

Applied BIODYNAMICS®



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Issue No. 48

An Interview with Helen Philbrick, Biodynamic Pioneer

Nick Franceschelli

Some people have a lifelong love of teaching, learning and doing. We are very fortunate in biodynamics that we have someone like homesteader and author Helen Philbrick who fits this description. At 95, she teaches chair caning, takes a t'ai chi class and recently wrote a book about her life experiences. Here, Helen recounts memorable times shared with her late husband John in the early days of biodynamics. Ed.

Nick Franceschelli: *First of all, I'm very grateful that you're willing to do this, and I know Mr. Courtney is very grateful. I think it will be wonderful for the readers to learn a little bit about some of the roots of the biodynamic movement in this country. I always ask folks who are willing to do interviews, "How did you meet biodynamic agriculture? Where in your life were you when you encountered it?"*

Helen Philbrick: I heard that there was some kind of conference about community building up in New Hampshire, and right there I said to John I wanted to go to the conference. That was in 1943. He couldn't go. When John's father died, we were able to buy this house [in Duxbury, Massachusetts on the Atlantic seacoast]. He stayed here with the new house that he was getting acquainted with. And at that conference, these people told me that there was going to be another conference somewhere later, in the next month or so, where they were going to study about agriculture, and they said that the most interesting thing about it was the compost. So in that time frame we found out where it was going to be. I said "I'm going," and John said, "I'm not going." You couldn't imagine how I ever got just outside New York City, to the Threefold in Spring Valley. Then they called it the Threefold Farm. Fred Heckel was still alive. He was the one who had been in charge of the conferences. [Mr. Heckel was the first Secretary-Treasurer of the BDA.] I do



"It was at one of these Conferences that a lively little lady from Duxbury, Massachusetts, first met with us. Helen Philbrick came alone the first time, but the following year John came too, and has been with us ever since."

Evelyn Speiden Gregg, BIODYNAMICS, Winter 1977, Number 121, p. 16, "The Early Days of Bio-Dynamics in America", Part III, (Springfield, IL: Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening Association, Inc.)

Photo above, John and Helen Philbrick in 1974.

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Notes

Before the 'back to the land' movement of the 1970s, there were some earlier pioneers in the biodynamic movement of the 1940s. Helen Philbrick, who turned ninety-five this year, recalls those early days in biodynamics. Read Nick Franceschelli's engaging interview with this witty biodynamic pioneer and co-author of *Gardening for Health and Nutrition* and the soon to be re-released *Companion Plants and How to Use Them*.

Also included in this issue: your letters, the new price list from JPI, details of the Annual Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association Conference in October and JPI's Preparation Making Schedule for the year.

Here's to a promising and blessed growing season.

—Patricia Smith, Editor

Thank You for the Blossoms

We are very grateful to the following for their time and patience in collecting the flowers of dandelion (BD #506), yarrow (BD #502), chamomile (BD #503) and valerian (BD #507) in 2004. Their harvests contribute a great deal towards making the biodynamic preparations here at JPI.

- Emigdio Ballon, Abiquiu, New Mexico
- Sharon Carson, Delmar, Delaware
- Alan and Kelly Huntington, Catawissa, Pennsylvania

- Dewane Morgan, Park Rapids, Minnesota
- Ruth Zinniker, family and friends, East Troy, Wisconsin

If we left anyone out, please let us know and we will be glad to include this information in our next issue.

In Memory of Robert "Beau" Johnson, 1944–2005

Beau Johnson, a dear friend and dedicated supporter of biodynamics, passed away February 23, 2005 at the age of sixty-one at his home in Virginia Beach, VA. A veritable "Johnny Appleseed" for dispersing biodynamic information, Beau traveled extensively for many years spreading the word about biodynamics through his popular economic/agriculture talks. Beau also supported JPI in many ways; you may have met him while he manned the JPI book table during conferences, workshops, seminars and other biodynamic gatherings. He was preceded in death by his wife Avis and daughter Flora, who both perished in a tragic boating accident in 1993. After that tragedy, he expanded his spiritual family to those of us who care for the earth. We love you Beau, and you will be sorely missed. May it be a comfort knowing that our dear friend Beau is now reunited with his beloved wife and daughter.

Applied Biodynamics

Applied Biodynamics is a quarterly publication of the Josephine Porter Institute for Applied Bio-Dynamics Inc. (JPI). The subscription price of \$30.00 per year helps support JPI research and development. Back issues are \$7.50 each.

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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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Letter from Livestock Farmer Philip Lyvers

Over 160 participants attended the 2004 Annual Conference of the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association, hosted by the Josephine Porter Institute in Durham, North Carolina last November. One speaker at the conference, farmer/pork producer Philip Lyvers, was well-received by attendees, sharing his transitional experience from conventional to biodynamic farming, including making his own biodynamic preparations. As a token of thanks for his presentation, Hugh Courtney sent Philip all the JPI newsletters that he didn't have in his collection. Following is the letter Philip wrote to Hugh:

Hugh Courtney,

I would like to thank you for the forty-two issues of [the] JPI newsletter. I have read most of them and there is no way of putting a value on the knowledge that is enclosed in them. I will not be buying as much preparations in the future; but I still want to support JPI and all the help you have given me. Enclosed is a small donation to show my appreciation for all the help and patience you have shown me.

Many Thanks,
Philip Lyvers

Special Offer:

Back Issues of *Applied Biodynamics*

A wealth of biodynamic information in practical terms is available to you, the biodynamic practitioner. Order a complete set of *Applied Biodynamics*, the newsletter of the Josephine Porter Institute. You can get the entire collection of forty-eight issues for only \$200.00. That's \$4.17 per issue, nearly forty-five percent off individual issues that normally price at \$7.50 each. A \$360 value for only \$200.00! Contact JPI at (276)930-2463 or fax (276)930-2475 to place your order today.

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*)

A Reader Responds to Price Increase

In our last issue of *Applied Biodynamics* (Winter 2004-2005, No. 47), readers were informed of a much needed price increase for the preparations here at JPI. Commenting on this increase, Edith Ficker of Nova Scotia, Canada recorded the following phone message on New Years Day 2005:

I'm really grateful that Hugh has kept JPI going as long as he has until the rest of us seeing his light learn from him, and I don't know how he ever could have sold his preparations as cheap as what he did.

We have been making our own preparations for the simple reason that we could see there might be a problem sooner or later with getting preparations and we know the amount of work involved. Thank you very much.

2005 Price List from the JPI Catalog

Composting

Biodynamic Compost Preparations (BD #502-507):

Per SET: \$20.00.

Per individual unit:

#504 @ \$2.75

#503 / #505 / #507 @ \$3.25

#502 / #506 @ \$3.75

Pfeiffer BD Compost Starter: \$10.00/unit (1 oz.)

Spray Treatments

BD #500 (Horn Manure): \$7.50/unit

"Prepared" 500 (per Podolinsky method):

\$8.50/unit

(x)500 (x=pre-potentized): \$8.50/unit

BD #501 (Horn Silica): \$3.00/unit

BD #501(F)(Feldspar): \$3.00/unit

#501(5x)(Potentized): \$4.00/unit

BD #508 (*Equisetum arvense*/Horsetail herb):

\$4.00/unit

BC Biodynamic Compound Preparation:

\$7.50/unit

Pfeiffer BD Field Spray: \$20.00/unit (2 ozs.)

Shipping and Handling Costs: \$9.00

(Note: For preparations only, additional cost if weight exceeds one pound, delivered in the U.S.)

An Interview with Helen Philbrick

remember this. There were goats. They used the little white studio as their headquarters where the first biodynamic conference was held. I'm not sure it's there still or not. It was wonderful. There were birds down below it, and there was thick vegetation, and there were grasshoppers and crickets and all these lovely sounds of the woods. [The little studio is still there, but with much renovation.] Dr. [Ehrenfried] Pfeiffer hadn't really come yet. I think he was still somewhere up in northern Maine. But Ralph Courtney read one of the agriculture lectures out of the Steiner book. [Mr. Courtney was co-founder of Threefold Farm along with Charlotte Parker.] Of course it didn't make any sense to us, and I didn't know who any of the rest of the people who were there were. There might have been some that did know what the conference was about in general. Course the Heckel's, Fred and his wife Alice lived there, so they knew what it was all about, and there were probably other people who were old timers, but some of us were real new at it.

Well, I came home, and I said to John, "It was very interesting, and we're going to build, use, and work with compost with our farm. We have determined to make a farm of this."

dynamite!" And this was the beginning of biodynamics. It was the first time we had ever heard the word. It was as though he was kind of thinking out loud. It's funny. I put it away in my mind. I have never talked about it before. So, this is something new.

NF: *That's wonderful. Those are the kind of human-interest stories that get lost because they're not recorded. I want to go back to when you decided to make a little homestead here and build compost piles. What did you have in mind with the five or eventually ten acres? Was it hard times?*

HP: It was the wartime in 1943. When the war was over the effects of the war were still on. John became a minister of the Episcopal Church in Duxbury, and that was what happened. That was why we came here. We needed an excuse to make a farm. It was a very small parish. About a dozen old ladies, and many of them lived together, like sisters. There were very few real families with farms or anything, so there was plenty of time to do what we wanted to do. Those were always the churches that we went to, and John had a very low salary because of it, which the church pension fund has been kind enough to recognize.

NF: *What was your situation before 1943, before you came here to Duxbury?*

HP: John came from Dorchester. He grew up in Dorchester,

"I remember one day we walked out to a patch where there were things growing, and he looked down at the plants, and he said, 'We're in the process of inventing something.' He said, 'I think we'll call it bio-dynamite!' And this was the beginning of biodynamics. It was the first time we had ever heard the word."

NF: *How much land was there here in those days?*

HP: We bought five acres. Later we bought another five acres, but we had to sell that because we needed the money, so we're back to the first five acres. I said then, "We're going to use compost. They did something with preparations, but we're not going to bother with all that." (laughter) Famous last words! The next time there was a conference, John went, and we never missed anymore. Dr. Pfeiffer seemed to like John when they got acquainted, so we were together quite a lot, and we spent a lot of time with him. He had new groups and we would go for walks around. It was interesting that he was feeling his way, but we didn't know him. We didn't know the situation well enough to understand what was happening. Then he was making up his decisions about how he could teach. I remember one day we walked out to a patch where there were things growing, and he looked down at the plants, and he said, "We're in the process of inventing something." He said, "I think we'll call it bio-

which is a part of Boston. His first parish was a little town way up north in Groveland, in Massachusetts. It was another small parish, and because he was new at it, I guess that's why he got it. The powers that be, an archdeacon, watched to see what the prospects were of a young man coming along, and they had a church nearer to Boston that needed help, so they moved him into Weymouth. We were there about three years. Then the rector who had been here in Duxbury was about to retire. The archdeacon came to see us in Weymouth and called on John and said, "Next week down in Duxbury they're going to have a ladies tea party, and they're going to invite the ladies from the Marshfield church, which is in the next town. They need a minister too." And he said, "We three will just happen to drop in that afternoon, so they'll get to see you and know what your name is, and when they hear your name proposed, they'll likely vote you in. So we went to the tea party. John was new and pretty fresh. He had a new collar and a new

suit. Everything was all spruced up for him, so he was really feeling his oats. He had lived up there in Dorchester with a lot of Irish people, and he never failed when he needed a credential or something. One of the ladies at this meeting, honest to Pete, you won't believe it, she looked up at him and said, "Were you any relation to Ralph Philbrick?" John looked down at her and said, "Was he a horse thief?" (laughter) I was so mad at him I could have spanked him. We don't do that! I scolded him afterwards, but we got the job.

NF: *Let's go forward a little bit to the time you met Dr. Pfeiffer.*

HP: With the war stringency, everyone was more careful with their food, and I figured that we should look as though we were raising food. We already had chickens, because we've always had them. John liked chickens, and the next thing, of course, was milk goats. So this all came together all at once, the decision to make a farm and our finding Dr. Pfeiffer. So we were going to do biodynamics without the preps. (chuckles)

NF: *At some point you actually did start to use the preps after you met Dr. Pfeiffer?*

HP: Yes, at some point we bought them.

NF: *You bought them from Josephine Porter, or how did you do it?*

HP: Yes, we met Josephine Porter. They began then to have these conferences at Spring Valley, and Josephine Porter became the Secretary of the Biodynamic Association. It was probably twenty or thirty people. It grew as the time went on. This was the late '40s. It went on year after year, and it grew as more people heard about it. I don't now remember who many of them were, but they all had their own need to learn. Evelyn Speiden [Gregg] [a 'right hand' to Pfeiffer and Secretary of the BDA before Josephine Porter] was there, and of course she knew about the preps, because she had made them.

NF: *So I take it at some point you began keeping goats here, planting vegetable gardens, and raising fruit trees. You began to follow the biodynamic method, which you outline in your book [Gardening for Health and Nutrition]. Is that right?*

HP: Yes.

NF: *I remember reading in it how pleased you were at noticing the soil mellowing and darkening after a very short period of time through using composting and cover crops and so forth.*

HP: Yes, it really works. It was amazing that it should work. Now I read the same thing in *Acres [USA]*. The big farmers find that their soil is better.

NF: *When you started using the preparations, did you notice something else was happening than what you normally would expect?*

HP: Yes, I did notice. I can remember clearly before we

moved up here. We lived in another house down there because we hadn't bought this house yet. I guess I was planting Swiss chard that day. We'd gotten cow manure from somewhere, which we could use for fertilizer, but I also had some chemical fertilizer that I had bought from a grocery store. This was before I knew anything about biodynamics, and I remember the experience of running the store boughten chemical fertilizer through my hands and thinking, "It doesn't leave my hands dirty. It's dusty, but it's not dirty, and you don't have to go and wash. Maybe it's fine." I wasn't awfully sold on it. But of course after I heard Pfeiffer, one couldn't possibly be sold on it.

NF: *Do you come from a gardening or farming background yourself?*

"It's so tragic, the junk we buy from the grocery stores. Oh dear."

HP: Yes. My mother always had a small garden. My father was a silversmith, and I was his apprentice. That's another whole story. His name was Franklin Porter. I was born in Fall River, Massachusetts but the family lived on the island that Newport is on in Rhode Island. Our house was on Porter's Lane off West Main Road. They had to move the house in order to put the bottom of the bridge there. That was our real background. We moved to another town, in Middleton, north of Boston when I was four years old, because of school. I had to go to school. That was the end of paradise. (chuckles) Mother always had a garden. Dad did not, but she did a lot with the garden. It was mostly flowers. I don't think they raised vegetables much, but it's amazing how much more self-sufficient people were in those days. They had fruit. They had blueberry patches and apple trees, pear trees, and grapevines around their house. Sometimes even an asparagus bed in the yard. This was a relic of their parents, probably following what their parents had done. Now we have lost so much of that. It's so tragic, the junk we buy from the grocery stores. Oh dear.

NF: *Going back to when you started using the biodynamic method, did you notice anything else, besides the darkening and softening of the soil, in terms of maybe the vegetable flavors or the keeping quality compared to the time before, when you were still using mineral fertilizers?*

HP: Yes, but of course we weren't trained to look for those things then the way we do now. Now we make a real study of the difference. In those days when the peas were ripe we picked the peas, brought 'em in, and ate them! And this went on. We already had the hens, and we figured we had

the milk supply, if we're going to feed hungry people. We often would kill chickens. As it went on we had more hens, and the men's club at the church would have a supper and we would provide the chicken for the stew or something. We got the milk goats and then we had the milk. Then we could make cheese. All different kinds of cheese. We even boiled down the whey to a kind of sugary substance, like maple sugar. I can't say we liked it very well. I took some of these cheeses down to Spring Valley.

NF: *Did you convey to the parishioners any of your work with biodynamics and natural gardening?*

HP: Yes. We tried to, and some of them were interested. The majority of them weren't. That didn't happen to be what they were especially interested in.

NF: *When did you add pigs?*

HP: That was later. People were curious about our homestead so I had written a book and then published some of this.

NF: "Powder Point Priest Keeps Pigs" book?

[*Powder Point is a geographical area within Duxbury, Massachusetts so named by the first pilgrims who thought the land-mass was similar to the shape of a holder they used for storing gunpowder. Ed.*]

HP: Yeah. The [title] *Powder Point Priest Keeps Pigs* was inspired by Owen and Kathy McBride. Owen had been a Trappist monk and Kathy had been a sister in charge of a school in the Philippines, and they were obviously Roman Catholics. They had a place over in Bridgewater, which we visited often. Anyway, before that, we had the pigs. We were all sitting in the back room there, and I read a list of stupid names I tried for the book. All of a sudden, Kathy McBride, a good Catholic, blurted out, "POWDER POINT PRIEST KEEPS PIGS!" That had to be the name. (laughter)

NF: *Although John was a minister, technically?*

HP: Well, Episcopal clergy are priests, too.

NF: *Oh! Alright. To follow through on the work you were doing with the biodynamics. I remember reading in the gardening book [Gardening for Health and Nutrition] that for awhile, you were in Missouri. Did that happen before or after you moved here to Duxbury?*

HP: No, that was after we lived here. We lived here about ten years, and it got to be time to go. You know, you find out after awhile. We were supposed to go down to a town called Orleans on Cape Cod. It was an Episcopal Church. We had good friends there. They had sheep and goats and all these rural things. Their names were Florence and Dickey Kimball. Dickey [the minister there], had been a writer. The arrangement was that when Dickey got too old to work there, he would retire and we would go down and take their place. It looked as though the right time had come, and so

we gathered up some of our animals and moved down there. Florence was much younger than Dickey. It turned out that Dickey was old and didn't drive, so Florence always drove him around, and when John came on and made calls to the same parishioners, Florence took Dickey to find out what the new minister had said. It was too much! Florence said, "John, you're not happy here, are you? I think you better find another job." This was totally illegal, because in the Episcopal Church the bishops and archdeacons make the decisions. So we jumped on a train and went to the New York headquarters. We saw a man coming who had taught John in the seminary. He looked as if he was about to leave, taking his hat down off the hat rack and putting it on as though he was just about to go out to lunch. We sort of expected that, and we told him the situation [of] what had happened, and he said, "A man in Missouri has just given a 400-acre farm to the Episcopal Church at the headquarters, and we don't know what to do with it. We don't want it, we can't use it, and we can't sell it." John said, "Well, you know, I'm probably the only Episcopal clergyman who knows one end of the cow from the other!" So we got the job. We were in Missouri for about eight or nine years.

NF: *He had a congregation there as well, or was he just care taking this farm?*

HP: It was three little tiny churches, and this was becoming a training center for clergy; for young men who were working in rural churches, and out of this they built an organization called the Rural Workers Fellowship, which included a newsletter with a prayer day for everyone on the list. The whole thing was very real and very strong in those days, for all those years, starting about 1950, I guess. We came back in '57. Organizations like that are encounters. We had people from all over the world; India, Australia and lots of clergy from England come to see how we were training the seminarians. Not John and me, but top people to be the trainers. They had women who trained for Christian education. All were really professional.

NF: *Were you farming the farm while all this training was going on, or how did that work?*

HP: We had a demonstration homestead. It was a little house that they built for us. We had a barn and we had goats, and we had sheep.

NF: *You grew vegetables and made compost?*

HP: Yes, we had compost piles. We taught the seminarians. There were maybe forty men from four seminaries who would come for a summer session of maybe three or four weeks and we would show them the demonstration homestead. We wrote a dictionary of rural terms, so that these city slickers would know what the farmer was talking about when he spoke of the apron out in front of the barn, and



The Philbrick's wrote The Minister's Vegetable Garden in 1952 for the Episcopal Church while homesteading at Roanridge Farm in Parkville, Missouri.

all these other terms, like the cow being "fresh." The language is totally different.

NF: *Did you have these seminarians working in the garden with you?*

HP: Yes. They worked on the farm. The big farm. They had a 100-head of purebred shorthorn cattle there. That was Mr. Wilbur Cochel's herd. Mr. Cochel was the man who gave the farm [to the Episcopal Church]. When the farm superintendent came to put the tools away, all the tools were missing. They couldn't find them anywhere. They found when they unpacked the hay bales in the winter time, the tools came tumbling out! The students had left them all out [in the hayfield]! It was very interesting. It had its ups and downs.

NF: *During all this time in the '50s when you were out there, you were staying in touch with Pfeiffer and going back to Spring Valley?*

HP: Pfeiffer came out to Missouri to see us. He came twice as I can remember. We had a man; he wasn't connected with what we were doing officially. His name was Mr. Pratt, and I remember him because a hundred times a day he would say, "No man can be a hundred percent cor-

rect a hundred percent of the time!" (laughter) I remember that before I remember his face. He was experimenting with some green liquid. I don't know what it was. I've forgotten the details, because that wasn't really quite my place, but he sent for Dr. Pfeiffer, and Peter Escher [associated with the Pfeiffer Laboratory and a biodynamic consultant] came too.

NF: *How do you remember Dr. Pfeiffer? You must have known him to some extent.*

HP: Yes, yes. He was very quick to speak. His speech was fast. He was fairly modest. He didn't take the center of the stage, although he got the respect from everybody.

They had a summer conference at Threefold Farm every year. Of course we all went to it, and it got bigger and bigger. I remember one year when it was a rainy day. They had built the new building; the auditorium that's there now. You've probably seen it. All of a sudden, on this rainy day this gaggle of people came walking in, soaking wet. Samuel Kaymen [Founder of Stonyfield Farm that produces dairy products, most notably yogurt, and a former Director with the Board of the BDA.] had brought them in on his truck. There wasn't room enough for them to be under cover, so they all got soaked on the truck on the way down. It was the 1960s. John was talking to the old-timers who always came to those conferences, and he said from the stage, because he was president by that time, "You've probably noticed there's an awful lot of hair around!" (laughter) [John Philbrick was President of the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association from 1962 to 1977.] I can remember latching on to Samuel, whom we had met up in New Hampshire a year or so before, so I knew him. I walked down beside him to go to lunch, and I said, "What do you think about these older people who live here in New York?," and Sam said, "Oh these are beautiful people! They're all deep down beautiful people, even if they do have a lot of automobiles." He had a gang that followed him. He's a real ringleader anyway. They had a house up there in New Hampshire, in Stonyfield, and a farm.

NF: *Did you also try out Dr. Pfeiffer's Compost Starter and Field Spray on your gardens and property?*

HP: Yes, I did. We had a big garden out here [in Duxbury], and not on the orchard. Those were orchard trees. We planted some apple trees later, but these are ancient apples. [The varieties are Roxbury Russet, Tolman Sweet and Rhode Island Greening.] These have always been here. They're two or three hundred years old. We used to have these weekend conferences here, before we built the building in 1956.

NF: *And who was invited?*

HP: Anybody who wanted to come, and they invited their friends, so we never knew who all they were.

NF: *And what was the theme of the conferences?*

HP: The theme was Biodynamics. This was to teach everybody biodynamics. I had a new friend who would just come to help me with cleaning. She came to those conferences. I was surprised. There were so many people, I didn't get to speak to them. One weekend we had a big group that was sort of extreme, led by Michio Kushi.

NF: *He was a pioneer in macrobiotics?*

HP: Yes he was. And the cooks for that weekend were macrobiotic cooks, and I remember them cooking in this little tiny kitchen. I remember they were even working on the floor; they needed the space so much. It was a lovely, lovely dinner party in here. We used all the shelves and everything, because it was crowded with people, and my husband, the wretch, (chuckles) he found a friend whose name was [Leon] Handell. He came from Rhode Island, and his wife [Helen] always said, "He's a swamp Yankee." That's where swamp Yankees come from, and John and his swamp Yankee friend would disappear at lunchtime and come back and brag about having a meal at Howard Johnson's down the road! (chuckles) And they had chocolate ice cream sodas! We'd been eating, I don't know, raw shellfish or something. Yes, and rice . . .

NF: *Do you remember some other people who came to these events and might later have gotten seriously interested in biodynamics?*

HP: I have guest books that are full of all kinds of names.

NF: *Any that stands out?*

HP: There were the people who came from Maine who started this MOFGA [Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association]. They were here. Samuel [Kaymen] probably eclipsed everybody. If I looked in the books, I would probably remember the people, but offhand I couldn't rehearse their names.

NF: *So you send some of these young people back to Maine with the ideas of organic and biodynamic agriculture?*

HP: They took the ideas back. Yes. They must have come to the Spring Valley conferences, too. I started to tell you, there was the Summer Conference, which is in June. It was early in the summer. Then in the fall there was another conference, the Farm Conference, at Walter Stuber's farm, Golden Acres [Newtown, PA], where we met Heinz Grotzke. There were oh, maybe ten people there. There weren't a great many, couple dozen. We walked acres and acres of pasture of different people's land who wanted to do all kinds of things with their land.

NF: *So going back a bit, you moved back from Missouri to Ashfield, Massachusetts?*

HP: Yes. The population was one thousand, and when we came the population was one thousand and two!

NF: *So had you kept this place here in Duxbury and rented it out all the while you were gone?*

HP: Yes, we had rented this to Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Alden, and Ben Alden was about sixth generation from John Alden, the pilgrim who landed on Plymouth Rock. The John Alden House, the oldest house in America, is just down the road here. We're so close to the early pilgrims here. [The Philbrick's house which they purchased in 1943 was built in 1772.]

NF: *You continued to garden in Ashfield?*

HP: We did biodynamics there. We loved it. It was lovely soil. There was a farmer who had cows right close, probably on the land that we were using. Many people came to visit us there. One of the Christian Community priests, Greg Brewer lived down on the Cape, and the last time I saw him before he died he said, "I remember coming to your house in Ashfield, and the whole house was full of little praying mantises that had just hatched." (chuckles) They hatched inside the house! Plenty of other people visited us up there.

NF: *How do you remember Josephine Porter?*

HP: She was little. And smelled of goats. (chuckles) She had blond hair. She was very enthusiastic. She spoke fast. She had a little daughter, Abigail.

NF: *So you remember her warmly?*

HP: Oh yes, very warmly. She was lively and always happy. And of course she had so many goats. [One hundred dairy goats] She had to milk them all and take care of them, but she had the right temperament. Goats are kind of temperamental animals anyway. We had enough goats. Once we had twenty-three but we sold most of them to somebody who wanted to clear a field.

NF: *They graze brush well, I'm told.*

HP: Yes, I know. They eat poison ivy. We never had any poison ivy here at all when we had goats.

NF: *When did you decide to write about your experiences?*



From left to right, Hartmut von Jeetze, Helen Philbrick, Heinz Grotzke, and Gerda von Jeetze in August 1998. (Photo above and on page 1 courtesy from the collection of Heinz Grotzke.)



Helen Philbrick in early 2005. Photo ©Veronica Schlegel

HP: It may have started when I was ninety. My ninetieth birthday, the Wildlands Trust [of Southeastern Massachusetts] had a party, and a venerable gentleman, a professor of Geography at Bridgewater State College said that I should write a book, so I started to write then. I've spent all this time on it. [The book, *Journeys With a Real Jack in the Pulpit*, will be published by Xlibris and released this year. Helen's husband, the Reverend John Philbrick, passed away in 1984.]

Books by Helen Philbrick (and others)

John and Helen Philbrick, *Gardening for Health & Nutrition*, (Hudson, NY: Garber Communications, Anthroposophic Press, 1988), 109 pages.

An excerpt from *Gardening for Health & Nutrition*:

"It has been stated over and over again that biodynamics is not a collection of recipes, or favorite tricks to make things grow. There is only one general rule and that is that each plot of ground is different from every other plot and must be studied carefully and handled as an individual entity. Because of this individuality, it is impossible to lay down hard and fast rules, to say exactly what you must do or avoid doing. You have the opportunity to study and apply the following principles in complete freedom in your own garden." pp. 23-24

NF: Can you talk about some of the changes you have seen in the biodynamic work over time?

HP: I'm delighted that so many more people are coming to it. I don't know how much is going on in Wisconsin, but I know they have a group, quite a large group, that makes the preparations.

Oh incidentally, we had Evelyn Speiden [Gregg] come here and we made preps in what was then on the ground floor hall of the new building [built in the 1970s]. Built to be a lecture hall or for dancers, the same building now is an office building for the Wildlands Trust of Southeastern Massachusetts. [Mrs. Philbrick donated the building in 1995 to this non-profit organization which works to save green land from being turned into house lots.]

We had quite a group. We had an anthroposophical reading group from 1943 to 1949. We read every week. Helen Oshima was around and she was in it. She was always the reader for us. She was a wonderful person.

NF: She was a biodynamic person, too, wasn't she?

HP: Oh yes, she was. She died some time ago. [Mrs. Oshima was a biodynamic farmer and researcher and passed away March 11, 2004.]

NF: It must have been a very pioneering effort in those early days.

HP: It was pioneering.

Nick Franceschelli was born and raised in New York City. After high school he worked on biodynamic dairy farms and at the Josephine Porter Institute. He now works for the educational program at the Hawthorne Valley Farm in New York State.

Helen and John Philbrick, *The Bug Book*, (Charlotte, VT: Garden Way Publishing, 1974), 126 pages. (Note: First published in 1963.)

An excerpt from *The Bug Book*:

"... the insect kingdom is noble and charming and infinitely ingenious. It is our hope that people will learn more about bugs so they may also know wonder and appreciation and reverence for the quality of life which surrounds us everywhere on this earth.

This is just part of the reason why we would rather not kill 'em all off and get rid of them once and for all!" p.120 (Note: *The Bug Book* was revised in 1994, and is available as *The Gardener's Bug Book* by Barbara Pleasant. Storey Publishing, North Adams, MA, 160 pages.)

The Reverend John and Helen Philbrick, *Powder Point Priest Keeps Pigs*, (Plymouth, MA: Cosmaids, Under Roof, Dome & Sky, Inc., 1978) 125 pages. [Published as a school project by the students of Plymouth and Carver High Schools.]

An excerpt from *Powder Point Priest Keeps Pigs*:

"The delight we feel, the confidence that Nature is lavish in its care of us all could fill our hearts with peace and a sense of security not to be found in the world of business or government." p. 3

The Reverend John Philbrick and Helen Philbrick, *The Minister's Vegetable Garden and Compost*, Roanridge Rural Church Series 1 & 2 respectively, (New York City, NY: The National Town Council, Division of Town and Country Work, 1952) Series 1: 55 pages, Series 2: 24 pages.

An excerpt from *The Minister's Vegetable Garden*:

"The return of waste materials to the soil from which our food is taken forms a pattern for the perpetuation of agriculture all over the world, and we believe that the Church should pioneer in helping people to see the close relation between agriculture and the disposal of waste in our country." p. 35

Helen Philbrick's *Journeys With a Real Jack in the Pulpit* is to be released this year and will be published by Xlibris. Call 1-888-795-4274 for details.

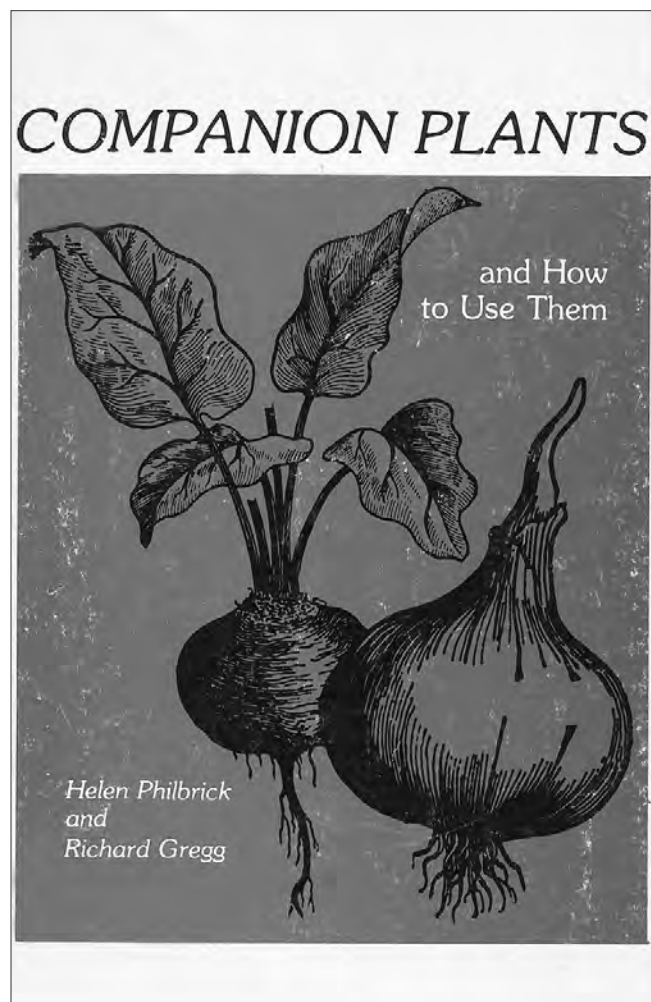
Helen Philbrick and Richard Gregg, *Companion Plants and How to Use Them*, (Kimberton, PA: Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association, 1966), 111 pages.

An excerpt from *Companion Plants and How to Use Them*: Birch (*Betula*)

"... If birch leaves are added to the compost heap, they will help exhausted soils. Soil taken from underneath birch trees or the soil surrounding their roots may be used to heal

the ground where diseased plants have been removed. Such "birch soil" will also restore barren soil where pine or fir trees have discouraged fertility." p. 10

Note: *Companion Plants and How to Use Them* is being reprinted, and will be available in July, 2005.



Annual Biodynamic Conference in Tennessee October 14–16, 2005

The Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association's Annual Conference will be at Long Hungry Creek Farm in Red Boiling Springs, Tennessee. Held concurrently with the farm's Tenth Annual Harvest Festival, all of the meals will be homegrown and biodynamic, fresh from the beautiful gardens you will be seeing. Help celebrate the joys of gardening with folks who make their livelihood from it, as the human being is placed in the heart of the garden.

One session of workshops will be presented by profes-

sional biodynamic market gardeners explaining how they grow specific crops. There will also be workshops on raising cattle, sheep, pigs, chickens and bees, as well as talks on compost and compost tea, and presentations on Rudolf Steiner's work in the fields of medicine, education and meditation. A special pre-conference workshop, "Demystifying Biodynamics", will be a hands-on making of all the biodynamic preparations and how to apply them. Speakers include Sarah Cherry, Sarah Flack, Luke Frey, Jim Fullmer,

Günther Hauk, Sandor Katz, Harvey Lisle, Phillip Lyvers, Eric Smith, Vinnie McKinney, Lloyd, John and Harold Nelson, and Hugh Williams. A wide variety of biodynamic and organic products and books will also be available.

Other activities will include demonstrations of a stirring machine, several compost tea brewers and an Italian spading machine; tours of the gardens and nearby biodynamic farms; and pony rides, goat-milking, art and other activities for all the kids. Rounding out the weekend's festivities will be a talent show, bonfire and "biodynamic music" on Saturday evening.

For attendees who choose to stay on the farm, there are plenty of beautiful camping spaces and also a barn loft.

Historic hotels in Red Boiling Springs offer accommodations at very reasonable rates.

Come feel the difference wholesome produce makes in your body, and learn how to grow it. Genuine health begins in the soil. Don't miss this rare opportunity to mingle with professional biodynamic gardeners, and experience firsthand the relationship between soil health and really good food.

For more information, contact the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association, Inc. at (541)998-0105, e-mail <biodynamic@aol.com>, or visit the Association website at <www.biodynamics.com>.

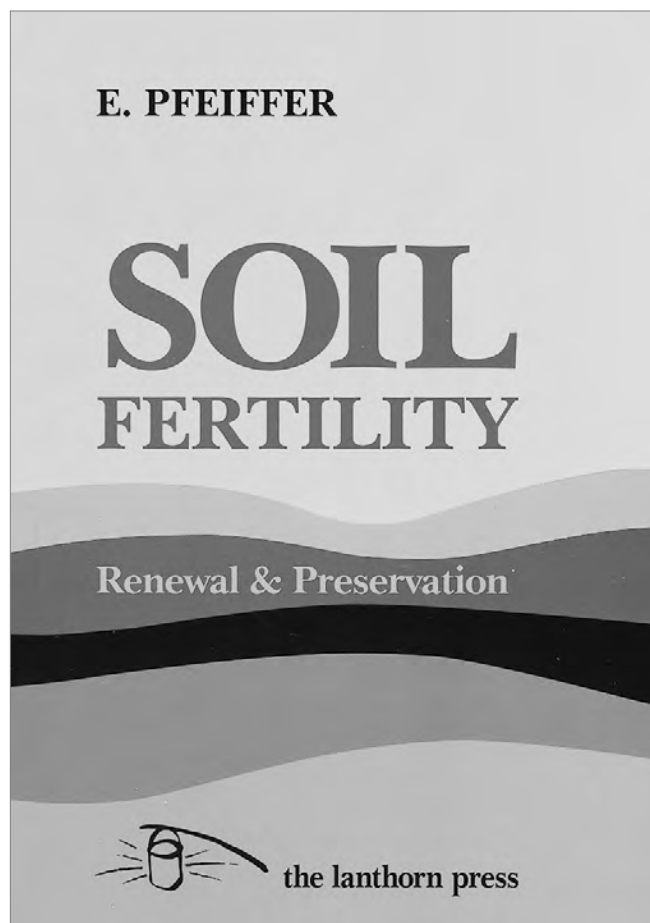
Out of Print *Soil Fertility, Renewal & Preservation* Now Available

Dr. Ehrenfried Pfeiffer's *Soil Fertility, Renewal & Preservation* is now back in print. First published in 1947, it is considered one of the most resourceful books for biodynamic methods around.

"It is not a question of going backwards, but of discovering where we made the wrong turn, and then going forward again in the right direction. In this vital enterprise, on which the survival of the human species may well depend, this book can be a really practical help,"

— Lady Eve Balfour

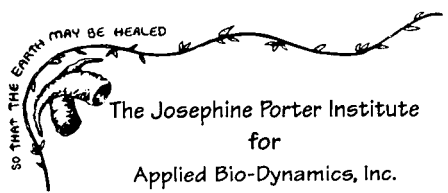
Soil Fertility, Renewal & Preservation is available from JPI for \$24.95 plus postage and handling (\$5.00).



With the Moon's rays the whole reflected Cosmos comes on to the Earth. All influences that pour on to the Moon are rayed back again. Thus the whole starry Heavens – though we may not be able to prove it by the customary physical methods of to-day – are in a sense rayed back on to the Earth by the Moon. It is indeed a strong and powerfully organising cosmic force which the Moon rays down into the plant, so that the seeding process of the plant may also be assisted; so that the force of growth may be enhanced into the force of reproduction.

Rudolf Steiner – *Agriculture*, Lecture 6, p. 109–110

SO THAT THE EARTH MAY BE HEALED



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