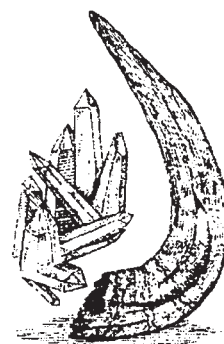


Applied BIODYNAMICS[®]



Spring 2013

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Issue No. 80

Earth, Water, Air, and Fire: Working with the Elements and the Cosmos

Abby Porter interviews Sherry Wildfeuer

*For thousands of years, cultures around the world have used the four elements of earth, water, air, and fire to explain and understand the creation, sustenance, and destruction of life on Earth. The elements have been associated with gods, the Moon, Sun, planets, and the constellations. In the second century AD, Claudius Ptolemy (a Greek-Roman from Alexandria, Egypt, who was highly respected as a mathematician, astronomer, geographer, and astrologer) recorded the division of the twelve constellations of the zodiac into groups associated with the four elements (heating, cooling, moistening, and drying). His thirteen-volume book, *Almagest*, is the only surviving comprehensive discourse on ancient astronomy.*

Although the phases of the Moon have been used as a planting guide for millennia, some contemporary planting calendars utilize the influences from the constellations in relation to the Moon to beneficially guide the growth of plants. The elemental effect of a constellation is enhanced when the Moon is in that constellation. For instance, root crops benefit when planted, cultivated, and harvested when the Moon is in one of the earth constellations of Taurus, Virgo, or Capricorn. Likewise, water constellations (Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces) enhance leafy plant growth, air constellations (Gemini, Libra, Aquarius) benefit flowers, and fire constellations (Aries, Leo, Sagittarius) can be used to improve the quality of fruits and seeds.

In 1978, Sherry Wildfeuer published her first planting calendar, based on Maria Thun's research.¹ A member of Camphill Village Kimberton Hills since 1973, Sherry has remained involved with the community as a housemother, gardener, and teacher. She has been very active in the Agriculture Section of the Anthroposophical Society since 1982, and took a leading role, in collaboration with the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association, in establishing the North American Biodynamic Apprenticeship Program. Sherry is president of the local branch of the Anthroposophical Society and continues to teach others about Rudolf Steiner's work.



In this interview, Sherry Wildfeuer shares her remarkable life journey, which led her to Camphill Village Kimberton Hills and the creation of the Stella Natura Biodynamic Planting Calendar. Her life exemplifies how serendipitous meetings and events can guide us on our life path when we are awake to opportunities and listen to our inner voice.

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Editor's Note

Dear Readers!

We are glad to share with you the story of a woman well-known to many in biodynamics, Sherry Wildfeuer, the founding editor of the *Stella Natura* biodynamic calendar. Her consistent work for over thirty years has given thousands of growers a chance to experiment with planting in accordance with various lunar, solar, and planetary rhythms. This causes us to pay attention to the activities in the starry heavens, and gives us a framework within which to experience and learn more about the relationship between plants, animals, and the heavenly bodies. This emphasis on cosmic rhythms and their influences on plant growth and animal health is a significant principle that separates biodynamics from organics. Many also receive information on planetary rhythms by referring to Hugh Courtney's "Recommendations for Working with Crops, Sequential Spraying, and Ashing," which appears as an insert in each issue of *Applied Biodynamics*.

Also in this issue, we have some amazing photos of the inner lining of the chambers of a cow's stomach. To paraphrase Manfred Klett in *The Biodynamic Compost Preparations and the Biodynamic Preparations as Sense Organs*, where the horn is the active sensing pole of the cow; her manure is

the passive pole. The manure is the carrier of the reflection of whatever the cow has perceived in herself while eating and digesting her fodder (this includes where the fodder was grown). These cosmic and earthly forces, to which the cow is exposed, impregnate the blood and are reflected by the horns and hooves back into the metabolic system. The cow manure holds in it the results of what the cow perceives. The oxygen and nitrogen in the manure are, in essence, parts of the etheric and astral body of the cow. With her manure, she releases part of her own being. Klett states: "The dung is a gift to the world."

In other news, I just returned from the Fellowship of the Preparation Makers conference, the 12th year this group has gathered. I attended the inaugural event in Copake, New York, and it was wonderful to be back with the group, and to see how firmly the commitment to the preparations work is living in many people. The event brought together many individuals, some with thirty years or more of preparation making experience, but also many who were new to biodynamics! There will be a more detailed report in our summer issue. Fellow newsletter editor and JPI board member Abby Porter attended, along with JPI board members Pat Frazier and Bill McCranie. I returned home motivated to renew my commitment to the preparations work.

At home on Whidbey Island, compost piles are being built from the goat manure on our community farm, and from horse manure hauled from a neighbor. Tonight, we

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Applied Biodynamics

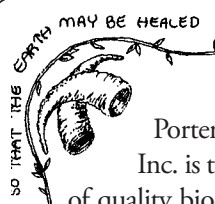
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Mission

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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Earth, Water, Air, and Fire: Working with the Elements and the Cosmos

AP: I noticed in your biographical notes in the *Stella Natura* calendar that you have lived in diverse locations: New York, Pennsylvania, California, and in England and Switzerland. Where did you grow up, how did you find biodynamics, and what inspired you to create the *Stella Natura* calendar?

SW: I grew up on Long Island (NY), in the suburbs, and I have to admit that my image of a gardener, during the whole of my youth, was of someone who didn't speak English. The gardeners who came to our house, to mow the lawn or rake the leaves, spoke Italian or Spanish or something I didn't understand, so I really had no contact whatsoever with gardening. It wasn't until I went to college that my concept of gardening changed. I went to Bard College (NY), and there, for the first time, my eyes were opened to nature through a fellow student, Joel Morrow. Joel was familiar with anthroposophy and later went on to edit the journal, *Biodynamics*, for many years.

AP: What serendipity!

SH: I know, it is amazing. That's how destiny works. During that first year of college, Joel introduced me concurrently to anthroposophy, and to nature. We took long walks on campus, and I learned about plants, birds, and the stars. He introduced me to the constellations, and I realized there was a whole world out there that I had never known about. I was totally gripped by anthroposophy from the very first evening I heard about it and I wanted to know, "what do people do, who think like that?" Staying in college did not seem so interesting anymore after that first year. I had heard about Camphill Villages, so in 1966, I applied to Beaver Run (a residential Camphill school for children with special needs near Philadelphia) to be a co-worker, to immerse myself in a community of anthroposophists.

Biodynamic Preparations Legend

BD #500 – Horn Manure

BD #501 – Horn Silica

BD #502 – Yarrow

BD #503 – Chamomile

BD #504 – Stinging Nettle

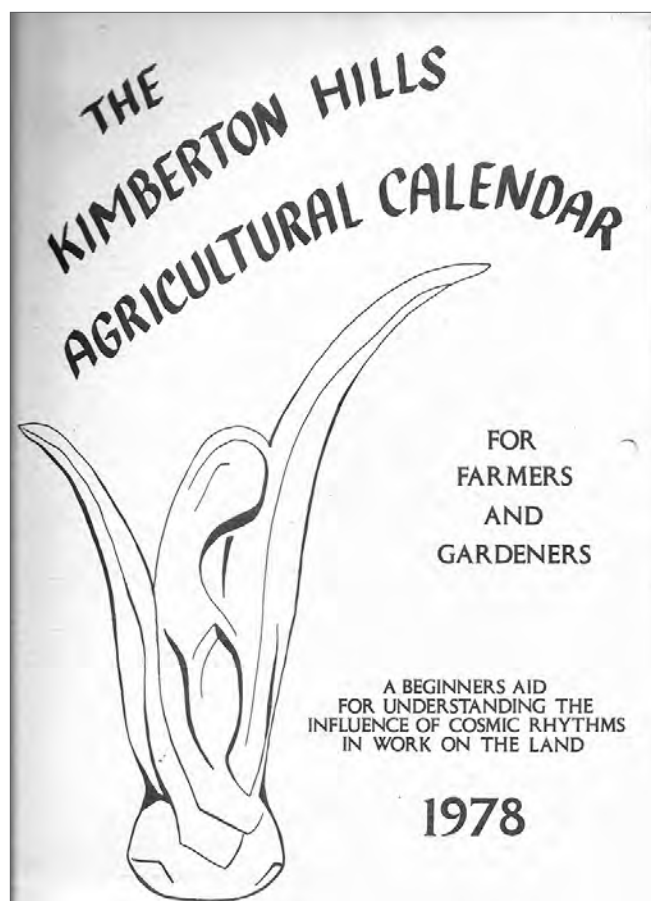
BD #505 – Oak Bark

BD #506 – Dandelion

BD #507 – Valerian

Compost
Preparations

BD #508 – Horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*)



It was there that I met biodynamic gardening through a seventy-eight-year-old woman. She was called Granny Lueder, and I just adored her. It was her last year of gardening, and I volunteered to help her harvest, just to be with her. I could see that she was seeing more than I saw in the garden, and she would talk to the plants. I realized that gardening was something extraordinary, and that it could be something for me to pursue.

After a year and a half, I decided to leave Beaver Run and go back to college to get back into the mainstream of life, and then to pursue gardening. In the summer of 1968, I worked in the gardens at Threefold Farm [now the Pfeiffer Center, Chestnut Ridge] in Spring Valley, New York with Ehrling Andersen. And then, in 1969–1970, I went to California to garden full time because the season was too limiting in the northeast. I worked in the garden with Alan Chadwick at the University of California at Santa Cruz.²

AP: How exciting, and what an opportunity!

SW: It was wonderful. He had a way of combining the artistic impulse with gardening, which made a huge difference to me. I was very connected to art and beauty, so this approach to gardening was meaningful to me. It wasn't just pragmatic. It had to do with the aesthetic of the garden.

Through living into the developmental process of the plant, we learned to appreciate the exact moment of ripeness for harvesting. It was extremely important. [As apprentices,] we all sweated over whether it was the right moment to pick the beans. We picked the scarlet runner beans every other day, so we had to decide with each bean, do I pick it today, or do I wait two more days? It was intense. And Alan would come along and look in your basket and would comment if he saw any overripe beans that should have been picked earlier.

AP: *That exercise must have been a real training in observation.*

AP: *What was the experiment? How was it set up?*

SW: We had four plots, side by side, about ten feet wide. Each plot had two or three rows each of different plants growing in them, representing root, leaf, flower, and fruit crops. There were beets and carrots, calendula, and I think string beans and lettuce. The plots were each assigned one of the four elements: earth, water, air, and fire. Every single time the Moon went into a new constellation, I would cultivate the soil and stir and spray the biodynamic preparations on the plot that had that constellation's element assigned to it. So, for instance, when the Moon

“From the Zodiac come the veritable secrets of God. The Star Angels are transmitters and flowers become symbols of their communication. The closer our communication with the Angels, the deeper will be our sense of the mysteries of the plant kingdom and the greater our realization of the spiritual ministry of the worlds of flowers.”

—Paracelsus

SW: Absolutely. I still remember the intensity of those scarlet runner beans! Steven Decatur was there at the same time and he did get a salary from the university.³ Since he preferred living in a tree house, he gave his salary to the rest of us so we could live in a house nearby. We cooked for him, and it was a wonderful communal experience. We were country hippies, raising flowers and vegetables when our city counterparts were in San Francisco being “flower children.” I worked there as an apprentice for five months until Alan kicked everyone out who wasn't a university student, which is something he would do periodically to clear the decks. I then went home to New York to earn some money, as we all lived on practically no money.

While I was back in New York, I read Marie Steiner's biography and suddenly realized that I had to go to Europe, to the Goetheanum.⁴ I called them up, and said I wanted to work in the garden at the Goetheanum. They didn't really have a position for me, but they made a position so I could go. Although I didn't speak very much German, I went and learned a bit of conversational German while there. I worked in the garden, and one of my tasks was to replicate an experiment by Maria Thun. They wanted to test whether her experimental results could be corroborated. I had never read anything about her work, and no one explained it to me because they didn't speak English, and my German was rudimentary. I understood what I was supposed to do, so I just did it. And it was there that I saw the results of the experiment in the garden that so convinced me of the importance of Maria Thun's work.

was in an earth constellation like Virgo, I would sow or cultivate and spray either BD #500 or BD #501 preparations in the earth/root plot. The first plot was only treated and cultivated on earth/root days, when the Moon was in an earth constellation, the second plot on leaf/water days, the third on flower/air days and the fourth plot on fruit/fire days. These plants were treated with the biodynamic sprays much more intensely than one could or would normally do in a production garden or farm.

As the season progressed, I couldn't really see any differences as they were growing. All the plants looked fabulously healthy. But in the harvest I could definitely see the difference. When I dug up the beets, I had a wooden orange crate for each plot. I started with the fruit/fire plot, and filled a crate for each plot. They all looked fine until I got to the root plot, and that's where I noticed a dramatic difference. These beets were extremely beautiful, perfectly formed, in this aesthetic way that makes you want to run and show someone the perfect beet. They were all like that. Not only did I fill the crate but I had to go back to the barn to get an extra flat because there was still more to harvest.

AP: *So, it was an archetypal beet and more productive?*

SW: Yes! And when I harvested the carrots, the same thing happened. When I got to the root plot, there were more carrots than the crate would hold, and they were exquisite. The form was more beautiful than in all the other plots. Now I saw what Maria Thun was working with. The root crops really did do so much better when they were worked with when the earth

element prevailed. I couldn't tell you anything about the lettuce and the beans. I didn't notice anything.

The differences with the calendula seeds were as dramatic as the root crops. I was sent out to harvest the calendula seeds much later in the season, in November, after there had been a frost. They were planning to do some tests on the seeds. So, I went out with paper bags to gather the seeds, this time starting with the root plot. I remember being grossed-out because the calendula flowers from the root plot were gooey and black. I had to extricate the seeds from this mushy dying flower. And when I got to the fruit plot, I couldn't find any blossoms or seeds. I went into a panic because this was my job, to bring in the seeds from all four sections. Then I looked down and saw that the seeds had already ripened, fallen on the earth and germinated. There were lots of little calendula plants growing underneath the dead plants. Then I realized... ahh... seeds... fruit... this is it! They produced their fruit so long ago that they had fallen down to the earth and had already germinated. This was the moment of realizing that this was really true. Those two experiences, of harvesting the roots, and then the seeds of the calendula, are what convinced me that there really was validity to this approach. I worked there for seven months, and at the end of the season, the leadership of the Agriculture Section at the Goetheanum changed, and they let all the employees of the Section go while they reorganized. I might have stayed forever if that had been an option. I loved being at the Goetheanum.

From there I went to Emerson College in England. I had heard that there was now an agriculture course at Emerson and that Dr. Koepf was teaching there for his first year.⁵ So I joined the agriculture course after Christmas. I was there for six months, and that was where I first studied the *Agriculture Course*, in addition to working on the farm. When we had our practicum, I knew I was not a farmer, so I asked if I could start a garden. They gave me a plot behind the student houses to start a garden. I stayed there until the end of the semester in summer time. In the course of the spring, there was a visitor, Franklin Kane, from the Sacramento Waldorf School, looking for a gardener to start a garden for the school. Although I knew full well that I was not really fully trained in biodynamics, that I had only had these spotty experiences, I decided to pretend that I was capable of running a school garden and applied for the job. They hired me, and I moved to California and became the gardener and the gardening teacher at the Sacramento Waldorf School.

AP: *What rich experiences you have had.*

SW: It was wonderful. I started the garden there and stayed almost two years. I loved my life, and yet there was

Camphill Movement

Camphill is an international movement of more than 100 communities, schools and training centers in 23 countries. The first community was founded in Scotland in 1939 by Austrian pediatrician Karl Konig (1902–1966) who was inspired by the concepts of education and social life arising from Rudolf Steiner's spiritual insights and philosophy of anthroposophy. Communities are residential co-housing villages for children, youth, and adults with developmental disabilities. Residential co-workers, their families, and people with special needs are supported and nurtured in an extended family environment to develop their full potential by participating in meaningful work (farming, gardening, art, handcrafts) and in social, cultural, and spiritual activities. Coworkers treat their work as a way of life, not as a job or career. They are volunteers and have their family needs met from shared community resources. The Camphill movement is an initiative for social change dedicated to creating intentional communities where individual gifts and contributions are recognized and where the values of service, sharing, and cultural and spiritual nourishment offer a model of renewal applicable to our wider society. For more information, go to camphillfoundation.org

a longing for the type of community I had experienced at Camphill. I had compared every place I had been since my first experience at Beaver Run, and had always found that the people at Camphill lived their social ideals more thoroughly than I had found elsewhere. It pained me to see the inequity of pay scale, where people were paid according to their position but not according to their needs. I knew that would never happen in a Camphill community. I realized that I was looking for a more advanced form of community than I was finding elsewhere. It was a question of recognizing my own destiny. I felt an inner call and I also had a series of dreams that called me back to Camphill.

One of the dreams I had was that there was a second Camphill Village being founded, and that I was in the founding circle. I dreamed it, but I didn't believe it, not literally at least. I wrote to Carlo Pietzner, who was the leader of Camphill in North America, asking him if I could return, thinking that I would be going back to Beaver Run where I had been before. He wrote back to me suggesting that, because of my background in gardening, I go to Kimberton Hills, a Camphill Village for developmentally disabled adults set on a 320 acre farm, which was just being founded. That was an amazing gift.

Camphill Village Kimberton Hills

Camphill Village Kimberton Hills, near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is an ecologically focused agricultural community of more than 120 people striving to meet the needs and aspirations of its members, particularly those with special needs. The farm provides biodynamic milk, vegetables, fruit, herbs, and honey for the community and a 200-share CSA, as well as for lunches in the Camphill Café. A variety of handcrafts are taught and utilized in the community. The Village is committed to sustainable building practices and energy conservation. It won the Pennsylvania Environmental Council's 2008 Philadelphia People's Choice Sustainability Award for its implementation of solar energy, its sustainably built buildings and its organic/biodynamic dairy. Visit online at www.camphillkimberton.org

So, in 1973 I did go to Kimberton Hills, and David Schwartz, whom I had met at Emerson, was also there. We were married, and when the children came, he took over the garden. We made the biodynamic preparations and used them from the beginning. While here, I made a calendar for my own use based on Maria Thun's ideas. Though I had not seen her calendar, I understood the idea. I used to get the *Sternkalender* from the Goetheanum, which had the basic astronomical information that I needed. With the idea of the four elements and their relationship to the constellations, I could transpose the data into my own charts. So, I would make a little calendar for myself that I shared with my sister and a few friends by making photocopies and using colored pencils to color in the little drawings of vegetables. At a certain point, my husband said to me, "You put so much effort into to this, you might as well publish it." St. George Books backed me and published the first calendar in 1978. I had to find a new source for the astronomical information because the *Sternkalender* came out too late for me to use. I connected with a man at the US Naval Observatory in Washington, DC and was able to get the pages of the Nautical Almanac sent to me in advance of their publication. With the help of the local Waldorf math teacher, I learned to do the necessary calculations. It was a big deal. It was much more complicated to publish it than it was to just send out the charts to my sister!

I asked friends and people I respected to write articles, and in the beginning, I illustrated it all myself with line drawings. Eventually, it made its own money, and Camphill took over publishing it. The money always came back to

the community; it never came to me, and that still is the case. Meanwhile, I was raising a family with four children while being a housemother in Camphill and gardening between children, when life permitted. It was hard for me not to be able to fully practice the vocation of gardening. Yet, I was always connected to it and to the farm as well. My second husband was the dairy farmer, and I learned to milk cows and helped with that for a while. Making the calendar kept me in touch with agriculture even when I wasn't able to be actively involved in the garden full time anymore. For some years I did continue to take care of the herb garden, which was small enough for me to manage with everything else.

AP: *I have noticed that there are discrepancies between some of the various calendars.*

SW: The astrological calendar and some almanacs divide the zodiac into twelve equal segments and are based on where the constellations were 2000 years ago.⁶ The astronomical calendar is based on where the constellations now appear in the sky. The constellations take up unequal amounts of space in the sky, and most planting calendars take this into consideration. The *Stella Natura* calendar has four-hour transition periods during which we should avoid sowing, as we don't really know when the greatest influence of one constellation begins or ends. There are no lines in the sky, and some constellations overlap each other as well. I encourage people to wait until the Moon is closer to the middle area of the constellation rather than the border regions when possible. [More detailed information is available on pages six-seven of the 2013 *Stella Natura* calendar.]

I've chosen to go with the boundaries between the constellations that were recommended to me by a man in Italy named Dario Anderle, who makes his own calendar for the biodynamic farmers in his region. He developed a computer program, for which I am extremely grateful, that can calculate the position of the Moon in the zodiac for years in advance. He has done research on Ptolemy's original *Almagest* and has proposed that the boundaries between the constellations were slightly different than the ones that the International Astronomical Union uses. That will account for a difference between my calendar and other calendars.

The late Paul Platt had clairvoyant experiences of the passage of the Moon and the planets from one constellation to another, and he had specific recommendations for the degrees of the different constellations. I used them for a couple of years and got a lot of flack.⁷ So, I changed it back to the conventional boundaries until I started using Dario Anderle's recommendations.

Twelve years ago, I started an experimental garden for myself when Hartmut Spiess's experimental work was

published in 1999. His experiments couldn't corroborate Maria Thun's work, so her work became controversial within the biodynamic movement.⁸ Some people were saying that it wasn't valid and that was devastating to me. I certainly didn't want to be putting so much of my effort into promulgating something that may not be true and that was based on an experience I had so many years earlier in my life. So, I started an experimental garden near my house so I could observe the rhythms at work more closely. It's not scientific enough to be worthy of publication, but it is an attempt to make the rhythms that I am putting in the calendar visible to myself. Again and again, I have had an opportunity to see, sufficient to my own sense, the value of putting it out there for people to keep working with. With a friend, I still work that experimental garden so I can continue to verify for myself what I am putting into the calendar.

AP: *And now, how are you involved with Camphill?*

SW: I am still a housemother, which is the essential part of my life. At 65, I no longer have a large house with 10 people. But I am the main cook and responsible householder in "Garden Cottage" with five–six people; one friend with disabilities, a couple agricultural apprentices, and another coworker. One of my daughters and her family lives in our village, and her husband is now the gardener of our CSA.

A few years ago, I felt a calling to tell Rudolf Steiner's life story through teaching. It is very important to me to keep biodynamics connected with the impulse of anthroposophy, and with the rest of Rudolf Steiner's work. My daughter Hannah Schwartz, along with her husband Jonathan founded a Camphill Village in Vermont called Heartbeet Lifesharing. For the past ten years, they have held anthroposophical youth conferences there twice a year. I stay connected with Heartbeet as a board member, and through participating in their conferences. I also teach anthroposophy in the social therapy seminar here at Kimberton Hills and in the larger community.

AP: *Is there anything that you would like to add?*

SW: I think it is important that people take the cosmic rhythms seriously, work with them, and make their own experiences. I know that the whole science of planting according to the Moon and the stars is in its infancy. Even though it has an ancient history, the modern development of it is still very young. And in a certain sense, I am a placeholder. I'm keeping it going so that people who are younger than I am and who don't have the destiny to be the mother of four children and a housemother in Camphill can devote more time to experimentation and refine it. I make the calendar as a service for those people who want to work with these rhythms.

I also put a lot of effort into finding authors and preparing the articles for the calendar each year because I am convinced

Understanding the Four Zodiacs

The zodiac boundaries or constellation beginning points from a grower's point of view in dealing with plants may well be different than the boundaries experienced from the human emotional/mental body point of view (as derived by Paul Platt). When efforts are made to rectify the constellation beginning points from a classical astrological point of view (*Stella Natura* in 2012 and 2013), things can become more than a little confusing. Among the various calendars and zodiacs mentioned (in our lead article), we have at least four different zodiacs with which to deal, with constellation boundaries coinciding or differing by one or even several degrees. It is possible that the plant kingdom is operating within one particular zodiac while animal and human kingdoms function in a different zodiac. It may also be the case that the biodynamic grower who employs all nine of the biodynamic preparations will have activated a different set of cosmic rhythms than the conventional or organic grower. The only way we can arrive at a clearer picture is by the collaboration by growers (on a huge scale) keeping careful records of planting times and results and sharing their observations. At some point in the future, whether immediate or far distant, when the Earth shifts on its axis, we may have an altered sky, and thus an entirely new zodiac with which to contend. The key word is to observe, observe, observe. – Hugh Courtney

that a healthy agriculture for the future needs to be informed by practical ideals stemming from a spiritual world view.

AP: *Thank you, Sherry.*

Notes:

- 1) Maria Thun (1922–2012) was born near Malburg, Germany. Her father had a small farm and the children took part in the farm work. In the early 1940s, Maria Thun met her future husband Walter Thun, who introduced her to some biodynamic farmers and Maria became greatly interested in these farming methods. She continued to experiment with sowing during the 1950s with many types of crops to see whether the movement of the moon had the same effect on all crops. From her observations, she divided passage of the moon through the zodiac into four: root days, leaf days, fruit days and flower days, each indicating which type of plant is best sown on each specific day. Her annual sowing and planting calendar is published in 18 languages.

- 2) English master gardener, Alan Chadwick (1909–1980) was tutored by Rudolf Steiner as a young teenager. Steiner had a deep influence on him throughout his life. In 1967, Chadwick brought the “biodynamic French intensive” method of gardening to the United States, where he created the apprentice gardens at the University of California at Santa Cruz from 1967–72. One of his advocates, John Jeavons (Ecology Action), further developed and streamlined Chadwick’s intensive systems, which Jeavons has taken to many third world countries. Although Chadwick did not use biodynamic preparations, he employed many biodynamic techniques, and was well known for his keen, heartfelt observations into nature. Chadwick’s gardens flourished beautifully. Many of his apprentices went on to become biodynamic practitioners. Please see *Performance in the Garden* and *Reverence, Obedience and the Invisible in the Garden*, two volumes of lectures by Alan Chadwick. www.alanchadwick.net
- 3) Steven and Gloria Decatur run Live Power Community Farm in Mendocino County, California. Started in 1973, the forty-acre solar and horse powered biodynamic farm supplies food for 160 households through their CSA. They host on-farm school visits, apprentice training, and farm-related workshops. www.livepower.org
- 4) The Goetheanum was designed by Rudolf Steiner and is located in Dornach, Switzerland. It is the world center for the anthroposophic movement and the School for Spiritual Science.
- 5) Herbert Hans Koepf (1914–2007) was a hands-on farmer in Germany who went on to receive a PhD in agriculture, specializing in soil science. In 1962, after the death of Ehrenfried Pfeiffer, with whom Koepf had worked closely, he became director of Pfeiffer’s biodynamic research laboratory in Spring Valley, New York. In 1970, he moved to Emerson College in the UK to run the annual biodynamic agriculture course until 1990. He lectured widely and was head of the Agriculture Section at the Goetheanum in Switzerland. He is the author of numerous books on biodynamic farming.
- 6) An astrological calendar uses the zodiac known as the tropical zodiac. Various farmer’s almanacs employ this zodiac.
- 7) Paul Platt’s recommendations are used in Brian Keat’s Australian planting calendar. For more info about Paul Platt and his other work. paulplatt.org
- 8) H. Spiess, “Pflanzenbau nach Mondrhythmen?” *Oekologie & Landbau*, Number 3/1999. Translated from the German and published in *Biodynamics*, May/June 2000. Since the release of Spiess’s research, Nick Kollerstrom in England ran Hartmut Spiess’s data with a statistical

filter for the progression of the season and found that it did show a slight “Thun effect.” Maria Thun challenged the validity of his experiment because it was conducted under electrical towers. A closer examination of the experimental work of both Speiss and Kollerstrom reveals that they did not use the same protocol as Maria Thun. They omitted the preparation BD #508 and employed little or no barrel compost.

The *Stella Natura* is available from JPI for \$14.95 plus shipping. Please contact us at www.jpibiodynamics.org for full details.

International Planting Experiment

The editors of three planting calendars representing America, Britain, and Australia have collaborated to set up a protocol for an international experiment using the calendars. More information is available on page nine of the 2013 *Stella Natura* calendar and on the *Considera* website at www.considera.org/2013planting.html, where a spreadsheet and details can be downloaded.

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Editor’s Note

will make up the paste of Pfeiffer BD Compost Starter in preparation for adding it to the compost piles tomorrow. After reading Hugh Courtney’s article, “Expanding Biodynamic Horizons: Biodynamic Compound Preparations,” in *Applied Biodynamics* (Issue No. 72), I was inspired to make my own Podolinsky 500 (sold through JPI as “Prepared” 500+). Last fall, I made a batch using my own BD #500 and a set of compost preparations purchased from JPI. It will be fun to experiment with this and see what results can be discerned. We would love to hear about your experiences using the planting calendars and the biodynamic preparations.

—Christy Korrow

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JPI Fall Intensive, 2012

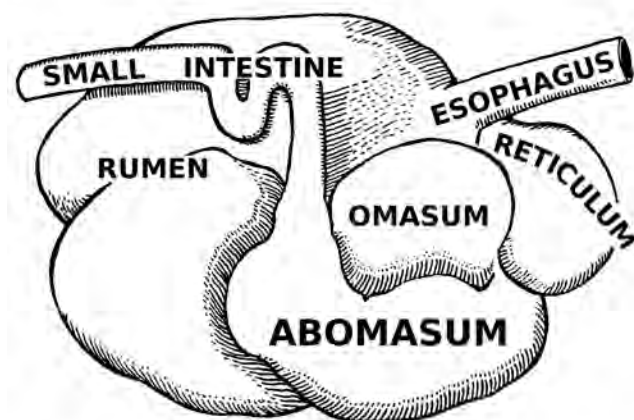
Abby Porter

Despite Hurricane Sandy and several subsequent cancellations by both instructors and attendees, the workshop proceeded successfully under mostly sunny skies. The most noteworthy aspect of the workshop was the increase of young people attending, over seventy-five percent of the total class. Attendees came from Virginia and adjoining states, Canada, Chicago, New York, as well as from West Coast wineries in California and Oregon. Their enthusiasm was contagious as they participated in all aspects of preparation making – from harvesting the sheaths to stuffing and burial.

The workshop started out with the honoring and sacrifice of the cow. The intestines and the peritoneum were harvested and set aside to be stuffed later in the workshop with chamomile and dandelion blossoms. The four stomachs were opened so the intricate variety of internal structure and textures could be observed, bringing home the importance of the cow and her contribution to biodynamics. People new to biodynamics have often asked me why cow manure is preferred... why not horse or chicken? After seeing the complexity of the digestive system, with each stomach and the intestines adding protozoa, bacteria, and other micro-organisms to the breakdown process, one cannot doubt that bovine manure is different and brings qualities to the compost and soil that is not available in other manures.

Many cow horns were stuffed with manure, Biodynamic Compound Preparation (a.k.a. barrel compost) was made, and skulls were stuffed with oak bark. Fifty deer bladders that had been stuffed with yarrow in the spring and spent the summer hanging in the sun, were patched with re-hydrated bladder material and then buried.

The four pits of BD #501 that had been buried in the spring were dug up. Hugh Courtney has been following a four-year cycle with the horn silica, digging it up each



The bovine stomach is divided into four compartments frequently called "stomachs." The first and largest is the rumen or fermentation chamber with a fur-like lining. The second division is the reticulum with a honeycomb-like interior texture. The omasum is round, about the size of a basketball, with many sections that have protrusions similar to a cow's tongue or the shell of a sea urchin. The last chamber is the abomasum or "true stomach" and is most like the stomach of other animals and humans. There are many folds, increasing the surface area. Additional digestive juices are secreted here to prepare food for nutrient absorption in the small intestine. (Adapted from Dr. Thomas Caceci, VA-MD Regional College of Veterinary Medicine; www.vetmed.vt.edu. Illustration by Pearson Scott Foresman.)

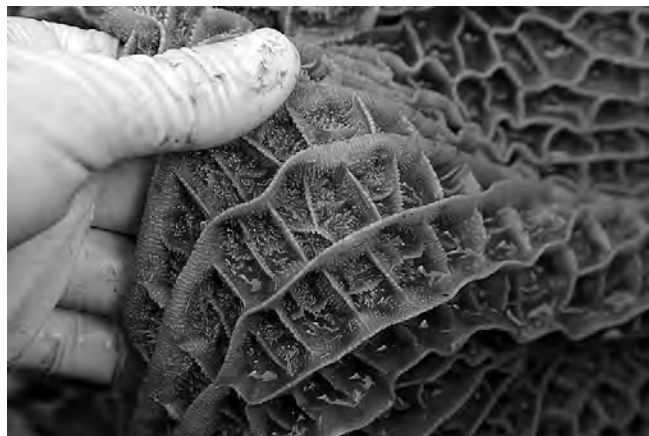
fall and reburying it again in the spring. After the fourth summer in the earth, the horn silica is removed from the ground, and processed for use.

Pest ashing was demonstrated, and the chamomile, dandelion, and oak bark preparations that were buried last fall were retrieved. The oak bark was taken out of the skulls, but unfortunately there was not enough time to sift and process the chamomile and dandelion preparations, though attendees did get to observe the transformation of the blossoms.

In between the hands-on work, Hugh gave lectures on the spiritual aspects of the cow and the various preparations. He also covered working with the constellations and the planting calendars. Saturday evening there was a discussion on



Close up of papillae in rumen (Photos left and right by Jamin)



Lining of reticulum, "honeycomb" or "tripe"



Omasum, "many plies"

the development of regional preparation making and educational centers. The workshop ended on Sunday evening with a film on large-scale commercial biodynamic composting.

For many at the workshop, the time was too short and there were requests that an additional day be added to the event next year. Several attendees stated on their evaluation sheets that they planned to attend again. A couple of people told me that, by having experienced the entire process of preparation making, they were more committed to using all the preparations and making more of them. Some of the other comments were: "Amazing experience." "I learned so much more than I ever imagined." "Excited that there were so many other young people, I thought I would be the only one!" "It changed my life." "I returned home with a desire to learn more and start making the preps here at the winery." "I get to do a PowerPoint presentation for all my co-workers about what I learned at JPI."

The effects of the workshop ripple out, and it is encouraging to know that the future of biodynamics is in good hands with this enthusiastic group of young people.



Abomasum, "true stomach" (most like human and other animals). (Photos this page by Abby Porter)



Attendees and staff at 2013 Fall Preparation Intensive (Photo by Jamin)

BDA and JPI Collaborative Scholarship Program

In 2012, JPI, in collaboration with the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association (BDA), initiated a scholarship program for two interns, apprentices, or beginning farmers to attend the JPI Fall Preparation Intensive. The program was administered by the BDA, and the two full scholarships were awarded to Malaby Webster from Wisconsin and Shayne Gipe from New York. Both were previously interns at Spikenard Bee Sanctuary in nearby Floyd, Virginia. The two women went on to attend the BDA conference in Wisconsin, and Shayne is currently working with the Greenhorns* in New York. JPI is looking forward to many more collaborations with BDA in the future.

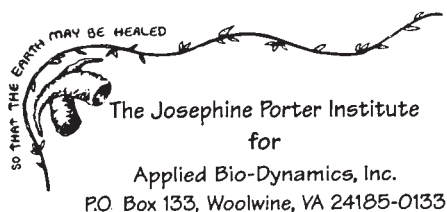
*The Greenhorns is a non-traditional, grassroots, non-profit organization made up of young farmers and a diversity of collaborators. Their mission is to recruit, promote, and support the new generation of young farmers. More information on their work is available at www.thegreenhorns.net.



*Recipients of BDA/JPI Scholarships, Malaby Webster (left), Shayne Gipe (right)
(Photo by Abby Porter)*

“Hence we shall never understand plant life unless we bear in mind that everything which happens on the Earth is but a reflection of what is taking place in the Cosmos.”

Rudolf Steiner – *Agriculture*, p. 23 (Adams translation)



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