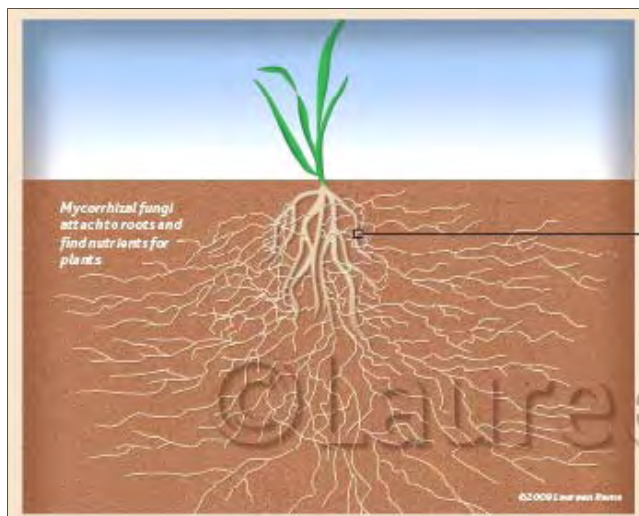


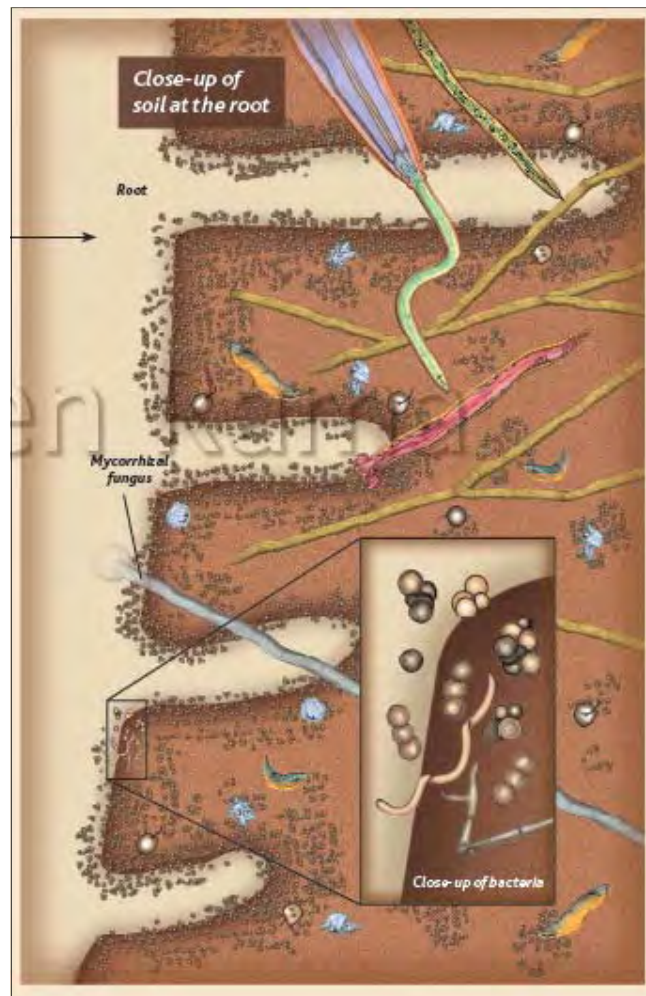
Eco-Friendly Landscaping



Microbes at the Plant Root - The Feeding Frenzy in the Soil

Lauren Rama

Why should we avoid using chemical fertilizers and herbicides and pesticides on our lawn and plants? Because they harm the amazing micro-organisms that feed and sustain the plants and those found in Fish Creek Provincial Park.



The diagram on the right shows the bacteria and fungi clustering near the root wall and feeding on sugars that the plant releases. The bacteria store nitrogen and the fungi store calcium. When the other micro-organisms shown here eat the bacteria and fungi they end up pooping out the nitrogen and calcium so the plants can absorb those valuable nutrients. Mycorrhizal fungi attach to the roots of plants to extend their reach 700 to 1000 times. Mycorrhizal fungi actually grow to find specific nutrients the plant needs.

It is this feeding frenzy at the plant roots that actually feeds the world!

So refrain from using those chemicals. Feed your plants with compost or actively aerated compost tea. These contain great nutrients and lots of soil micro-organisms. You will be helping to restore those micro-organisms that have been lost to chemical use in your yard, and benefitting the greater ecosystem as a whole.

Lauren Rama is a Calgary landscaper specializing in design and installation of eco-friendly landscapes. She also has a service spraying actively aerated compost tea on yards (Eco-yards Spray). Her book *Eco-yards: Simple steps to earth-friendly landscapes* is available at local garden centres, natural grocery stores, independent bookstores and through her web-site: www.eco-yards.com. The diagram above is available at www.eco-yards.com as a poster or a digital file.