

Healthy Soil

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Often trees and plants start to decline for no reason, but remember it's not natural for tree or plant to be growing in a sterile environment. Many times trees and plants have different relationships with the micro flora that we do not completely understand but we know these symbiotic types of relationships exist. Often, we unknowingly destroy these mutually beneficial relationships through the use of synthetic pesticides. The usage of these types of poisons destroys our ecosystems and the natural balance that many plants use to survive our harsh environment. Because of this, it is necessary to rebuild these microenvironments around our trees and shrubs with natural fertilizers and fungicides, which build up the microbes.

The secret to fixing a sick tree or shrub is a matter of re-establishing the natural make up of the soil. The first thing to do is create an oxygen root exchange inside and outside of the drip line of the tree. This could be as simple as using a cone aerator (the type used for lawns and readily available at most rental shops) and core aerate through the drip line area and beyond. Remember, most of the feeder roots are at the drip line. I also use a hand core apparatus and the copper pipes with a high-pressure nozzle at the end. All of these procedures will create well-oxygenized soil, as well as an environment where beneficial micro flora and micro fauna will thrive.

The second trick is to spread some sort of stimuli so the microbes have some reason to hang around. I use either a tablespoon of sugar or dried molasses, which is available through <http://www.groworganic.com/>. I put down approximately 5 pounds per 1,000 square feet. Another good addition to your soil would be cornmeal at 20 pounds per 100 square feet. Cornmeal is a natural disease fighter that feeds the beneficial microbes in the soil.

For a final treatment, cover your soil with 1 to 2 inches of compost. Compost is a naturalizer that helps cool the soil and retains moisture. It increases the porosity of the soil and actually reclaims a chemical damage and fights weeds. Make sure to install it out beyond the drip line of the tree or plant.

For extra measures foliar feed your trees with 1 cup of manure tea, 2 oz. of liquid seaweed and 1 gallon of water. Foliar feeding is one of the best treatments you can use on a tree's and goes a long way to the trees overall appearance and longevity. Foliar spraying should never be done during the hottest time of the day or you will sunburn the leaves.