

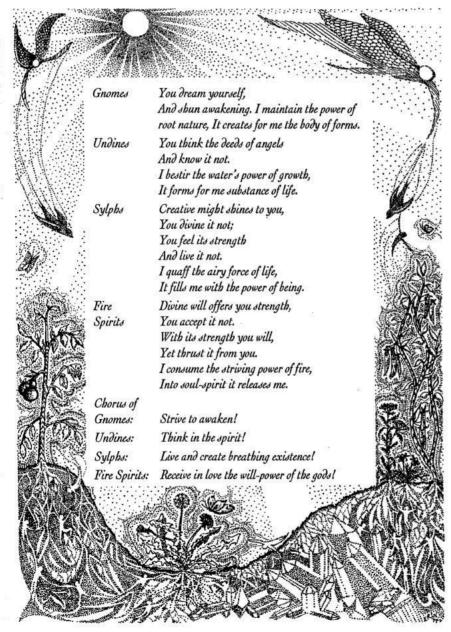
Applied BIODYNAMICS



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Rudolf Steiner: Man as Symphony of the Creative Word, Rudolf Steiner Press, 1993, p. 144.

SEED SOAKS WITH THE BIODYNAMIC PREPARATIONS

by Hugh Courtney

One very valuable technique to use in getting off to a good start in the garden is that of using the appropriate biodynamic preparation as a seed bath or seed soak prior to planting the seed. Such a treatment is especially useful where one must use bought-in seed, almost all of which comes from a chemical background. However, even seed from organic sources has, so to speak, lost its connection to its cosmic archetype or "blueprint." If you already have biodynamic seed, and keep in mind it takes several generations to reconnect the seed to its cosmic forces, and you have the time to seed soak, it will be well worth the effort. A soaking of the seed with the most suitable biodynamic preparation helps to re-establish this connection to the cosmos from the moment of germination. Where seed baths are used with diligence, two principle benefits can be noticed. The first benefit is that germination rates are much higher. Advantage number two is that fruit set is significantly greater. This improvement in fruit set is easily observed in the case of legume crops. As is apparent from the article "Spring in the Biodynamic Garden" in this same issue, this seed bath technique is very much under utilized by biodynamic growers in this country.

In an effort to increase the use of this technique, we have gleaned information from several different sources and have compiled them in a convenient tabular form. Unfortunately, at this point, all these sources are secondary and the original research done in Europe has yet to be translated into English. We will be hoping to remedy this

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shortcoming in the future. In the meantime, we have used three different sources which deal with this subject —

- 1. Castelliz: Life to the Land, Lanthorn Press, 1980.
- Koepf, Pettersson & Schaumann: Biodynamic Agriculture, Anthroposophic Press, 1976.
- Sattler & Wistinghausen: Bio-Dynamic Farming Practice, Bio-Dynamic Agricultural Association, 1992.

What appears in this article subsequently is largely a synthesis of what was learned from these three sources.

To employ the preparations for use as a seed bath, one should stir the preparations in the biodynamic fashion for the usual time: the BD #500 for its usual one hour period and the #507 for the recommended 10 to 20 minutes, depending upon one's preferred stirring time "authority." When the compost preparations #502-506 are used, although the one hour stirring time could be employed, a more "user friendly" method is suggested by the sources mentioned above. For smaller quantities of seed, one unit of the selected preparation is placed in one or two pints of water, stirred vigourously for up to 5 minutes and then allowed to stand for 20 to 24 hours.

Another brief stirring is done just before the actual seed treatment. Some crops are treated with "manure water" (prepared manure, or manure treated with #502-507), or with "birch pit concentrate", both of which are akin to Barrel Compost in their effects. When such instances arise, we will cite Barrel Compost in the table. In one or two instances, whole milk is suggested as an additional ingredient in the seed bath. The length of time recommended for soaking is generally 10-15 minutes. Seeds with a hard coating, such as parsley or carrots, could be given a longer bath. However, with such seeds as peas or beans, a longer soak will cause them to sloughoff the seed coat and lose their germinating capability. Seeds can be drained by using a kitchen strainer or else they can be suspended in the bath solution in a cheesecloth bag. Once removed from the solution they can be spread out on bath or paper towels for relatively rapid drying. It is best to plant out the treated seed within 24 to 48 hours after treatment. For field planting of larger quantities of seed, a somewhat different technique is employed. Any one of the three sources cited can provide an adequate description of the technique, so I must refer the reader to those. Recommendations for treatment of potatoes, especially in *Bio-Dynamic Farming Practice*, are so extensive that I must also refer the reader to that source for the exact details.

In general, a seed bath with BD#500 would benefit virtually all crops especially as far as root development is concerned. However, in the research done in Europe, principally by Martha Kuenzel and Franz Lippert, individual preparations were found to enhance plants in a more effective way than was the case when a compound preparation, ie. Barrel Compost, was used.

Although cereals especially seem to each have a preferred preparation, my own experience with seed baths has led me to evolve a "quick and easy" thumb rule to remember which preparation goes with which seed. The table provided will readily identify the exceptions to the following thumb rule: Legumes & Brassicas — BD#503(Chamomile preparation); Lettuce crops — BD#505(Oak Bark preparation); Fruit crops (other than legumes) — BD#507(Valerian preparation).

An analysis of the recommendations in the table will quickly reveal that preparations #501, #506 and #508 are not among those listed. Several years ago, in a "seat of the pants" seed bath experiment with corn (maize) which I never replicated, I felt that I obtained the best results with the plot that had been treated with a combination of #501 and #506. That particular plot had a higher yield and almost no corn ear worm damage in comparison to the several other plots that had received a variety of different treatments. Much more experimentation seems desirable in this area of seed soaks.

CROP	PREPARATION	CROP	PREPARATION
CEREALS		celeriac	
wheat507		celery507	
rye502		chard500	
oats505		chicory507	
barley504		collards503	
rice?		cucumber507	
corn (maize)507		eggplant? (likely 507)	
millet?		garlic? (likely 507)	
linseed503		kale503	
COVER CROPS		kohlrabi503 leek507	
alfalfa	503	7 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 1 -	
clover		lettuce	(C) (CDCC) (D) (CDCC) (CDC
grasses502		melon? (likely 507)	
		mustard greens503	
FLOWERS		okra?	
sunflowersBarrel Compost		onion507	
other flowers?		parsley?	
HERBS		parsnip?	
herbs?		peas, English503	
VEGETABLES		peas, field	
artichoke?		peppers	
arugula	1.00	peppers	
asparagus?		namic Farming Practice, pgs.175-180,	
beans503 (505 for bush beans)		D T	or other pertinent references.
beets507 or 507 + Barrel Compost		pumpkin	
or 1 part BC + 4 parts water + 5 parts whole milk, let stand 24 hours, stir		radish	
		rutabaga	
	another 5 minutes prior to use.	scallion	
broccoli	503	spinach500	
brussels sprout	ts503	squash? (likely 507)	
cabbage503		sweet potato? (? 500 ?)	
cantaloupe507		turnip503	
carrot507 or: BC/water/whole milk soak (see beets)		tomato	
		watermelon	