An Introduction to Soil Foodweb International NZ, their Methodology & Approach to Soil Health

(Workshop Duration: One Full Day)

A healthy soil, far from being an inert medium, is a complex and dynamic system that is teeming with life. A large percentage of organisms that reside within healthy systems are beneficial micro-organisms such as fungi, bacteria, protozoa and nematodes. While seemingly insignificant they are represented in their millions each type providing a range of important services that promote plant growth, plant health and vigour.

The collective term for all of these organisms is the 'soil food web'. The interactions between these organisms can provide plant with many of the requirements that they need to survive and flourish including nutrient availability & retention, disease suppression and the building of soil structure. However, to date soil biology is an aspect that has largely been over looked since the adoption of quick fix solutions such as artificial fertiliser and chemical pesticides. The use of chemicals to kill pathogens and pests also destroys the beneficial organisms in the soil. The result is the creation of an environment conducive to further disease and nutrient deficiencies because the natural soil processes have been destroyed. The soil is a living system that needs to be managed. A balanced and healthy soil food web will suppress disease, cycle nutrient and improve aggregation meaning that fertiliser, pesticides and water can be substantially reduced.

This workshop outlines the benefits and management of soil biology and covers the following topics:

- The function of each group of soil organisms.
- Soil organism interactions and how this effects:-
    - Soil structure
    - Nutrient retention
    - Nutrient cycling
    - Residue decomposition
    - Disease suppression
- Methods to assist/reduce our fertiliser, pesticide and chemical use.
- Why a healthy soil offers disease suppression and up to 70% water saving.
- Management of soil biology.

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