



At the Heart of Biodynamic Agriculture: The Preparations

By Vincent Masson

To introduce this topic, we need to realize or remember that agriculture is the foundation of many aspects of daily life: health and health care products, food, clothing as well as landscapes, water quality and the earth's capacity to sustain life.

Biodynamic agriculture was put forward by Rudolf Steiner in response to problems caused by several decades of intensification of farming practice far removed from Nature and Life, as well as problems due to weakening vitality and fertility of the Earth.

The 'Agriculture Course' is the first course on general ecology and gives an outlook on the co-evolution of the Earth and the human being in a widened context reaching to the cosmos.

Steiner's view of agriculture is vast and all encompassing. The farmer is seen in a greater context, where many interactions are formed between the life of the soil and the life of the plants, animals and the people on the farm. He points out the relationships between the life on the farm and the wildlife in the surrounding environment: insects, earth worms, animals, birds, hedges, trees, forests, wetlands. He also takes into consideration the wider influences of the planet Earth and other planets, the stars and the spiritual world.

Taking into account these diverse and complex considerations, his approach encourages us to look at agriculture in a completely different way.

The ideal of a diversified farm and of the farm as an individualised organism form the firm and solid foundation for well-balanced agriculture, resulting in healthy soil, plants, animals and people. This balance is reflected economically on the farm by reducing the need to bring in elements from outside sources, and is also beneficial on a larger scale, economically and ecologically, making farmers less dependent on industry, transport services and outside sourcing in general.

Agriculture that is coherent and creates health does not only act on the soil, plants, animals and human food production. It also becomes a factor of health for the whole society.

In addition to this broad understanding of agriculture and the living, Steiner urges the farmer to take an active role in the future of the planet, by introducing a totally new dimension: the production and use of the biodynamic preparations.

These preparations, if prepared and implemented correctly, support the development of soil fertility and the health of plants grown on these soils. They open far-reaching perspectives for a new quality of agricultural production and the support of man in his psycho-spiritual evolution.

THE BIODYNAMIC PREPARATIONS

First of all, the horn manure or 500 preparation, which reinforces the link to the Earth and builds fertility and structure in the soil.

■ The six compost preparations¹. They contribute to the building of new substances in the compost heap and increase substance mobility in the soil.

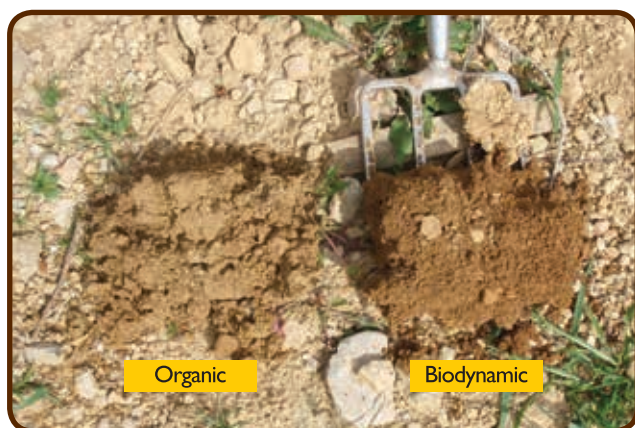
■ Based on the work of Alex Podolinsky² in Australia, we use the 500P (Prepared 500³) that brings together the two building impulses of 500 and the six compost preparations. 500P helps plants to create substance and encourages the development of vertical root growth and depth. It plays a major role in nourishing the rhizosphere, contributes to the creation of humus and soil structure. It helps plants to find in the soil the life and nutrients necessary for healthy growth.

■ 501 is a 'health builder' for plant growth. It brings an upright structure and individualized leaf positioning clearly visible on the following photos. 501 also improves the qualities of agricultural products.

These preparations, used in minute quantities in a colloidal state impulse amazing transformations in soil and plants. This colloidal condition is '*the bridge between substance and process*' (Friedrich Benesch).

The use of all the preparations, plus the Equisetum Arvense (common horsetail) decoction is a major contribution to salutogenesis⁴ in agriculture. Each of the preparations should be used at least once and preferably several times during the farming season depending on the crop and prevailing weather conditions during the year.

THE FOLLOWING PICTURES SHOW DARKENING OF SOIL COLOUR, THE DEVELOPMENT OF FINE ROOT SYSTEMS; TRANSFORMATION/ IMPROVEMENT OF SOIL STRUCTURE IS VISIBLE.



Cortons (Burgundy) 28/08/2009 Comparison of organic/biodynamic over a 5-yr. period

Increase in humus levels and darkening of soil. Difference in soil aroma. Soil is rich with the smell of humus, reminiscent of the forest floor; with a slightly floral scent. Soil is more 'supple' and porous. Erosion of silt soil on deep slopes is arrested. Changes in plant behavior can be seen. Quality of wine is improved.



1924
90
2014

SAINT ESTÈPHE 3 MARCH 2011
One year of biodynamic practice with two applications of 500P in Spring and one application in Autumn
Two applications of 501 before flowering and one before grape harvest
One year of good biodynamic practice March 2011 - Saint Estèphe

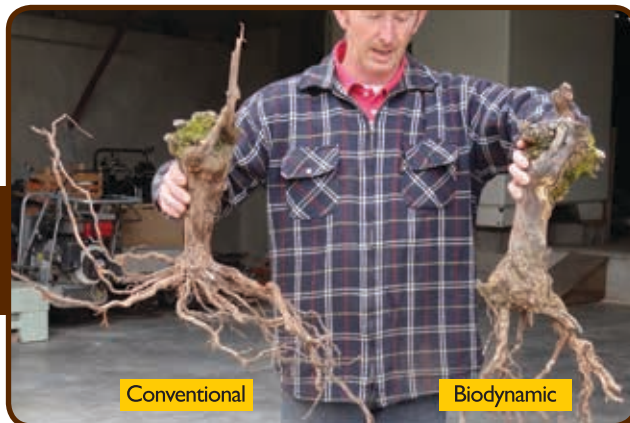
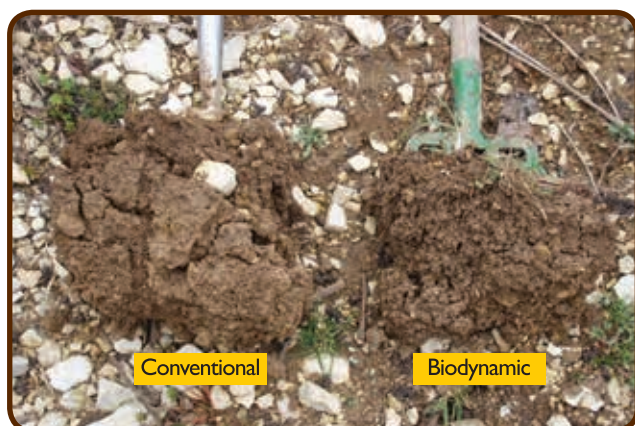


Southern Ardèche 14 March 2011

loess soil

Five years of biodynamic practice with 1 - 2 applications of 500P in Spring and 1 application in Autumn 2 - 3 applications of 501 twice before flowering and possibly 1 before grape harvest

CHAMPAGNE
On the right: 5 years of good biodynamic practice using 500P
On the left: conventional
Root systems and soil structure



CHAMPAGNE

Same as previous picture.

Note difference in soil structure



Domaine Boisseau, Burgundy -
1x 500P 17 april 2014 -
Pictures 15 june 2014



2015
International
Year of Soils



Châteauneuf du Pape (Rhône Valley). 15 october 2014, 3 years of good biodynamic practice.

MOURVÈDRE, NO BD PREPARATIONS



Same place same time. Typical plant behaviour with preparations (500P and 501): upright shiny leaves. Individual positions of leaves. Healthy plants.



JURA 19/06/2009, 4 X 501



SAINT LAURENT 30 MAY 2010 (12H), 3 X 501.



STRAWBERRIES
Typical effect of using 501 with upright leaves





July 2014 Germany - Maria Bienert

© Pictures courtesy Vincent Masson

CONCLUSION

Development of soil fertility and storing of carbon in the soil, as well as food quality are major issues to be confronted at the present time and in the future. Building health should be a central focus for human beings, for nature and the planet Earth. Our welfare and survival depend on it.

What is the true nature of biodynamic agriculture, in particular the preparations that are at the heart of the farming method? They do not only play a positive role in soil improvement, plant behaviour and the quality of the resulting production. They also act as principles of salutogenesis, by creating health rather than treating disease.

They play a regenerating, re-organisational role by creating anew a bond of the Living with the stellar and planetary creative spheres. Their role is fundamental with regard to the future and evolution of the Earth.

The preparations can be seen as cosmetics for the face of the Earth; regenerating unguents for the planet in its ageing process. The biodynamic preparations confer forces to the Earth assisting its evolution towards the future.

The farmers that make and use the preparations metamorphose the soil, plants and food and contribute to the creation of a new Earth. The making and use of the preparations are a result of a path to consciousness and freedom of the winegrower, gardener and farmer.

1. WHAT IS 500P?

PREPARED HORN MANURE

Developed and widely-used by Alex Podolinsky in Australia, Prepared Horn Manure (500P) is made from Horn Manure (500) into which the six compost preparations (normally used for making the compost pile) have been added according to a specific method.

Using Prepared Horn Manure (500P) instead of traditional Horn Manure is a way of applying the six preparations (usually used in the compost) to areas where such compost is not, or infrequently used.

Prepared Horn Manure (500P) has been proven effective on grain and cereal crops, on pastures, market gardens, orchards and vineyards. We recommend using it whenever and wherever possible. This preparation replaces in one single spraying, the triple application of M. Thun's Barrel Preparation (CPP), followed by one spraying of plain 'Horn Manure'.

Prepared Horn Manure (500P) should be stirred for one hour, in the same way as for traditional Horn Manure.

2. BIODYNAMIE SERVICES

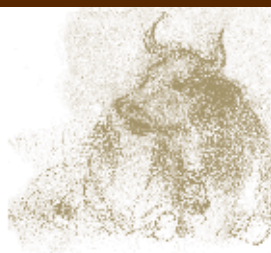
Biodynamie Services produces and sells Biodynamic Preparations, as well as a wide range of equipment and other products for use on Biodynamic farms, vineyards and gardens.

Products available at Biodynamie Services :

- High-quality Biodynamic Preparations,
- Medicinal plants for making your own plant extracts, herbal teas and decoctions to regulate and stimulate plant health,
- Peat-lined, wooden boxes with glass jars for proper storage of biodynamic preparations,
- Equipment for manual stirring and spraying
- Consultancy services for groups and individuals,
- Training for professional farmers and home gardeners.

See their website <http://www.biodynamie-services.fr/en/> for advice on using and storing the Preparations as well as Pierre Masson's 2015 Biodynamic Lunar and Planetary Calendar (all in English). They have also produced an errata sheet to English Translation of The Biodynamic Manual by Pierre Masson for download.

(based on the Keynote Lecture given at the Biodynamic Conference: Biodynamic Agri-Culture: A Matter of Life)



¹ Yarrow (502), chamomile (503), nettle (504), oak bark (505), dandelion (506) and valerian (507).

² Alex Podolinsky – Director Biodynamic Research Institute in Australia

³ See explanatory box at end of article

⁴ Salutogenesis, the origin of health, is a stress resource orientated concept, which focuses on resources, maintains and improves the movement towards health. It gives the answer why people despite stressful situations and hardships stay well. It is the opposite of the pathogenic concept where the focus is on the obstacles and deficits. See: <http://www.salutogenesis.hv.se/eng/Home.2.html>