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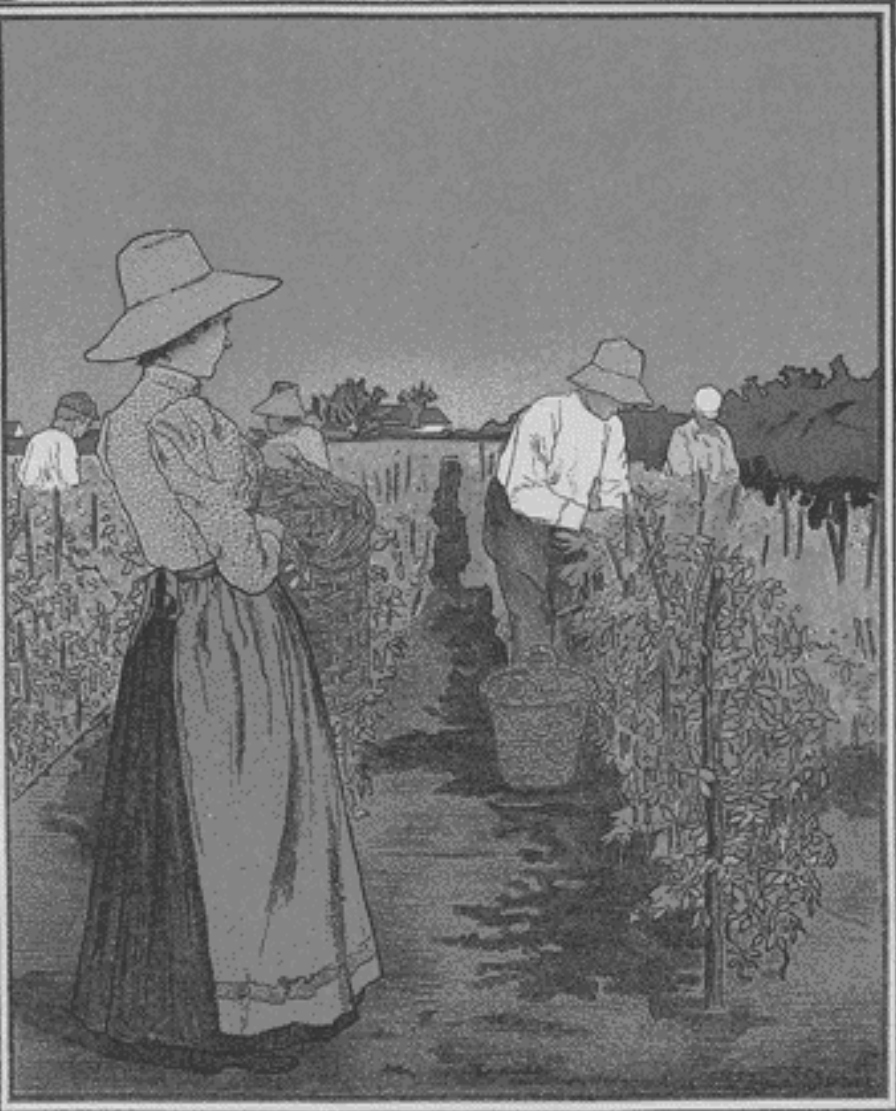

COMPOST TEA SURVEY RESULTS 2005

2005 Compost Tea Survey Results

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Introduction

Visitors to our web site were invited to participate in www.mastercomposter.com's *2005 Compost Tea Survey*. At the conclusion of the survey, respondents were shown a summary of survey responses to date and were also provided the opportunity to read about benefits of aerated compost tea.

Before taking www.mastercomposter.com's *2005 Compost Tea Survey*, a whopping **78%** of the 901 respondents were unaware that aerated compost tea has significant benefits over tea brewed without aeration. In fact, **24%** of respondents had never even heard of compost tea. These statistics qualify the survey as a success because the survey plus information provided to respondents increased the practical knowledge of the composting community.

The survey consisted of 10 multiple choice questions. The entire survey, including questions and multiple-choice answers, is reproduced in *Part I: The Survey Questionnaire* of this report.

Responses to each question were calculated independently of other questions for the *Part II: Basic Statistics* portion of the results. The *Part II: Basic Statistics* section of the report reveals the number and percentage of respondents that chose each answer, per each question.

Further analysis was conducted by examining responses to a combination of questions. We have included the items of greatest interest in Part III. *Part III: Cross-Question Statistics* reports pertinent responses of various groups. The Appendix provides a complete list of groups that were analyzed.

Examples of Basic Statistics

Question 2 of the survey asked what percentage of total respondents had brewed only non-aerated tea before the survey vs. what percentage had brewed aerated tea. The percentage of respondents that selected each choice in Question 2 is reported in the *Basic Statistics* section. (The eight answers which indicated aerated tea was brewed are combined in this table.)

Have brewed tea only by non-aerated method	207	23%	
Have made aerated tea	90	10%	

Question 10 asked if respondents were aware that there was a significant difference in the disease-fighting benefits of aerated tea over non-aerated tea. The percentage of respondents selecting each choice in Question 10 is reported in the *Basic Statistics* section.

Were aware of the benefits	183	20%	
Were not aware of the benefits	700	78%	

Examples of Cross-Question Statistics

Wouldn't it be interesting to know if people who had brewed aerated tea were generally more aware of its superior benefits? To do this, we select only the records of those who responded to Question 2 by saying they had brewed aerated tea. We then calculate this group's response to Question 10 for *Part III: Cross-Question Statistics.*

Of those who had brewed aerated tea,
78% were AWARE of superior benefits of aerated tea
22% were NOT AWARE of superior benefits of aerated tea

We will use the same Cross-Question method to look at only the records of those who responded to Question 2 by saying they had brewed only non-aerated tea. Their response to Question 10, as a group, was quite different.

Of those who had brewed only non-aerated tea, the statistics were reversed,
22% were AWARE of superior benefits of aerated tea
77% were NOT AWARE of superior benefits of aerated tea

These *Cross-Question Statistics* show that the majority of those who brewed aerated compost tea were aware of its benefits, whereas the *Basic Statistics* report that the majority of total survey respondents were not aware of these benefits. Distinctions such as this can only be revealed by looking at Cross-Question Statistics.

********** **ALLOWANCE FOR ROUNDING** **********
Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole percentage point. Totals will not always equal 100% due to
(1) rounding to whole percentage points and
(2) all respondents may not have answered a particular question.

Part I: The Survey Questionnaire

Question 2 asked for the amount spent on a brewer, stated in US dollars. Before taking the survey, participants who used another currency to purchase a brewer were provided with a currency calculator to convert their cost figure so they could answer this question.

Following are the 10 multiple-choice questions on the Survey:

1. Which statement best describes your experience with compost tea?

a. Never heard of it before.
b. Have never used it and don't intend to
c. Have never used it but intend to in the future
d. Have never used it and am undecided as to whether I will use it in the future
e. Have used it to water plants, i.e., soil drench
f. Have used it as a foliar spray
g. Have used it as both a soil drench and foliar spray

2. Which statement best describes your compost tea brewing method?

a. I've never brewed compost tea.
b. Have brewed tea only by a non-aerated method (e.g., bag of compost steeps in barrel of water)
c. Have made aerated tea with a brewer constructed of components costing < US$25
d. Have made aerated tea with a brewer constructed of components costing US$26 - 50
e. Have made aerated tea with a brewer constructed of components costing US$51 - 100
f. Have made aerated tea with a brewer constructed of components costing over US$100
g. Have made aerated tea with a purchased brewer costing < US$25
h. Have made aerated tea with a purchased brewer costing US$26 - 50
i. Have made aerated tea with a purchased brewer costing US$51 - 100
j. Have made aerated tea with a purchased brewer costing over US$100

3. What volume of compost tea do you usually produce per batch?

a. Zero. Never made compost tea
b. Less than 5 gallons or less than 19 liters
c. 5 to 10 gallons or 20 to 38 liters
d. 11 to 15 gallons or 39 to 57 liters
e. 16 to 20 gallons or 58 to 78 liters
f. 21 to 30 gallons or 79 to 114 liters
g. 31 to 40 gallons or 115 to 151 liters
h. 41 to 50 gallons or 152 to 189 liters
i. Over 50 gallons or over 189 liters

4. **Estimate the number of batches of compost tea that you have made in your lifetime.**
   a. Zero. Never made compost tea.
   b. 1 batch
   c. 2 batches
   d. 3 batches
   e. 4 - 10 batches
   f. 11 - 50 batches
   g. 51 - 100 batches
   h. Over 100 batches

5. **Which of these best describes the source of the compost or castings that you brew? (If you have never made compost tea, choose the source from which you would most likely obtain compost or castings for brewing.)**
   a. Generated from my own piles or worm bins
   b. Generated from piles or worm bins of friends, family or neighbors
   c. Purchased from Garden Stores or Nurseries
   d. Purchased from Home Improvement Stores
   e. Purchased from Feed or Hardware Stores
   f. Purchased from another type of Retail Store not listed above
   g. Purchased from municipal compost operation (includes any operation supported by local taxes)
   h. Purchased from an individual (for instance, some ranchers sell compost when they have it)
   i. Purchased directly from large commercial compost operations

6. **What percentage of your fertilization practices (adding nutrients to soil) are organic?**
   a. None. No organics used to add nutrients to soil
   b. 1 - 25% of nutritional amendments are organic
   c. 26 - 50% of nutritional amendments are organic
   d. 51 - 75% of nutritional amendments are organic
   e. 76 - 100% of nutritional amendments are organic

7. **What percentage of your GARDEN disease- and pest-fighting practices are organic?**
   a. None. No organic pesticides or fungicides used in my garden
   b. 1 - 25% of disease- and pest-control methods used in my garden are organic
   c. 26 - 50% of disease- and pest-control methods used in my garden are organic
   d. 51 - 75% of disease- and pest-control methods used in my garden are organic
   e. 76 - 100% of disease- and pest-control methods used in my garden are organic

8. What percentage of your LAWN / LANDSCAPE pest- and disease-fighting practices are organic?

a. None. No organic pesticides or fungicides used on my lawn and landscape
b. 1 - 25% of disease- and pest-control methods used on my lawn and landscape are organic
c. 26 - 50% of disease- and pest-control methods used on my lawn and landscape are organic
d. 51 - 75% of disease- and pest-control methods used on my lawn and landscape are organic
e. 76 - 100% of disease- and pest-control methods used on my lawn and landscape are organic

9. Individual foliar & root diseases can be treated by tea brewed with compost made <u>from a specific feedstock</u>, i.e., pile input materials. Would you track down a specific feedstock if research showed it would treat your particular needs?

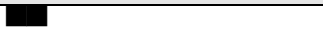
a. No, I'd rather purchase a pesticide
b. No, I'd rather purchase a pesticide, but only if it is organic
c. No way, I only compost materials I have on hand
d. Not likely to track down specific feedstock (or compost made from that feedstock)
e. Sometimes, if feedstock (or feedstock compost) is available nearby
f. Often, if feedstock (or feedstock compost) is available nearby
g. Always, if feedstock (or feedstock compost) is available nearby
h. I would not only obtain specific feedstock (or feedstock compost) located nearby, but would also obtain them from outside my immediate geographic area.
i. I do not understand the question.

10. Prior to taking this survey, were you aware that there is a significant difference in the disease-fighting benefits of <u>aerated tea</u> over the disease-fighting benefits of <u>non-aerated tea</u>?

a. Yes
b. No

Part II: Basic Statistics

1. Which statement best describes your experience with compost tea?

a. Never heard of it before.	217	24%	
b. Have never used it and don't intend to	21	2%	
c. Have never used it but intend to in the future	221	25%	
d. Have never used it and am undecided as to whether I will use it in the future	151	17%	
e. Have used it to water plants, i.e., soil drench	137	15%	
f. Have used it as a foliar spray	14	2%	
g. Have used it as both a soil drench and foliar spray	132	15%	
Participant did not respond to this question	8	1%	

Answers a, b, c, and d indicated no prior use of compost tea. Answers e, f, and g indicated prior use of compost tea. Note that the compost tea used was not necessarily created by the respondent. The question asked only if the respondent had used compost tea.

Suprisingly, **24%** of survey respondents had never even heard of compost tea. That would not be so startling if respondents were drawn from the general population. But our respondents were visitors to www.mastercomposter.com web site, so presumably they were already aware of compost but not compost tea.

Forty-four percent had never used compost tea, but most intended to use tea (**25%** of survey respondents) or were at least considering its use (**17%** of survey respondents).

Thirty-two percent of respondents had used compost tea before taking the survey with the largest percentage (**30%**) using it to water plants rather than (**15%**), or in addition to (**15%**), using it as a foliar spray. **Two percent** had used it as a foliar spray only.

The preference for use as a soil drench may be attributed to several factors. The disease-fighting benefits of aerated compost tea are greater when it is used as a foliar spray, but many people are unaware that compost tea can be used in this way.

The more common use as a soil drench could also be due to a lack of equipment. Some sort of pump is needed to use tea as a foliar spray. In addition, some gardeners may desire to use tea in the quickest or easiest way. It is easier to use compost tea as a soil drench, i.e., to water plants, because there is neither transfer to nor clean-up of equipment. The tea is just poured out of the bucket onto the soil.

2. Which statement best describes your compost tea brewing method?

a. I've never brewed compost tea.	593	66%	
b. Have brewed tea only by a non-aerated method (e.g., bag of compost steeps in barrel of water)	207	23%	
c. Have made aerated tea with a brewer constructed of components costing < US$25	46	5%	
d. Have made aerated tea with a brewer constructed of components costing US$26 - 50	12	1%	
e. Have made aerated tea with a brewer constructed of components costing US$51 - 100	7	1%	
f. Have made aerated tea with a brewer constructed of components costing over US$100	8	1%	
g. Have made aerated tea with a purchased brewer costing < US$25	4	0%	
h. Have made aerated tea with a purchased brewer costing US$26 - 50	3	0%	
i. Have made aerated tea with a purchased brewer costing US$51 - 100	1	0%	
j. Have made aerated tea with a purchased brewer costing over US$100	9	1%	
Participant did not respond to this question	11	1%	

Two-thirds of our survey respondents had never brewed compost tea. Another **23%** had brewed compost tea without aeration. Only **10%** had brewed aerated tea. Note that answers g, h, and i received a few responses each, but not enough to equal even one percent of the survey.

The greatest number of composters who made their own brewer (**5%** of survey respondents) spent less than US$25 for components with which to construct it. Of those who purchased a brewer, the greatest number of composters (**1%**) spent over US$100. Looking at the actual number of responses, almost as many respondents constructed their brewer for over US$100 (**8 respondents**) as purchased in the same price range (**9 respondents**).

This question allows us to divide respondents into groups for further analysis:

1) Those who have not brewed compost tea at all (answer = a),
2) Those who have brewed only non-aerated tea (answer = b), and
3) Those who have made aerated tea (answer = c through j).
    a) Those who constructed their brewer (answer c through f) versus
    b) Those who purchased a brewer (answer = g through j).

We will focus on those who brew compost tea in *Part III: Cross-Question Statistics*.

3. What volume of compost tea do you usually produce per batch?

a. Zero. Never made compost tea	590	65%	
b. Less than 5 gallons or less than 19 liters	160	18%	
c. 5 to 10 gallons or 20 to 38 liters	78	9%	
d. 11 to 15 gallons or 39 to 57 liters	9	1%	
e. 16 to 20 gallons or 58 to 78 liters	12	1%	
f. 21 to 30 gallons or 79 to 114 liters	8	1%	
g. 31 to 40 gallons or 115 to 151 liters	9	1%	
h. 41 to 50 gallons or 152 to 189 liters	10	1%	
i. Over 50 gallons or over 189 liters	11	1%	
Participant did not respond to this question	14	2%	

Note that this question asked the respondent to report his or her *usual* batch size. The respondent may very well have made larger or smaller batches on a more or less frequent basis. The size of the brewer usually sets the maximum batch size. Operating under the assumptions that most composters have only one brewer and that most human beings are creatures of habit, these responses should give us an estimate of common batch sizes.

Notice also that the question did not specify aerated or non-aerated compost tea, so this question was not limited to aerated brewers. We will show separate answers on this question from those two groups in Part III.

Again, we see that **65%** had never made compost tea.

Of the respondents who had made tea, small batches were customary. **Eighteen percent** of total survey respondents usually made batches of five gallons or less, and another **9%** usually made batches between 5 and 10 gallons. Only **6%** of total respondents brewed batches of eleven gallons or more.

4. Estimate the number of batches of compost tea that you have made in your lifetime.

a. Zero. Never made compost tea.	591	66%	
b. 1 batch	24	3%	
c. 2 batches	36	4%	
d. 3 batches	32	4%	
e. 4 - 10 batches	108	12%	
f. 11 - 50 batches	61	7%	
g. 51 - 100 batches	17	2%	
h. Over 100 batches	20	2%	
Participant did not respond to this question	12	1%	

This question was asked to determine whether there were serious brewers out there. We also wondered if many people quit making compost tea after their first batch. The number requested was batches made during the particular respondent's lifetime. The respondent may have been 18 or 80. They may have been brewing only since yesterday or they may have made their first batch 60 years ago. Neither age nor duration of compost tea experience were requested, therefore these responses are not necessarily indicative of the frequency with which batches are made.

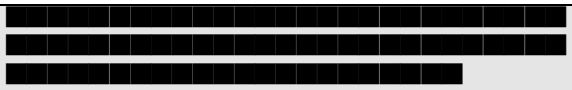
This question did not discriminate between aerated and non-aerated compost tea. We will report separate answers on this question between those two groups in Part III.

Interestingly, somewhat of a Bell Curve is evident among those who had made compost tea (b through h). Only **3%** of total respondents were limited to one batch. Of course, those individuals could have easily bought their brewer just last week. Answering "b" on this question did not indicated that these individuals will not make a second batch. The small percentage of single batches is an encouraging result. Apparently, most respondents who had made one batch of tea went on to make another.

The greatest number of respondents (**12%**) had made between 4 and 10 batches of compost tea. The next largest group (**7%**) had made between 11 and 50 batches. **Twenty respondents** had made over 100 batches. That is a lot of compost tea!

Though no direct evidence was given, the normal distribution of respondents may indicate that brewing tea is not overly burdensome or difficult (else most people would not continue to do it). One could further assume that respondents are getting good results (else why would they continue to brew). However, these are clearly assumptions and not produced by direct analysis.

5. Which of these best describes the source of the compost or castings that you brew? (If you have never made compost tea, choose the source from which you would most likely obtain compost or castings for brewing.)

a. Generated from my own piles or worm bins	681	76%	
b. Generated from piles or worm bins of friends, family or neighbors	31	3%	
c. Purchased from Garden Stores or Nurseries	59	7%	
d. Purchased from Home Improvement Stores	22	2%	
e. Purchased from Feed or Hardware Stores	9	1%	
f. Purchased from another type of Retail Store not listed above	4	0%	
g. Purchased from municipal compost operation (includes any operation supported by local taxes)	14	2%	
h. Purchased from an individual (for instance, some ranchers sell compost when they have it)	13	1%	
i. Purchased directly from large commercial compost operations	9	1%	
Participant did not respond to this question	59	7%	

Note that this question asked for the best description of the source of compost that was used or would be used in brewing. Respondents were only allowed one answer, though they may have obtained compost from various sources. The answer reported was the choice that "best described" their source.

These answers are a combination of the actual source of compost that was brewed in the case of respondents who have brewed tea, and the most likely source of compost from which they would brew tea in the case of respondents that have not previously brewed compost tea. In addition, this question was answered by both brewers of aerated tea and those who brewed only non-aerated tea.

Seventy-six percent of respondents said they were most likely to use compost from their own piles or bins to make compost tea. This was far and away the most likely source.

The second most likely source (**7%**) was listed as garden centers or nurseries. Because a significant number of respondents chose this category, we digress for a moment to give a tip on bagged compost.

Much of what garden centers/nurseries sell is bagged compost. Some (but not all) producers of bagged compost sterilize their compost, killing microorganisms. The brewing process must be aerated to keep microorganisms alive, but if the compost has already been sterilized, it's a moot point.

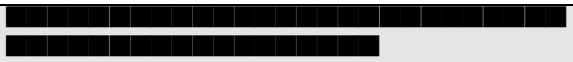
Many, if not most, producers of bagged compost do not sterilize their compost because it would add to the cost. However, some manufacturers do sterilize because of the large numbers of bags returned. Customers complain there is "mold" growing in their compost. This is usually actinomycetes, an extremely beneficial microorganism, but uninformed consumers interpret it as a sign the compost is "old" or "bad", the way they would react to mold on a loaf of bread. To cut down on returns, sadly, the producers sterilize so there will be no complaints.

Sterilization is not noted on the bag. The only way to know if bagged compost has been sterilized is to ask the manufacturer. (If you ask the salesperson at the nursery, they may just tell you whatever you want to hear. In truth, it is highly unlikely that a salesperson will know since it isn't noted on the bag. If you decide to ask the salesperson, don't give any indication whether you want sterilized or non-sterilized until AFTER he or she gives you an answer.)

To ensure your compost brand is not sterilized, write to "Customer Service" at the address of the company which should be printed on the bag. Simply ask if the specific compost you purchased (copy the exact name of the product from the label and include a UPC code number) was sterilized.

Sterilized compost is not "bad", and is certainly fine to add to your soil. The only concern is that if you are buying it to make aerated tea, and you are brewing with the aerated method to keep microorganisms alive, it would make sense to use compost that is full of microorganisms.

6. What percentage of your fertilization practices (adding nutrients to soil) are organic?

a. None. No organics used to add nutrients to soil	124	14%	
b. 1 - 25% of nutritional amendments are organic	143	16%	
c. 26 - 50% of nutritional amendments are organic	102	11%	
d. 51 - 75% of nutritional amendments are organic	102	11%	
e. 76 - 100% of nutritional amendments are organic	403	45%	
Participant did not respond to this question	27	3%	

This question asked all respondents, regardless of their compost tea practices, to report the percentage of their fertilization practices that were organic. **Forty-five percent** reported that their organic practices were 76 - 100% organic.

Close to the same number, **41%**, reported that less than half of their practices were organic.

Fourteen percent of respondents answered by selecting answer a: "None. No organics used to add nutrients to soil". This is curious. The majority of respondents were visitors to www.mastercomposter.com. And we know that compost is an organic source of nutrients. If these respondents weren't adding compost to their soil, why were they visiting a compost web site?

The numbers don't answer this question, but here are several hypotheses:

1) Maybe they were considering composting, but hadn't yet started.
2) Maybe they were just starting to compost and hadn't yet added any to their soil.
3) Maybe they added compost to improve the structure of their soil and didn't think of it as part of their fertilization program.

7. What percentage of your GARDEN disease- and pest-fighting practices are organic?

a. None. No organic pesticides or fungicides used in my garden	206	23%	
b. 1 - 25% of disease- and pest-control methods used in my garden are organic	147	16%	
c. 26 - 50% of disease- and pest-control methods used in my garden are organic	84	9%	
d. 51 - 75% of disease- and pest-control methods used in my garden are organic	95	11%	
e. 76 - 100% of disease- and pest-control methods used in my garden are organic	343	38%	
Participant did not respond to this question	26	3%	

Questions 7 and 8 asked respondents to reveal the percentage of their disease- and pest-control measures that were organic. This issue was covered in two questions to distinguish practices in the garden from practices on the lawn/landscape.

Responses to the two questions were similar. However, there was a greater use of organic disease- and pest-controls in the garden than on the landscape. In the garden, **38%** used the highest level (76% - 100% organic) of organic methods and **23%** used no organic methods at all. On the lawn and landscape, **35%** used the highest level (76% - 100% organic) of organic methods but **29%** used no organic methods at all.

At first glance, that difference seems reasonable, since gardens would more likely contain human-consumable produce, and because gardeners have a greater exposure to the soil in their gardens than that on their lawns so would want it to be free of chemicals. Still, it seems that since children would more likely play on the lawn, there would be an equal level of concern there. Unfortunately, the survey had no questions about children and their use of the lawn.

8. What percentage of your LAWN / LANDSCAPE pest- and disease-fighting practices are organic?

a. None. No organic pesticides or fungicides used on my lawn and landscape	265	29%	
b. 1 - 25% of disease- and pest-control methods used on my lawn and landscape are organic	123	14%	
c. 26 - 50% of disease- and pest-control methods used on my lawn and landscape are organic	78	9%	
d. 51 - 75% of disease- and pest-control methods used on my lawn and landscape are organic	98	11%	
e. 76 - 100% of disease- and pest-control methods used on my lawn and landscape are organic	312	35%	
Participant did not respond to this question	25	3%	

The presence of a reversed Bell Curve on both Questions 7 and 8 is interesting. The majority of respondents were at either the highest level of use for organics (76 – 100%), or the lowest (0%). The cause of this distribution is a subject for speculation. A large number in the highest category seems to suggest a commitment, or high level of desire, for an organic environment. The second largest group used no organics at all, suggesting the attitude that if someone is not going to commit to having an organic environment, they might as well not have any organics at all.

Or perhaps the non-organic products available to them were less expensive, and they figured they might as well buy the cheapest products they could find.

Another possibility was that there is a gap of knowledge or belief between those who believed an organic environment contributes to family health vs. those who were unaware or didn't believe that an organic environment had benefits. Or perhaps one group had the resources to learn organic methods and the other group had not had that opportunity.

9. Individual foliar & root diseases can be treated by tea brewed with compost made <u>from a specific feedstock</u>, i.e., pile input materials. Would you track down a specific feedstock if research showed it would treat your particular needs?

a. No, I'd rather purchase a pesticide	52	6%	
b. No, I'd rather purchase a pesticide, but only if it is organic	23	3%	
c. No way, I only compost materials I have on hand	76	8%	
d. Not likely to track down specific feedstock (or compost made from that feedstock)	94	10%	
e. Sometimes, if feedstock (or feedstock compost) is available nearby	201	22%	
f. Often, if feedstock (or feedstock compost) is available nearby	146	16%	
g. Always, if feedstock (or feedstock compost) is available nearby	126	14%	
h. I would not only obtain specific feedstock (or feedstock compost) located nearby, but would also obtain them from outside my immediate geographic area.	70	8%	
i. I do not understand the question.	89	10%	
Participant did not respond to this question	24	3%	

This question included a statement of fact that the respondent may not have known before the survey. We now know (per responses to Question 10) that most respondents were not aware that individual plant diseases could be treated with compost tea created from a specific feedstock. Because the question was based on a fact of which respondents were previously unaware, it may have been more challenging than other questions. **Thirteen percent** of respondents either did not understand the question or chose not to answer it.

Nine percent responded that they would rather buy a pesticide to treat a specific plant disease, though **one-third of those** would insist on using an organic pesticide.

The remainder of responses fell along a typical Bell Curve depending on how often and how much trouble it would be to get specific feedstocks. The highest number of respondents (**22%**) said that they would sometimes obtain a specific feedstock if it was available nearby. **Eight percent** on each end of the curve said that either they would never get specific feedstocks or, on the other end of the curve, that they would obtain specific feedstocks located both nearby and outside their immediate geographic area.

Note:
The intent of this question was to determine how much trouble a respondent would take to get feedstock for their compost pile (or compost made from a specific feedstock) from which they could brew a tea to specifically address a foliar or root problem. Because some respondents may not have wanted to brew tea to address specific problems, two potential answers were included indicating the respondent would prefer to purchase a pesticide rather than brew tea. The respondent who wished to purchase a pesticide could indicate either that any pesticide was acceptable, or that his/her selection would be limited to organic products.

A puzzling occurrence was noted during analysis of cross-question statistics for Part III. We isolated the records of those who had responded to this question with answer "b. No [I would not acquire a feedstock], I'd rather purchase a pesticide, but only if it is organic". Based on this answer, it seems that this group did not want to create a tea for specific needs, but they were certainly dedicated to organic products. However, on questions 7 and 8, this group responded that **30%** used no organic pesticides or fungicides in their garden and **39%** used no organic pesticides or fungicides on their lawn or landscape. **Less than a quarter** reported themselves in the 76 - 100% organic-usage categories for these questions.

These results seemed highly inconsistent. Their response to Question 9 indicated a high commitment to organic pesticides and fungicides, while their responses to Questions 7 and 8 showed low usage of organics for the group.

Upon reviewing the survey and responses, a deficiency was found in the question. The question never actually stated that the compost made from feedstock (or purchased feedstock compost) should be made into compost tea. This glitch in the question probably caused confusion.

We apologize for this error. Please take the results on Question 9 with a grain of salt.

10. Prior to taking this survey, were you aware that there is a significant difference in the disease-fighting benefits of <u>aerated tea</u> over the disease-fighting benefits of <u>non-aerated tea</u>?

a. Yes	183	20%	
b. No	700	78%	
Participant did not respond to this question	18	2%	

Only **20%** of survey respondents were previously aware that compost tea brewed by the aerated method had superior disease-fighting benefits to tea brewed by the non-aerated methods. After completion of the tea survey, information on these benefits was made available to the respondent.

Part III: Cross-Question Statistics

Part II: Basic Statistics showed that **24%** of survey respondents had never heard of compost tea before taking the survey, and that **two-thirds** of respondents had not yet brewed compost tea. These represent significant portions of the surveyed population. If these groups exhibit a different pattern of behavior than those who fall outside these groups, it may be hard to tell by looking at the Basic Statistics.

Example

Looking at *Part II: Basic Statistics* Question 2 percentages regarding those who purchased their brewer, it appears that the only price paid for a manufactured brewer was over US$100. Answers specifying lower dollar amounts (questions g,h,i) were chosen 4, 3, and 1 times, respectively. These numbers were less than half a percentage point of the total number of survey respondents.

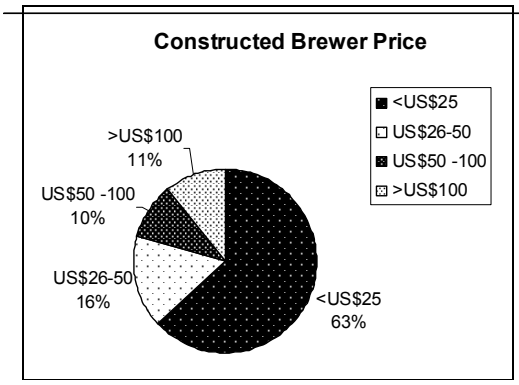
g. Have made aerated tea with a purchased brewer costing < US$25	4	0%
h. Have made aerated tea with a purchased brewer costing US$26 - 50	3	0%
i. Have made aerated tea with a purchased brewer costing US$51 - 100	1	0%
j. Have made aerated tea with a purchased brewer costing over US$100	9	1%

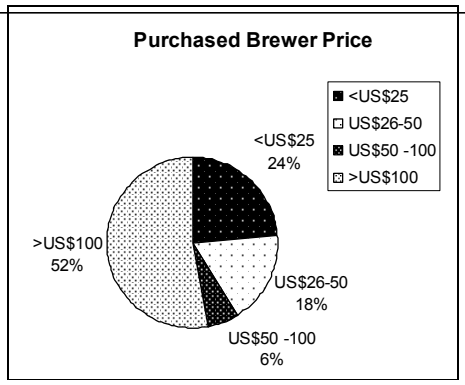
So, in *Part III: Cross-Question Statistics*, we isolated those who purchased their brewer, and calculated the percentages of this group only. This gives a better picture of how much respondents paid for manufactured brewers:

g. Have made aerated tea with a purchased brewer costing < US$25	4	**24%**
h. Have made aerated tea with a purchased brewer costing US$26 - 50	3	**18%**
i. Have made aerated tea with a purchased brewer costing US$51 - 100	1	**6%**
j. Have made aerated tea with a purchased brewer costing over US$100	9	**53%**

After doing the same for those who constructed their brewers, we found that:

> A huge price differential was reported between those who buy components and make their own brewer versus those who purchased a manufactured brewer. **63%** of those who **constructed** their own aerated compost brewer spent **less than US$25**, while **53%** of those who **purchased** a brewer spent **over US$100**.





In order to examine the behavior of specific groups, we first isolated records of quite a few groups. Part III does not include all the groups nor group responses to all questions. We reviewed each group's answers for patterns of behavior that differed significantly from the total group, or from each other. Patterns which varied significantly from the responses of all survey responses are documented.

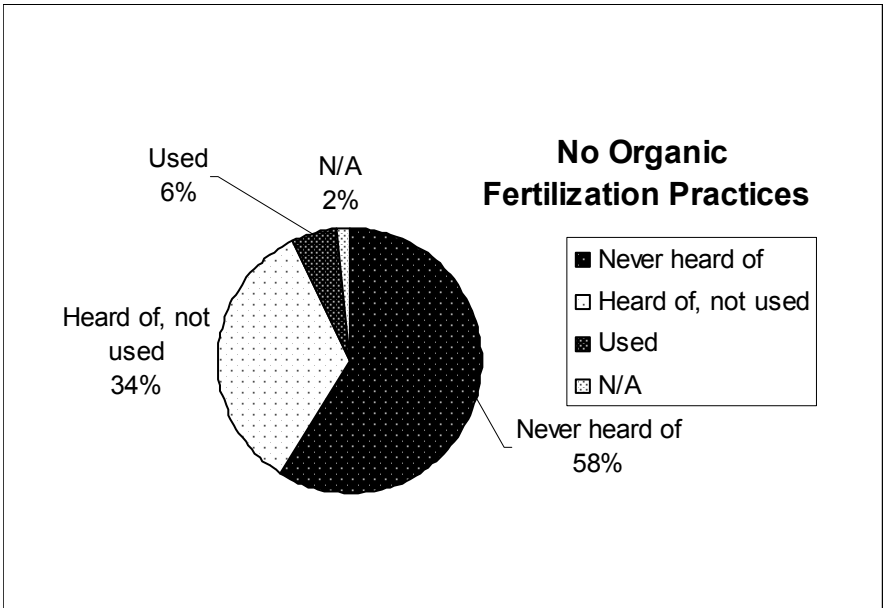
Part III reports only those areas where a significant or interesting variance occurred.

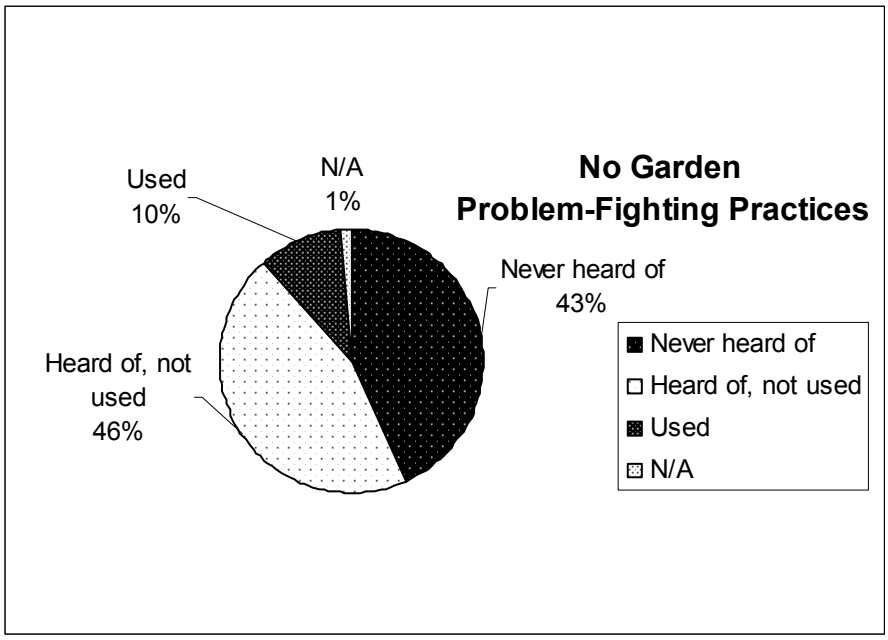
No Prior Awareness of Compost Tea

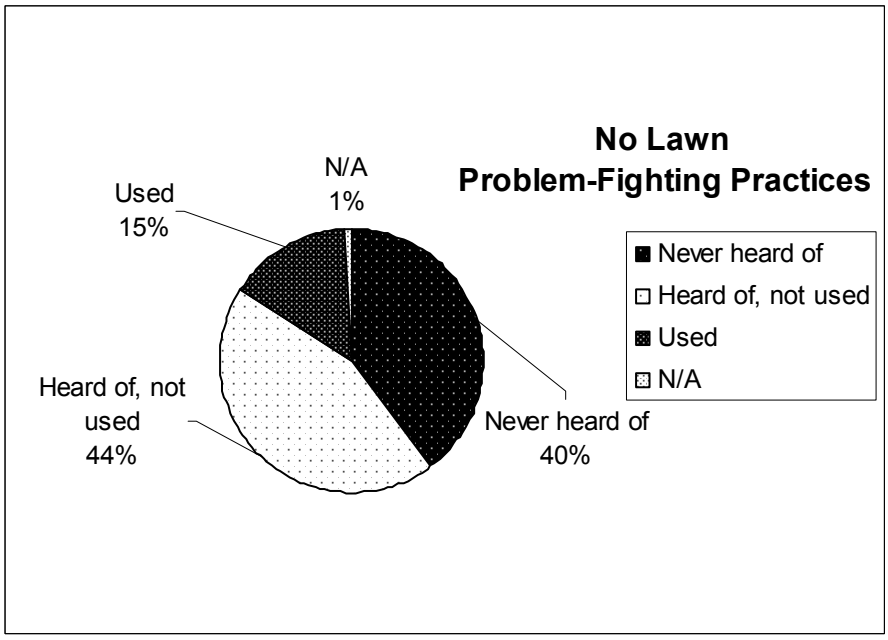
Twenty-four percent of all respondents had not heard of compost tea before the survey.

Those who had never heard of compost tea used significantly less organic methods for fertilization, disease-control, and pest-control than other groups (see graphs on page 27). A significantly higher number used no organic measures at all. They were more likely (compared to the average respondent) to buy a non-organic pesticide to resolve a specific plant problem, and less likely to obtain specific feedstocks from which to make compost tea as a solution for a specific problem.

These three graphs show the experience of total survey who reported no organic practices. A large portion consists of those who had never heard of compost tea.



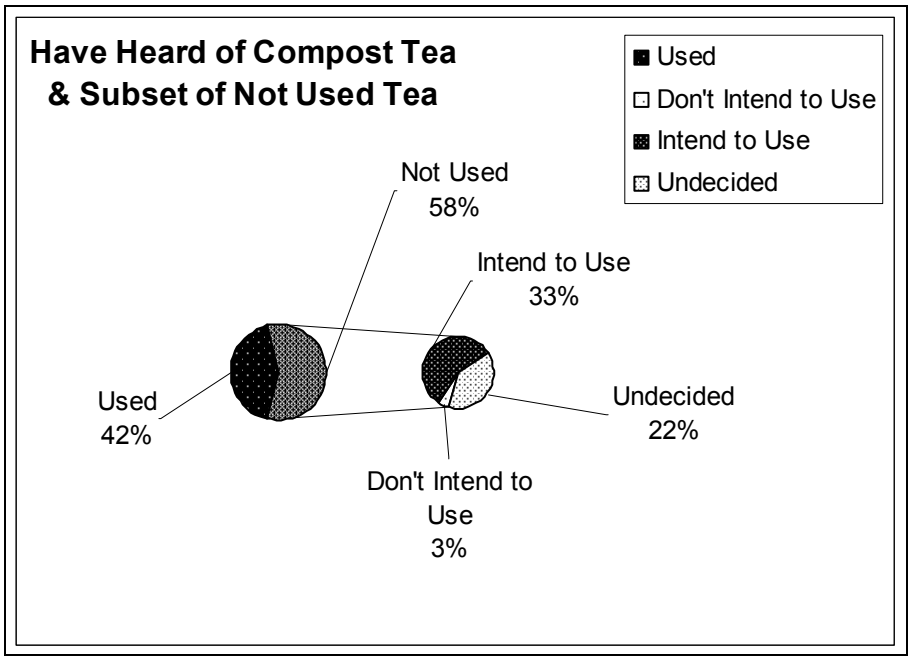

No Garden
Problem-Fighting Practices
N/A
1%
Used
10%
Never heard of
43%
Heard of, not
used
46%
Never heard of
Heard of, not used
Used
N/A


No Lawn
Problem-Fighting Practices
N/A
1%
Used
15%
Heard of, not
used
44%
Never heard of
40%
Never heard of
Heard of, not used
Used
N/A

Those Who Were Aware of, Yet Had NOT USED Compost Tea

Of the remaining 76% total respondents who had heard of compost tea before the survey, **42%** have used compost tea and **58%** have not used tea.

Of the 58% who have not used tea, **5%** do not intend to use it in the future, **56%** intend to use it, and **38%** are undecided as to whether or not they will use compost tea in the future.



This group used a lower percentage of organic methods for fertilization, disease-control, and pest-control than the average survey response.

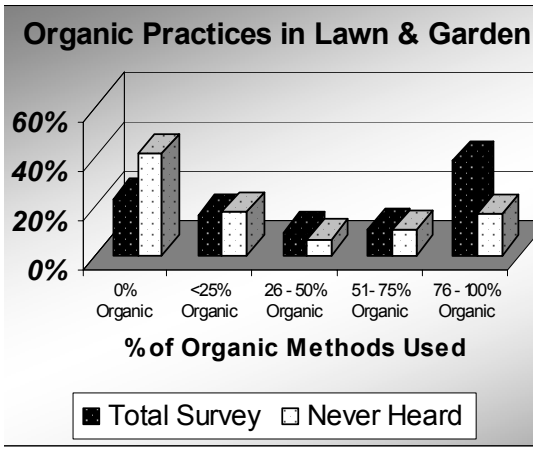
Only **16%** of those who had heard of compost tea but not used it were aware of the additional benefits of aerated tea prior to the survey.

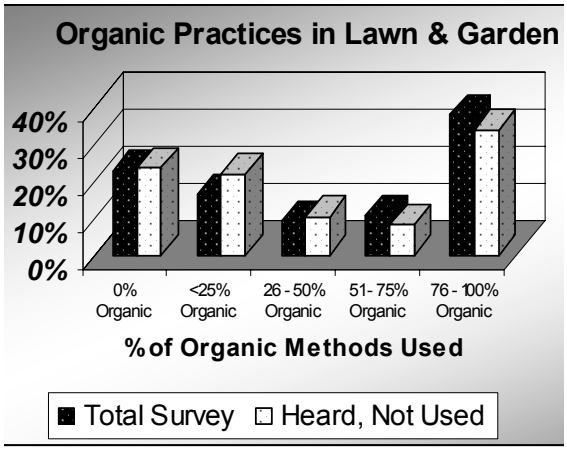
Those Who Have USED Compost Tea

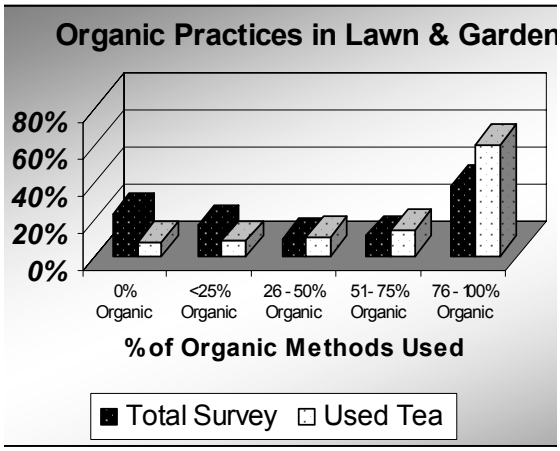
Of those who have used compost tea, **48%** used it only as a soil drench, **5%** used it only as a foliar spray, and **47%** used it both ways. The number and size of batches followed patterns similar to those of the total survey for foliar spray and drench use. So the intended method of use did not appear to affect the batch size or number of batches created.

Three percent of those who had used compost tea reported that they had not brewed tea. One respondent emailed me that she had purchased a bottled compost tea. Because compost tea can go anaerobic quickly, sterilization or other measures have probably been taken to ensure the product is safe and beneficial. Be sure to buy bottled compost tea only from a reputable manufacturer.

The graphs below show three groups -- those who had never heard of tea, those who had heard of tea but not used it, and those who have used tea. They are compared to the average survey responses. Those who had used compost tea had a far greater percentage of organic practices in their lawn and garden. (Note: Y-axis scale differs among graphs.)



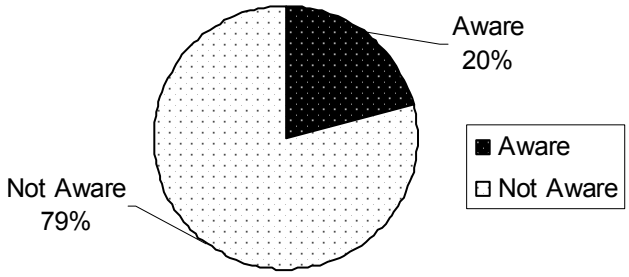




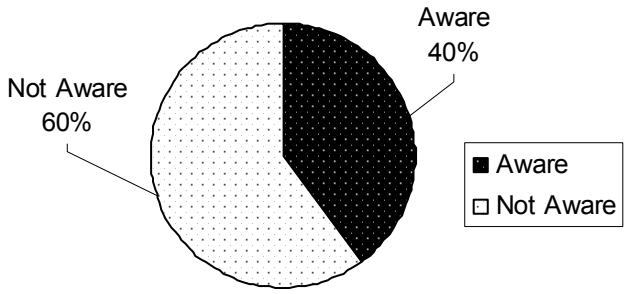
Those who had used compost tea reported higher use of organic methods. When asked how they were most likely to address a specific foliar or root disease in Question 9, those who had used compost tea reported that only **1%** would use a non-organic pesticide (as compared to **6%** for total survey), and that another **1%** would use an organic pesticide (as compared to **3%** for the entire survey). **Twenty-two percent** would <u>often</u> track down specific feedstocks locally and **19%** would <u>always</u> track down specific feedstocks locally, compared to total survey results of **16%** and **14%** respectively.

A far greater percentage of respondents who had used tea was aware (prior to the survey) of the increased benefits of aerated compost tea when compared to non-aerated compost tea. **Forty percent** of this group was aware of the increased benefits, as compared with only **20%** of the total survey.

Total Survey Respondents



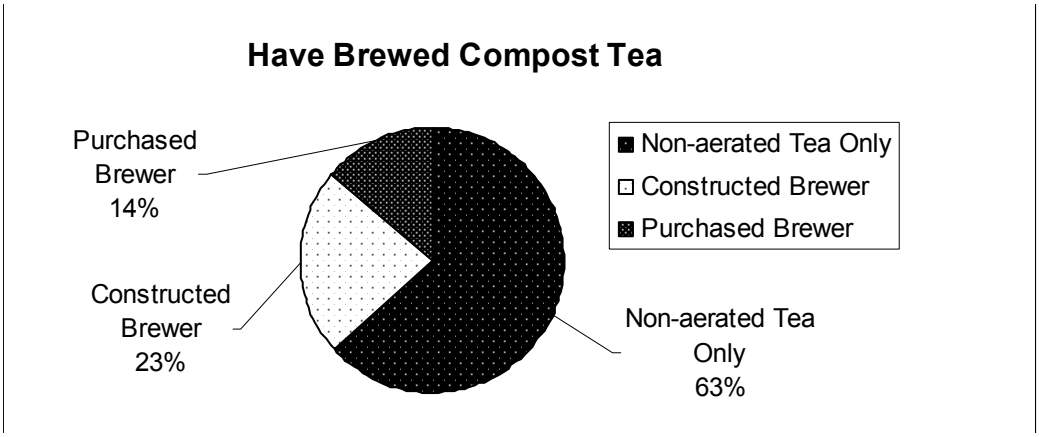
Respondents who had Used Compost Tea



Aerated vs. Non-aerated Brewing Methods

Sixty-six percent of the total survey respondents had never brewed compost tea. This section reports on the **32%** who reported having brewed compost tea prior to the survey. (Please note this is a separate distinction from those who had used compost tea.)

Of those who had brewed compost tea prior to the survey, **64%** brewed only non-aerated tea, **23%** had constructed their own brewer, and **14%** had purchased a brewer.



Those who made aerated tea used the finished product a bit differently than those who brewed non-aerated tea. Most of those who brewed non-aerated tea used it as a soil drench only. Watering plants is a good use for non-aerated tea because it is added to soil which hopefully is already full of life. Tea used for foliar spray is much more effective if it has been brewed with the aerated method. However, the survey result was unlikely to have been caused by this logic since only **22%** of those brewing non-aerated tea were aware that tea used as foliar spray should be aerated.

Aerated Compost Tea	USE AS	Non-aerated Compost Tea
22%	Soil Drench Only	**55%**
3%	Foliar Spray Only	**4%**
68%	Both Drench & Foliar Spray	**32%**

Those who made aerated tea reported having made more batches of tea in their lifetime (**40%** had made more than 10 batches) than those who had made non-aerated tea (only **30%** had made more than 10 batches). Most respondents in both groups had made 10 or less batches.

We had a total of **20 respondents** reporting they had made over 100 batches of compost tea! Good for you! Seven of the 100 had used the aerated method, but not necessarily for every batch. By the way, all 20 said their most likely source of compost for brewing was their own compost pile or worm bin.

Most brewers of both aerated and non-aerated tea have made 4 to 10 batches. The next most common number of batches for the non-aerated group drops below 4, while the next most common among aerated brewers is the 11 – 50 count category.

Aerated Compost Tea	NUMBER OF BATCHES MADE IN LIFETIME	Non-aerated Compost Tea
23%	Less than 4	**34%**
37%	4 - 10	**36%**
26%	11 - 50	**18%**
14%	More than 50	**12%**

Not only have aerated tea brewers made more batches, but those batches are typically larger than batches of non-aerated tea.

Aerated Compost Tea	USUAL VOLUME OF BATCHES	Non-aerated Compost Tea
41%	Less than 5 gallons	**59%**
49%	5 to 50 gallons	**38%**
10%	More than 50 gallons	**1%**

Of those who had brewed only non-aerated tea,
22% were AWARE of superior benefits of aerated tea
77% were NOT AWARE of superior benefits of aerated tea
Of those who had brewed aerated tea, the statistics were reversed,
78% were AWARE of superior benefits of aerated tea
22% were NOT AWARE of superior benefits of aerated tea

Constructed vs. Purchased Aerated Brewer

Eighty-one percent of those who brewed aerated tea constructed their brewer, while **18%** purchased a brewer.

A huge price differential was reported between those who bought components and made their own brewer versus those who purchased a manufactured brewer. **Sixty-three%** of those who constructed their aerated compost brewer spent less than US$25, while **53%** of those who purchased a brewer spent over US$100.

Of those who had purchased their brewer, **100%** used at least some organic fungicides and pesticides on their lawn and landscape. When asked what percentage of their practices were organic (i.e., vs. non-organic), **14%** of those who had constructed an aerated tea brewer reported that when fighting pests and diseases on their lawn and landscape, absolutely no pesticides or fungicides used were organic. None.

When asked where they were most likely to obtain compost to brew, **81%** of those who had constructed their brewer had also generated compost from their own pile or that of a friend, neighbor, or family. The remaining **19%** purchased compost. On the other hand, only **47%** of those who purchased their brewer said they generated their own compost (none from friends, neighbors, or family). **Forty-eight percent** of the same group purchased compost.

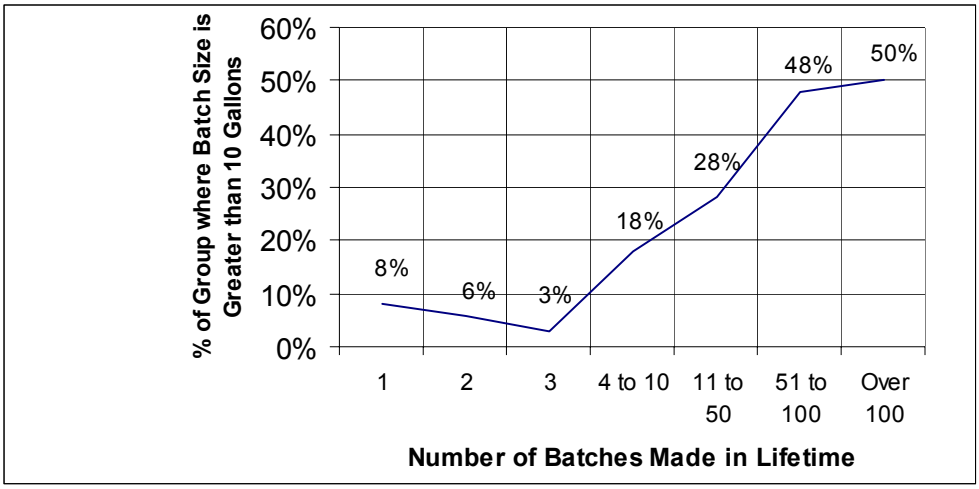
Looking at the preceding paragraphs, we can hypothesize that the group who constructed their own brewers has a higher population of "do-it-yourself-ers" because they built their brewers rather than purchased them, and also created their own compost rather than purchased. Perhaps this group was able to spend a greater amount of time in their garden or have a higher skill level (and/or comfort level) in working with their hands. It is also possible that this group was more frugal than the group who purchased their brewers, hence the choice of the lower-cost options. Unfortunately, we don't have the information to determine this definitively.

Number of Lifetime Batches Made

Question 4 asked respondents how many batches of compost tea they had made in their lifetime. Isolating groups along these lines showed two interesting trends.

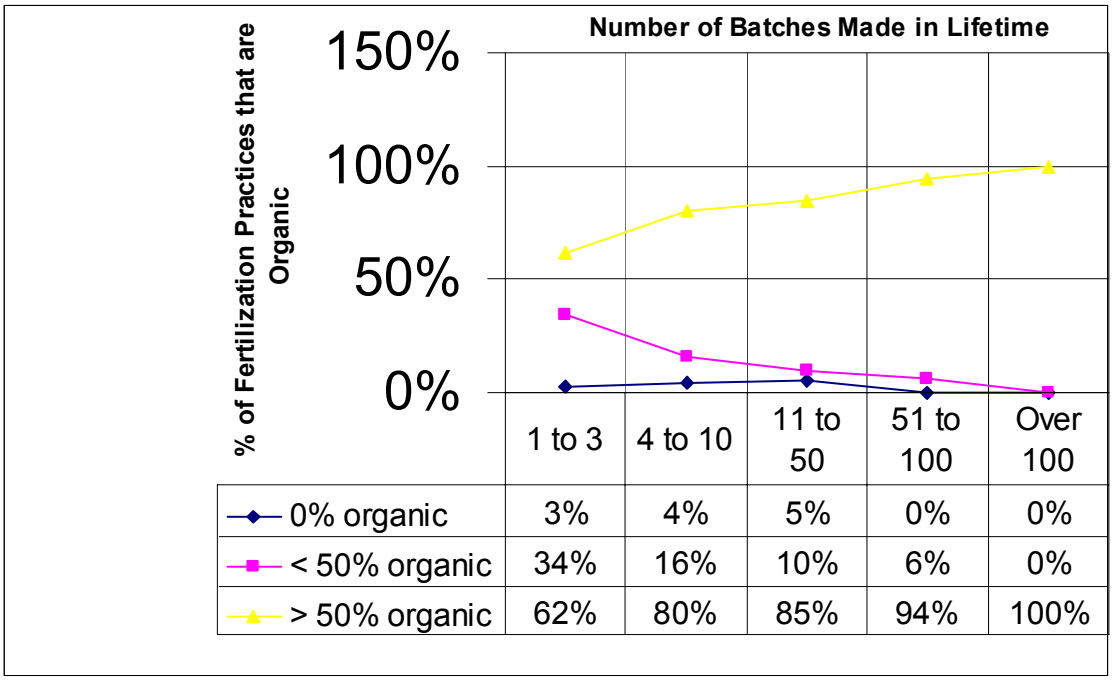
The fewer batches a respondent had brewed, the smaller their usual batch size. The greater the number of batches made, after the first few, the greater the size of the batch. Perhaps those who were just starting out made small batches, and then increased batch size as they become more confident. Or perhaps once they started using compost tea, they wanted more of it!

No. of Batches	Usual Batch Size > 10 gallons
1	8%
2	6%
3	3%
4 - 10	18%
11 - 50	28%
51 - 100	48%
Over 100	50%



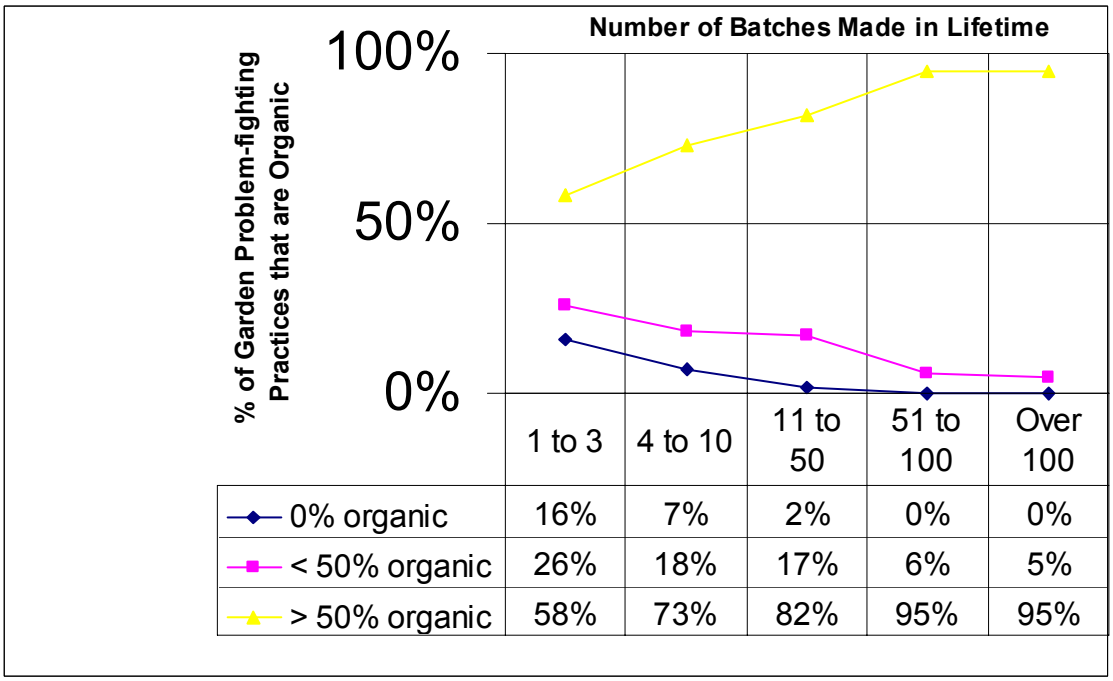
The second trend was that, generally, the greater the number of batches a respondent had brewed, the larger the organic portion of their lawn and garden practices.

Organic portion of fertilization practices (Question 6)



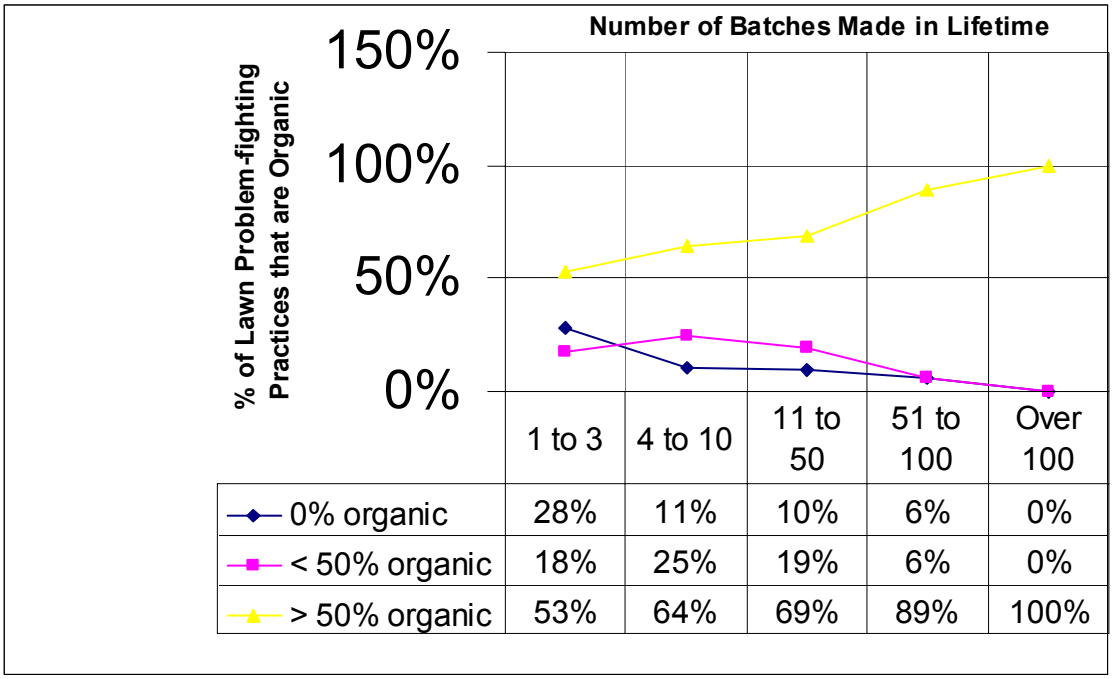
	1 to 3	4 to 10	11 to 50	51 to 100	Over 100
0% organic	3%	4%	5%	0%	0%
< 50% organic	34%	16%	10%	6%	0%
> 50% organic	62%	80%	85%	94%	100%

Organic portion of disease- and pest-fighting practices in garden (Question 7)



	1 to 3	4 to 10	11 to 50	51 to 100	Over 100
0% organic	16%	7%	2%	0%	0%
< 50% organic	26%	18%	17%	6%	5%
> 50% organic	58%	73%	82%	95%	95%

Organic portion of disease- and pest-fighting practices in lawn/landscape (Question 8)



	1 to 3	4 to 10	11 to 50	51 to 100	Over 100
0% organic	28%	11%	10%	6%	0%
< 50% organic	18%	25%	19%	6%	0%
> 50% organic	53%	64%	69%	89%	100%

Organic vs. Non-organic Fertilization

This chart compares the group who reported they had no organic practices of fertilization whatsoever vs. the group that claimed 76 - 100% of their fertilization practices were organic. The group that used a higher percentage of organic fertilization practices was more aware and more experienced regarding organic methods.

Reported:	**NO Organic Fertilization Practices**	**PRIMARILY Organic Fertilization (76 - 100%)**
Have never heard of compost tea	59%	13%
Have not brewed compost tea	94%	50%
Have no organic disease- and pest-fighting practices in garden	80%	5%
Have 76 - 100% organic disease- and pest-fighting practices in garden	4%	75%
Have no organic disease- and pest-fighting practices in lawn and landscape	80%	10%
Have 76 - 100% organic disease- and pest-fighting practices in lawn and landscape	3%	68%
Aware of the superior benefits of aerated tea over non-aerated tea before taking survey	8%	30%

Though this group's fertilization practices were at the highest level, there was an absolute absence of organic disease- and pest-fighting practices reported by **5%** for their garden, and **10%** for lawn and landscape. It is undeterminable if they have no disease- and pest-fighting practices of any kind, or if their practices use non-organics instead.

Organic vs. Non-organic Response to Plant Diseases & Pests

A comparison of the awareness of the benefits of aerated tea between those who use no organic problem-fighting measures vs. those who use high levels (76 - 100%) organic problem-fighting practices shows a distinct difference. There was more awareness among those who showed greater use of organic methods.

Percentage of Respondents who were Aware of the Benefits of Aerated Tea

Group:	Garden	Lawn & Landscape
No organic problem-fighting methods used	8%	10%
Primarily organic (67 – 100%) problem-fighting methods used	32%	30%

Does this mean that those who were aware of the benefits of aerated tea were more likely to use organic methods? Or does it mean that those who used organic methods were more likely to know about the benefits of doing so? This is much like asking whether the chicken came first, or the egg. However, we sincerely hope that greater awareness of aerated compost tea and its benefits will increase its use.

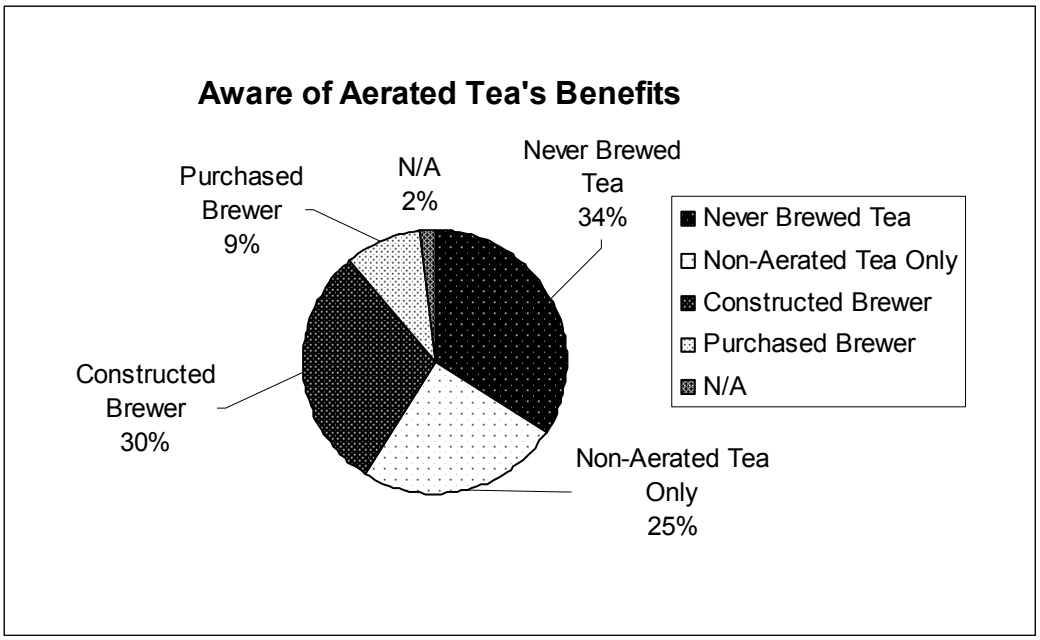
Those Aware of Aerated Tea's Benefits

Those who were aware of the additional benefits of aerated compost tea over non-aerated tea appear to be more dedicated users of organic measures, and so may be more knowledgeable about organic measures in general.

Only **34%** of this group had never brewed compost tea, which is significantly lower than the **66%** of total respondents that had not brewed compost tea.

Twenty-five percent of this group had brewed compost tea only by the non-aerated method, very close to the **23%** of total respondents who had brewed only non-aerated tea.

Thirty percent had constructed an aerated brewer, while **9%** had purchased an aerated brewer with which they made their tea.



For either a brewer or components to build a brewer, **19%** of this group spent less than US$25, **7%** spent between US$26 - 50, **4%** between US$51 - 75, and **9%** between US$76 - 100.

The usual batch size for **48%** of this group was less than ten gallons. **Eleven percent** had usual batch sizes of 11 to 50 gallons, and **5%** had usual batch sizes over 50 gallons.

The interesting aspect of this group was their increased use of, and perhaps commitment to, organic measures. **Sixty-six percent** used fertilization practices that were 76 - 100% organic; only **5%** of this group used no organic fertilization at all. For disease- and pest-fighting in their garden, **60%** used practices that were 76 - 100% organic, while only **9%** had no organic practices. For disease- and pest-fighting on their lawn and landscape, **52%** used practices that were 76 - 100% organic, with only **15%** using no organic practices on the lawn or landscape.

In addition, more of this group was willing to go to additional trouble to collect specific feedstocks for their compost tea for particular plant problems. **Nineteen percent** said they would always obtain specific feedstocks to treat problems if the feedstocks were located nearby, as compared to the total survey response of **14%**. **Eighteen percent** said they would even be willing to go beyond their geographical area to obtain such feedstocks. The total survey response to this option was a mere **8%**.

Conclusion

The awareness of compost tea and knowledge of the benefits of aerated compost tea are associated with the increased use of compost tea specifically and organic measures in general. If that pattern holds true, then this survey was a success because of the large number of people who were made aware of compost tea as well as the benefits of aerated tea.

If you would like information on the benefits of aerated compost tea, you can still access the information provided to respondents at completion of the survey. The information is in the free excerpted chapters from the eBook How to Make Your Own Brewer and Brew Compost Tea at Home! The excerpt is available from both the eBook information page and the compost tea section of our web site. There is no charge whatsoever to download the free excerpt and read that information.

If you would like to provide feedback on this survey, please use the Contact Us form at http://www.mastercomposter.com/site/contact.html.

If this report was helpful to you, please subscribe (free) to the **Book Notification List** at www.mastercomposter.com to be notified as more survey reports and eBooks become available.

More surveys are planned and will be announced on the home page. Thank you for participating.

Appendix: List of Sub-categories Analyzed

1. Using Question 1 as criteria:
   a) Never heard of compost tea (a)
   b) Have heard of, but not used compost tea (b,c,d)
   c) Have used compost tea (e,f,g)
      i) Used to water plants / soil drench (e)
      ii) Used as foliar spray (f)
      iii) Used as both drench and foliar spray (g)
2. Using Question 2 as criteria:
   a) Never brewed compost tea (a)
   b) Brewed compost tea (b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i,j)
   c) Brewed non-aerated tea only (b)
   d) Brewed aerated tea (c,d,e,f,g,h,i,j)
      i) Constructed tea brewer (c,d,e,f)
      ii) Purchased tea brewer (g,h,i,j)
3. Using Question 3 as criteria:
   a) Records grouped by each size batch of compost tea, using answers b through i
4. Using Question 4 as criteria:
   a) Records grouped by each number of batches of compost tea, using answers b through h
5. Using Question 5 as criteria:
   a) Those whose compost was generated by their own pile or bin, or that of a neighbor, friend, or relative (a,b)
   b) Those whose compost was purchased (c,d,e,f,g,h,i)
6. Using Question 6 as criteria:
   a) Used no organic fertilization practices (a)
   b) Used 1 - 25% organic fertilization practices (b)
   c) Used 26 - 50% organic fertilization practices (c)
   d) Used 51 - 75% organic fertilization practices (d)
   e) Used 76 - 100% organic fertilization practices (e)
7. Using Question 7 as criteria:
   a) Used no organic disease- and pest-fighting practices in garden (a)
   b) Used 1 - 25% organic disease- and pest-fighting practices in garden (b)
   c) Used 26 - 50% organic disease- and pest-fighting practices in garden (c)
   d) Used 51 - 75% organic disease- and pest-fighting practices in garden (d)
   e) Used 76 - 100% organic disease- and pest-fighting practices in garden (e)

8. Using Question 8 as criteria:
   a) Used no organic disease- and pest-fighting practices in lawn/landscape (a)
   b) Used 1 - 25% organic disease- and pest-fighting practices in lawn/landscape (b)
   c) Used 26 - 50% organic disease- and pest-fighting practices in lawn/landscape (c)
   d) Used 51 - 75% organic disease- and pest-fighting practices in lawn/landscape (d)
   e) Used 76 - 100% organic disease- and pest-fighting practices in lawn/landscape (e)
9. Using Question 9 as criteria. To treat a particular need, respondent would:
   a) Purchase pesticide (a)
   b) Purchase organic pesticide only (b)
   c) Only brew compost made from materials on hand (c)
   d) Not likely to track down specific feedstock (d)
   e) Sometimes track down specific feedstock if available nearby (e)
   f) Often track down specific feedstock if available nearby (f)
   g) Always track down specific feedstock if available nearby (g)
   h) Would obtain feedstocks even if outside immediate geographic area (h)
10. Using Question 10 as criteria:
   a) Were aware of additional benefits of aerated tea prior to survey (a)
   b) Were not aware of additional benefits of aerated tea prior to survey (b)

Additional Materials Available

eBooks

2005 Compost Tea Survey Report (full report) has both Basic Statistics and Cross-Question Statistics. Copies may be obtained at www.mastercomposter.com/site/news.html

Make Your Own Compost Brewer and Brew Compost Tea at Home! gives instructions to build your own compost tea brewer with less than US$15 of components and a bucket! Also included are details on safety, choosing components, creating a compost that will yield the best tea, brewing procedure, and proper application to your garden. More information at www.booklocker.com/p/books/1812.html?s=tea-surv-rpt

Composting the Holidays helps you use holiday decorations to create mulch and compost for your garden. Utilize the abundance of autumn leaves, jack-o-lanterns, hay bales, scarecrows, fir boughs, pine trees, mistletoe, holly wreaths, and more! An entire chapter on leaves! Compost food in a pile, using decorative pumpkins as our example! From autumn leaves and harvest festivals to winter celebrations, so many materials may be composted! The eBook's entire Index is included in the free excerpt available at www.booklocker.com/p/books/1842.html?s=tea-surv-rpt

How to Help a Grieving Friend provides experienced-based advice on what to do and say – and what *not* to do and say – for a bereaved friend. These practical and specific solutions may be downloaded immediately in eBook format. More information at www.booklocker.com/p/books/1596.html?s=tea-surv-rpt

Newsletter

Digging Deeper Into the Pile , our bi-monthly newsletter, features advice, research and product reviews related to backyard composting. (To subscribe to newsletter, click here: www.mastercomposter.com/site/news.html)

Updated List of Available Materials

More titles are planned but were not yet available as of this book's publication date. Check this link to see which books are currently available: www.mastercomposter.com/ebooks/index.html