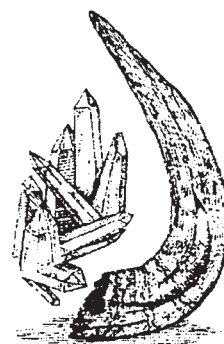


Applied BIODYNAMICS®



Spring, 2010

Newsletter of the Josephine Porter Institute • Woolwine, Virginia

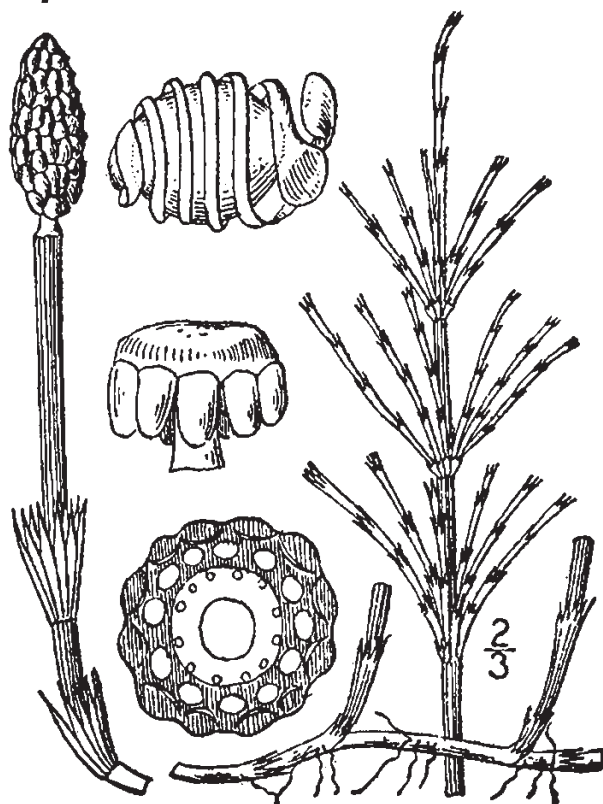
Issue No. 68

Revealing the Hidden Forces of *Equisetum Arvense*

Hugh J. Courtney

When I began distributing the preparations following Josephine Porter's death in 1984, I was troubled by the fact that two of the preparations, as I understood them from my training by Josephine, seemed to be of virtually no interest to anyone ordering preparations. Those two were BD #501, the Horn Silica, and BD #508, *Equisetum arvense* or Horsetail Herb. The problem with regard to BD #501 turned out to be that most growers simply could not work it into their busy spring-time schedule and since authorities from both Europe and Australia put forward cautions about the very strong light/sun forces in North America and the danger of plants being easily burned after applying BD #501, the grower was provided with an excuse not to use it. Much of our educational efforts at the Josephine Porter Institute for Applied Bio-Dynamics, Inc. has been devoted to overcoming the reluctance to use BD #501, since we strongly believe that this preparation needs to be used to the maximum extent possible. Provided one uses proper care to avoid application too long after sunrise, use of BD #501 should not bring about the negative effects assumed by those authorities from other parts of the world.

However, it turned out that there was a much greater reluctance towards applying BD #508, *Equisetum arvense* (hereinafter referred to as BD #508, or simply *Equisetum*) than I initially had any reason to believe. At one point, I was taken to task by a member of the board of directors of the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association, Inc. for having the temerity to refer to *Equisetum* as a "biodynamic preparation" and labeling it as BD #508. This individual, trained in biodynamics in Europe, reflected the view that *Equisetum* was appropriate only when one was faced with a problem of fungus. In such instances, *Equisetum* was brewed into the fresh tea and applied as a prophylactic to curtail or eliminate the fungus problem. My own understanding of *Equisetum* was influenced by Lilly Kolisko's



Equisetum arvense (From USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database: Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. *An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions*. Vol. 1: 39.)

description in *Agriculture of Tomorrow*,¹ of a fermented tea recipe, and in particular by the Capillary Dynamolysis (Rising Picture) that contrasted the fresh tea and the fermented tea recipes. It was abundantly evident to me that the fermented tea recipe (see sidebar on page 5) was a much stronger carrier of forces than the fresh tea recipe. Moreover, such fermented tea definitely goes through at least the same degree of preparation as does the BD #507, or Valerian preparation. We have adopted the view at JPI that

continued on page 3

Editor's Note

As a follow-up to our last issue, where co-editor Patricia Smith presented much useful “how-to” information on *Equisetum Arvense* (BD #508), Hugh Courtney offers an in-depth study of this often overlooked biodynamic preparation. Drawing on Steiner's coverage of this plant in the *Agriculture Course*, and from his own decades-long fascination with this preparation, Hugh gives us much to contemplate. He suggests that this preparation is more potent and significant than most people have previously thought, especially because of its relationship to moon (water) forces. This preparation might become more valued and necessary with increasingly unpredictable weather patterns. Please write to us about your experiences using the fermented or fresh BD #508.

Please note that it is also time to renew your subscription, if you haven't already!

—Christy Korrow

Additional Dandelion Thanks:

- The Center for Discovery – Harris, NY

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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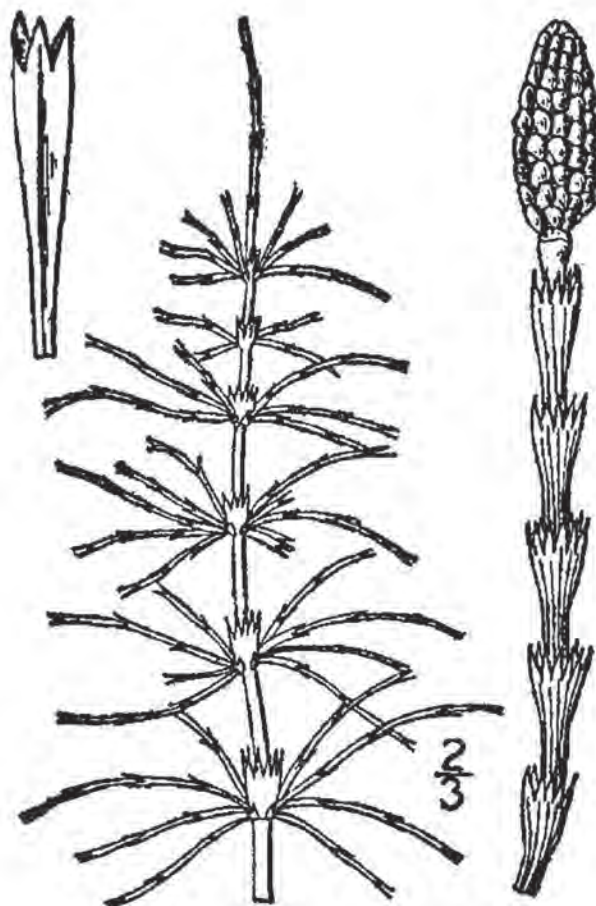
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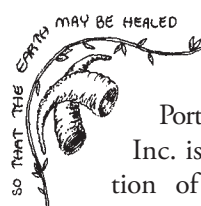
Co-Editors – Hunter Francis and Patricia Smith

Layout – Bruce Bumbarger

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Equisetum pratense (meadow horsetail) – Found in the northern US, Alaska and Canada. Moist woods, thickets and meadows. Grows up to twenty inches high. (From USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. *An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions*. Vol. 1: 39.)



Mission

The mission of the Josephine Porter Institute for Applied Biodynamics, Inc. is to heal the earth through production of quality biodynamic preparations based on the spiritual scientific discoveries of Rudolf Steiner and to advance education and research in biodynamic agriculture.

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continued from page 1

Revealing the Hidden Forces of *Equisetum Arvense*

BD #508 will yield much better results in the fermented tea version, and that it especially should be applied as a soil spray early in the growing season (shortly after a spring application of BC and/or BD #500). Thus, *Equisetum* can be preventative before the fact of fungus, rather than merely being used as a treatment when fungus is already present or its appearance is almost certain.

The antipathy towards the use of *Equisetum* prompted me to begin looking more deeply into what Rudolf Steiner had to say about it. Initially, I looked at the organization of the *Agriculture* lectures themselves.² The first three lectures lay the foundation for what we call the biodynamic agricultural preparations. In Lecture Three, Steiner makes the promise to provide us with the means to administer a “dose of clay” in order to bring about a mediating force between the silica and limestone polarities. Although numerous individuals have experimented with this or that “new” preparation to bring about this seemingly unfulfilled promise of Steiner’s, ranging from Hugo Erbe’s clay preparation as well as various versions of a “horn clay”, I would suggest that it is not a specific clay preparation to which Steiner was referring, but rather the nine biodynamic preparations that he actually did give to us. My understanding is that when Steiner described the “mediating force” (clay) that was needed, he met that need when he described how to make and use the nine biodynamic preparations.

When we examine the structure of the course of lectures, Steiner uses Lecture Four to describe for us the making of the preparations of Horn Manure (BD #500) and Horn Silica (BD #501), as well as the reason for their being. In Lecture Five he lays the foundation and then tells us about the compost preparations of Yarrow, Chamomile, Stinging

Nettle, Oak Bark, Dandelion and Valerian (BD #'s 502–507). In Lecture Six, he presents one final preparation when he describes making *Equisetum arvense* into a tea. Steiner devoted more time and energy into laying the foundation for the *Equisetum* preparation than he spent on any of the other preparations, so it is apparent that he assigned some importance to it by including it in the *Agriculture Course*.

Structure of the Course

It may also be of interest to examine the structure of Lecture Six in the light of the indications Steiner gave on how one should present a lecture on Spiritual Scientific subjects. In at least two different lecture cycles, Steiner described how the lecturer should approach his or her presentation. One such cycle is published under the title, *Art of Lecturing*.³ In this and a second cycle of lectures which I read many years ago at Josephine Porter’s, the steps Steiner outlined for the presentation of Spiritual Scientific subjects were as follows:

- 1) Indicate and identify the nature of the problem.
- 2) Give background and build a foundation to fully elaborate the problem.
- 3) Provide a solution to the problem.

When we look closely at Lecture Six in this light, the problem can be described as how to deal with “harmful plants and animals and to what are commonly called plant diseases,” using insights gained into plant growth, and the forces relating thereto. Steiner then describes the role played by cosmic forces or influences with respect to the growth of plants as well as the relationship of those forces to the animal kingdom. While identifying various cosmic factors involving both the several planetary members of the solar system as well as the individual constellations of the zodiac, Steiner repeatedly identifies the Moon as the overwhelmingly primary celestial factor affecting plant as well as animal growth. This is illustrated by the following selected sentences from Lecture Six:

- 1) “Here we have all the influences that come in from the Cosmos – from Venus, Mercury and Moon – and ray back again, working upward from below. Everything that works in the earth in this way causes the plants to bring forth what grows in a single year and culminates in seed-formation. From the seed a new plant arises, and a third, and so on. Once more then: everything that works from the Cosmos in this way flows out into the reproductive forces – into the sequence of generations.” (*Agriculture*, p. 108)
- 2) “Now a large number of plants – notably those which we ordinarily count as weeds – are greatly influenced by the workings of the Moon.” (109)
- 3) “What do we know of the Moon in ordinary life? We

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*)

know that it receives the rays of the Sun upon its surface and throws them back again on to the earth. We see the rays of the Sun reflected – we catch them with our eyes – and the Earth, too, of course, receives these rays from the Moon. It is the rays of the Sun which are thus reflected, but of course the Moon permeates them with its own forces. They come to the Earth as lunar forces, and so they have done ever since the Moon separated from the Earth.” (109)

- 4) “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*.” (109–110)

Spray BD #508 – For Use on Foliage: Standard Instructions (originating with E.E.Pfeiffer)

Keep dry and in darkness until needed. Part portions may be cooked, keeping same proportions. Fully effective only when used following other biodynamic preparations.

TIME

- During wet, damp or sunless warm weather as preventative of or care for fungus diseases.
- Only during warm time of year.
- Usually in two-week intervals, more frequently in emergency.
- When there is no wind.
- Not when a rain will soon wash it off.

USE

- One portion of BD #508 to one quart water (for cooking).
- Two gallons water for later dilution.
- Same stirring equipment as for BD #500.

PREPARE

- By cooking slowly in covered vessel for twenty minutes.
- Strain and dilute.
- Stir as for BD #500, but only for fifteen minutes.

SPRAY

- With clean sprayer, as for BD #501.
- Using fine mist spray.
- Within a few days when once cooked and diluted.
- Gradually more dilute the more frequently it is used.

The preceding excerpts are only a very small sample of the many statements which Steiner makes concerning the Moon and the various ways that its forces manifest in the Earth. Steiner is laying the groundwork here in the middle part of Lecture Six regarding the manner in which Moon forces affect pests and weeds. The solution provided is the use of “peppers” pertaining to the specific pest. However, I would contend that the various “pest peppers” will yield the desired results much more readily if they are fully supported by a prior use of the biodynamic preparations, and most especially by the use of BD #508.

You will find it to be a most interesting exercise, as I have, to read the entirety of Lecture Six with an eye to compiling a listing of all of Steiner’s comments regarding the Moon so as to have in front of you a more complete picture of the role of the Moon and Cosmic forces. Indeed, an even better exercise would be to read the entire course itself with a focus on the Moon and in essence, compile a résumé of how the Moon exercises its influences on the Earth and all the Kingdoms of Nature, as described through Steiner’s unique perspective.

Near the end of Lecture Six, Steiner presents us with the solution to the original problem posed, that is, how to deal with “harmful plants and animals and to what are commonly called plant diseases,” when he provides us with the background of how to handle extremes with respect to Moon forces, especially when such forces are too strong. Not directly examined by Steiner in this lecture, is the other side of the coin, how one is to deal with Moon forces which are too weak.

The solution Steiner presents to the problem of Moon forces is to bring about a balancing or a harnessing of these forces using a counter force which he gives in the following two paragraphs:

- 1) “Thus we see the forming of mildew, blight, rust, and similar diseases. The over-intense Moon-influence prevents what should work upward from the earth from reaching the necessary level. The true force of fertility depends upon the Moon’s influence being normal. It must not be *too* intense. It may seem strange, but it is so: this result is brought about, not by a weakening but by an over-intensity of the Moon-forces. If we merely theorised about it instead of looking at the process, we might reach the opposite conclusion, but we should be wrong. Perception shows it as I have now described it. What, then, should we do?” (118)
- 2) “We must somehow relieve the earth of the excessive Moon-force that is in it. And we can do so. We need only perceive what works in the earth so as to deprive the water of its mediating power; so as to lend the earth more “earthiness” and prevent it from absorbing the

excessive Moon-influences through the water it contains. We can achieve this result. Outwardly, it all remains just as it is. But we now prepare a kind of tea or decoction – a pretty concentrated decoction of *Equisetum arvense*.^{*} This we dilute, and sprinkle it as liquid manure over the fields, wherever we need it – wherever we want to combat rust or similar plant-diseases. Here again, very small quantities are sufficient – a homeopathic dose is quite enough.” (118)

Thus, a careful analysis of the structure of Lecture Six provides us with the possibility of seeing this *Equisetum* preparation in a wider sense rather than in the narrower more “orthodox” view prevalent in biodynamic agriculture.

Using *Equisetum* – Two Approaches

The customary introduction to the use of *Equisetum* is well illustrated by the basic instructions provided by JPI in the one-page leaflet entitled “Brief Directions for the Use of the Biodynamic Sprays,” (see sidebar on page 4) and also the booklet *Bio-Dynamic Sprays* by H. H. Koepf.⁴ The one-page leaflet was inherited by JPI from Josephine Porter in 1984 and the instructions therein were probably originated by Dr. Ehrenfried Pfeiffer shortly after he brought biodynamic agriculture to this country, and may, indeed, have been based on the standard practice in European biodynamic circles. The booklet by Dr. Koepf was based on a pamphlet by Evelyn Speiden Gregg which was likely compiled under Dr. Pfeiffer’s direction in the earliest days of biodynamic agriculture in this country. Thus far, we have not been presumptuous enough to supersede those instructions with our own version, although we have attempted to solicit input from various practitioners with a view to revising instructions for all the spray preparations. (See Issue No. 50 of *Applied Biodynamics*.)

As will be seen from the instructions for BD #508, it is identified as a foliar spray. Dr. Koepf specifies that “Horsetail is used against such fungal diseases as mildew, rust, monilia, scab, soil born pathogenic fungi.” He recommends that, “One sprays this tea frequently, especially on garden crops.” Here the implication would seem to be that the *Equisetum* is regarded also as a foliar spray.

When one examines the book *Bio-dynamic Farming Practice* by Sattler and Wistinghausen,⁵ which is used as the basic text in a four-year training program for beginning biodynamic farmers in Europe, it is interesting to note that absolutely no reference to identifying it as a biodynamic preparation is made, it is pointedly not referred to as BD #508 and it appears to be grouped along with several other useful plant-based sprays, such as seaweed, stinging nettle, wormwood and tansy. Immediate use of the tea as a pre-

BD #508 Fermented Recipe

The following is a slightly modified recipe of the one developed by Lilly Kolisko. Take one unit of shredded *Equisetum arvense*, which is about eight ounces by volume and one and a half ounces by weight. Bring to a boil in one gallon of water and simmer for one hour. Let cool and transfer to a crock or other storage container with a loose fitting lid. Store this in a cool place, e.g. basement, and allow to ferment ten to fourteen days, until the “characteristic smell” described by Kolisko, develops. Thereafter, strain the remaining herb particles out, fill the tea in a glass jug, and store it in a cool, dark place until ready to use. It can be stored six or more months without losing effectiveness.

To use, add one-half gallon of fermented tea to four and a half gallons water, stir twenty minutes in the biodynamic fashion, and use to treat up to one and a half acres. One unit of horsetail can thereby treat up to three acres with as powerful effect as can be achieved by the fresh tea recipe on only one acre. Ratio for diluting is one part fermented tea to nine parts water. The fermented BD #508 most likely should be applied as a soil spray, whereas the fresh tea version is most likely the form to use as a foliar spray.

ventative is recommended, although the statement is made that “...stored in a barrel. It will ferment in due course and turn into the liquor, which does not affect its usefulness.” (79) This source also indicates: “Do not add horsetail when stirring Preparations 500 and 501.” (79) In 1997, some eight years after the initial publication of *Bio-dynamic Farming Practice*, another booklet, *The Biodynamic Spray and Compost Preparations-Directions for Use*,⁶ jointly compiled by five different European biodynamic practitioners, including the Wistinghausen of the first book, provides a brief one-page mention for *Equisetum* under the heading “Horsetail (508) *Equisetum arvense*, a biodynamic plant care Preparation.” The following statements on this page are worth noting:

- 1) “The high silica content in this plant can be released either by decoction or by fermentation and be used to regulate fungal growth.”
- 2) “In autumn and spring this Horsetail tea may be sprayed on the soil to control potential fungal infection and where crops are at risk, directly on the plants as a preventive measure.”

Thus it is only after some fifty to sixty years or more of biodynamic practice that *Equisetum* is mentioned for application to the soil rather than just to plants, and its preparation

by fermentation is endorsed. This delay occurred in spite of Steiner's very clear statement: "Nevertheless, you have a guiding line, and you will now investigate how equisetum works when you transform it as described, into a kind of liquid manure, and sprinkle it over the fields." (*Agriculture*, 118) It is almost transparently evident that "liquid manure" is best arrived at by fermenting the *Equisetum*; and that it is application to the soil that is meant when we are directed to "sprinkle it over the fields" as one would do if making any kind of manure application.

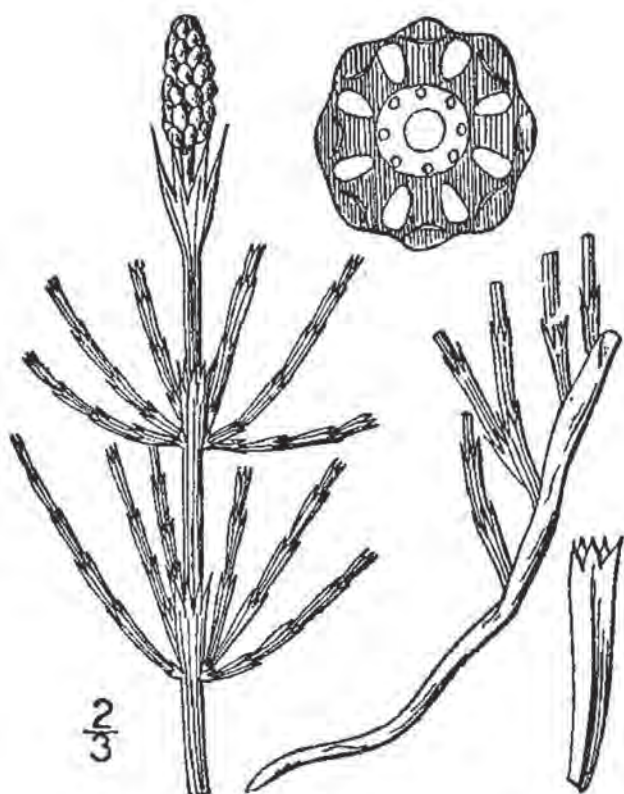
Although we have had the lectures Steiner has given us for almost eighty-six years, we sometimes do not read them carefully enough. The question to ask is, "Are we choosing to make our own assumptions rather than really paying attention to what he says?"

Here at the Josephine Porter Institute, we have long relied on what we have gleaned from *Agriculture of Tomorrow* by Lilly and Eugen Kolisko. On pages 82–84 of that work, Lilly Kolisko suggests, when the Moon forces are too strong, the need to "re-establish the right balance with equisetum." In describing the making of the tea, she states that "It is necessary to boil equisetum for rather a long

time. The tea is of a light green colour, and we found it best not to use it immediately, but in a few days' time, when a certain smell is developing." On page 84, two pictures derived through the technique of Capillary Dynamolysis are given, one of the fresh tea and one of "Equisetum Tea matured until the characteristic smell develops." It was clear that the matured or "fermented" *Equisetum* provided a dramatically more impressive picture of forces or energy at work than does the fresh tea, and we have been using and recommending the fermented *Equisetum* tea since the late 1980s. Furthermore, based on Steiner's statement that we "sprinkle it as liquid manure over the fields," as well as practical application in garden and pasture over a number of years, the fermented tea BD #508 applied as a soil spray following BD #500 in the spring has proven more effective than fresh tea as a foliar. The preventative role of *Equisetum* is emphasized with the early season application, although the fermented tea is every bit as effective as the fresh tea when combating fungus that has already appeared. We are inclined to encourage a late fall application to the soil as well. It should be noted that in our experience the "characteristic smell" mentioned by Kolisko is a rather powerful "rotten egg" or hydrogen sulfide smell, which is every bit as powerful as is evident in a fermented stinging nettle brew or liquor. It is most interesting to realize that sulfur is a major anti-fungal agent in orchard and vineyard practice, so the sulfurous character of the fermented version of *Equisetum* may bring to bear another dimension of anti-fungal forces beyond the level achieved by the fresh tea.

***Equisetum* in the Context of the Cosmic Forces Within Our Solar System**

Throughout the entirety of Lecture Six, Steiner makes frequent mention of "Cosmic Forces." One of the exercises I have pursued in an effort to pay attention to Steiner's admonishment that we look at the various preparations "not as substances, but as forces", is to imagine which preparation relates to which member of our solar system. My own scheme may differ to a considerable extent from relationships postulated by others. For instance, compared to Lievegoed in *The Working of the Planets and the Life Processes in Man and Earth*,⁷ my interpretation may also be seen as somewhat simplistic, but it has worked very well for me, due in large part to my previous study of the field of traditional astrology, and my current interest in astrophysics. Of the nine preparations, it is very easy to identify BD #500 with the Earth, and BD #501 with the Sun. Almost everyone who has approached this question assigns the Yarrow Preparation, BD #502, to the planet Venus; the Chamomile Preparation, BD #503, to Mercury; and the Dandelion



Equisetum palustre (marsh horsetail) – Found in northern US, throughout California, Alaska and Canada. Nutrient-rich wet meadows. Grows up to two feet high. (From USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. *An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions*. Vol. 1: 40.)



Equisetum is an ancient genus, and the only surviving representative from the class of plants known as *Sphenopsida*. Here is an artist's rendering of a prehistoric Carboniferous forest (approx. 300 million years ago) where the *Sphenophytes* dominated the understory, growing an estimated sixty feet tall.

Preparation, BD #506 to the planet Jupiter. With respect to the remaining principal members of the solar system, Moon, Mars and Saturn, my perception differs substantially from other views that have been expressed. My scheme assigns the Moon to the Oak Bark Preparation, BD #505; Mars to the Stinging Nettle Preparation, BD #504; and finally Saturn, the outermost planet of the visible solar system, to the Valerian Preparation, BD #507. At first glance, one can presume that the solar system assignments are now essentially complete, and need not concern oneself with *Equisetum* as a bona fide biodynamic preparation; if in fact it is merely something confined to use as an anti-fungal agent. However, in my reading of other lecture cycles by Steiner, I found a number of intriguing concepts and images. In the first place, Steiner identifies the Lemurian age as the time of the separation of the Moon from the Earth, and also describes the Earth of Lemurian times as one of highly active and flexible growth forces, especially prior to that separation. Geologically, the *Equisetum* plant family was extreme-

ly abundant during this same age which is correlated with the Mesozoic period by Eugen Kolisko.⁸ Numerous fossils of *Equisetum* plants are found in seams of coal throughout the world, and such plants have been determined to have grown to heights of eighty feet or more and fossil remains have been found in as many as seventy-six layers one on top of the other with clay or shale layers interspersed. Such a finding serves to confirm the possibility of the highly active growth forces mentioned by Steiner.

The Lemurian age is also identified by Steiner as a recapitulation of the "Old Moon" incarnation of the Earth which immediately preceded our present Earth. In further descriptions of Lemurian times, Steiner assigns a very prominent member group of our solar system, which he identifies as the Comet, as belonging to this age. Steiner states that a Comet is born out of the Sun, and dies into the Sun. The Sun can thus be identified with a cosmic/silica force (BD #501) from the center of the solar system, while the Comet can be identified with a cosmic/silica force (BD #508) from the periphery of the solar system. Very specifically, Steiner also describes the Comet as the bearer of the "primal feminine force" which opposes the "primal masculine force" of the Moon. When one examines the form of the Comet and its pattern of periodic return and then turns to *Equisetum arvense* and takes a close look at its form, one can see in the physical expression of this plant the same pattern of periodicity in the leaf or frond whorl intervals that are expressed in the Comet. When one further understands that Steiner advises the use of *Equisetum* as the carrier of a counter force to Moon forces and assigns to the Moon a "primal masculine" character, it is not out of order to understand the *Equisetum* plant as a carrier of "primal feminine" forces. What can better serve to harness or balance "primal masculine" (Moon/Watery) forces than a "primal feminine" (Comet/*Equisetum*) force? Thus, if/when the Moon force is either too strong or too weak, *Equisetum* is the appropriate remedy. The key to the timing of application of *Equisetum* lies in taking note of whether conditions are too wet (Moon force too strong), or whether conditions are too dry (Moon force too weak). In the former case, one is more likely to achieve the desired results if the application is made when the Moon is in a Fire or Fruit constellation. In the case of a drought, if one makes the application when the Moon is in a Water or Leaf constellation, the probability of some moisture relief is much more likely.

Practical Application of an Abstract Intellectual Theory

All of the theory in the previous section can remain just so much abstract intellectualism unless and until it can be

put to some practical use with a dependable consistency of results. Initially, the theory was put to a practical use when I attempted to address a problem of drought in 1988, with the thought that if biodynamic agriculture could provide to the environment of the plant or the crop what is needed for its best growth, then by applying the right preparation or preparations in a given situation, one could stimulate the desired results. Since I was not sufficiently astute or clairvoyant to be able to focus on just the right preparation, I resorted to a “shotgun” approach and came up with the “Sequential Spray Technique” using BC (Biodynamic Compound Preparation), followed by BD #’s 500, 501, and 508 in a very short period of time. (See *Applied Biodynamics*, Issue No.6). The initial result was at least a temporary relief of the drought. Even though I had not reached the point in my understanding of applying in only a Leaf/Water period to stimulate moisture, coincidentally, it appeared that my initial effort was actually applied when the Moon was in a Leaf/Water constellation. Subsequent applications that year, although resulting in rain, did not yield as dramatic a moisture relief because at least some of the applications were made during times when the Moon was in a Fruit/Fire constellation.

A few years later, when my understanding had matured somewhat, during another drought in the early 1990s, when the then governor of Virginia, Douglas Wilder, made plans to suspend or cancel the deer season because of the extreme fire danger from careless hunters in the woods and forests, a concerted group effort was initiated to stimulate moisture. We were able to coordinate a sequential spray application by six different people at seven different sites, involving farm and garden situations, in both Virginia and North Carolina. The rains came very shortly after this application, and the threatened cancellation or suspension of the deer season was no longer necessary. Since that time,

many, many people have employed the Sequential Spray Technique with a high percentage of positive results in attracting beneficial moisture conditions.

If nothing else, this technique provides evidence that *Equisetum* should be regarded as a multi-dimensional preparation, rather than as an afterthought by Steiner limited merely to countering some fungus conditions. In keeping with an effort to broaden the horizon in using *Equisetum*, I have chosen to use it in the compost pile as though it were a seventh compost preparation. The observed result is that the moisture distribution within the pile tends to be more even throughout with no cold, wet spots or hot spots exhibiting so called “fire-fanging.” Such a practice can be readily recommended for adoption in any composting situation (see below).

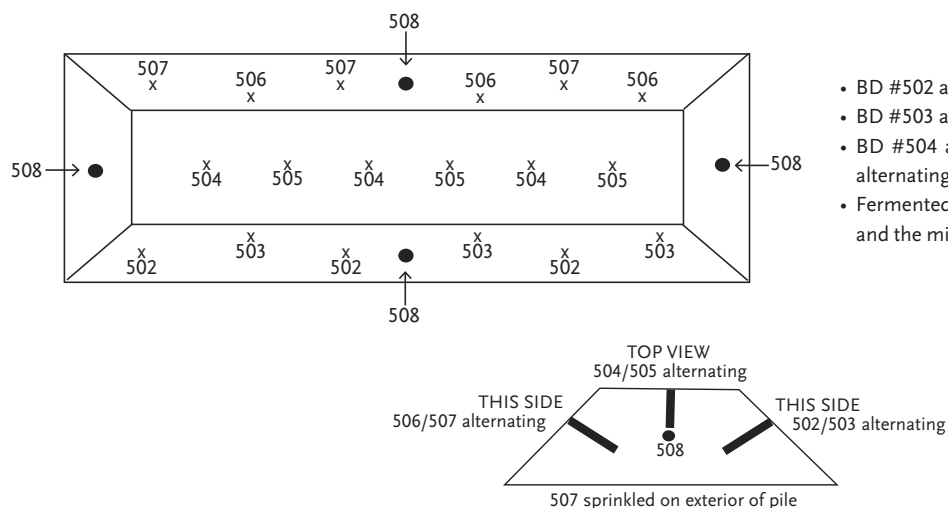
Another avenue that reveals *Equisetum* as deserving greater attention and usage is the incredibly significant increase in the count of beneficial fungi in compost teas when it is added to the tea brewer as a standard practice.

Altogether, there is a great deal more to be explored before we have fully fathomed the potential role of *Equisetum* in our biodynamic practice. The one caveat I would mention, is that all of the recommendations that Steiner makes throughout Lecture Six in the way of weed, insect, and animal pest “peppers” will provide better results if one has previously applied the biodynamic preparations in one form or another to the area of concern before treating with any particular pepper. In particular, it is of prime importance that the *Equisetum* preparation be applied in order to achieve the optimum results.

Equisetum as Primary Support for “Peppering” and for the Farm Individuality

When we consider various insect and disease pest problems, I would speculate that we will see differences in such problems

Biodynamic Preparation Placement for Piles Over Ten Cubic Yards



depending on whether the Moon forces are too strong or too weak. We have a particular movement of the Moon each month which gives us possibilities of a wide difference in the strength of the Moon's forces. When the Moon is far away from the Earth at apogee, the Moon forces are weaker and when the Moon is quite close at perigee, we have a period when the Moon forces are particularly strong. Closer observation of prevalent insect problems, for instance, might reveal that one would see more flying insects when the Moon forces are weak, and when Moon forces are stronger, we would see more nematode and fungal problems. Orchestrating the particular insect energy that manifests at any given time would be the Moon's sojourn through the different constellations. Maria Thun's work seems to suggest that each weed appears to have a relationship to a particular constellation as the Moon travels through the zodiac.⁹ When we have to deal with the pestiferous members of the higher animal kingdom, Steiner directs our attention to additional members of the solar system that he states have to do with the forces of reproduction, namely Venus and Mercury, and most especially, the planet Venus when it traverses the constellation Scorpio/Scorpion.

To substantiate the caveat rendered in the previous section with regard to our ability to obtain better results of our "peppering" efforts if the biodynamic preparations are first used, I would call attention to several additional quotes from Steiner. In Lecture Three, p.55, he mentions "The *silica* nature is the universal *sense* within the earthly realm,..." Earlier, however, on page 38 of Lecture Two, he requests that we, "Look at the *Equisetum* plant. It has the peculiarity: it draws the cosmic nature to itself; it permeates itself with the silicious nature. It contains no less than 90% of silicic acid. In *equisetum* the cosmic is present, so to speak, in very great excess, yet in such a way that it does not go upward and reveal itself in the flower but betrays its presence in the growth of the lower parts." Finally, on page 118 of Lecture Six, as he is about to give us the remedy based on *Equisetum*, which we now refer to as BD #508, he states, "The true force of fertility depends upon the Moon's influence being normal."

The several rhythms and movements of the Moon (that is, full moon, new moon, apogee, perigee, descending, ascending, and so forth) provide a full range of possibilities as to strong or weak effects. When further modified by the forces of the particular constellation through which the Moon is traversing, one can be overwhelmed by all the data that one might need to take into account. The agent for "normalizing" the Moon's influence is none other than *Equisetum*, which through its silica content brings to bear the Cosmic within the farm individuality. So not only are

the Earthly forces, reinforced by an unbridled Moon at play, but the Cosmic forces are there as well. It is BD #501, and especially BD #508 (by virtue of its "normalization" of the Moon's Earthly energies) which stimulate the sense organs of the farm individuality. Without that stimulation, and with the varying and often abnormal Moon forces, the other members of the solar system cannot bring to bear their powers within that organ of the farm to which they most relate. For instance, the planet Jupiter cannot bring to bear those forces which in the human being relate to the liver. Thus the cleansing "liver forces" within the farm individuality cannot fully function if the Moon forces are not "normalized." Such "normalization" is provided to the farm organism only by the use of *Equisetum*. Similarly, the other planets cannot exert their forces to the maximum for lung (Venus), digestive organs (Mercury), heart (Sun), and other organ functions relating to Mars, and Saturn. When the biodynamic practitioner relegates *Equisetum* merely to the more insignificant role of fungus prevention, the full expression of the farm individuality is hindered. It is this picture of the importance of *Equisetum* that is so compelling to me and which drives my insistence on the absolute importance of using *Equisetum arvense*, Horsetail Herb, (BD #508) in our biodynamic practice.

Notes

- 1) Lilly Kolisko, *Agriculture of Tomorrow* (Bournemouth, England: Kolisko Archive Publications, 1978).
- 2) Rudolf Steiner, *Agriculture*, trans. George Adams (London: Biodynamic Agricultural Association, 1984).
- 3) Rudolf Steiner, *Art of Lecturing* (Mercury Press).
- 4) H. H. Koepf, *Bio-Dynamic Sprays* (Kimberton, PA: Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening Association, Inc., 1971).
- 5) Friedrich Sattler, Eckhard von Wistinghausen, *Bio-dynamic Farming Practice*, trans. A. R. Meuss (Stourbridge, UK: Biodynamic Agricultural Association, 1992).
- 6) C. von Wistinghausen, W. Scheibe, H. Heilman, E. von Wistinghausen, U. J. König, *The Biodynamic Spray and Compost Preparations – Directions for Use* (UK: Biodynamic Agricultural Association, 2003).
- 7) Bernard Lievegoed, *The Working of the Planets and the Life Processes in Man and Earth*, 1951.
- 8) Eugen Kolisko, *Geology No. 3, "Lemuria – The Mesozoic Age"* (Kolisko Archive Publications, 1998).
- 9) Maria Thun, Matthias Thun, *The North American Biodynamic Sowing and Planting Calendar 2010*, trans. Bernard Jarman (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2009).