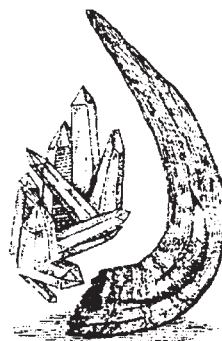


Applied BIODYNAMICS®



Winter 1999/2000 Newsletter of the Josephine Porter Institute • Woolwine, Virginia Issue No. 28

Hugh Courtney

Ashing or BD 'Peppering' – A Function of Lunar Forces – Part 2

As promised in the previous issue of *Applied Biodynamics*, we will continue with our presentation on the subject of ashing. In this particular section of our series on this subject, I would like to concentrate on the subject of “potentizing” or homeopathic dilution as it specifically is concerned with applying the results of our ashing process. As mentioned in the previous article, when one has finished burning the weed seeds, there is usually a very modest quantity of ash available to apply. In order to ensure the recommended three or four sprayings in a row as well as repeated applications during a year or over a four year period for most effective results, one can potentise the ash and provide enough material for numerous treatments of considerable territory.

To begin with, I will offer a definition of the potentizing process, and at least some explanation of why it is presumed to work. When one resorts to a dictionary, the words potentise or potentizing do not seem to appear in the two fairly comprehensive ones checked. One can find the word *potentiate*, which means, to make more potent. As a result it seems to me that the most useful source for the meaning of the words potentize or potentization can be found in the publication by Theodore Schwenk entitled *The Basis of Potentization Research* (available from JPI at a cost of \$10.50 plus shipping and handling of \$3.50). Schwenk is most noted for his study of water rhythms and movement and especially for his development of the water-drop method of quality testing. His most noted publication available in English is *Sensitive Chaos* (available from JPI at a cost of \$29.95 plus shipping and handling). In order to arrive at a thorough definition,

I will quote at length from *The Basis of Potentization Research*:

“Potentization, which is a stepwise treatment of the original substances, was introduced by the homeopathic school on the basis of a discovery by Samuel Hahnemann (1755–1843) at the turn of the nineteenth century. Though Hahnemann started out prescribing material medications, he later came in the course of his practice to ever higher potencies. The historical development of his discovery was thus itself just such a series of steps from a material beginning to use of high potencies. However, the essential characteristic of the homeopathic method is not, as is often mistakenly supposed, the producing and prescribing of potentized substances, but rather its adherence to the principle of “like cures like” or – in medical terminology – the “Simile Principle.” This discovery actually predated that of the effectiveness of potentized substances. In a life devoted to attentive study of the effectiveness of medications, Hahnemann had the distinction of adding to the Simile Principle the method of the potentizing process. Though he could not have been aware of it, this process must have been known very early in cultural history, a fact reported by Rudolf Steiner from his spiritual research but of which little other record exists.

“In the sketch to follow, potentizing will be discussed chiefly in its aspect as a pharmaceutical process, though it does play a much larger role in nature than is commonly recognized. We remind

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From the Editorial Desk

Although it has been more than a plateful to deal with, and this issue is later than promised (due to a serious illness within the extended Courtney family), we hope that you our readers will continue to be patient with us. We do have material for several more issues already on hand and we will still strive to complete the publication schedule for the year 2000 by December 31.

In this issue, we are very pleased to publish an article by Penny Kelly on the subject of the elementals or nature spirits. Penny may already be known to those who will have read her book, *The Elves of Lily Hill Farm*, which we intend to review in a forthcoming issue of *Applied Biodynamics*. While mention of elementals is a subject which is often carefully avoided within the biodynamic community, and it was virtually not spoken about when Rudolf Steiner presented his lectures in Koberwitz, it was a topic about which he had a great deal to say in other instances. In our next issue, we will address this subject to a further extent, and will, in particular, hope to include several reviews on various books by Steiner and

others on the matter of the elemental beings. Also planned for our next issue is a continuation of our series on ashing which we trust is of use to the biodynamic practitioner on a very practical level. We would particularly appreciate hearing from any of our readers who have had some experience with the ashing technique regardless of whether or not that experience produced the desired results. We feel that it is of particular importance that such experiences be shared so that we all may learn to use this technique in a more effective fashion.

At a recent meeting of the Board of Directors, we took a good hard look at the fiscal situation for JPI; the probable need to once again revise prices; our "internet future"; what the publishing future of the JPI newsletter will be, especially when we establish an internet presence; the need for a concerted fund raising effort; and other realities we are facing here in attempting to fulfill our mission. In a future issue of the newsletter we will outline in detail the decisions reached and our plans for implementation of those decisions.



Mission

The Josephine Porter Institute for Applied Bio-Dynamics Inc. (JPI), was founded to produce quality biodynamic agricultural preparations based on the spiritual-scientific research of Rudolf Steiner.

It serves as a living memorial to Josephine Porter, a pioneer for this work in America.

The mission of JPI also includes education and research in biodynamic agriculture. JPI undertakes these tasks so that the earth may be healed.

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Applied Biodynamics

Applied Biodynamics is published three times each year by the Josephine Porter Institute for Applied Bio-Dynamics Inc. (JPI). The subscription price of thirty dollars per year helps support JPI research and development. Back issues are five dollars each.

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Dandelion Honor Roll

We wish to honor with utmost gratitude the following contributors to our supply of dried dandelion blossoms for use by JPI in making our yearly supply of biodynamic preparation #506. Without these contributions, it would be impossible to meet the demand for this preparation, in large part due to the relative scarcity of this most precious of flowers in our immediate area, and also in part due to the fact that the prime period for harvesting our dandelions also coincides with the busiest time of the year in fulfilling and shipping orders for springtime use. While every contribution is vital, we wish to especially acknowledge two people in different parts of the country who have managed during the last few years to send us dried dandelions by the pound. A special thanks to Ruth Zinniker and friends in Elkhorn, WI and also to Sara Tufts and family in Mebane, NC. At Ruth's spring dandelion picking festival, with some fifty people in attendance, a whopping eighteen pounds (when dried) of blossoms were harvested. Ruth also was the prime mover behind the Prairie Hill Waldorf School contribution of five pounds of dried dandelion blossoms, although our more direct thanks go to the classes who did the actual harvest at the school. Sara Tufts, with a lot of help from her daughter Tracy and other members of her family brought us six pounds of dried blossoms and was profusely apologetic that her harvest was so small. Our honor roll of contributors for our dandelion needs is as follows (listed in order of receipt):

Sara and Tracy Tufts Haw River, NC	Sylvia Eonio North White Plains, NY
Ruth Zinniker and Friends Elkhorn, WI	Steve Yates Maurertown, VA
Prairie Hill Waldorf School (via Ruth Zinniker) Pewaukee, WI	Mountain View Farm Carol Ach & Doug Moser Leaburg, OR
Dan and Mickie Thomas Karlsruhe, ND	Deede Quigley Grangerville, NY
Paul and Nancy Keiser Agriculture and Health Alive, Inc. Marne, MI	Sharon Carson Sharon's Natural Gardens Delmar, DE
Mike Whalen Genesee Community Farm Waukesha, WI	Tom Earle Earle Family Farm Center Conway, NH

Fall Preparations Making Seminar Registration

If you have any thoughts about attending our Fall Preparations Making Seminar, please register soon. Attendance is limited, and a number of people have either indicated interest or have already sent in their deposit to secure a spot. Our Part II Fall Seminar, which will feature the harvesting of bovine sheaths, will be held from Wednesday, October 25 at 8:00 PM through Sunday, October 29 at 6 PM. Cost of the fall seminar will be \$475.00, which again includes midday and evening meals for Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Reservation may be secured by a non-refundable deposit of \$75.00. We believe that the opportunity to experience preparations making as directly and as intensively as is possible at JPI is unique, and is not available anywhere else in the country.

Biodynamic Preparations Legend

BD #500 – Horn Manure

BD #501 – Horn Silica

BD #502 – Yarrow

BD #503 – Chamomile

BD #504 – Stinging Nettle

BD #505 – Oak Bark

BD #506 – Dandelion

BD #507 – Valerian

Compost
Preparations

BD #508 – Horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*)



Continued from page 1

our readers of the great significance of the trace elements occurring in the very finest dilutions, of the existence of many medicinal springs with their traces of substances important to life, of the ocean tides with their rhythmical motion, their surf breaking along the coasts with its variety of dissolved substances. These processes can all be regarded as nature's own worldwide potentization processes, and this dissolving takes place according to such laws as govern the gaseous element.

"Potentizing is done, as is known and has already been mentioned, in a series of steps. A quantity of a given substance is taken up by a quantity, several times larger, of a suitable medium: water, alcohol, milk sugar, and subjected to rhythmical movement. Superficially considered, this corresponds to a dilution; a decimal potency is a 1 plus 9 proportion, a centesimal potency 1 plus 99. Once a proportion has been chosen, it is retained through all the stages of the potentizing process.

"But the process involved here is more than a mere diluting. The important process, as Rudolf Steiner once put it, is 'what is being made to happen': in the first place a rhythmical motion at every stage of the process. In his day, Hahnemann ascribed greatest importance to the process involved in treating the substance:

"The inner remedial capacity comes marvelously alive when subjected to friction (shaking), and frees itself as it were from its bonds with matter so as to be able to work more freely and with greater penetration on the human organism."

"To put it thus is to characterize potentization in its three fundamental aspects of substance, force and rhythmical motion. It is the latter which leads over from the substantial state to the development of force."

With this lengthy explanation of the process, we now have a basis for understanding why potentization may be effective. When one takes the mother substance, dilutes it with a medium of water or milk sugar at a ratio of 1 to 9 or even 1 to 99, and then subjects it to a rhythmical motion, one transfers the force inherent in the mother substance to all the particles of the medium. At the same time, there appears to be a further enhancement or liberation of the force of the mother substance so that it takes on a more powerful or potent quality. A rough analogy can be found in the process whereby our muscles become stronger when we exercise them regularly with a barbell

when we engage in a weight lifting program. The process of potentization also will help explain why the label on the bottle of cough syrup or other medicine requests the user to "shake well before using." Whether such a label is placed there consciously or unconsciously, following its direction results in a more effective medicine.

Let us assume a concrete example and walk through the process step by step, and thereby, we hope, answer most if not all of your questions on the process of potentization. Please keep in mind that this description of the process will apply not only to weed ashing, but also to the ashing of insect or animal pests.



We start with the "dynamized" ash. Assuming that we have on hand approximately six tablespoons of this dynamized ash, we need to choose a measure or weight that will remain consistent throughout the entire process from DØ to D8 (or CØ to C8 if the centesimal dilution route is our choice). For the sake of our example, let us choose to start with a volume measure of one tablespoon of dynamized ash. Since most biodynamic practitioners do not have a laboratory scale that would allow them to measure out a gram or so of ash, nor calibrated metric measuring containers for millimeters of water, we will stick to the ordinary implements one can find in the kitchen. Of course with a metric laboratory scale and metric flasks, etc., the calculations may be simpler, because one is always dealing in easily calculated decimal proportions. If you intend to do lots of ashing, it may well be worth your while to obtain the necessary metric based equipment. At any rate, remaining in our ordinary kitchen implement mode, we take our tablespoon of ash, place it in a small jar, add nine tablespoons of water, tighten down the lid thoroughly, and begin a rhythmical motion which will result in a thorough mixing of the ash with the water. The object of the mixing is to have every molecule of the ash slide past every molecule of the water, thereby imparting

to the water such forces as are contained in the ash. The required rhythmical motion can be accomplished in a number of different ways and for varying lengths of time, depending upon which homeopathic or anthroposophical medical school or authority you wish to follow.

In homeopathy, the rhythmical motion is achieved by a process termed succussing or succussion. One takes the jar or container in one's fist and firmly but gently pounds it against a rubber mat or a book for a specific period of time, or for a specific number of times. Some of the usual recommendations are to continue the rhythmical pounding for a period of one minute, or alternately a period of three minutes. Another recommendation is to continue this rhythmical pounding for a count of 100.

In anthroposophical medicine, the technique of succussion is thought to impart a somewhat violent character to the remedy, so a different technique is employed. One takes the container or jar and holds it in one's hand(s), while moving the jar in a rocking or back and forth, circular motion so that the ash and water in the container begins to move in a figure eight or lemniscate pattern.

Whichever methodology you employ in your effort to achieve the thorough mixing required, it is suggested that you be consistent throughout. After completing the "potentization" step with the DØ ash to which you have added 9 measures of water, you now have a D1 potency with a volume of 10 tablespoons or ½ cup plus 2 tablespoons. Our ultimate target for most ashing treatments is a D8 potency, and we will tabulate the volume required if at each step one takes the entire volume of the preceding step and adds 9 more measures of the diluting medium:

Step Volume at completion

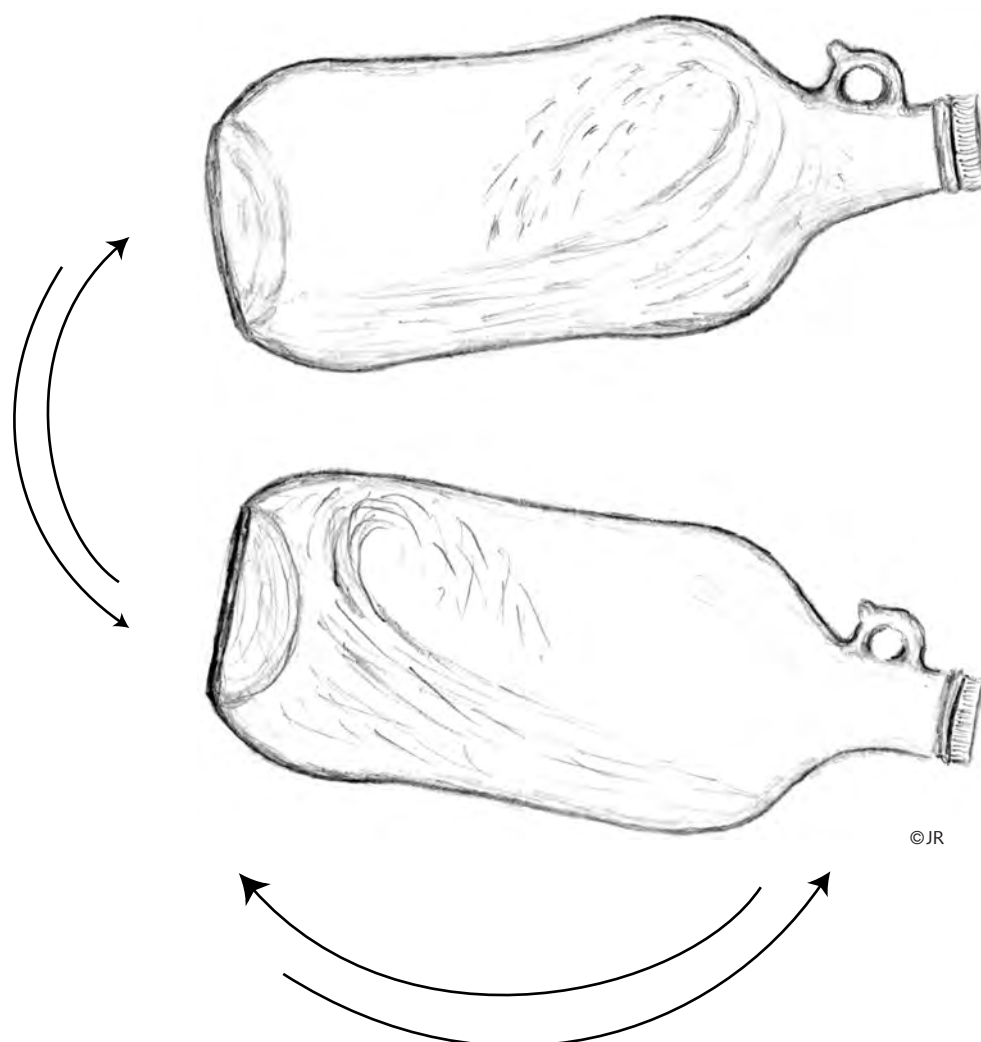
D1	10 tablespoons or ½ cup + 2 tablespoons
D2	100 tablespoons or 6¼ cups or 1 quart + 2.25 cups
D3	1000 tablespoons or 62.5 cup or 3 gallons + 3.5 quarts + ½ cup
D4	10,000 tablespoons or 625 cups or 39 gallons + 1 cup
D5	100,000 tablespoons or 6250 cups or 390 gallons + 2 quarts + ½ cup
D6	1,000,000 tablespoons or 62500 cups or 3,906 gallons + 1 quart
D7	10,000,000 tablespoons or 625,000 cups or 39,062 gallons + 2 quarts
D8	100,000,000 tablespoons or 6,250,000 cups or 390,625 gallons

Quite obviously, at a fairly early stage, one is dealing with an enormous volume of material that would be impossible to handle by succussion or the lemniscate rocking motions described above. Therefore, one is well advised to do two things before proceeding beyond the D1 potency. The first thing is to determine how much of the finished product of D8 you want to apply. If you were going to treat one acre or less then you would probably

need no more than 3 to 5 gallons to spray for your final D8 potency. Thus at the D7 step you would require only ½ gallon or less of material. For a larger area, say twelve acres, you would need 36 to 60 gallons for the final D8 potency for spraying, and at D7 would need 3.6 to 6 gallons of material.

Let us assume that we are only dealing with a one acre or less garden situation. We therefore need only repeat for the first several potencies the quantities involved in the step from D1 to D2. In other words, for arriving at D3, we take only 10 tablespoons or ½ cup plus 2 tablespoons (that is, the same quantity we arrived at upon completion of a D1 potency) from the quantity of D2 we have made. To this quantity we add 9 more measures or 90 tablespoons, and proceed with our rhythmical mixing to arrive at a finished D3 potency with a total quantity of 100 tablespoons or 1 quart plus 2.25 cups. Likewise, for each step up to D6 we take the same quantity. At D6 we can take the entire volume of D6, that is, one quart plus 2.25 cups and produce 3 gallons plus 3.5 quarts plus ½ cup of D7. In going from D7 to D8, we take ½ gallon of D7 and produce 5 gallons of the finished D8 potency we want to spray. We could also choose to take the entire amount of D7 and end up with 39 gallons plus 1 cup of D8 for spraying larger areas. At the D6 to D7 step and again at the D7 to D8 step, instead of the succussion or lemniscate rocking technique employed for the earlier steps, we take the given quantity plus the added amount of water and stir for one hour in the usual biodynamic fashion. Admittedly, the above may be somewhat confusing to follow, so I will place the above description in a tabular form in the hope of arriving at greater clarity for the reader:

From	To	Take
D0	D1	1 tablespoon and add 9 tablespoons of dilutant
D1	D2	Entire amount above and add 90 tablespoons or 5½ cups + 2 tablespoons (Volume when finished = 1 quart + 2.25 cups)
D2	D3	10 tablespoons or ½ cup + 2 tablespoons and add 90 tablespoons or 5 ½ cups + 2 tablespoons (Volume = 1 quart + 2.25 cups)
D3	D4	10 tablespoons or ½ cup + 2 tablespoons and add 90 tablespoons or 5½ cups + 2 tablespoons (Volume = 1 quart + 2.25 cups)
D4	D5	10 tablespoons or ½ cup + 2 tablespoons and add 90 tablespoons or 5½ cups + 2 tablespoons (Volume = 1 quart + 2.25 cups)
D6	D7	Entire amount above and add 3 gallons + 2 quarts + ½ cup (Volume = 3 gallons + 3 quarts + 2½ cups)
D7	D8	½ gallon of above and add 4½ gallons (Volume = 5 gallons)
or alternatively		
D7	D8	Entire volume of D7 and add 35 gallons + 2½ cups (Volume = 39 gallons + 1 cup)



Before one begins all of these potentization steps, it is helpful if one has lined up a complete set of containers to accomplish each step in the entire process. For instance, in going from DØ to D1, a half-pint jelly jar is an appropriate size. In the example above, if we have gallon or ½ gallon size containers, such as apple juice containers, especially the ones with a handle on them, (see illustration above) we can use such containers for each step from D2 through D5, and for D6 to D7 and D7 to D8 we can use the customary stirring vessels employed for regular stirring of the various biodynamic preparations. It is important that whatever container is used be sufficiently large to leave plenty of room for the liquid to move freely throughout the container. It is also important that one carefully label each container according to the potency it holds.

Once you have the quantity of D8 potency desired for

spraying, you should try to schedule repeated sprayings, which should not be a problem if you have a series of potencies available for further potentization. For example, the 3 gallons + 3.5 quarts + ½ cups produced at the D7 step described above for the one acre situation is sufficient to yield a total of 7 batches of D8 at 5 gallons each. Once all of the D7 has been used up, you will have to return to the D5 step and repeat the D6 and D7 steps. At a certain point, one will need to return to the original ash and repeat each step from the beginning. In homeopathy, for water-based potencies, there is a question as to the stability of a potency over time, unless twenty percent or more of alcohol is used to stabilize the product. For myself, I am not comfortable in applying alcohol to soils no matter what the degree of dilution. For a potency in which water alone is used as the medium for diluting, the shelf life or viability cannot be retained beyond a few

months, and to be on the safe side, I would suggest that three months is a reasonable time to consider that a potency is still useable. Beyond that time, one should start over again from a solid substance stage, that is, the ash itself. It is for this reason that milk sugar is used to arrive at potencies with a very long shelf life.

It is hoped that the above description is sufficiently detailed and clear and that the reader will be encouraged to potentize the products of the ashing effort with a good deal more assurance that biodynamics also offers a serious and viable solution to various weed and pest problems. If you are so encouraged, please consider sharing your experiences in a letter or article to *Applied Biodynamics* so that your experiences can be more widely shared with our entire readership. Failures are as important to share as successes, and we look forward to hearing from many of you soon. We hope to continue to address the ashing question in future issues of *Applied Biodynamics* with a focus on insect and animal pests.

Our thanks to Jennifer Reeve for the illustrations in this and the following article, and to Erin Coffin for the drawing of the yarrow plant on page 11.

Penny Kelly

Working With Nature Spirits

I had never heard of “nature spirits” or “elementals,” did not believe in elves at all, had four children, a college education, and was an engineer for Chrysler Corporation when I first saw three elves in my home at the age of thirty-three. Even after that experience, I still did not believe in such things. I decided they must have been part of a dream or something, since I was in bed when they marched into my bedroom and tried to carry me off! I dismissed the fact that I was wide awake at the time, and that they actually got me and all the covers half out of the bed before my screams brought others to the room and the elves disappeared.

Ten years later, my husband and I bought a 57-acre patch of ground in southwest Michigan, outside the town of Lawton. The year was 1990, Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait, the U.S. was making war noises, and I

Recent Publications

At this point we would like to recommend three titles we have recently added to our available publications list. We plan on doing more extensive book reviews in the future on all of these titles. In the meantime, the serious biodynamic practitioner should consider adding these titles to their collection.

From Adalbert Keyserlingk comes *The Birth of a New Agriculture: Koberwitz, 1924* (\$21.95) and *Developing Biodynamic Agriculture: Reflections on Early Research* (\$16.00). These titles, published in 1999 by Temple Lodge, provide essential background for the early days of biodynamic agriculture. The first book is especially helpful in placing the agriculture lectures within the context of the times.

Hawthorn Press is now distributing Maria Thun's *Gardening for Life: The Biodynamic Way* (\$26.00) This well illustrated publication lives up to its sub-title description of “a practical introduction to a new art of gardening, sowing, planting, harvesting.” While some partial practitioners of biodynamics, those mired in abstract intellectualism, or those suffering from delusions derived from oriental calendar interpretations, continue to find fault because Thun's results escape their duplication, she continues on her path achieving truly life enhancing and very dynamic effects. Some of those effects are beautifully illustrated in photographs, once again demonstrating that “a picture is worth a thousand words.” Well worth the price.

was terribly afraid my eighteen-year-old son would be called into the military to fight. Unable to concentrate in my office, I went for a walk with my dog and two cats. Maybe it was because I had just read a book in which devas were mentioned and I was curious about what a deva might be, or maybe it was because I had recently seen several clients who talked about angels, elves, and fairies, but for reasons I may never know, I said to no one in particular, “If there are any elves out here, say something!”

When I heard a small group of voices respond a few minutes later, I was certain it was my imagination. Although they kept on making an effort to communicate, I said very little except for one comment made mostly to myself before heading back home, and by the time I got back to the house, I had once more dismissed the entire experience.

Two weeks later, however, I could not get the small voices off my mind. The things they had said to me seemed so deeply aware of nature *and* the physical world of humans. I decided to make a deliberate effort to contact those voices again just to see what would happen. The result was a slow, unsteady, uneven, often unwilling awakening on my part to the fact that there is an entire dimension of intelligent beings that exist in the world of nature, known loosely as “nature spirits.”

A Primer on Nature Spirits

For those who, like myself at one time, have absolutely no idea that these beings exist, perhaps a short course in nature spirits is in order. Please understand that what I am going to say here is what I have learned and amounts to my own personal efforts to make sense of what I have seen, heard, and experienced. Therefore it may not match what someone more experienced might say about the subject.

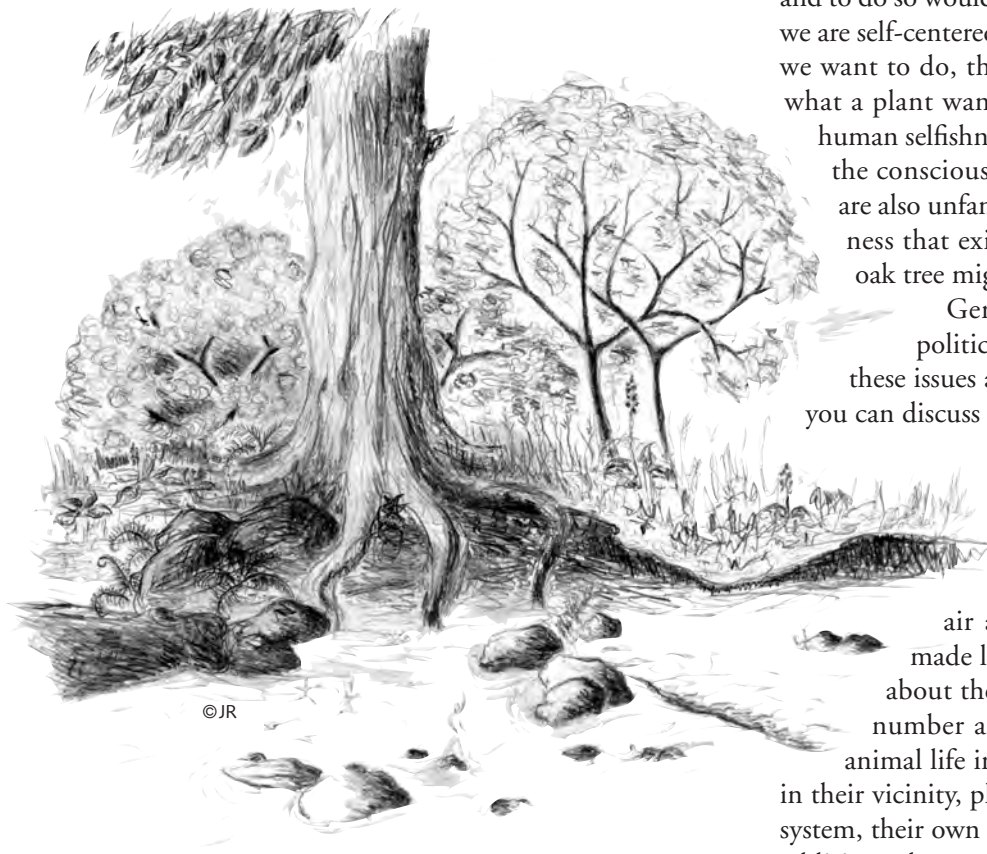
In the same way that each human body is a physical form inhabited by an intelligent spirit that is aware of itself, all trees, flowers, grains, vegetables, and other plants are physical forms of nature also inhabited by intelligent spirits who are aware of themselves. To some extent, we differentiate between these two types of intelligence by referring

to “the human spirit” and “nature spirit.” Although the term “human spirit” is used to mean something more akin to a nebulous quality of human beings, a human spirit is more appropriately identified as a particular human spirit, such as the spirit of Bill Clinton, or the spirit of Desmond Tutu, Elizabeth Taylor, perhaps Ted Turner. Each of these humans are known for the particular kind of energy effect (a.k.a. “spirit”) they bring to the world.

There are many kinds of nature spirits with a variety of names, purposes, and interests. The terms nature spirit, nature being, elf, gnome, dwarf, wee folk, brownie, pixie, leprechaun, sylph, mermaid, water sprite, undine, drake, salamander, deva, fairy, and a number of other terms that have been popular in various times and places, all refer to those forms of intelligent consciousness associated with physical forms other than humans. Consciousness implies an awareness of an existing self that is capable of responding to stimuli. And an intelligent consciousness is, “an organized system of perceiving, responding, and learning in a way that furthers existence.”

We are never taught that plants are aware, able to communicate, or capable of learning and so we never talk to them. Indeed, most humans are seriously lacking in the sensitivity required to communicate with nature spirits, and to do so would require a willingness to respond. Since we are self-centered to the degree that we want to do what we want to do, the idea of having to take into account what a plant wants is an interruption in the stream of human selfishness. And except for our experience with the consciousness of pets such as dogs and cats, we are also unfamiliar with different kinds of consciousness that exist, for example, the kind a rose or an oak tree might have.

Generally speaking, you cannot discuss politics or money with nature spirits because these issues are not part of their consciousness. But you can discuss the weather – a favorite topic of plants and humans everywhere! The consciousness of any plant, whether a flower, vegetable, or other, is keenly tuned to the everyday issues of water, sunlight, their own nutrition, air and air movement, moonlight, man-made light, and soil. They are also concerned about the chemistry of neighboring plants, the number and kind of trees in their vicinity, the animal life in their vicinity, the mechanical activity in their vicinity, planetary influences at work in the solar system, their own life-cycles and those of other plants. In addition, they are deeply interested in the nutritional



needs, emotions, and behaviors of human beings, for in the view of most plants, they are here to serve humanity and extremely responsive to us. The loss of communication with us has not only made their work more difficult, it has left their world less interesting and one of the first things I learned about was the great interest in many individual spirits of nature in rekindling the relationship with humans in terms of dialogue, and working together.

Besides their interest in everyday issues, each kind of nature spirit has particular interests and goals of its own depending on its physical connection to the world. An elf, gnome, or dwarf is often a spirit of the soil or earth in a given location. So are the wee folk. Brownies, pixies, and leprechauns are similar spirits but are more often connected with soil or earth that is covered by forests. If the forest is cut down and a city, town, or individual house is built on the soil where the trees were, the brownie or leprechaun will stay connected to its location and often inhabit the buildings of such places, especially basements which are dug down “in the soil.”

“Sylph” is the name given to the spirit of air or wind. Mermaids, water sprites, and undines all refer to the intelligent spirits connected with individual bodies or flows of water. The terms drake, salamander, and even “Archangel Michael” are often used as symbols of the intelligence of fire. And since all of the above intelligent spirits are connected to earth, wind, water, and fire, they are often called *elementals* simply because these four substances are the basic elements of our reality.

The intelligent spirits of flowers are often referred to generally as fairies, and overall, a deva is similar except that it is not restricted to flowers, and is frequently coupled with the name of the plant it inhabits and inspires. For example, the intelligence that inhabits a carrot is called simply the *Carrot Deva*, that of a peach tree is called the *Peach Deva*, and that of a parsley plant is called the *Parsley Deva*. You could also speak of the *Rose Deva* and the *Marigold Deva*, but don't get all caught up in the need to be technically correct with names. An overall understanding that everything existing in our physical reality has both form and intelligence is all that is really necessary for communication to begin.

Communicating With Nature Spirits

There are lots of reasons to communicate with the other beings who inhabit the world with us. Perhaps you want to optimize your garden's productivity or crop output. Maybe you want to make the change to organic farming and aren't really sure what is best for your fields or your crops. Maybe you need more rain in your area, or less

rain, more air movement, or less wind damage. You might want to create a healing garden full of flowers, vines, and trees that each contribute a special energetic effect. You could be trying to develop a special color of flower, or genetic characteristic. You might be interested in creating unique seed adapted to your particular soil and climate conditions. You may want to win ribbons at the fair for your flowers and vegetables, or need a particular plant to have certain healing properties that aren't available in the usual flora of your climate. Perhaps curiosity has caught hold of you and you want to see what can happen if you try communicating with plants or soil or water. Whatever the reason, be aware that deciding to work with the nature spirits that live around you is often the start of an entire process of re-educating yourself about reality and what is possible within it.

The first thing you will probably struggle with has to do with the question of being able to hear or see some kind of response from a plant. Since plants don't have mouths or a voice box, you should not expect to hear a physical voice booming at you from the rose garden or the parsley patch. Communication with all non-physical beings is carried on mind-to-mind, however this is not to say that you can't walk up to the maple tree in your yard that is not growing well and verbally inquire, “What in the world do you need?” You may have even done this at one time or another, but didn't expect an answer, and therefore were not listening and missed the opportunity to hear the tree's response. Next time simply be present and attentive when you ask!

To communicate mind-to-mind requires several things. One is the *intent* to communicate. In some ways this is similar to the kind of communication that goes on between your mind and your body. When you *intend* to get yourself a cup of tea, your feet and legs respond by walking you over to the stove where the teapot is sitting, your hand reaches out and picks it up, your legs then carry you and the teapot to the sink, the other hand turns on the water while you refill the pot, then your legs take you back to the stove where you set down the teapot and turn on the burner. Next you get the cup, then the teabag, and when the water is hot, you pour it over the bag in the cup. You did not have to give verbal orders for your body to respond to your intent to communicate your wishes. You merely had to be clear enough about what you wanted in order for the communication to be carried into action. The same thing is necessary when you set out to communicate with plants. *Be clear* about what you are asking or communicating.

The second requirement is the need to actually focus

on the plant as you communicate. This means you need to set other thoughts and issues aside – a process commonly called “clearing your mind” so you are free to pay attention to the conversation at hand.

Next, to allow communication with the plant to take place, you have to be able to utilize your *mind’s eye*, your *mind’s ear*, or be able to *recognize differences in the basic feelings* equated with “positive” and “negative.” If you are primarily visual and tend to trust what you see, you may do best in using the mind’s eye. If you are primarily auditory and tend to trust what you hear, you may do better with the mind’s ear. And if you are mostly kinesthetic, responding primarily to feelings, you will probably do best by paying attention to feeling states that can be described as, “yes, that feels right” or “no, that doesn’t feel right.”

To use the mind’s eye you have to be able to allow images, pictures, and scenes to appear in your head. To use the mind’s ear you have to be able to allow words, sentences, or conversations to be heard in your head. To use feeling states, you have to be able to clear away whatever you were feeling until you’re in a neutral state, so you can detect subtle shifts in feeling, and learn to trust that feeling.

All of this may be what you typically dismiss as “just imagination.” In our world of Newtonian science and Cartesian math, the ability to either create or allow an image to form in the mind or a voice to be heard in one’s head has been totally sidelined. Imagination has been relegated to the realm of fantasy, instead of utilized as one of the key human tools that allows communication with other-than-physical realms, or with those forms of intelligence that do not have physical voices or the capacity for typically human physical movement and self-expression.

Next, you will probably have to deal with the amount of doubt you carry around in the world. For instance, some people will say, “What if I just hear what I want to hear?” My own observation of students who worry about this is that usually, if they hear what they thought they were going to hear, it is simply an indication that they were already aware of what the plant needed. As soon as they form the question regarding the plant, they discover that the answer is already there, and end up saying, “. . . but that’s what I thought the answer would be!” then discount themselves and the answer.

Keep in mind that you will probably not hear anything exotic when it comes to talking with plants, in other words, they are not likely to request a dish of ice cream or insist that you come and dance around the base of the plant at 2 AM. And the more you know about plants, the better they will be able to communicate with you. For instance, if you ask a plant what it needs, and it says

“water,” you will know what water is, where to get it, and about how much to give the plant. But if the plant says “molybdenum” and you have never heard of the substance, you probably won’t even recognize what the plant is asking for. As we say in dealing with the brain and perception, you have to have a “peg” already in basic awareness labeled “molybdenum” in order to hang further information, usage, and experience on it. Thus, if the plant asks for it and you have no idea such a thing exists, the plant will not be able to explain or teach you about it, you will probably end up dismissing what you heard as something unintelligible, and the need will go unfilled. So, as in any relationship, the more you educate yourself, the better your communication will be.

I also tell students that it is critical for them to act on the information and insight gained in the communication with the plant. If there is a problem, and the problem is not resolved within a reasonable amount of time, then it is important to go back to the plant and ask what else is needed. . . and to keep up this kind of exchange until the problem is solved.

Let’s say you have a small tomato patch and the plants are growing slowly. You are standing among them, wondering why your neighbor’s look so much bigger and better. Instead of just wondering, you decide to ask them, “What do you tomatoes need in order to get bigger and look better?” Before you put this question to them, clear your mind and review your question! Is this really what you want – for them to get bigger and look better so you can compete with your neighbor? Probably what you really want is to have the healthiest tomatoes with the highest Vitamin C and longest keeping quality. The question becomes, “What can I do to help you produce plenty of tomatoes with the highest possible nutrition and the longest possible keeping quality?” This expresses with good clarity what you are really asking for.

When you ask a question of a specific kind of vegetable, it is usually the deva of that vegetable that will form the answer and try to make it sound clearly in your head. Let us say you are listening in your head and hear the answer, “We need some compost!” You go and get some compost and spread it around the base of the plant, wait a week or ten days, and nothing happens. So you go back and say to the plant, “You don’t seem to have changed much. Is there anything else that will help you grow tomatoes with the highest nutrition and longest keeping quality?”

In response this time, you get a picture of the fact that it has been extremely dry for the last week or two and you become aware that perhaps the plant has not been able to

utilize the benefits of the compost because it's been too dry. So you water them deeply, wait, and still they seem small, with few blossoms.

You go back to them again, and at this point the plant may answer, "We need some molasses!" If you are experienced, you will understand that the plant is asking for carbohydrate energy that will help feed the micro-organisms in the soil (micro-organisms that were supplied by the compost) and you'll simply mix up one of these nutrients with water and pour around the base of the plant. If you are not experienced, you might say, "Molasses?! What would a plant need molasses for?" This question of your own is the next one to be answered, and you will have to do some research, or ask around to find those who might give you some tips as to how to go about mixing and applying it. This need to honor the communication by pursuing whatever you need to learn and do is the burden of any good relationship. It is especially worth it when you realize that the plant gives its service to the world by producing the food items that help to continuously repair and rebuild your body.

In a different situation, let's say you have several fields you intend to plant with corn in one, soybeans in another, and wheat in a third. Let's say that rotation would normally dictate which crop is being planted where, but when you ask the spirit of the soybean if it is a good idea to plant them where you intended to plant them, you get this vague sense of dread and a definite feeling of, "No, that's not right."

You don't have any logical reasons for planting them elsewhere, you don't want to mess up your rotation, and it seems too late in the year to start working another field, so you plant them where you intended to put them in the first place. But late in the growing season there are a series of torrential rains, the field you put the soybeans in is low, two-thirds of the crop is underwater for more than a week. Massive mildew is the result, a large percentage of the crop is lost, and only belatedly do you understand the reason why you kept getting the feeling/answer, "No, that's not right." The question to ask at this point is, "What could I have done differently back in spring if I had decided to honor the response of the spirit of the soybean? Would swapping fields have created as big a disaster as the one I ended up with? Would prepping another field and planting the beans later done any harm?"

Over time, if you continue to work with nature spirits, several things will happen. One will be the realization that you are not working alone. You will begin to see that nature spirits operate within a slightly different, but overlapping realm of information, and that you can have

access to this wider field of information if you are willing to work with them. Another is the realization that you are creating a real relationship to plants which is quite useful and helpful. You will find that you are becoming quite intuitive and you'll trust your own decisions more. And you'll develop your faculties of clairvoyance, clairsentience, and clairsentience which are the abilities to see, hear, or feel clearly beyond the physical realm without the distortions of personal preferences, biases, laziness, or fears.

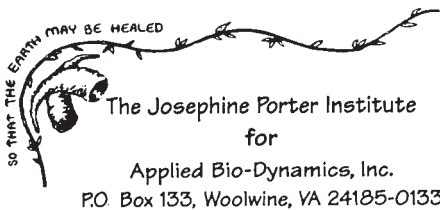
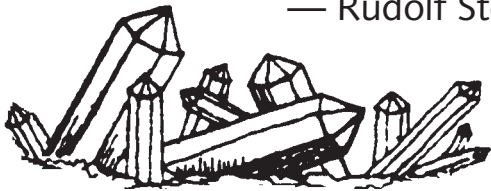
As you get better at communicating with the many forms of intelligence in nature, this often transfers into better communication with people in general. Gradually your awareness of the intelligent life in plants expands to include the fact that this intelligence is critical to your good health. If you stick with it long enough, you will become acutely aware that the ways of commercial, corporate agriculture are extremely destructive to all of us here – humans, nature, and earth. There will be a re-connection to nature, and to place, and the re-establishment of these two bonds carries you back into the realm of the sacred where it is once again easy to know what is truly meaningful in life.

Penny Kelly is the author of *The Elves of Lily Hill Farm* and *Robes: A Book of Coming Changes from the Little Men in Brown Robes*.



“I believe this has made it scientifically acceptable to say that just those radiant forces needed by the organic world are released when small quantities of substance are applied in the appropriate way.”

— Rudolf Steiner, *Spiritual Foundations for the Renewal of Agriculture*, page 93



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