

Biodynamics In A Nutshell...

BIODYNAMIC COMPOST PREPARATIONS

Key concept

Biodynamic compost is a fundamental component of the biodynamic method; it serves as a way to recycle animal manures and organic wastes, stabilize nitrogen, and build soil humus and enhance soil health.

In a nutshell...

A distinguishing feature (and probably the most difficult to explain) of Biodynamic Agriculture (BD) is the use of the nine biodynamic preparations described by Rudolf Steiner for the purpose of enhancing soil quality and stimulating plant life. They consist of plant, mineral and animal parts usually fermented and applied in small proportions to compost, manures and the soil or sprayed on the fields. The 2 spray preparations (500, 501) are described in the article 'in a nutshell- the spray preparations' in this article the compost preparations are described.

Biodynamic compost is unique because it is made with BD preparations (502-507). Together the BD preparations and BD compost may be considered the cornerstone of biodynamics. Here we can see that "biological" and "dynamic" qualities are complementary: biodynamic compost serves as a source of humus in managing soil health and biodynamic compost emanates energetic frequencies to vitalize the garden, farm or landscape.

(Reference BDAA:www.biodynamic.org.uk)

The biodynamic preparations form a unique and INTEGRAL part of the biodynamic approach to farming and gardening. Their use helps to increase soil vitality, regulate imbalances, improve plant health and bring the garden or farm into harmony with its surroundings. They are made by using an alchemical process from plants, minerals, animals and conscious human interaction, and then applied to the landscape in homeopathic doses. With the right balance of sand, lime, clay and humus and the addition of the BD preparations you can improve nutritive quality, taste and texture, seeding abilities, tissue quality and stems. You can also assist the capacity for the plants to push upwards and reach seed production, and help balance the size and proportions carried in the humus layers. This all helps guide the landscape to a healthy and harmonic convergence.

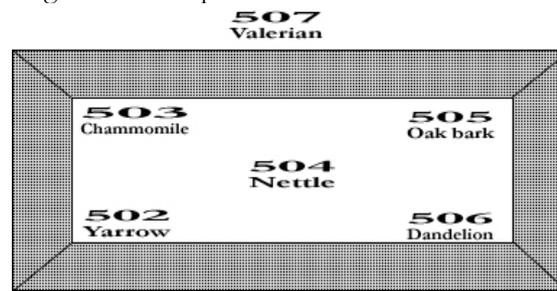
Compost Preparations (502-507)

The preparation of these unique materials was specifically indicated by Rudolf Steiner during the agriculture lectures. The compost preparations are made from six well known medicinal plants - yarrow, chamomile, nettles, oak bark, dandelion and the juice from pressed flowers of valerian. The plant material is either used on its own or combined with animal sheath and buried in the ground over a specific time, usually over winter, summer or a whole year.

The preparations are usually made on the farm by the farm community during spring and autumn. This is also the time the preparations from the previous season are dug out. All the preparations are kept in

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a special peat filled box on the farm so that they keep their potency. When ready these humus like substances are added to the compost heap, as it is formed and when it is turned, in tiny amounts where they radiate their effects throughout the heap.



The preparations are put into the heap and radiate throughout it. (507 Valerian is sprayed on the heap)

The work of these preparations is to enhance the proper and more controlled breakdown of the heap and develop living processes for the different elements (calcium, nitrogen, phosphorous etc.) needed for healthy plant growth to be present in a living organic way. Their specific properties are enhanced and made effective for soil life during the course of a unique fermentation process in the soil. When the treated compost or manure has been applied to the soil, the plants become more sensitive to their environment and responsive to the rhythms of the day, moon, seasons and planets. These rhythms are ones that the farmer takes note of when sowing, cultivating and harvesting.

The preparations are still a mystery to many Biodynamic practitioners but they are used because they work and because they bring something unique to the soil. Something that is made of natural material and is familiar to nature, but the composition of it is alchemy which is a result of conscious human work. They are one of the places where in biodynamics we do not only recycle organic matter in the form of compost, but add to it something of our selves.

About the author

Phil Howard- Phil is inspired by ecological stewardship and the natural world. He is actively engaged in the South East working as a community coordinator for food security, is an instructor for Trackways in Lewes sharing bushcraft and nature awareness skills and techniques, and founded and runs the Earth Steward Apprenticeship for young adults.