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Feeding a Family the Biodynamic Way

Leonard Ablieter

It's quite a journey for a world traveler to become a biodynamic farmer, but the author finds it to be a fulfilling life for he and his family. Leonard Ablieter was born in Stuttgart, Germany in 1933. He became a U.S. citizen by joining the U.S. Air Force when he arrived in the states in 1955. He worked as an in-flight medic and, while stationed in Japan, got hooked on sailing. After the military, Leonard's career focused on the travel industry, and then he retired to live on his boat. In total, he's sailed 25,000 nautical miles and has published stories about his adventures. "The conventional never interested me," he says, "while not always consciously, I look for the unconventional." Now we will read about this sailor who left his boat to become a biodynamic farmer.

About seven years ago, I was living on my forty-foot sailboat in Chula Vista Harbor, California, and had been cruising the Pacific Ocean from Alaska to Hawai'i to Mexico for the previous ten years or so. I met a friend for coffee in San Diego who, among other things, can heal by using energy.

We were completely absorbed in our conversation about various aspects of subtle energies when we were interrupted by a voice from a couple of tables away. The stranger apologized for having been listening in and asked if he might join us since he thought he might have something to contribute. It is not often that one runs into somebody even aware of the subject of our conversation, let alone be able to talk about it, and so we were happy to invite the stranger to our table.

He introduced himself as a naval officer on one of the ships in the harbor, and then began by asking us if we ever had heard of Rudolf Steiner. My friend drew a blank and I vaguely recognized the name because of a friend who

became a Waldorf teacher and sent her daughter through twelve grades of Waldorf school.

Our new acquaintance told us of biodynamic preparations and compost, and related a story of a friend of his in Hawai'i who had bought some pretty marginal land on some volcanic mountainside and proceeded to start a garden there. Everybody laughed at him and assured him that nothing would grow there. Well, his friend, knowledgeable about biodynamics, proved everybody wrong. We were then told about an individual in the San Diego area who was actively growing crops biodynamically. All in all, my friend and I were treated to an introduction to a whole new dimension of growing things. We talked for a long time and it was closing time when we all left the coffee shop.

I was in the process of preparing for another ocean voyage, and my friend was heading back to an alternative medical clinic in Tijuana, Mexico where he used to treat people, so neither of us were about to use this new-found knowledge in the foreseeable future. For some reason, however, the conversation made an impact on me and I thought about biodynamics off and on for some time.

But things happen. Before I was able to leave on my voyage, I met my future wife in Tijuana. We got married, had a daughter, and then I sold the sailboat. We moved from Ensenada, Mexico to the southern Willamette Valley of Oregon. I found a little eight-acre farm with a sixty-year-old farm house and we bought it with the money from the boat sale. That was at the end of August, 2003.

The property included five acres of forest with Douglas-fir, white fir, and hemlock, and three areas of neglected pasture. A rocky area covered with white oak trees divides the upper pasture on a gentle hillside from the lower. There

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Notes

In preparing articles for this issue, I was struck by the way disability has touched the lives of the authors – a former mental health professional who now turns her healing talents to traumatized forests and trees, a farmer whose wife has a disability, the grandmother of a child with a developmental disability. And each of us has our own story.

Part of my healing comes through gardening and communing and working with the elementals. Some months ago, I was observing one of my azalea bushes and began to listen as the spirit of the bush (as I interpret it) told me its story of trauma and pain. Before Earth had become so physical and dense, it used to be free to move and dance and create spiritually. It longed for the old days. Then other azaleas' spirits began to tell their stories, all at once, in a chorus of pained voices. I was overwhelmed, and could only turn it all over into God's hands and implore intercession.

This morning, inspired by Maria Mihok's story of using the Tree Harmonizers, I placed the ones from the kit I just received from JPI around a large oak tree on the edge of my yard. This old tree is a sight to behold each afternoon when the western sun shines upon it, as if to glorify it. I have grown fond of this tree, and knew it was the one to receive the Tree Harmonizers.

My landlord stopped by this evening for a rare visit (he

had to come up because a tree fell on a neighboring cottage he rents out). So he came over and I showed him the tree. He said he'd been worried about its health and he pointed to all the stubs going up for several yards up the trunk where large branches had broken off and scarred over, as if the tree was a multiple amputee. The tree now feels clear, incredibly clear, and shines like the sun. I look forward to seeing what healing takes place, and hope it is shared with other trees and the azalea bushes. I've heard that the effects of Tree Harmonizers can reach many miles.

It is exciting to have such tools for healing the Earth available! And now we have the worldwide healing efforts of applying the biodynamic preparations in conjunction with St. John's Day, as told in this issue. An upcoming Michaelmas spray initiative is also described herein. Please share your stories about these initiatives with us.

—Kara LeBeau

Gratitude to All for Preparation Plant Contributions

Once again, we wish to thank everyone who sent us dandelion blossoms. JPI would fall very short of being able to produce an adequate supply of BD #506 without the help of blossom contributions from the following:

- Eileen Bristol – Ann Arbor, MI
- Kent & Sharon Carson – Delmar, DE
- Paul & Nancy Keiser – Marne, MI

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Applied Biodynamics

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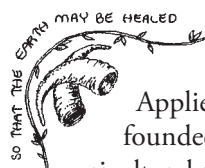
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Mission

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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Healing a Wounded Woodland

Maria Mihok

Last year, events in my life unfolded in such a way that I came to a point where I only wanted to do that which I loved to do – live in direct communication with the Earth, listen to it, and work to bring healing to it. I have a master's degree in clinical psychology, and even though I worked in the mental health field for eighteen years, it wasn't satisfying to me. After some heart searching and several educational workshops, I rediscovered my love of nature and particularly the woodlands. Eventually I quit my job and attended a nine-month wilderness school residential program. That's when plants started to communicate with me. This experience led to a six-month apprenticeship with Stephen Buhner learning Sacred Plant Medicine. It changed my life and helped me to realize that I have gifts to help the planet beyond any job in the nine-to-five world.

In the meantime, I was doing odd jobs just to make a living and letting go of my old sense of "self" to embrace something new. I kept feeling that I should go live with a friend I met during my apprenticeship who owns land. I realize now that the land wanted me there as much as I wanted to be on the land. When I mentioned this to her, she said she had been having the same feeling and knew I was supposed to come to her place.

She and her husband had bought a house on forty acres in Argyle, New York seven years ago. They also bought an additional sixty acres across the street a year later, mainly to rescue it from the ravages of heavy logging equipment and noisy chainsaws that were tearing down the trees.

When my friends walked the land the first time, they saw huge gashes in the tree trunks, large swaths of vegetation torn away, and roads filled with mud and deep

ruts. Off the main roads were smaller roads that had been cleared or bulldozed, oftentimes just to get to one felled tree. Abandoned piles of cut timber lay rotting. Tops of trees littered the ground. My friends felt sick when they saw the wanton destruction. The land had been raped, they said. This was six years ago.

As my friend and I talked about my coming to their land, it became apparent that something greater than both of us was at work – that my going there was not about my having time to just be on the land, but was about my being there to help heal it. I was terrified. Although I had wanted to do something like this for many years, I didn't know where to begin.

When I first walked the woods, no place felt good to me. Every area was in varying degrees of pain. I started to work on various levels – physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual. Each situation required a unique blend of skills and understanding I had gleaned from my work in the mental health field and in all my studies and experiences since leaving that field. On the physical level, I took what I knew from *feng shui* (Chinese for "wind" and "water" – the art of placement to facilitate the flow of positive energy) and cleared areas of obstructed energy mostly by clearing away downed trees.

I kept getting the intuitive message that this land wanted to be witnessed – it wanted its traumatic story to be known and acknowledged. Some areas wanted to be honored, others wanted to be witnessed, and all of it wanted to have a positive reciprocal relationship with people. And so on the emotional and psychological level, I paid attention to the images and feelings that came to me from the trees and the land as I walked and worked in various places. I saw images, for example, of trucks rolling through on their way to retrieve felled trees. Suddenly, I felt anger, grief, hopelessness, and despair as I walked and worked in different places. These were not feelings I'd had prior to entering those areas, and so to me that was a clue to what the various areas were feeling. Some places felt like a war zone. I began to realize that these woods were no different on a psychological and emotional level than a person who had post-traumatic stress syndrome – an anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to a terrifying event. And so on that level, I began to treat it as if it were a person who had been raped, disrespected, and dishonored and very wounded. I listened, watched the images that would come into my mind as I walked or worked, witnessed, honored places that I felt needed that, made agreements with certain areas as to what

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*)

could be done in that place and what could not – e.g., no cutting of anything, no removal of downed wood for firewood, etc. I always told an area what I was doing when I was there, what my intentions were, and checked for feedback from that area. In this way, I tried to establish a positive reciprocal relationship.

On a spiritual level, I applied some techniques that I knew to help clear areas of any beings that did not need to be there. Some areas seemed to have layers and layers of trauma to be released. Nature accepts us where we're at, with the knowledge we have at hand to communicate and work with it to heal. If there's something needed that we don't know, then it lets us understand that we need more training in some area. I felt a pull to learn dowsing – a method to discern elements and energies in an environment, and so I did and then wrote a dowsing program to help clear the land of any noxious energies, energy blockages, or areas of residual suffering by man's hand. The result was dramatic – the entire 100 acres of land was cleared of its “negative” emotional frequencies instantaneously! It now felt like a “normal” healthy woodland. Unbelievable to me, yet it happened.

All of this work took place between October 2006 and March 2007. Starting in January 2007, I began to feel the “presence” of the soil and that it needed something. But I didn't know what. “Biodynamics” kept coming to me the more I thought about the soil. So I called around and

learned of the Josephine Porter Institute. I spoke to JPI staff and they recommended the Pfeiffer BD Field Spray and possibly the Tree Harmonizer Kit. So I bought a backpack sprayer and started spraying the Field Spray in the woods. The spray was the *pièce de résistance*, so to speak. The change it brought, especially in the most damaged areas, was unbelievable! After spraying, it felt like a wrong had been righted. Even the most inharmonious places now felt peaceful and sometimes even joyful. The whole process took two to three days. Some of the places that had been quite repulsive to me started to feel so good, I didn't want to leave!

The experience of land being transformed from a “war zone” into a place of peace, happiness, and joy is beyond words! It's truly a co-creative process with nature. I have sprayed about six acres to date, some places I have sprayed twice. However, I know the effects go well beyond the areas specifically sprayed. I can feel it. As alive as the packets of Field Spray feel in dried form when they arrive in the mail, is as alive as the land becomes after spraying. It glows with lightness not present before.

I have also used the Tree Harmonizer Kit – certain biodynamic preparations that are placed in the four cardinal directions around a tree (one is hung, three are buried) to enable the tree to become a potent “harmonizer” of healing energy. My perception of these, so far, is that their effects are more subtle. One I used in the woods with a pine tree



seemed to have “grounded” that space – solidified it back to its original integrity. The Tree Harmonizers seem to gently send out their healing energies through the circulation of the sap throughout the tree and beyond. Another was used on a maple in the front yard. For the past two to three years, tent caterpillars have almost completely defoliated the many trees in the yard. This year, one week after we used the Tree Harmonizers, the caterpillars disappeared from the maple. And they disappeared from surrounding trees, too. Was this just a coincidence? In checking with Hugh Courtney, he said, “Trees so treated definitely appear to improve in health.”

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Feeding a Family the Biodynamic Way

is also a level area with the house and outbuildings, a 9,000-square-foot garden, and another pasture out front.

Some of the pasture areas contain fruit trees, mostly various kinds of apples, some pears, and a couple of Italian plums. The bonus was a full southern exposure. We also have a well that produces excellent, clear water that we can drink from the tap.

The land was quite neglected – the garden and pasture dry and full of weeds, but we had credible assurance that for at least three years no synthetic chemicals, including fertilizer, had been used. So we had a more or less clean start. Maybe that is why the energy of the little farm felt so good to me when I first came to look at it.

At this point, my knowledge of biodynamics had been gleaned from *Biodynamic Agriculture – Ideas in Practice* by Willy Schilthuis. In addition, I knew about the need for compost, lots of it, and somewhere I’d read about cover crops.

Year One: Working with BD

I began by building an 8’-deep x 16’-wide x 6’-tall frame of two-by-fours and covered it with corrugated metal panels to form the roof, under which I enclosed two spaces about 4’ x 6’ each using straw bales. These formed our initial composting bins. Then I bought some red clover and vetch seed mixture for the garden area. The soil there was so hard and dry that it took four days of continuously running the sprinklers to get the ground wet a few inches deep. I had no tractor, tiller or other equipment at the time so I just seeded by hand on top, hoping that with fall and winter coming, the cover crop would win out over the weeds, and it did, sort of.

With these two jobs out of the way, it was time to get seri-

I wanted to share this experience with others who use biodynamics and to let people know that preparations can be used in other ways and not just on farms. The land that we live on can either uplift us or degrade us, depending on its quality of life. We owe it to the land to listen to it and its needs and give it our best to help it. Biodynamics is an amazing tool of the Earth to heal the Earth and bring it back into its own harmony and balance.

If you would like to know more about Maria Mihok’s work with healing the land, contact her at <innerspirals@yahoo.com>. To learn more about the Tree Harmonizer Kit, contact JPI at (276) 930-2463 or <info@jpibiodynamics.org>.

ous about biodynamics! I found out about the Josephine Porter Institute and, when I called, had the good fortune to reach Hugh Courtney. Generous as he is with his time, Hugh got me pointed in the right direction. I bought a stack of books, signed my first Associative Contract in March 2004, and started reading.

The following spring, the cover crop was doing nicely and I tilled the garden area with my newly acquired tractor and tiller. Compost was at a premium at the time, and there was only enough to put a little where the plants went. I put in the usual crops: tomatoes, cucumbers, summer and winter squash, potatoes, onions, peppers, peas, beans, and even some sweet corn. I like the Scarlet Runner pole bean which I grew up with in Germany. We always saved our own seeds, and Scarlet Runner always grows vigorously, produces ’til frost, can be used as a flavorful dry bean, and arguably has the best green bean taste. The secret is to pick the green beans early in the season, before they get stringy. I only used about a third of the available garden area the first year and sowed buckwheat into the rest.

Of course I started to use the BD preparations, sticking with the Pfeiffer BD Field Spray for simplicity rather than using BD #500 (horn manure). I might explain here that my wife has a disability and doesn’t drive, so I have to drive our daughter to her Waldorf school every day. My being the only driver in the family limits the amount of time I can devote to the farm.

All things considered, we had a pretty good harvest that first year. Unfortunately, the deer thought so too and ended up with their share. When I became aware of their damage, I put in some motion-activated sprinklers that worked for awhile, but toward the end of summer we started losing more and more. I decided that a deer fence was needed

and during the winter put one up using 10' T-stakes and 7½' tall black plastic netting, which is quite flimsy but has been 100 percent effective. I'm told that deer, who are near-sighted, can't see the top and therefore don't try to jump it even though they could.

Year Two with BD

Things gained momentum going from 2004 to 2005. We acquired two Hereford cows, each of which had a four-month-old calf; a small pygmy goat that serves primarily as a lawn and weed mower; a continuous supply of horse manure from our neighbor who loves us for taking it off her hands; and two dozen laying hens for our eggs. I also put up a 14' x 48' plastic tunnel green house, heavily pruned our overgrown apple and pear trees, and fixed fences to keep in the cows, who after their arrival promptly disappeared for a month, but we got them back again.

I also began spraying the Field Spray around the drip line of the fruit trees and, as an experiment, mulched some of them with alfalfa. The buckwheat cover crop, which was just about knee high in 2004, grew to shoulder height in 2005, and earthworms were everywhere!

Last, but not least, composted cow manure was beginning to become available. I built a small movable corral into which the cows had to come for their water and hay and sprayed the area now and then with the Pfeiffer BD Compost Starter that contains all the BD Compost Preps (BD #502–507) plus stirred BD #500. In the spring, when the cows went out to pasture, I bulldozed the accumulated manure and spoilt hay into a compost pile with the tractor.

I kept renewing my Associative Contract, changing from one acre to two in 2006, and kept bothering Hugh with questions. I also made contact with a local biodynamics group and acquired valuable mentors in Carol Ach and the late Douglass Moser of McKenzie River Farm.

Through my daughter's two years at Waldorf school, I have been exposed to the spiritual aspects of what I'm trying to do. My friend the healer, whom I mentioned at the beginning, has taught me how to feel energy and I often find myself standing in the garden next to a newly planted bed, or in the greenhouse in early morning, focusing on the energy that is emanating from these places.

Having read Verena Stael von Holstein's *Nature Spirits and What They Say*¹ and having absorbed some of Steiner's ideas from my contacts and the things I've read, I am now in the process of allowing myself to think that this energy I'm feeling might be an expression of the nature spirits at work. It does seem to make sense.

There is a lot of love involved, even pulling weeds or shoveling manure. I talk to my animals, even the chickens,

and to my plants as well. Sometimes I talk to the spirits – elementals, as some call them. I don't hear back, but quite often there is a response in that I'm suddenly prompted to do something – or not! For example, when pruning, I try to let myself be guided by the plant – or her spirit – especially when in doubt, and at times I just step back and let things be. Sometimes the executive businessman I was in my past working days comes to the fore and then I act too much from the mind, until I catch myself. I guess the way to proceed is from the heart, as they say. Just do things, like Goethe said. It's really an ongoing learning process.

The vegetable harvest in 2005 was very good, providing cabbage for sauerkraut, red cabbage for canning, broccoli and beans for freezing, and enough potatoes and onions to last 'til the next harvest. In May, we slaughtered two young steers since the herd had grown to six animals, sold one, and put the other in the freezer.

Finally, in early September, I put in some two hundred ever-bearing strawberry plants, following Maria Thun's advice to plant strawberries in late summer rather than early spring and prepared ground for the planting of about three dozen blueberry bushes the following spring.

I took great care following Maria Thun's calendar for planting and harvesting,² and I managed close to 100 percent adherence to the Northern Hemisphere cycle,³ but probably only achieved 80 percent compliance with respect to sowing and planting according to the four different cycles for leaf, flower, fruit, and root. I was very careful on harvesting, and at least with the storage crops, followed the calendar 100 percent.

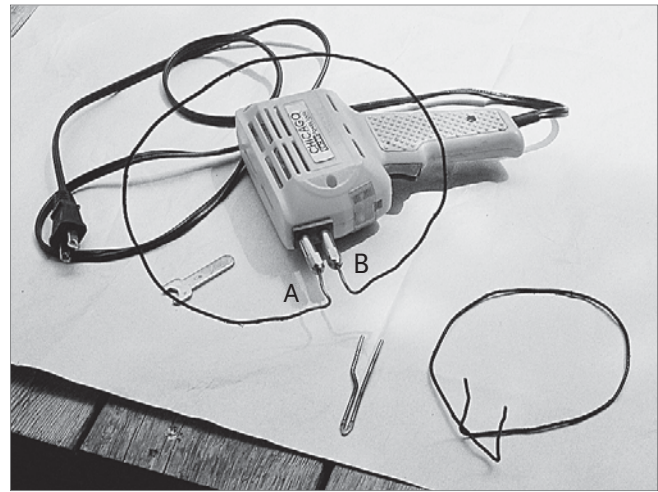
Year Three with BD

In 2006, things started to come into their own. I kept re-reading the subject of *no-till* gardening in Eliot Coleman's books.⁴ Not disturbing the soil structure by not tilling once or twice a year, as is generally done, made a lot of sense. The root systems and stems of plants left in the ground would decompose and aid in oxygenation of the soil. As time became available, I'd use Coleman's special broadfork for additional deep aeration. This fork was designed in Europe and is used there extensively. It is the manual equivalent of a winged chisel plow and is used to lift and loosen the soil without turning it. It now comes with five or seven tines and widths of 24" and 30".

I'd also read with great interest Paul Sansone's article in *Applied Biodynamics*, about using plastic weed blocker since weeds continued to be a problem.⁵ Mulching with straw was fine for tomatoes and potatoes, but not practical with most of the other crops. I liked the idea that after two or three years of using the weed blocker it might no longer be necessary to use it, having broken the cycle of the peren-

Making a Weed Blocker Tool

Here is a simple and inexpensive tool I devised to actually burn holes into the weed blocker for the plants. You will need a soldering gun of at least 1,800 watts and some ten feet of #12 copper wire (see photo to right). Cut off about two feet of the wire. Starting with one end of the cut-off wire, measure about four to six inches, and bend the wire at a right angle (A). Take a cylindrical object like a can (I used a bean can four inches in diameter and a coffee can six inches in diameter) and lay (A), the short end of the wire, alongside the can. Then, bend the remaining wire around the circumference of the can until you are within about one-half inch of meeting (A). Make another right angle and lay the tail of the wire (B) alongside the can parallel to (A) so the two wires form a type of "handle" for the round loop. Trim (A) and (B) so they are the same length. You now have a loop of wire of the same diameter as the can you used with the "handle" formed by (A) and (B) that stick up at right angles and are about one-half inch apart. Pull out the soldering tip of your gun and insert in its place (A) and (B) – the two ends of the copper wire. You can now burn holes of the desired diameter into the weed blocker with this device. Once the gun is hot, it takes only five to ten seconds to burn a clean hole with the edges melted so the fabric can't unravel. The one-half inch portion not immediately burned through is easily burned by holding the edge of the copper wire loop against it for a second or two. Note: Ideally, the soil should be dry for this operation if you are working on it outside. If it is wet, the fabric must be lifted off the ground a bit when burning or the wet ground will bleed off too much heat. The burning can also be done on the shop floor, and the fabric can be folded in such a way as to permit burning a number of holes at one time. The gun uses only about one and a half amps, so if it is used in the field, even several hundred feet of inexpensive two-conductor extension cord won't cause too much of a voltage drop.



The results were more than gratifying. I'd not had time to put in cover crops in the fall of 2005, and let the weeds be the cover crop. In early March, I spread compost over the beds to be planted, covering the weeds, as well as those beds to be left fallow. (I'm still using only one half of the available area each year.) I laid down soaker hoses on top of the compost-covered beds and then spread the 4'-wide weed blocker on top, covering the beds as well as the narrow walkways between them. For the beds to be used for cruciferous crops, lettuce, and tomatoes, I used composted horse manure; for the rest, composted cow manure. When the time came to start planting and sowing, I cut round holes of four-inch or six-inch diameter – depending on the eventual size of the plant – into the weed blocker at the appropriate intervals. The weed blocker has green longitudinal lines woven into it at one foot intervals, so it is a cinch to plant and sow in neat, straight lines. If weeds pushed through the compost, I pulled them. After some time they didn't grow back.

I don't know how this system would work for crops like carrots or radishes, but it works very well for onions, leeks, and beets. I planted or sowed them in clusters of three to five per hole at one foot intervals and three rows per bed, with the rows off-set to give each grouping maximum room. I ended up with as many as five Walla Walla onions in a hole ranging in size from medium to huge, and the results for the leeks and beets were similar. All the crops did exceedingly well. I like head lettuce, and the size of the heads the garden produced were larger than any I had seen anywhere, and they had beautiful flavor. The cabbages turned out solid like bowling balls, ranging from five to seven and a half pounds. The broccoli also produced well, both the heading and sprouting kinds. About a dozen sprouting broccoli kept us supplied from late May through October. The corn grew eight feet tall, the Scarlet Runners produced green beans

nials. Finally, the available supply of compost was sufficient now to cover the planting beds completely and not just the planting holes. Since the idea of not tilling at all and using the weed blocker extensively was perhaps a bit radical, I wanted to be sure and I touched base with Hugh. He didn't try to talk me out of it, so I decided to "just do it."



for eating and freezing, as well as a good supply of dried beans, and I had to hustle to keep the sugar peas picked.

The strawberries just about overwhelmed us, providing the first ripe berry on May 15 and producing a continuous harvest of large, flavorful fruit 'til frost. A good quantity actually froze as I just didn't have time to pick them. Many we dried, as we did all our keeping tomatoes and many of our Italian prune plums.

Drying uses much less energy than canning and retains all of the enzymes and vitamins since it is done at low temperatures. We even dried zucchini with excellent results. Drying seems to intensify flavor and dried foods can be used in soups or sautéed. We dried fruits and vegetables with an Excalibur Food Dehydrator, which costs about \$200, and has over twelve square feet of drying space. It is rated at 600 watts.

A most pleasant surprise was the apples. We had a bumper crop, but unlike the first year when the trees were loaded as well, this time only about 10 percent to 20 percent had worms. I don't know what I did to bring this about, maybe it was the alfalfa mulch or the Field Spray, or maybe it just was that kind of year. Maybe birds had something to do with it. When we first arrived, I couldn't help noticing that there really weren't any birds except Blue Jays, vultures, and birds of prey. As of late, I've begun seeing other, smaller birds flitting about the garden and trees. Anyhow, the apples were of such quality that we were able to sell some to parents at our daughter's school. We made some 100 gallons of cider (unpasteurized!), which we drank, froze, and gave to neighbors in thanks for their often invaluable help.

A word needs to be added about the tomatoes and potatoes, some of each of which were mulched with straw and others with weed blocker. The potatoes mulched with straw produced tubers in size from small to very large close to the surface. Those under weed blocker lay deeper and were very uniform in size, medium to large. The yield was

about the same. I tried five varieties, including Yukon Gold and German Butterball, and at this point will probably stay with these two this year. The tomatoes in the greenhouse were mulched with straw and trained along vertical twine. All varieties did well but Early Girl outperformed all. One vine wouldn't stop growing and kept producing till frost. The outdoor tomatoes were grown with weed blocker and staked. They were so heavy with fruit, the stakes had to be supported. They too produced 'til frost. I produced four Selke tomato plants from seed.⁶ I kept one, gave one to the Waldorf school garden, and the others to friends. I didn't get the seeds until late May so the transplants weren't ready until early July. Yet all four plants grew with great vigor and produced many fruits with excellent flavor.

I want to make a comment about flavor. I've been buying organic since the early days when selection was poor and quality not much better. Never in all those years have I come across produce with the kind of real flavor that our garden is producing. Everything has flavor. Our daughter who was four last summer would sneak out into the garden to pick broccoli sprouts to eat them raw. The potatoes taste like real potatoes and not like mealy mush. People I sold apples to wanted more. Even corn on the cob, frozen within hours of being picked, when cooked in boiling water for a few minutes almost tasted like fresh, with great flavor. This I can only ascribe to the biodynamic way of growing things.

Along with the excellent flavor, I should mention that things seem to be keeping very well. The red cabbage we stored in a wooden crate in an unheated storage area attached to the house (for lack of a better place), by the following April had developed some mold on the outer leaves, but inside still was nice and crisp. We finished our last yellow apples (similar to Golden Delicious but different and with more flavor) the last week of March. In early May we still had over a bushel of Newton Pippin left in very good condition. They were stored very unprofessionally in the workshop (to keep them separate from the potatoes, which were in the storage area with the red cabbage). And speaking of potatoes, we were well supplied with them and I am indeed using our own seed potatoes this year.

As for my experiment in no-till gardening and use of weed blocker, I can say that at least the first season was a complete success. Working alone, I don't see how I could ever have achieved the level of production I did by the usual means. I am employing the method again this season, and the results should indicate if we were just lucky last year or if maybe we're on to something.

The Current Season

The 2007 growing season is now well under way and I have

been following the same regimen this year as last. So far, the results appear to be repeating and, in some cases, even exceeding themselves. We put our first crop of outdoor broccoli in the freezer three weeks ago and started to pick a few tomatoes about the same time. The tomatoes especially responded to my generous composting by growing to (for me) almost incredible heights, and bearing large numbers of big fruit – more than in any of the previous years. I am wondering if this is partly the result of my having planted them in the same place for three years now. I read that unlike other plants, tomatoes like to grow in the same place each year rather than being rotated and are supposed to increase in vigor with time. My Selke cherry tomatoes already have reached the top of their supports and seem hardly to have begun growing. Most of my other varieties are not far behind, with one or two even ahead. We've already got two five-liter jars of sauerkraut in storage with more cabbage to be harvested this week (mid-July) along with more broccoli. The red cabbage is well on its way to match last year's bounty and we've been enjoying a copious supply of sugar snap peas. Zucchini and winter squash seem to be ahead of last year, as are the potatoes (which we've been eating for a month, feeding last year's leftovers to the chickens).

As an experiment, I seeded a type of Mexican dry bean (*Frijol Azufrado*, in Spanish). It's arguably the preferred bean in Mexico, expensive and not always available. So far, they are doing very well, just setting flower buds and very vigorous. If successful, this would add another major staple to our food supply, especially appealing to my wife who is Mexican.

In any event, except for things like flour, salt, oil, vinegar, etc., our little farm has been providing us with almost all of the food we eat, thanks largely to the benefits of biodynamic agriculture.

Notes

- 1) Wolfgang Weirauch, ed. *Nature Spirits and What They Say: Interviews with Verena Stael Holstein*. Edinburgh: Floris Books. 2004. Available from JPI.
- 2) Maria and Mathias Thun. *The Biodynamic Sowing and Planting Calendar*. Edinburgh: Floris Books. Published annually. Available from JPI.
- 3) The Thun calendar identifies Northern Hemisphere and Southern Hemisphere planting times corresponding to descending and ascending moon respectively as seen from locations north of the equator.
- 4) Eliot Coleman is an organic farmer and author who lives in Maine. His books that I found especially helpful are *Four Season Harvest* and *The New Organic Grower* published by Chelsea Green Publishing Company. To

learn more about Eliot, his books, and no-till philosophy, visit his Web site at <www.fourseasonfarm.com>.

- 5) See "Biodynamic Flower Production: Demystifying the Method," in *Applied Biodynamics*, Issue #49 (Summer 2005). The article mentions the DeWitt Company as a source for professional agricultural grade plastic to use as weed barrier. For more information, contact the DeWitt Company at <info@dewittcompany.com> or call 1-800-888-9669 (toll-free) or (573) 472-0048. Street address: 905 South Kings Highway, Sikeston, MO 63801. Web site: <www.dewittcompany.com>.
- 6) To learn more about planting this variety of tomato, see "The Selke Biodynamic Cherry Tomato and Evergreen Elm Recipe for Planting Using B.D. Compost Starter," by L.A. Rotheraine in *Applied Biodynamics*, Issue #7 (Spring 1994).

If you have any questions about Leonard's experiences with biodynamic farming, contact him at <leonardablieter@yahoo.com>.

continued from page 1

Notes

- Kimberton Waldorf School – Kimberton, PA
- Bob Lyvers – Loretto, KY
- Philip Lyvers – Loretto, KY
- Barbara Martin – Austin, TX
- Christine Sloan – Brunswick, ME
- Ruth Zinniker – Elkhorn, WI

We also want to express our grateful appreciation to Mary Lee Plumb-Mentjes and Conrad Mentjes of Anchorage, AK for the wonderfully aromatic Alaskan Horsetail herb (*Equisetum arvense*) and the equally fragrant Alaskan yarrow blossoms with the distinctive pattern on the underside of the flower head.

It is marvelous to be able, here at JPI, to serve as a connection point for all of these very supportive people within the greater biodynamic community in North America.

—Hugh Courtney

New Sequential Spray Initiative for Michaelmas

Jennifer Greene

August 12, 2007, Perseid Meteor Shower Peak

Dear Friends,

I have been asked to give a brief picture of how the idea for coordinated sequential spraying of biodynamic preparations came about.

The first impulse for an Earth-wide spraying of biodynamic preparations happened in 1999 following my introduction to the Three Kings Preparation as suggested by Hugo Erbe.¹ I had spoken to a friend who had a BD farm in New Mexico and who related what has become more widely known by many, that the Three Kings Preparation seemed to bring harmony to a farm which had the biodynamic foundation well established. Weather patterns, when strong storms occurred around the farm, seemed to be less damaging on the farm itself; and dew formation was stronger as well. I was very interested in what she had to say and tucked it away in my mind.

On Christmas day, I noticed on a walk that the landscape I was in was very quiet, but it wasn't the quiet peacefulness that accompanied the sacred Birth at this time 2000 years ago. My sense was that the atmosphere was "dead," "stuck," "rigid," and "closed." I asked friends to check this out, and they confirmed my impression. I wondered then what could be done and remembered the Three Kings Preparation and contacted Michael Hahn in Germany, who works extensively with this preparation. I prepared it, and a friend and I stirred it and applied it on the evening of January 5 (the beginning of the sixth esoterically) and again on the sixth, Three King's Day. This served as an intensification of the application. The two sprayings brought about a remarkable change in the atmosphere: it was supple, responsive and open, as if a much needed dialogue between estranged friends was again possible. This was confirmed also.

I spoke of this experience with water research colleagues around the world. As conversations went on, people began asking, "Why couldn't we do this preparation as well, and do it for the millennium change?" So the idea grew and spread. To my perception, for about three weeks in January 2000, the Earth had a special mood. It was as if the Earth "had been heard and human beings were finally listening." There were great festivities for the new millennium all over the Earth from every culture, from indigenous peoples to countries in the developed world. We of the modern world tended toward the direction of fireworks and hoopla, while in the indigenous cultures around the Earth there were

prayers, rituals, and celebrations. Whatever the mode of observance, human beings Earth-wide had turned their attention to our home planet.

The Three Kings Preparation, which is so time specific, lends itself readily to this imagination of a simultaneous, intentional, Earth-wide work with a preparation. Seasonally, the BD preparations also lend themselves to the general application times, depending upon the place on Earth, the site conditions of the ethers, local climate, and soils. So this Earth-wide work is happening anyway. What makes this impulse valuable is the collective intention of the community of humanity doing this together on behalf of the elemental beings. There is also a sense that individuals can actually do something and, that collectively in concert with each other, we are helping to heal the planet by exercising human will forces.

The response to the recent worldwide St. John's initiative has been remarkable. We have heard from people all over the world and have asked that they put in writing what they experienced. Some have said that they did work with the BD preparations but in a different order, or chose to leave one spraying out because they were in a different climatic condition.

I have asked the question in return, "Is this sequential spraying initiative also a rigid impulse in its own right, a kind of 'one size fits all' approach?" The responses have been very helpful. They range from "The elementals take the preparations and distribute them where they are needed, because of the intention of working Earth-wide" to "We are working with the preparations in accordance to our specific climate but with the intention of joining this community work." On the social front, one person said, "We are trying to create a network of human beings who are keen to understand how the elemental beings are faring and how the ethers are at work in different parts of the Earth and, through sharing, to awaken an understanding of the present condition of the Earth and what sustains her, world-wide." All of this contributes a beginning towards understanding *what sustains* sustainability.

In this light, we have been encouraged to suggest the following spraying sequence for Michaelmas, 2007, which should be done **ONLY** after the nine basic biodynamic preparations given by Rudolf Steiner have been used *previously on the property to be treated*:

SEPTEMBER 28, FRIDAY EVENING

Stir (20 minutes) and spray BC (Biodynamic Compound

preparation aka Maria Thun's Barrel Compost or *Fladen-preparate*).

SEPTEMBER 29, SATURDAY MORNING

Stir (one hour) and spray BD #504 stinging nettle preparation and the Michaelmas Preparation, as described in The Josephine Porter Institute newsletter, *Applied Biodynamics*, Issue #24, Fall 1998.

SEPTEMBER 29, SATURDAY EVENING

Stir (one hour) and spray BD #500, horn manure preparation.

SEPTEMBER 30, SUNDAY MORNING

Several options:

- 1) Rest on your laurels, you have already completed three consecutive intensive healing sprays for the Earth,
- 2) Stir (20 minutes) and spray BD #508, Horsetail herb (*Equisetum arvense*), fermented recipe, if possible,
- 3) Stir (one hour) and spray the Harmonizing Preparation # 9 of Hugo Erbe (if available),
- 4) Any other biodynamic or other healing preparation you feel called to apply.

The Josephine Porter Institute is offering the stinging nettle preparation BD #504 free of charge other than the shipping cost of \$10 for Priority Mail. One unit serves one acre. Anyone ordering from JPI also will be furnished with Hugh Courtney's article on the BD stinging nettle preparation. The article includes a description of the various ways of protecting the stinging nettle so most of it is retrievable, correcting the length of time it is buried and why he con-

siders stinging nettle as an ideal Michaelmas preparation. JPI also has a booklet on the Erbe preparations – *Hugo Erbe's New Bio-dynamic Preparations*.

When sharing your impressions and thoughts, please email me (<jgreene@waterresearch.org>) and cc Hugh at JPI (<info@jpibiodynamics.org>). Updates and articles will be published in future issues of this newsletter.

As you join in this initiative, the collective will forces of us, as human beings, will surely lead to a fulfillment of Rudolf Steiner's words:

“Warm Thou our hearts,
Enlighten Thou our heads,
So that good may become
What from our hearts we would found,
And from our heads direct
With single purpose.”

And with our work, filled with heart-forces, may the Elemental Beings be nourished.

Jennifer Greene
Hugh Courtney
Günther Hauk
Marjorie Spock

Note

- 1) To learn more about Hugo Erbe (1895–1965) and the Three Kings Preparation, see *Applied Biodynamics*, Issue #35, Winter 2001–2002 and Issue #39, Winter 2002–2003.

Worldwide Communal Biodynamic Spray Initiated

Christy Korrow

Jennifer Greene, Executive Director of the Water Research Institute in Blue Hill, Maine; Günther Hauk, former director of the Pfeiffer Center in Chestnut Ridge, New York, and author of *Toward Saving the Honey Bee*; and Marjorie Spock, eurythmist, biodynamic gardener, and author of *Fairy Worlds and Workers*, initiated a communal biodynamic sequential spray activity June 22 to 24. Their invitation “to help the elemental world bring weather into more rhythmical, harmonious patterns, and to nourish the ethereal world” was circulated worldwide.

The series of sprayings of biodynamic preparations began Friday evening, June 22, with the horn manure preparation (BD #500 – stirred for 60 minutes); Saturday afternoon with Maria Thun's Barrel Compost (stirred for 20 minutes), and

at dawn on Sunday, June 24 – St. John's Day, with the horn silica preparation (BD #501 – stirred for 60 minutes). Optional, on Monday, was the Horsetail preparation (BD #508) that could be sprayed in the afternoon. It was suggested that the Horsetail should ideally be a fermented tea and be stirred for about 10 minutes.

In Jennifer Greene's letter that was circulated, she described two wonderful imaginations to accompany the sprayings:

“The first is that, if this begins in New Zealand and Australia and India and moves over the earth, as if one is moving an imaginary longitudinal line westward, to the Middle East, Africa, Russia, eastern Europe, Europe, Scandinavia, the British Isles, Ireland, Iceland, Canadian

Maritimes, North America, Central America and South America, Hawai'i and Asia, three waves would move rhythmically over the face of the earth, anointing all the ethers.

"This is the first imagination. The second is to imagine lemniscates lying on the earth in a North-South direction, with the middle point at the soil's surface so that the lower half of the lemniscates are in the dark, moist earth. Imagine now the movement of the time of year, two points opposite of one another, riding the curves of the lemniscate. In spring and summer in the Northern Hemisphere, in April, May and June, the current upper point is emerging from the earth and rising to the upper lobe of the lemniscate, cresting at the summer solstice and, towards the end of the summer, descending, reaching the middle point at the equinox, and then moving into and under the earth. In the Southern Hemisphere, at the same time of year, the point is at an opposite position. While in the north the days are getting longer with more light and warmth and the plant life is dreaming its way to the cosmos, in the south the contractive forces of the darkening day, diminishing light and cold withdraw the growth forces, and outer nature succumbs and the moving point moves beneath the earth. While humus is being built up in the winter-time, it is being expended in summer time.

"With this impulse we are nourishing the dynamic between the rhythms that use Nature as a kind of Aeolian harp upon which the spirit can play, of day and night and summer and winter, east and west, and north and south. Imagine each place, where this sequence is being done, resonating with every other place, creating a vast network of etheric force to help heal the planet.

"The biodynamic preparations anoint the forces of nature at whatever stage they are in. To build the imaginations of what is occurring is an important aspect of this work."

The editors of Applied Biodynamics welcome your insights, reports, and observations on sequential sprayings. See the article below by Nancy and Gordon Poer on their experience during this worldwide biodynamic event.

A Note from Hugh Courtney on the June 22–24 Spray Sequence

The sequence outlined was different than generally described by JPI, most specifically because Barrel Compost has been repeatedly recommended by its originator, Maria Thun, for application prior to BD #500 (horn manure).

In addition, while BD #508 (Horsetail herb) was indicated as an optional spray in this initiative, we believe that it is vitally important to be included for the Western Hemisphere especially. We further believe that its inclusion is essential if we are to encourage the participation of the undines, which is particularly important as we come into the hurricane season for the North American continent. In the future, please consider adding it to your spray efforts.

In spite of the difference between the usual JPI protocol and that outlined in the World Biodynamic Initiative, I encouraged following the sequence as given in the Initiative, so as to maintain the resonance of specific biodynamic energy (BD #500/gnomes, BC/sylphs, BD #501/salamanders) and the linking of the elementals among all the sites where the preparations are applied. A mighty and powerful resonating network within the etheric body of the Earth can be formed.

Participating in the St. John's Day Worldwide Spray Initiative

Nancy and Gordon Poer

It has been a wonderful experience to be part of this event, and especially knowing that brothers and sisters around the planet were doing the same ritual over these three days. It was an honor to participate in the St. John's Day Spray Initiative, by helping to care for the elementals, a connection so important to Rudolf Steiner that he made it a cornerstone mantra in the Foundation Stone Meditation.¹

We have an eighty-acre ranch in the Sierra foothills in California where we have a biodynamic orchard and garden, and raise beef cattle. With the help of flow forms, which we made several years ago with Jennifer Greene, we

were able to stir over 150 gallons of biodynamic preparations.² We sprayed forty-five gallons of BD #500 and then the same quantity of Barrel Compost the next day over all the hills and valleys and meadows of our White Feather Ranch. In addition, we shared sixty gallons with neighboring farmers. We are on a granite ridge and silica is abundant in our sandy soil so rather than use BD #501 we applied *Equisetum* tea on St. John's day. My husband, with safety mindfulness, rigged the sprayer in the back of the pickup with a jumper cable set up to the battery of the truck, and away we went. One of us sat in the back and sprayed,

making great lemniscates back and forth, with rainbows forming constantly in the fine radiating healing droplets.

For us, it was far more than doing something good for our land for which we feel we must be responsible stewards. Mainly we were motivated to do this work as a social deed that united us with everyone else around the planet who participated at the same time. It was heartwarming to think of communities around the world bringing a serious and insightful consciousness of Earth as the body of Christ/Gaia/Sophia, bringing gratitude and nurturing for all the elementals, honoring St. John's Day, and being willing to do this positive deed as activists in caring for our beleaguered planet, the Earth home we all share.

On a personal note, our thirteenth grandchild, Christopher, was just born in April, and he is a child with Down syndrome. Among several of the world participants in this event were Camphill communities where many of these special children [and adults] often live,³ it was delightful for us to imagine these open, childlike and love-filled individuals of all nationalities, running around with spray brushes and delighting in the effect. They are truly the universal citizens as they appear in all races, and thus are connected to the spirit of all humanity. Probably some of them can even see the elementals we would honor and serve!

On Friday night, the twenty-second we read with our crew an excerpt from *Man As Symphony of the Creative Word* by Rudolf Steiner,⁴ describing the activities of the elementals. Such inspiring words sound to us from those nature beings who must have so welcomed our recognition and striving through our commonly performed world ritual. As Rudolf Steiner tells us, the kingdoms of nature give challenge to humanity in the following thoughts:

(Earth) Gnomes: "Strive to awaken!"

(Water) Undines: "Think in the Spirit."

(Air) Sylphs: "Live creatively breathing existence."

(Fire) Salamanders: "Receive in Love the Will Force of the Gods."

Notes

- 1) To access the Foundation Stone Meditation (in German and in English), go to <www.rsarchive.org/Articles/FStMed_index.html>.
- 2) For further details about flow forms and their origins, see <www.flow-forms.com>. To learn more about Jennifer Greene's work with water research, visit <www.water-research.org>.
- 3) For more information about Camphill for individuals with developmental and other disabilities, go to <www.camphill.org> and <www.beaverrun.org>.

- 4) *Man as Symphony of the Creative Word* has been reprinted as *Harmony of the Creative Word*. Available from JPI for \$20.95 plus shipping and handling.

Upcoming Events at the Josephine Porter Institute

SEPTEMBER 28: AN EVENING LECTURE BY HUGH COURTNEY
Topic to be announced. Cost is \$10.00.

SEPTEMBER 29: HOW TO MAKE HORN MANURE PREPARATION (BD #500) AND HOW TO MAKE BIODYNAMIC COMPOST

Workshop includes a biodynamic lunch at 1:00 PM. Cost is \$60.00 (includes evening lecture on September 28).

OCTOBER 17–21: FALL WORKSHOP – MAKING THE BIODYNAMIC PREPARATIONS

Five days of hands-on work and lectures for the aspiring preparation maker, featuring guest lecturer Jennifer Greene, Water Research Institute, Blue Hill, Maine. For more information, see "Advisory and Educational Services" on the JPI Offerings page at <www.jpibiodynamics.org> or call the main phone number: (276)930-2463. Cost is \$500.00.

NOVEMBER 10: MAKING HORN MANURE PREPARATION (BD #500)

Free of charge.

Other Events

SEPTEMBER 28–30: WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

A biodynamic farming and gardening conference in Red Boiling Springs, TN. For details, contact (616)699-2493 or go to <www.barefootfarmer.com>.

OCTOBER 30–NOVEMBER 1: INTERNATIONAL PREPARATION MAKERS MEETING IN DORNACH, SWITZERLAND

Contact Harold Hoven at <hhoven@steinercollege.edu>.

DECEMBER 6–8: THE 2007 ACRES U.S.A. CONFERENCE IN LOUISVILLE, KY

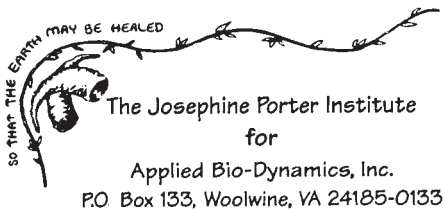
For information, contact (800)355-5313 or go to <www.acresusa.com>.

JANUARY 25–27, 2008: FUTURE OF THE PREPARATIONS CONFERENCE, VIROQUA, WISCONSIN

Contact Brian Wickert at (608)637-8890 or <bwickert@frontiernet.net>. Featuring Hugh Courtney as keynote speaker.

“For all the different spheres of farming life we must gain insight into the working of the substances and forces, and of the Spiritual too.”

Rudolf Steiner – *Agriculture* (Adams translation), Lecture Four, p. 67



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