

Introduction to Biodynamic Herb Gardening

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Biodynamics is an ecological and Spiritual approach to gardening and farming relating the Ecology of the Earth to the larger Cosmos. One of the core beliefs and practices of biodynamics is to help heal the Earth. Biodynamics offers humans a spiritual path to develop our inner capacities for helping our planet be a place for life to flourish.

1. The biodynamic planting calendar offers an understanding of the lunar, solar, and seasonal rhythms and cycles, the four elements, and the movement of the planets and how these influence the growth and vitality of plants.
2. The BD Preparations enhance the vitality of the soil, seeds, compost, trees and plants and serve as Medicines for the Earth.
3. Significant attention on soil health. Soil becomes more receptive to the larger cosmic and planetary influences when the BD soil preparations and BD compost preparations are applied regularly. Understanding concept of *forces* and *substances*.
4. Honoring the Ancestors, Nature Spirits and Elemental Beings of place. Recognizing and nurturing the spiritual presences and unseen life forces active in the garden and in all of nature.
5. Views the farm as a living organism and the gardener and farmer as an integral part of the farm organism.
6. Close Observation of Nature.
7. Helping each plant establish a relationship to the Earth and to the larger cosmos, which in turn supports the plant's expression of its healing gifts.
8. Biodynamic gardeners and farmers aim to produce food and herbs that nourish body, soul and spirit. This in turn helps humans to become more fully conscious, more spiritually awake.

Resources: *Culture and Horticulture* by Wolf Storl, *Cosmos, Earth and Nutrition* by Richard Thornton Smith, *A Biodynamic Manual* by Pierre Masson, *How To Move Like a Gardener* by Deb Soule, *Agriculture Course* by Rudolf Steiner (translated by Malcolm Gardener), *Grasp the Nettle* by Peter Proctor (look for documentary film called *One Cow, One Man, One Planet* about Peter's work in India).

THE FOUR ELEMENTS

EARTH (Gnomes)

Soil/Earth is the substance plants grow in. Soil holds the minerals, micronutrients and water plants need to survive.

Enlivened soil contains billions of microorganisms that fix necessary nitrogen out of the air and add life to the soil. Good quality, living soil is home to lots of earth worms, humus and mycelium and is high in organic matter.

Organic matter, the decaying bodies of plants and animals, is an essential component of living soil. Soil bacteria and fungi digest organic matter which creates spongy, nutrient-rich, fertility-enhancing material called humus. The digestion process also releases nitrogen into the soil. Humus builds soils structure, moderates the pH of garden soil, and retains 90% of its weight in moisture. Humus-rich soil tends to be drought-tolerant.

When the moon travels through the zodiac constellations related to Earth: Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn, root crops are planted, transplanted and harvested.

WATER (Undines)

Water is the medium for transporting nutrients. It is the basis of all circulatory systems: plant, animal and human.

When the moon travels through the zodiac constellations related to Water: Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces, leaf crops are planted, transplanted and harvested.

AIR (Sylphs, Fairies)

Provides the plant's 3 most important foods: Oxygen, carbon and nitrogen. Air's light quality forms an opposite pole to Earth's quality of darkness. As a plant transpires moisture into the atmosphere, the atmosphere itself forms part of the plant's circulatory system. The air element controls the last stage in the plant's growth cycle: ripening and seeding.

When the moon travels through the zodiac constellations related to Air: Gemini, Libra and Aquarius, flower crops are planted, transplanted and collected.

FIRE/WARMTH FORCES (Salamanders, Fire spirits)

The Sun provides the light and warmth necessary for plants, animals and humans to grow. The sun supports the process of photosynthesis.

When the moon travels through the zodiac constellations related to Fire: Aries, Leo and Sagittarius, fruit and seeds crops are planted, transplanted and harvested.

The Biodynamic Field Sprays Horn Manure BD 500 and Horn Silica BD 501

BD 500 Horn Manure- enhances soil fertility. Made from fresh cow manure placed within cow horns and buried in the ground from late September through April or May.

1. Affects the biochemical processes in soil which enhances the microorganism growth in the soil and root growth in plants
2. Improves soil structure and humus formation
3. Increases earthworm activity
4. Stimulates beneficial bacteria in soil
5. Increase the moisture-absorbing capacity of the soil
6. Encourages good germination of seeds

Storage of the BD 500 and the BD compost preparations. Store these preps in glass jars that are placed inside a wooden box. The storage box needs to be kept in a cool, dry place, away from electromagnetic waves. Use a wooden box with a wooden cover that is filled with slightly damp peat moss.

Tools needed for stirring and spraying BD 500 and BD 501:

Rain water collection, barrel collecting rain water from gutter

4-5 gallon ceramic or copper container

Clean 5 gallon, food grade plastic bucket

Wooden brush or tree branches,
Clock for keeping time. Backpack sprayer for BD 501

Stirring and spraying Horn Manure BD 500

Spring and fall

1-2times in spring and once or twice in fall when garden soil is exposed.

Early Evening

Stirred and sprayed in early evening when the daily rhythm of the earth is contracting and drawing downward. This makes sense as the forces of the horn manure are being directed downward to the soil and roots. Place a small ball of the BD 500 into 2-3 gallons of rain water (sprays 2-3 acres) and rhythmically stir for 1 hour. This potentized water is then poured into a 5 gallon plastic bucket. Dip a wooden brush or tree branch into the bucket as you walk around a garden and orchard and fling the water onto garden beds and around the base of trees.

BD Planting Calendar: root phase, descending moon

Horn Silica BD 501

Similar to homeopathic preparations, the horn silica barely contains trace elements of its original substance.

1. Its purpose is to aid the light absorption capacity of plants
2. Strengthen the form-giving aspect that occurs as a plant grows
3. Ensure that the flavor, fragrance and nutritive qualities are of very high quality

BD 501 works in the air above the soil, supporting the flowering and fruiting process. BD 501 is applied once the plants have established good root systems-do not spray on seedlings or newly planted seed bed.

In young plants 501 supports the process of assimilation and the development of a strong plant structure. In more mature plants it enhances their flavor and fragrance and ensures longer storage capabilities in vegetables such as carrots and potatoes.

Peter Proctor author of *Grasp the Nettle*, recommends that BD 501 be sprayed 12 months after the first application of BD 500. Peter's practice is to let the BD 500 begin to work on improving the structure of the soil for one year and then introduce the radiant silica force of the BD 501 during the next year's growing cycle.

Store BD 501 in a glass jar with a loose-fitting lid in a sunny place on a window sill.

Stirring and Spraying Horn Silica (BD 501)

Summer, avoid using during intensely hot times like summer 2016

How To Stir and Spray BD 501

Place 2.5-3 grams of the pulverized silica (BD 501) into 2-3 gallons of rain water (sprays 2-3 acres) and rhythmically stir for 1 hour at dawn. This potentized water is then poured into a clean back pack sprayer. I quickly walk around the gardens, using an upward gesture with the wand, imagining the fairies delight as the fine droplets of the silica mist envelop their realm.

Early Morning

Rudolf Steiner taught that an out-breathing occurs at dawn and an in-breathing in the evening. With the earth's out-breath, the fine mist of the silica, being sprayed around the garden with a backpack sprayer, is carried upward within the structure of the plants that the silica mist surrounds.

BD Planting Calendar

Flower or fruit time, ascending moon phase

Avena Botanicals' Medicinal Herb Gardens are the first Demeter-certified Biodynamic gardens in Maine. We are open to the public, Monday-Friday, 12-5pm, year-round. We offer several herb walks and classes throughout the year. <https://www.avenabotanicals.com/pages/classes-herb-walks>