

STARTER FOR FARMERS

Please first read *DIY Instant Compost Tea – Introduction*

<https://tinyurl.com/mvecbpm2>

The starter combines local soil biology with a growing medium and foods to multiply the biology. This starter may be further multiplied by brewing. Farmers and graziers will do this to cover large areas.

A 1,000-litre brew needs a 40-litre starter and is enough to treat 5 to 10 Ha. Quantities for smaller brews may be reduced accordingly.

Step 1 – **Collecting local soil biology.**

Collect at least 5 litres of soil from areas that have not been cultivated or sprayed – creek banks, fence-lines, road-sides or remnant native vegetation.

Push aside the layer of dead leaves and sticks and collect the top 1 to 2cm soil which is the layer where the biology is most active.



Photo 1 type of collecting area

Both photos:

In front of bucket:
. litter removed.

In front of shovel:
. soil collected.



Photo 2 Soil after collecting, mulch removed

Thoroughly mix the soil and store in a cool and moist place. Avoid it being water logged or drying out.

Step 2 – **Mixing** 40 L Starter for 1000 L brew for 10 Ha

Uniformly mix:

- 30 L worm casts, from your own or a local worm farm,
- 10 L Mill Run – bran and pollard, high in minerals and complex carbo-hydrates - available as chook-food from most produce stores,
- 500 ml molasses or 250 g sugar - dilute in warm water for even spreading.
- 1 L local soil collected in Step 1.

Once mixed, add water till just able to squeeze a drop of water, no wetter.

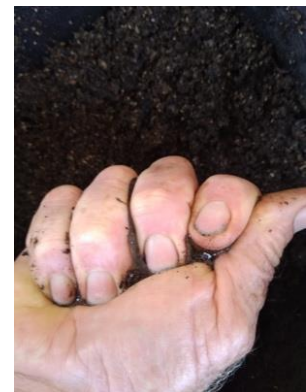


Photo 3 Squeeze until a droplet appears

Step 3 - **Growth phase**

Place the mix 8 – 10 cm deep, on the ground in a cardboard box or on a tray with drainage and in a shady place. Compress it gently, like compressing soil around seedlings. Excess compaction will exclude air and stop desirable biology growing.

Cover with a wet cloth to maintain humidity. Rewet the cloth in a bucket of water, wring it out and put back over the starter twice a day

¹ Trevor Galletly, QDA, B AgSC - 40 years in biological farming

Peter van Beek, Dip Agr, B Ec, M Ag studies

A slight warming will occur after 12 – 24 hours which indicates strong biological activity. It is important to check by hand for warming and make sure it is going well.

Step 4 Check if ready to apply

This may be after 24 hours in summer or 48 or more hours in winter.

When fungi cover the surface, open the side of the box and break the starter top to bottom to check that there are fungi throughout the medium. If you can see white or gray threads throughout the starter, it is ready. If not, put it back and give it another day.



Photo 5 - Two days after starting

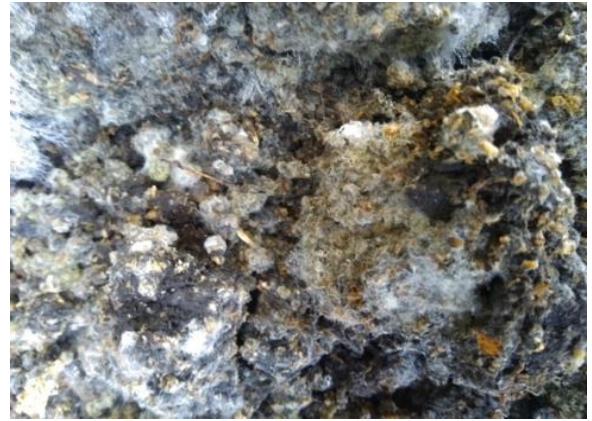


Photo 6 - Close up at two days

It is strongly suggested to complete 3 small starters as for Gardeners to develop your methods for local ingredients and conditions before undertaking a 40L starter.

For Brewing and Application information: <https://tinyurl.com/mvecbpm2>

Further enquiries to : trevorbundy8@gmail.com