

To:

Date:

Monday April 26, 2004
1 page from Mario Lanthier

COMPOST CONFERENCE - PORTLAND

This 3-day conference was held in Portland from March 15 to 17. It was organized by the magazine "Biocycle", associated with Dr. Vicky Bess of BBC Labs.

About 400 persons attended, mostly university scientists and manufacturers of compost or compost equipment. There were 6 persons from Canada.

General comments

- Expensive (US \$395 no lunch) and many presentations were very sloppy.
- Scientists are running behind compost tea technology and working overtime to explain why it works. The list of required research is long.

Steve Scheuerell, Oregon State University

- He wrote in 2002 a literature review on compost tea, the best summary to date of available technical information. He then prepared a summary for a grower magazine.

- Many assumptions in the current technology:
 - Is higher microbe diversity better, or should we aim for specific microbes?
 - Sprayer filters do not harm the microbes? What is the "safest" pressure setting?
 - Is full plant coverage better? We know that acquired resistance is translocated.
 - Are microbes UV susceptible? Should we spray in the evening? Add a sticker?

Cindy Salter, Compost Tea Industry Association

- Use of compost tea is growing rapidly despite the lack of scientific research. Growers are currently driving the process.

- Available research on disease suppression:
 - Rodale Institute, funding by USDA, published recently.
 - Compost tea "clearly affected" disease severity for grape powdery mildew (50% less).
 - Pumpkin: no difference. Potatoes: "increased" market yields with weekly applications.
 - Presidio Golf Course, 2000.
 - Weekly application, 1 gallon / 1,000 ft². Improved root depth, reduction in snow mold.