and just help everything to be a little healthier in the process.
- Speaker 1: [02:14](#) Now, it's sounds simple enough, but when you start to look at all the different ways that people make compost tea, you'll quickly learn there are approximately 9 million different methods, techniques, and recipes. One of the blessings and also the curses of having a tool like the internet at our disposal. There is an endless amount of opinions and ideas floating around and that's where it begins to get just a little confusing. So I like to organize things into compartments. That's just how my brain works. When I was looking at all this compost tea info, I sorted the compost tea recipes into two categories. There are aerated and non-aerated varieties. Now before your eyes glaze over and you're like, oh my gosh, she's getting sciency, just hang with me. This is really simple. Aerated compost tea merely uses an electronic device of some sort, which is usually like a bubbler from a fish tank to force oxygen into the brew.
- Speaker 1: [03:26](#) That's it. And then non-aerated tea just uses water and compost and some time to make it happen. No bubblers or extra oxygen required. There's actually a decent amount of debate. It always surprises me how much debate there are around topics like

these, but there is debate as to which method is superior. Some folks swear by aerated compost tea and they say it's the only appropriate way to brew it. While others will argue that there is no scientific research backing up the claims that aerated tea is the way to go. So I'll leave the ultimate decision up to you as to what you'd rather choose. But after a lot of digging around, I have personally settled on doing non-aerated compost tea for my homestead plants and here's why. Number one, simplicity always wins for me, and I'll definitely admit there's probably some benefits to the aerated version, but I really don't have the time or the interest in adding another labor intensive project to the homestead.

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So we have quite a list of things we are working on or want to work on. And a complicated compost tea setup is really not even going to make the cut. Now if you have a lot of extra time or you're really interested in this or garden is your primary passion, then by all means I encourage you to do some research and maybe even become an aerated tea expert. But for us at this stage in life, keeping it simple is my number one priority. Now the other reason that I stuck with non-aerated tea is history. So it appears that different cultures have been brewing various forms of tea for centuries. And I mean, I'm assuming they had results cause they kept doing it and I'm also going to assume that they probably didn't have fish tank motors. So I'm going to go with the old fashioned approach on this one.

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And then well side note, I think part of my reason for sticking with non-aerated tea is laziness. AKA, maybe we call it efficiency. I like the idea of steeping compost in a bucket and just stirring it on occasion rather than having to babysit a complicated system. So anyway you pick which one you want to do. But today I'm going to share my simple non aerated compost tea recipe with you right now. So grab a pen and paper and here we go. So what you'll need to start is a five gallon bucket. Now you could definitely use a bucket of a different size, but I figure why not make a larger quantity because it's pretty easy to use it up. You'll also want to get one shovel scoop of good quality finished compost. And as you can see, we are very specific and scientific in our measuring methods here.

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I really am not going to get picky with amounts. Give a good old scoop of compost in the bucket, maybe fill it, you know, a quarter full and call it good. And then you'll also need some non-chlorinated water. If you have chlorinated water, you can, and this is the same method I use when I'm making things like sourdough or ferments because chlorine is not good in that application, either. You can just leave the water in a bucket or a

container uncovered for a day or two and the chlorine should evaporate. Now another option is to use rainwater. If you collect rain water, you can use that for your compost tea. So don't overthink it, but just make sure you have water without chlorine in it. And when I said good quality compost, the biggest issue there is you wanna make sure it's finished. So it's gone through the heating process and it is transformed from either manure or you know, raw kitchen scraps into crumbly, beautiful finished compost.

Speaker 1: [07:54](#) That is key. You don't want to use just, half composted materials. That would not be ideal. All right, so here's your instructions. You're going to dump your shovel of finished compost into the bucket. You're gonna fill the bucket the rest of the way full with water. Give it a good old stir and set it aside for about a week. If you forget about it for a couple of weeks, not saying I did that, but if you do, it's going to be okay. Maybe stir it once or twice a day if you're walking by it and think about it. But again, if it doesn't happen every day, it's not the end of the world. Now, when you're ready to use your tea, you want to strain the compost out and just keep the water.

Speaker 1: [08:44](#) Now you can use this finished tea undiluted. If it seems very, very strong or very, very dark, it might be wise to dilute it a little bit with water. You can go with a one-to-one ratio or just go with what feels right. Now since this isn't exactly a very specific scientific method, I would recommend that before you go crazy spraying your tea all over everything you're growing, that you do a little bit of testing first just to make sure it's not going to cause issues with your plants. I've never had issues, but you know, different variables come into play here. So put your compost tea in a sprayer. I like to have one of those weeds sprayers. You know you're supposed to put chemicals in them, but I usually put everything but chemicals. Then I use them all over the homestead. Put your finished tea, whether it's diluted or not in a sprayer.

Speaker 1: [09:34](#) And then you can just, you know, spray it on a few plants that aren't going to be super important if they have issues from the tea and just watch them for a few days. As long as they're not having issues, then you should be good to go. Now some folks like to spray their compost tea on the leaves. You can totally do that. I prefer just to use, mine as more of a soil drench. So just to pour a little bit of the tea around the roots of my plant in a circular motion and allow it to soak in. And if you are applying your tea to a very large area of your garden, you can continue to dilute it with water to make it stretch just a little bit more. So it's really that easy. And what I figure is it's really cheap if not

free to make, if you have compost of some sort on your homestead and if anything, it's definitely not going to cause harm or it shouldn't cause harm.

Speaker 1: [10:32](#) It's just gonna add more goodness to your soil. So considering it doesn't take a lot of time, compost tea is a really easy way you can give your organic plants a boost. Now a few little notes here before we wrap up. Some sources that I've read and researched, warn against using compost tea because they're worried it could harbor dangerous bacteria like salmonella or ecoli, since these are organisms that can live in manure. And in my opinion, I'm not super worried about this because I'm using finished compost but I would not use raw manure or uncomposted manure for this compost tea recipe for that reason. So use good finished compost that should have technically killed off any organisms in the manure or the compost. I've seen a few other recommendations, warning folks not to spray the leaves of a plant if you plan to consume it or it's produce or fruit right away.

Speaker 1: [11:37](#) And I would tend to agree cause you know it is compost. I probably don't want to eat or drink compost tea. But as long as you're washing your fruits and vegetables before they're eaten. And honestly, that's why I like to use my tea as a drench instead of a spray. Um, it's just not something I'm super concerned about, but in the end, it's ultimately your choice so you can decide what you want to do. You can also add other ingredients to your compost tea. Some people add kelp or molasses or you know, depending on where your soil might be depleted. If you get soil testing done, you can add some natural options in there to give it an extra boost. I haven't really found that necessary. Our soil tests haven't revealed anything as far as being a big deficit. So I just keep it simple and go with straight compost.

Speaker 1: [12:37](#) So all in all, it's simple, it's effective and it's kind of fun to make compost tea for your garden. If you give it a try, definitely shoot me a message or an email and let me know how it goes. So if you are ready to do this homesteading thing, compost teas, gardening chickens, the whole nine yards, but you're feeling a little unsure of how to start. Well, I've got ya covered. I happened to have an entire library of resources I've created over the years for homesteaders, just like you, and you can get complimentary access at theprairiehomestead.com/grow. My friends, if you have a minute, I would be so honored if you would drop a quick review over on iTunes if you enjoyed this podcast so more people can find it and bring homesteading into their lives. Thanks for listening and I'll catch up with you next time on the old fashioned on purpose podcast.

