

## Terra Simpatico – Biodynamic Compost

Through the art of gardening, comes the opportunity to observe, dig in and gather experience with nurturing our local soils. As a collective activity practiced worldwide, we can explore and share with others through deepening our rapport and connection with our earth Gaia.

During the many years cultivating the soils of Santa Fe, I have tried to respond with a thoughtful, beneficial approach. Here in the more arid Southwest managing water, land contouring, cultivating and restoring soils, while balancing its alkalinity, are all essential to ensure sustaining reserves of vitality. We can see this demonstrated in beautiful, healthy and thriving gardens and landscapes. In the Southwest where heat and drought can dominate, we want to conserve water and intensify the forces of the soil. Further balance is achieved when we bring a similar diversity above ground as we create with soil micro-organisms below ground.

“Plants are utterly open to and formed by the influences from the depths of the earth to the heights of the heavens. Permeated by celestial rhythms, while responding to light and warmth, water and earth/soil, the plant grows. The Biodynamic approach relates the ecology of the earth-organism to that of the entire cosmos.” (Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association).

Integral to Biodynamic practices is building a soil/plant partnership that is dynamic and self-regulating, i.e. – plant growth in direct proportion to vitality in the soil to actively decompose organic materials. The aim in our cultivation practice, brings focus on improving the **receptive** capacity of the soil - *its inner aliveness- its inner mobility*. This process is enhanced by the quality of **balanced life forces** found in Biodynamic compost. Reference to these life forces are reflected in the name, originating from the Greek as, *bio*-life and *dynamis*-energy. This agricultural and gardening practice was derived from a series of lectures that Rudolf Steiner presented to gardeners, farmers and veterinarians in June 1924 in Koberwitz, Silesia, which is now part of Poland. Biodynamic concepts were brought to the US by Dr. Ehrenfried Pfeiffer in the 1930's and the Biodynamic Farming & Gardening Association was founded in 1938.

Biodynamic compost is built in layers, utilizing dry-green matter, manures, garden soil or similar, past compost, water and six compost preparations inserted into the body of the pile. One of these, valerian, is sprayed over the pile after it is built. The preparations assist in regulating temperature and moisture and in a properly built pile, direct the fermentation of this organic matter toward a neutral colloidal humus (colloidal- held in suspension). In the Agriculture Course, Dr. Steiner stated that the preparations, "organize the compost."

With this method, the organic matter is more thoroughly digested, thereby influencing the formation of **stabilized humus**, which is the capacity of organic matter in ripened compost to store nutrients and moisture. **Humus** is the breakdown and transformation of raw organic matter into simpler compounds and through proper combination of soil bacteria, re-assembles compounds to become complex lasting substance, i.e. *a nutrient rich soil component*.

The preparations are specially made plant derived substances which radiate **energies** through the pile and **organize** and balance aerobic fermentation in the breakdown process. Penetrating the pile in about three weeks, they serve as **catalysts**, directing the decomposition and buildup of materials in the pile, while bringing about a speedy and even breakdown. The preps lead the fermentation in an **optimizing** direction. Steiner designated yarrow, chamomile, stinging nettle, valerian, dandelion and oak bark, as those members of the plant kingdom which hold particular element (s) in the best possible form and/or ratio for use by the soil. Further, they act like a magnet for the celestial forces to enter an organic earthly activity.

In the garden we can discover..."A tablespoon of good topsoil will have billions of microorganisms, all in varying states of growth, death and reproduction. Humus is, more or less, *the persistent residue of this biological activity*. Although a tiny fraction of soil by weight, the presence, condition and *activity* of this humus is very effective in enlivening, stimulating and re-awakening the life forces in the Earth, soil and plants" (From article in 2005 Stella Natura Biodynamic Calendar by Mason Vollmer). In plants we see these life forces expressed in sprouting, growing, flowering and fruiting.

The cover of the June 2007 Wine Spectator ([www.winespectator.com](http://www.winespectator.com)) features the Benzinger Winery in

Sonoma, California. Their vineyard and gardens use Biodynamic methods and practices. In describing BD preparations, they relate “they are triggers that initiate biological activities aimed at bringing the right energies at the right time to the soil and plants.” This is demonstrated in strengthening life forces, stimulating root growth, soil micro-organism production and humus formation.

In the January 2011 issue of Architectural Digest, ([www.architecturaldigest.com](http://www.architecturaldigest.com)) the article ‘Tuscan Paradise’ displays the gardens and Biodynamic vineyards of Sting and Trudie Styler’s 900 acre estate outside Florence. International Biodynamic consultant Alan York, developed their vineyards.

Hugh Courtney of Josephine Porter Institute for Applied Biodynamics has been creating the preparations since 1982. He describes the **dynamic** rather than physical properties of the preps. “With BD agriculture and preps, we are asked to think in terms of **carrier of forces**, rather than substances. Just as the effects of the forces of magnetism or gravity can be observed without actually being able to *see* these forces, so we can recognize **through their effects** the forces which are released through the use of BD preps. Flower fragrances are heightened, their colors radiant richer hues or more subtle nuances. Terrior, the taste of the land, lends signature authenticity to the especially delicious flavor and premium quality of foods and beverages. Crops and livestock are healthier exhibiting greater disease resistance.

As the topsoil becomes deeper, it is less subject to erosion and the living substance is improved. “The humus in the compost becomes **colloidal** and the micro-organisms ordinarily working to decompose materials, rather continues assisting in building stable humus and maintaining soil fertility. Plant roots and fine root hairs penetrate further and digest this humus...plants are stronger and thrive.” (from phone interview with Hugh Courtney, July 2005).

Gaia is a self-organizing and self-regulating intelligence - perceptive and sentient, animating and responsive. We can trust Her to teach us what we need to know – for there is a reciprocal and rejuvenating connection bonding human nature to Gaian nurture. By remaining rooted, present and confident in this connection, we may deepen our potential to grow, co-evolve and illumine our true nature.

Let us garden Gaia with loving care. Please contact Maggie Lee at Terra Flora for information regarding prices and delivery...982-6879.

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