

# May Newsletter 2010



## Patty's Plants

### There's A Mini City Underground

You know you want to start organic gardening. It's better for the environment, for you and your families health. You ask yourself, "How do I do this?" "Why should I?" It sounds like way to much work! "I am afraid, I'll fail and nothing will grow." I'll have so many bugs, diseases and weeds that I'll have to use chemicals." Yiks, It's not that hard. Let me or someone you know who is already gardening this way help you. Most of you have probably heard me say, "Feed the Soil and the Soil will Feed your Plants". You may even be tired of hearing me said this. It is the organic gardening 'Motto'. Why is it so important? Let me tell you. There is a whole community of residents down under, most with the same job focus. Which is making the soil (not dirt) the richest and most nutritious substance to grow healthy plants. There are millions and millions of living creatures called organisms working together to do this. Let me introduce you to some of them. Their names may not sound pretty, in fact you may even think they sound bad or unhealthy for the soil. Meet Algae and Fungi, these two work together to help release nutrients to the soil in a way that the plants can use them. Next is Bacteria, now Bacteria is multi-tasked. They help animal



*"This is my kind of lunch"*

and plant matter decay. They also pull nitrogen from the air to the roots for the plants to drink in. One of the most important residents are Worms. Worms are hungry creatures. They eat layers and layers of grass clipping, leaves, twigs, etc. Their castings (do do) add valuable nutrients to help your plants grow big and strong. By years of using chemical fertilizers these hard working living organisms will die or are already be dead. Without any of these, your plants will need an artificial fix and keep needing it to survive. In other words they're hooked. But there are ways to stop the addiction. By feeding the soil with organic matter these living creatures will return. Year after year your soil will get healthier, hence your plants will be too! Not to mention tastier with so much flavor or vivid color, you will wonder what took you so long to change. I will tell you why I use worm castings in everything I plant. I will list some beneficial insects that will help in your change over from chemical insecticides to organic gardening practices. Plus a new easy weeder, because we are all busy and we want gardening to be fun, not a chore.

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### Beautiful Container Gardens

*Now At Patty's*



## Why I Use Worm Casting? ( Because it Works)

I put worm castings in everything I plant. When I plant my veggies, I put some in the hole before planting. My tomatoes always had better favor than any one else's, so I was told by my friends. If my houseplants needed repotting I always put a couple handfuls in with the potting mix. Sometimes I would just top dress my plants with the castings. In a container garden it's a must for me. When I repot houseplants and containers for my customers it use potting soil already with worm castings added to in, it's ready to go. I had a customer that wanted me to plant his annual container for the first time one year. He said his just doesn't grow well or look good anymore when he does it. I told him I'd use my secret ingredient, a little black gold. I told him it would be the best container he ever grew. He just laughed and said, "We'll see". Later that summer he brought in pictures. He said," Patty, I've got to tell you whatever that was that you put into my container I loved it." "I

*Worms Castings  
builds soil structure .  
They can inhibit  
fungal and bacterial  
diseases.*

have to know what it was." He told me it was the best container he ever had! He said his neighbor had the same plants in his container and his looked awful. I showed him the worm castings and told him it was a natural organic soil builder and fertilizer. It gets your plants off to a good start and it also stays in the soil for your plants to drink it up when they need it. I had quite a few customers that would never leave without it after they tried it just once. I have sold a lot of organic or natural products over the years. Thinking back on it now, I have been "going green" for the last 30 years and it makes me happy to know there's are old and new generations that are learning all about "going green" today.



## The Worm Apartment (Vermiculture)

You can convert kitchen scraps and yard waste into nutrient-rich worm castings in no time with the Sunleaves **Wormtopia**, a four-tray worm compost system which can accommodate over 15,000 redworms. Worms work in one tray at a time, producing castings as they migrate up to the upper trays. Made from recycled plastic, the Wormtopia also features a handy spigot for the collection of liquid vermicompost. Suited for use indoors or out within 55° and 75° F. Includes vermicomposting instructions, tips, and worm bedding material. Redworms available separately. **Patty's carries LIVE EARTHWORMS-** Earthworms eat and burrow twenty-four hours a day! All of this tunneling aerates the soil (getting oxygen to the roots), allows for easier root growth, and improves water retention. They are a natural tie in for cold composting. Earthworms help keep the soil loose. Mother Nature doesn't own a spade! Earthworms



consume ordinary soil and cast it back with more nutrients available to plants. These "castings" release their nutrients slowly and do not leach out with watering. Approx. 200 in boxes.

Make your own "Worm Apartment", let these books help you.

**"Worms Eat My Garbage"** - Mary Appelhof, master vermiculturist better known as "The Worm Woman," wrote this comprehensive how-to on worm composting, including sections on equipment, care, harvesting and worm biology.

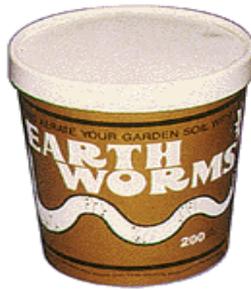
**"The Worm Book"**

This complete guide to gardening and composting with worms will fill you in as to why you should raise and garden with worms. Eco-journalist Loren Nancarrow and entomologist Janet Hogan Taylor instruct you on topics including the art of building a worm bin (complete with diagrams), how worm composting works, how to use worms, worm anatomy, and much more.

## Beneficials at Patty's

### Live Earthworms-Red Wigglers

Great for Vermiculture Earthworms eat and burrow twenty-four hours a day! All of this tunneling aerates the soil (getting oxygen to the roots), allows for easier root growth, and improves water retention. They are a natural tie in for cold composting. Earthworms help keep the soil loose. Mother Nature doesn't own a spade! Earthworms consume ordinary soil and cast it back with more nutrients available to plants. These "castings" release their nutrients slowly and do not leach out with watering.



### Lady Bugs

A favorite "good bug," ladybugs have been a popular part of the Orcon line of beneficial insects for the past 20 years. When released at sundown (because they don't fly at night), ladybugs eat aphids, mealy bugs, scale, leaf hoppers, various plant eating worms and other destructive soft bodied pests. And they keep on eating until the bad guys are gone, laying their own eggs in the process. When new pests



arrive, fresh ladybugs will be waiting, and, as an alternative to chemicals, these lady bugs will be doing something favorable.

### Green Lacewings

The natural enemy of many species of pest insects and mites, receive eggs that soon hatch into larvae. The tiny larvae are known as "Aphid Lions" because of their voracious appetites (devouring as many as 10000 aphids per day). They remain as larvae for up to 21 days, just crawling around looking for food. Aphid Lions also make hearty meals of mealybugs, cottony cushion scale, spider mites, caterpillars, whitefly larvae and a wide variety of moth eggs and just about any other soft bodied pests. The adult green lacewing, feeding only on pollen, will lay its eggs, and the life cycle will repeat.



### Beneficial Nematodes

Beneficial Nematodes (BN) attack more than 230 kinds of soil dwelling and wood boring pests, such as flea larvae, white grubs, cutworms, corn root worms, strawberry weevils, gypsy moth larvae, cabbage root maggots, fungus gnat larvae, and many more.



## Easy Composters

**Indoor Kitchen Composter-** This waste container features a replaceable charcoal filter that effectively removes odors so the waste can accumulate for literally days indoors, unnoticed. The bin is 11" tall with a 1.8 gallon capacity. Replacement filters are available in a three pack.



**This Soilsaver Composter** has a locking lid. It's has many air vent holes in it, helping to avoid problems with the pile smelling, and you can use the holes in the lid for adding water to keep the pile moist and active. The base will help keep critters out of the pile.

It's lightweight (about 30 pounds), as it's made from Polyethylene with 50 percent recycled HDPE plastic content, and comes with a 25 year manufacturers warranty.



## Patty's Plants

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Natural & Organic Garden  
Supply



Patty's Plants

**Here at Patty's Plants:  
Original "Dandelion Hero"**  
Your ultimate weeding tool. Get it before your neighbor does. Dandelions, Do you have them? Do you want to get rid of them? Your wait is over. No more



chemicals. No more bending over. No more getting down on your knees. Takes care of many other weeds also. Use year after year. Your neighbors will want to borrow it. **ALERT!**

**ALERT!** the **Dandelion Hero** is here!

Some may have so many that just the Dandelion Hero can be overwhelmed. We and you will have to approach those lawns differently,



Chemical free! **\$19.99**  
(drill not included)

**www.GreenbyJohn.com**  
**Insured · State Licensed ·  
State Certified**

## Composting Options

Compost should be dark, rich, crumbly, earthy smelling mix that consists of mostly decaying organic matter. When it is ready, it should not smell sour or stinky but like fresh wet dirt after a spring rain. There are many different ways to compost. Most are very easy to do. These are some of the composting methods:

### **No Fuss, for the busy or lazy gardener** (that's me)

This is the easiest way to compost yard waste. In a heap or in a bin layer chopped yard waste. Leaves, grass, weeds etc. as they accumulate. Water as needed, so the compost stays moist. In 12-18 months the materials at the bottom and center of the pile will be dark and crumbly. Take the top uncomposted material off to start a new pile.

**Bucket Compost** This is a small scale garden waste method. Take dry matter (leaves, dried grass, peat moss, soil) add kitchen scrapes and keep it moist. If it starts to smell add more dry ingredients. When the bucket is half full, let it stand for 1-3 months. You need to mix it once or twice a week. It should be ready in 1-3 months.

**Fast Compost** This is the fastest way to build a "Hot Pile" in a heap or bin. You must turn it frequently to make this work. Layer and mix green materials with dry until you have a good sized pile (3x3x3). Keep the pile moist. Turn the pile at least 2 times a week to give it the air that it needs. This will

make it compost faster. I should be ready to use in 2-15 weeks. Add more or less of green or dried materials if it's not heating up properly.

**Worm Compost** Worms will turn food and garden waste into rich nutritious fertilizer and soil amendment. I've always bought ready made worm castings and I truly believe in them. This year I have started a Wormtopia Bin. You need food wastes (no meat or bones) newspapers and red worms and a special worm box or bin. Come in and see my "Worm Apartment".

**Sheet composting** Spread leaves or plant residues over the surface of your garden in the fall. Turn the materials into the soil then or wait until spring. I do use this method too.

**Compost tea** Put composted manure in a burlap bag or old stocking an sock in water to make a liquid fertilizer. Use for watering transplants, garden flowers, vegetables and container plants. Apply to the soil or make a 1/2 strength solution and put in a sprayer.

**Trenching** or dig a large hole. This is the method my Grandmother used. Every day she would send my grandfather out with a bucket of kitchen scrapes (no bones or meat) to put in a large hole he had dug for her. They covered it with a heavy flat board. In 2-6 months her compost was ready to use.