Handout
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Grow Bigger, Stronger Plants

Bloom out-performs both compost and commercial garden fertilizers

By Dr. Francis Gouin

Most commercial fertilizers are designed to provide nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. Unless your soil is rich in other major elements such as calcium and magnesium as well as essential trace elements, your plants will not grow efficiently. Worse yet, repeated use of commercial fertilizers often depletes essential trace elements from the soil.

It takes deficiency of only one essential element to prevent plants from growing to their optimum potential. In many of the soil test results I review, boron, sulfur, zinc, calcium and magnesium are often deficient.

Bloom, a soil amendment produced at Washington, D.C.'s, Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant, provides most all of the essential elements in a single application. Potassium (K) is the one element lacking in Bloom.

Bloom has the consistency, timing of nutrient release and range of nutrients to give plants of all sorts a head start.

First, it is more reliable than compost. Because compost is made by blending feedstocks, its nutrient content and availability of nutrients vary depending on the stocks and their maturity. Bloom is a very consistent product because it is not blended with any other feedstock. Neither the process nor the produce varies from day to day, week to week or month to month.

Second, it is rich in iron and essential trace elements.

Available iron means that plants fertilized with Bloom will develop deep, dark-green foliage. Growers at Homestead Gardens compared begonia plants grown in Bloom-amended potting medium with begonia plants growing in the same medium amended with Osmocote 18-6-12. The plants grown with the Bloom were nearly twice as large, contained many more flowers and had foliage black-green in color as compared to grassy-green for plants grown with Osmocote. In addition to being rich in iron, Bloom is also rich in essential trace elements not found in Osmocote 18-6-12.

Third, Bloom's nutrients are available for roots to absorb both instantly and slowly over two to three months. When I visited Homestead, the plants had been growing in their containers for more than three months with only water and no additional fertilizer.

Bloom can be used as a top dressing incorporated into soil or as a potting media. I have used it successfully in a cyclone fertilizer spreader on turf and as an enrichment for garden soil.

Bloom is not fragrant but it has enough odor to repel rabbits and groundhogs.

How Safe is Bloom?

Q I know you are very enthusiastic about Bloom. I have a question, which I asked Blue Plains but got no response. So I'm relying on you.

Are you confident that hormone-interfering and carcinogenic chemicals have been removed from the biosolids in Bloom? Removing bacteria is fine, but that's not all the bad stuff that results from normal waste treatment.
–Bobbie Kestenbaum, Edgewater

A The biosolids processed at the Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment Plant are tested monthly. All metals and compounds fall far below EPA standards.

Since I started conducting research with Blue Pains biosolids in 1972, I have used it for growing fruits and vegetables as well as ornamental plants. In 25 years of research, I have never uncovered any abnormalities or recorded uptake elements that do not normally occur in plants. The process used to convert biosolids to Bloom has been in use in Sweden for more than 25 years and is widely being used throughout Europe. I feel safer adding Bloom to my garden soil than I do driving Route 2 through Edgewater.

Publication Information