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New Insights on the Valerian Preparation – A Call to Examine Old Habits in Biodynamics

Very often in biodynamic agricultural practice, one is inclined to approach everything with a certain trepidation so as not to make any mistakes. While such an effort is commendable in most respects, it may also have led to a much greater rigidity than Rudolf Steiner intended. In some instances, it appears that the earliest practitioners may have put into effect *their understanding* of what Steiner meant without paying adequate attention to what *he actually said*. One of my own personal experiences with this possibility has to do with the making of the stinging nettle preparation. In general, the practice of most of those in biodynamic agriculture is to harvest the stinging nettle in the late spring, bury it, and then dig it up a year later. They are paying attention to Steiner's statement that "they need to be buried for a whole year."¹ Unfortunately, such a practice ends up completely ignoring his equally valid statement: "Let the nettles spend the winter and also the following summer in the ground."² As pointed out in an article which appeared in *Applied Biodynamics*, Issue #24, I believe there was a very specific reason that Steiner did not want us digging up the nettle preparation until after it had also spent the *summer* months buried in the ground.

It is for this and similar reasons that I have often expressed the thought that we really need to examine most carefully what Steiner tells us. We need to also realize that the words Steiner used to convey his message were very carefully chosen, and we should not be too quick in translating from the German to choose a meaning that might make the words flow better in the target language. When Joe Stevens was attending a Preparations Making Seminar at JPI in June 1999, he took to heart my emphasis on Steiner's precision in his word choices. Joe chose to focus on the words Steiner used to indicate how one was to make and use the valerian preparation, which is usually referred to as BD #507. When I use the term focus, I should point out that Joe's approach was extremely intense, and launched him into a thorough search of all that Steiner had to say about valerian, phosphorus, and many other subjects, as well as Steiner's word choices. Joe's search of the subject has now encompassed over two years and is still continuing. It seems to me, he has come to an understanding of Steiner's indication for making

and using the valerian preparation that deserves our attention. While Joe's view will require us to shift gears, and even to accept the possibility that our generally accepted use of this preparation may actually be in error, I would urge everyone to suspend judgment until such time as some very practical research on the question can be accomplished. It is for this reason that our subscribers are once again invited to conduct their own experiments on this question regarding the best timing for applying BD #507.

As a kind of footnote to this subject, a recent letter from Walter Stappung, who does biodynamic advisory work in Switzerland, advises that Maria Thun would avoid inserting BD #507 into the pile as it tends to make the finished compost turn black and clump together like slag. One presumes, however, that the valerian may have been sprayed over the pile at the beginning of the composting process rather than at the point where the compost substance has become mostly colloidal in nature. At the moment, it is only Alex Podolinsky who emphasizes the need for compost to be colloidal. It is Podolinsky's "Prepared" 500 that meets the criteria that Joe Stevens would have us follow in using the BD #507.

Notes

- 1) Rudolf Steiner, *Spiritual Foundations for the Renewal of Agriculture* (Kimberton, PA: Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening Association, 1993), 99.
- 2) Ibid.

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