

MAINTAINING A HEALTHY ROOT ZONE

Plant roots have two basic functions: they anchor plants and they extract water and minerals. The roots are arguably the most important part of a plant as root mass is directly proportional to the size and yield of a plant. This is one of the most easily damaged parts of a plant. It is crucial to practice good preventative care - it is much harder to eradicate an existing problem. If you want to maximize the health and ultimate yield of your plants, it is wise to have a clear picture of the crucial activities occurring at the root zone.

Root-Microbe Symbiosis

A plant actually grows its own garden of microbes along the surfaces of the root. To do this, the light energy captured from photosynthesis in the leaves is channeled down the stem through the phloem vessels and out through epidermal cells to the external root surface. Up to 80% of the total plant energy is exuded as mucigel into the ectorhizosphere as carbohydrates, amino acids, and other energy-rich compounds. Billions of bacteria, fungi, algae, actinomycetes, protozoa, and other microbes feed upon this exudate.

Those Phenomenal Mycorrhizae

Especially important are the mycorrhizal fungi which extend their thread-like hyphae from inside root cells out into the soil for several millimeters. They extend the feeding volume of a root by 10 to 1,000 times or more bringing nutrients back to the root. There are two types - ectomycorrhiza and endomycorrhiza.

Feeding On Exudate

In return for the release of nutritional substances from plant roots, microbes produce chemicals that stimulate plant growth and/or protect the plant from attack. This large array of substances include auxins, enzymes, vitamins, amino acids, indoles and antibiotics. These complex molecules are able to pass from the soil into the plant, with minimal change to chemical structure, where they stimulate plant growth, increase metabolic functions and enhance plant reproduction. As these molecules are released into the rhizosphere, they serve as food and growth stimulants for a healthy mix of microbes. The rhizosphere is always functioning for the plant whether it is growing in a field, in a planter, in a hydroponic media, or even in a lake or ocean. The details of function may differ somewhat, but the principles are the same in order for the plant to survive.

General Root Tonics And Stimulators

Heavy 16 Prime: Formulated to give plants a boost of energy by raising the rate of metabolism, **Prime** increases nutrient uptake by providing naturally occurring hormones and vitamins which are missing in macro / micro hydroponic nutrient formulas. Prime can be used during a plants' entire lifetime from seed to harvest. **Prime** is ideal for hydroponic, soil or any other growing medium.

CANNA Rhizotonic: An organic root stimulator, **Rhizotonic** is suitable for both soil and hydroponics. This is a powerful, organic stress-reliever which provides hormones and vitamins to help stimulate new fuzzy, white root development, increase resistance against disease and improve the vigor of plants.

Heavy 16 Roots: The strongest product we have for preventing and combating Root Disease. It is a root promoter, root protector, drip cleaner, and anti-precipitate all in one. Increases branching of lateral roots. Significantly increase the quantity and size of the true absorption zone. Also protects against lockout caused by poor water or base nutrients, exotic nutritional programs or faulty nutrient mixing methodologies. Will also keep equipment and media free from salt buildup and scale It will blow roots - WAY OUT - within 3-5 days and keep them Super Healthy the entire cycle.

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Root Health and Pathogen Control

In a healthy root environment, “microherd” groups of microbes colonize the rhizosphere of the plant. Most are beneficial bacteria and fungi; they do not damage living plant tissue and are critical to making essential minerals available to the plant. These microbes retain large amounts of nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, sulfur, calcium, iron and many micronutrients in their bodies, preventing these nutrients from being leached or removed by water runoff. Mycorrhizal fungi form an almost impenetrable physical barrier on the surface of plant roots - Ideally, they out-compete pathogenic species. It is usually only when the beneficial species are killed by toxic chemicals that pathogenic species have an advantage. In hydroponics we can promote a plant’s rhizosphere capability by insuring it has the proper minerals, as well as a well aerated root zone to allow for good air and water movement. We strongly suggest using Heavy 16 Roots, the strongest Root Tonic that we have ever come across - not only does create a HUGE amount of roots - it keeps them extremely happy and healthy as long as you use it. It is a powerful, organic stress reliever which stimulates new root development, increases disease resistance & improves plant vigor.

Root Rot and Pythium

“Root rot” is a generic name for several common opportunistic waterborne diseases that can seriously affect indoor and outdoor crops year round. “Pythium” is the name of one of these diseases and is also used as a generic term for several different root rot and stem rot fungus species (including Pythium, Verticillium, Phytophthora, and Fusarium). The term “damping-off” is also often used and usually applies to disease in seeds, seedlings and clones. Whatever you call them, these diseases attack the roots of a plant and can rapidly infect crops in all stages. Damage includes reduced yields and crop failure. Pythium is particularly damaging in re-circulating hydroponic systems as the reservoir provides ideal conditions for rapid growth and spread of infectious spores; a single infected plant can breed and send spores to all the plants. The best thing is to prevent root rot from ever taking hold in the first place. It is an opportunistic disease which means that it is looking for sick, injured or weakened plants. Pythium is almost impossible to 100% eradicate from an infected system; this would involve starting completely over. It is probably present even if undetected... just waiting for its chance to get a foothold. This can be why a previously successful grower has suddenly started experiencing problems.

Spotlight on Enzymatic Formulas

Small, yet amazingly powerful -- enzymes have a variety of important benefits for the grower. There are two types of enzymes that we are most concerned with: There are those that accelerate sugar/ resin production, creating flavor and aroma. Then, there are those that break down dead plant proteins (leaves and roots) into amino acids, lipids and smaller molecules which can be reabsorbed by the plant and the beneficial microbes, thus preventing those proteins from being food for pathogens.

Hygrozyme: This is a great enhancing enzymatic formula. It prevents the formation of pythium and algae, and facilitates chemical nutrient assimilation. It will also create healthy white root growth in your plants. Hygrozyme is not a digestive enzyme solution, rather a plant growth & metabolism stimulant.

Cannazym: simply put, is the strongest digestive enzyme product on the market. It digests dead or dying root matter like no other can (which in turn greatly helps at keeping your root zone healthy and strong.) Use with Hygrozyme for a explosive combination!

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Some of the Main Beneficials at the Root Zone

Bacillus

Certain forms of Bacillus are known to inhibit pythium and other pathogens. One of these is bacillus subtilis and is found in Hydroguard, and Great White. Several varieties of Bacillus have been found to play a role in the conversion of unavailable forms of phosphates into plant available forms. In natural settings they can provide near 10% of the available phosphorous in the soil solution. Bacillus can function as a backup, providing hungry blooms with phosphorous if they should become otherwise unavailable. Bacillus actually cleans the roots & disinfects them, also helping to synthesize hormones & enzymes.

Mycorrhizal Fungi

These fungi colonize the outer cells of plant roots and extend long fungal threads, or hyphae, far out into the rhizosphere, forming a critical link between the plant roots and the growing media. Mycorrhizae produce enzymes that decompose organic matter, makes phosphorus and other nutrients from inorganic rock, much more soluble, and convert nitrogen into plant available forms. They also greatly expand the area from which a plant can absorb water. In return for this activity, mycorrhizae obtain valuable carbon and other nutrients from the plant roots. This is a winwin mutualism between both partners, with the plant providing food for the fungus and the fungus providing both nutrients and water to the plant.

Nitrosomonas Bacteria & Nitrobacteria

Nitrosomonas is a species of aerobic bacteria which converts ammonia to nitrite. Nitrosomonas is one of the critical bacteria in the nitrogen cycle. Nitrosomonas eat ammonia, they absolutely LOVE it. They convert plant available ammonium (NH₄) to unavailable nitrite (NO₂). Nitrobacteria then convert the nitrite (NO₂) into nitrate (NO₃-), an important form of highly absorbable nitrogen that all plants need. Found in Azos.

Trichoderma

Trichoderma fungi have been observed physically attacking and destroying pathogenic fungi. Strains of trichoderma are found naturally occurring in many soils and play a role in the prevention and control of root pathogens. Trichoderma can degrade chitin, a structural component found in pathogenic fungi and in insects. Many forms of coco coir contain Trichoderma naturally, such as CANNA Coco. If a healthy root environment is maintained, the bacteria will continue to colonize the roots and multiply.

A Note About Colonizing Growing Media:

If you are using beneficials, you will want to use one of the growing media that is hospitable to inoculation, such as coco or rockwool or Soil. Although rockwool works, it is not as aerated as the coco. Coco also has naturally occurring enzymes which are GREAT for roots, and is a natural habitat for Trichoderma.

How to Avoid a Bad Case of Root Rot

- Monitor plants and roots frequently
- A clean system – change the reservoir regularly. Preferably run “Drain to Waste”(See -Info Sheet)
- Keep reservoir between 66 - 68 deg F to maximize root growth, O₂ levels & inhibition of pythium
- Constant aeration – maintaining high dissolved oxygen levels inhibits pathogens & accelerates roots
- Keep a lid or black plastic cover over your reservoir to keep plant matter and light out
- Use Ro Water with a UV sterilizer. This will ensure a pathogen free water supply
- Enzymes: Hygrozyme, Cannazym
- Beneficial's: Impello Continuum™, Fungal - Great White, Mykos, Vermi-T, Voodoo Juice Bacterial - Azos
- Tonics: Heavy 16 Roots, Heavy 16 Prime or Rhizotonic

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Using Good Microbes to Fight the Bad Ones

There are countless beneficials and they have a vast variety of functions, ranging from the breakdown of nitrogen into useable forms, to cleaning the roots, to warding off negative microbiological pathogens. These good microbes also activate, enrich & stimulate the roots - They help to create beautiful fuzzy white root growth like you have never seen before. The new array of products on the market can be confusing and misleading. We sell products that we have personal experience with and really believe in. Some of them can be mixed and matched:

Continuum™ by Impello® Biosciences: is a high-performance plant biostimulant designed specifically with large-scale, high-intensity crop growers in mind. Continuum™ comprises a powerful blend of naturally occurring, plant growth-promoting rhizobacteria (PGPR) that improve plant growth, quality, and abiotic stress tolerance through natural processes like enhanced nutrient acquisition and water uptake.

Voodoo Juice: A liquid solution consisting of five strains of microbes, one which is a nitrogen fixer. Also contains bacillus subtilis. These microbes colonize the roots, facilitating the conversion of nutrients.

Great White: Excellent product that combines very fine (weaponized) mycorrhizae, and trichoderma fungus with a wide assortment of beneficial bacteria. Can be used in a Hydroponic Reservoir or hand watered with Soil / Coco.

Heavy 16 Roots: This is the strongest all around product we have at preventing and combating Root Disease. It will blow roots WAY OUT within 3-5 days and keep them Super Healthy throughout the cycle.

The Other Route: Keeping the Reservoir Sterile

Some growers rely on sterile growing environments, strong disinfectants and products that sterilize the reservoir. Here are a few of the most effective options:

Hydrogen Peroxide: Creates ozone in water, killing bacteria and adding oxygen to the system. Elevated levels of oxygen in water have proven to dramatically increase the speed of plant growth.

UV - Filter: Use of a UV Filter can greatly help win the battle against pathogens. As long as the nutrient solution is clear when it runs across the filter, (i.e. no organics,) all microorganisms DNA will be torn apart.

PLEASE NOTE!! *Hydrogen Peroxide offer protection and benefits, but it does not work well with organic additives in the reservoir. We DO NOT recommend using it with Liquid Karma, Super Thrive or anything similar. Keeping your reservoir totally sterile can work very well, but once you get a population of icky badness it can keep coming back again and again. Some pathogens such as pythium are almost impossible to get rid of completely. More and more innovative growers are moving toward a holistic approach of using good microbes and beneficial enzymes in the reservoir.*