

Joseph A. Stevens

Prepared Valerian: The Secret of Finished Compost

My research into the valerian preparation began in June of 1999 at the JPI preparation-making seminar when I noticed a difference between the way we were being shown to use it and the indication as given by Rudolf Steiner.

Prior to that moment the use of the preparations was something that I took on faith—that is to say, I did not understand how and why they worked; I only knew from Alex Podolinsky's lectures¹ that they did, and in a near-miraculous way that seemed to me to be the agricultural equivalent of walking on water. Nor could I make any sense out of the Agriculture Course²; the ideas expressed in these talks were wholly enigmatic and entirely incomprehensible to me.

I also could not understand why none of the farms I had previously visited that used the preparations could produce anything like Podolinsky's published results with tith; the creation of thirty inches of topsoil (twelve percent organic matter in the top four inches) in six years using nothing but preparations, rock dust and subsoil plowing. *What was he doing with them that nobody else was?*

There was a profound mystery here. It occurred to me that the answer to that mystery might be found in the way the preparations were made and used.

At the JPI seminar I heard one thing from Hugh Courtney above all else, which was this: every word Steiner uses has significance. Keeping this in mind, I began to read, very slowly and carefully, one word at a time, the indication for prepared valerian and all at once it made perfect sense to me.

This insight can be summarized in the following way:

A close reading of the indication text reveals that prepared valerian is correctly applied *only to the finished pile*. Think about the meaning of the words “. . . before using this treated manure. . .”³ and you will realize that “treated manure” really means, “treated fertilizer”, since you can't actually use “manure” until it has become “fertilizer”.

And indeed, in the German, *Duenger* is correctly translated as “fertilizer” rather than just “manure”, and therefore refers to a finished product.

How astonishing then to learn that traditional practice applies prepared valerian to the unfinished pile, when Steiner clearly does not say to do that at all!

On the contrary, his actual directions state explicitly that prepared valerian is applied only when the pile has become usable substance.



Valerian (Valeriana officinalis)

That is to say, with just five words Steiner describes in a very clear and self-evident manner an application sequence which, apparently, no one ever seems to have read.

What is going on here? How can this be?

Steiner says elsewhere that people are not yet accustomed to reading his books very closely. This would still seem to be the case today because, as you see, there is no basis in the indication text for applying valerian preparation to a pile not ready for use.

Editor's note: In the text of this article the words, “preparations”, “compost preparations”, and “agriculture indications” are more commonly known today as the biodynamic preparations or the biodynamic agricultural method. The writer chooses to use these terms as Rudolf Steiner referred to them. While Steiner did approve of the expression “biodynamic”, a word describing the agricultural preparations first adopted by the early practitioners of this new agricultural method, he did not use the term in his lectures or writings.

I then began to pursue this line of thought a bit further. To begin with, we must grasp more precisely the difference between “fertilizer” and “manure” when we read the indication for procedure instructions. People for years have been saying “manuring” when they mean, “fertilizing”; but “manure” is not “fertilizer” either in German or English. Knowing the difference between them explains why valerian preparation is applied to “fertilizer” and the other five are applied to “manure”; the principles at work behind their effects run along opposite lines.

Review briefly each of the preparation-making procedures and you will find that valerian is the only preparation not exposed to the solidifying winter crystallization process below the Earth; it remains instead a liquid dilution of the summer blossoming process above the Earth.

Note well the polarities you see here.

They are winter/summer; solid/liquid; below/above the Earth; and crystallization/blossoming. These are sequentially opposite natural processes that produce correspondingly opposite forces in substances exposed to them. Likewise, compost preparations produce effects in the same natural order used to create them. Just as summer follows winter, one process begins where the work of the other ends.

Knowing the order in which the forces develop in making the preparations also tells us the order in which effects must occur in using them.

The winter crystallization process concentrates forces within substance. Summer blossoming processes release forces from substance. The five solid winter preparations create a structured, inwardly organized substance in the finished pile that is mobilized into outward activity in the life of the soil by the liquid summer preparation. Compost becomes a substance by a winter crystallization process; this substance becomes *usable* through a summer dissolution process.

Why then is prepared valerian effective only on the substance of a finished pile?

Because it is a potentized dilution (like all homeopathic preparations made in the same way), the release of its radiant effect is instantaneous but momentary. Valerian preparation requires the *colloidal humus structure of finished compost* in order to deliver its effect.

The force of this momentary impulse is lost in an unfinished pile because there is no unified structure in place to absorb its impact. Such a unified structure is created and refined by the metabolic uptake of the first five preparations.

The same principle of potentized dilution effects applies to the use of Horn Manure, Horn Silica, and Equisetum preparations; all the liquid preparations work

by extending or amplifying the resonant forces contained in the substances of the soil or plant they act upon.

What happens to the compost when the effect of valerian preparation is lost?

According to the indication, prepared valerian activates phosphorus, or “light-bearing” substance. Phosphorus is the switch that turns on the “light” which catalyses the crystallized fertility of the finished compost into energy available for plants. Losing this effect means that the radiant force of the compost never gets “turned on”, and as a result the effect of the field sprays will lack a characteristic intensity.

“Light” is also the structuring power of the ego organization (“uprightness”) carried by phosphorus through the fertilized cow manure. Without the right amount of “light” activity the humus structure of the soil that sustains the agricultural individuality either falls apart and mineralizes into dust or stagnates into a swamp-like condition.

As it happens, Alex Podolinsky’s Prepared 500 applies valerian preparation to the colloidal humus of finished Horn Manure. This usage is consistent with the sequence given by Steiner and may explain (along with good farming practices) the phenomenal depth, fertility and structure of Podolinsky’s soils; the “light” switch has been turned on and the agricultural individuality can see its path illuminated everywhere into the Earth.

You can try this sequence with the valerian preparation yourself over the next year or two, and record the changes in the depth and quality of your soil structure in the way Podolinsky describes in his lectures.

My research over the past two years to further develop the parameters of this insight includes a pharmacology of valerian in its medicinal and spiritual effects, a precise indication translation from the German, a description of the chemistry and physics principles embedded in the language Steiner uses, and a discussion of a variety of techniques and applications, some traditional and some new, that may be of interest to practitioners.⁴

This is a work in progress that invites response and seeks to stimulate the experiments that will verify these ideas and explore their implications. It outlines a view of this preparation that is at once both buried beneath an obscure text and yet stands as if hidden in plain sight.

You may wonder, as I have, why someone has not discovered this use of prepared valerian long before now.

Most discoveries appear obvious only in hindsight; the indication for valerian calls little or no attention to itself, and under ordinary circumstances it would never have occurred to me to notice it. The indication provokes no real curiosity or interest, especially after having to ponder

the preceding indications. It just doesn't make much of an impression the first few times you see it and weigh its content in your mind. This weak impression has consigned it to obscurity.

Valerian preparation is almost, you might say, invisible; it exists as a kind of blind spot and so over the years, nobody has had much to say about it. Had the indication for valerian never been given, none of our books about the preparations would need very much revising.

In reality, however, it asks from us an effort beyond our usual capability.

Unless we can call forth within ourselves a perspective from above, the information it contains escapes our notice and the indication remains indecipherable in the ordinary sense.

Truly observing these inner processes in oneself moves us to re-examine all that we think we know about the preparations in the light of their spiritual foundations; right preparation use is in fact a method of accelerating our spiritual evolution.

The Agriculture Course was met with almost universal incomprehension at the time Steiner gave it, and to some extent this is still the case today. We continue to interpret what he says according to our "education", and this predisposition then renders the information he gives us psychologically inaccessible.

What is the path to understanding preparation use?

Steiner gives us two clear instructions for the future of his agriculture indications. The first is to use them and then to conduct experiments to verify that we know how to use them. The second is to then spread their use as far and wide over the Earth as possible.

Alex Podolinsky's initiative in Australia seems to me to be an experimental verification of the right use of the preparations spread over a wide area, and therefore fulfills both Steiner directives. His example can enable us to produce comparable results, provided we are willing and able to learn from it.

For without such results Steiner's agriculture will shortly cease to exist in America. It is in fact already legally dead here, having been made indistinguishable by law from "organic" agriculture. While nothing harmful in itself, "organics" is far too weak to support evolving human life on the Earth very much beyond the immediately foreseeable future. Nor has "organics" the moral and spiritual power to shift the current materialistic agribusiness paradigm, but will instead be co-opted and made to accommodate.

If this unique way of life is to rise again from the dead and distinguish itself in the way Steiner indicated, on this

continent, it must be taken up by a generation of farmers who can absorb and manifest in themselves the gift and power of the Spirit of the Earth.

It is this future generation of farmers in America for whom this study is intended.

Summer Solstice,

In the last year of the 2nd millennium AD,

Under the earnest gaze of Uriel.

Notes

- 1) Alex Podolinsky, *Biodynamic Agriculture*, Volumes 1 and 2 (St. Leonard's, Australia: Gavemer Press, 1985).
- 2) Rudolf Steiner, *Spiritual Foundations for the Renewal of Agriculture* (Kimberton, PA: Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening Association, 1993).
- 3) Steiner, op. cit., 104.
- 4) This research is available upon request by contacting Joe Stevens, 31 Bethwood Drive, Loudonville, NY 12211; voicemail: (518)465-9472; e-mail: <jas5261956@hotmail.com>.

Joe Stevens is a tree care specialist in upstate New York and a frequent participant in the JPI Preparations Making Seminars for the past several years.