



SO THE EARTH MAY BE HEALED

Cosmic Energy Abounds at Stephen Storch's
Biodynamic Farm in Water Mill By Patrick Dougherty

Stephen Storch knelt before an old wine barrel buried in the ground of his Water Mill farm. With an air of quiet reverence, he slid a wooden disk cover aside, revealing the barrel's contents: compost.

But this is no ordinary compost. It is rich and dark, perfectly level, silky and fine. The compost looks inviting, as if it is radiating heat against the chilly spring day's backdrop of gray sky. "*Here, look,*" Storch beckoned. He gently trails one finger along the compost's surface, revealing several squirming baby worms. "*When it's warm there's even more,*" he said.

The compost is a foundation of the alternative agriculture known as biodynamic farming. The worms exemplify a key biodynamic tenet: the earth is alive. A handful of biodynamic compost is concentrated energy, churning with microbial life. In the biodynamic model, a farm is not a plot of land, but a self-sustaining, living entity. Plants are not inanimate; they are vibrant, energetic beings with inherent intelligence. The biodynamic farmer lives in communion with his surroundings, not in dominion over them.

Proponents believe that biodynamic farming yields fruits and vegetables that have better taste, aroma and nutritional content than their commercially-grown counterparts. Perhaps most importantly, biodynamic produce is thought to be more vital—loaded with cosmic energy that is the ineffable life force of the universe.

It's the Bomb

Storch, along with the growing ranks of biodynamic farmers, follows the teachings of philosopher and scientist Rudolph Steiner, who in 1924 gave a series of lectures outlining biodynamic farming principles. Steiner devised this organic-energetic agriculture approach to reverse the damage to plants, living soil and livestock inflicted by the early 20th century advent of chemical agriculture. To breathe new life into dead soil, biodynamics combines pragmatic organic farming practices with mystical, astrological and energetic influences.

"Even on the worst chemically abused soil, I can make a difference in one year," said Storch. *"You'll see the biology increase, you'll start to get some soil structure back from increased microbial activity. This compost and 'the 500' are like biological nuclear bombs."*

"The 500" is one of nine "preparations," numbered 500 to 508, that are integral to biodynamic farming. Preparations, derived from plant, mineral and animal sources, are akin to homeopathic treatments. They serve practical functions, like stimulating the soil's micro-life and health, fostering root growth and plant health, and potentiating plants' metabolism of light. Biodynamic preparations are also believed to transcend the biological and tap into the ethereal, gathering energies that strengthen plants' life force.



In a large bin, Storch keeps some of his preparations: earthy organic matter packed in tiny terra-cotta urns nestled in a bed of soil.

"The 500 is cow manure that gets packed in a cow horn and buried in the ground for the winter. 501 is finely ground silica that gets packed in a horn and buried in the ground for the summer," explained Storch. The remaining preparations use yarrow blossoms, chamomile blossoms, stinging nettle, oak bark, dandelion flowers, valerian flowers, and horsetail. Small quantities

of these plant preparations are then diluted in composts.

"Each preparation goes through a different composting process," Storch said. *"Yarrow goes in the bladder of a stag, which is hung in the sun for the summer then buried in the ground for the winter. Chamomile gets packed into the intestine of a bovine, which is hung in the sun for the summer and then buried in the fall."*

Storch explained the theory behind the ritualistic procedures. *"In creating preparations, we're dealing with very specific biological and energetic processes,"* he said. *"We end up with highly concentrated preparations that combine cosmic, seasonal, animal and plant energies."*

Though the process may seem quirky, Washington State University researchers found that compost mixed with biodynamic preparations was a more effective growing medium than compost mixed with field soil—even when preparations were used only in minute amounts.

The Brewmeister

Among the controlled chaos of tools, dirt mounds, stone piles, sheds, tractors and bicycles are large plastic tubs with piping and pumps attached. These are Storch's homemade "brewers," which introduce biodynamic preparations and composts into water, creating a "tea" medium for application.



But in the biodynamic philosophy, water is more than liquid—water is energy. *“Water is the mediator between cosmic forces and earthly forces,”* said Storch. *“Water is what makes life on this planet possible. Plants, animals—everything is based on water. So that’s the element these preparations are presented in.”*

Storch’s biodynamic tea brewers “imprint” preparations on the water in a manner that harmonizes with nature, and therefore is most beneficial to plant life. *“Water that gets carried in a pipe... the energy of it is deadened,”* he said. *“Nature doesn’t like straight lines. Think of a meandering brook or stream tumbling over rocks.”*

Storch’s brewers swirl the ingredients first clockwise and then counterclockwise. *“It’s all about energy,”* Storch reiterated. *“These brewers create a vortex; the water is corkscrewing as it’s spinning. A vortex draws in energy. The most powerful forces on earth, like hurricanes or tornados, are vortices. The energy comes from the periphery to the center; that is a formative, creative force. Every flower, every bud, has the property of a spiral.”*

Indeed, Storch’s explanations and theories seem born out when one considers the patterns of spiraling, spinning images in nature and science: DNA, the Earth’s rotation, black holes, yin-yang, electrons around atoms, planets swirling around the sun. In his greenhouse, a particularly vibrant aloe plant features a prominent stalk that terminates in a bud with a distinct vortex pattern.

Storch produces a biodynamic planting calendar that annotates moon phases and astrological signs. According to biodynamic philosophies, plant growth is strongly influenced by moon cycles. Care is taken to plant seeds during phases that are most conducive to strong growth.

As the moon exerts the greatest gravitational pull on the earth, root growth is impeded; as the moon’s pull lessens, roots are free to delve deeper. In addition, moonlight encourages foliage





development; as the full moon bathes leaves in light, the roots rest—further testament to biodynamic farming’s meticulous attention to balance.

Storch pointed out the connection between plants and the astrological signs. “*You work with these energies; you just try to get a little more enhancement into the plants through the astrological signs,*” he said. “*The more layers you can add to it, the more the plant can benefit—and in the end, the more we benefit.*”

Supporting Self-Sufficiency

Storch’s plot embodies Steiner’s credo: The farm should be a self-sufficient entity. A large pen holds two massive, contented-looking woolly Scottish Highland cattle that produce the manure used in biodynamic compost and preparations. The farm’s south side features huge mounds of decomposing organic matter, full of grass clippings, landscaping project remnants and fish racks. Down a path lies a mound of charged paramagnetic stone, which helps root development, and piles of pulverized rock that provide plants with necessary minerals.

At the height of summer, Storch’s fields are lush and dense with vibrant life. He grows over 350 varieties of fruits, vegetables and flowers that he claims defy conventionally-grown produce. “*Chemical farming takes the taste, energy and aroma out of plants,*” Storch commented. “*Eating biodynamic food raises your vibration. You think clearer. You feel better.*”



Inside his farmhouse, Storch brewed stinging nettle tea and broke out a jar of homemade pickled biodynamic Brussels sprouts. He spooned a heaping helping into a bowl. They were sublimely delicious, juicy, firm and vibrant. The stinging nettle tea, served in a steaming mug with a scoop of organic honey, was unexpectedly pleasant and mild.

Storch's focused, extraordinary work goes beyond Water Mill. He may leave Long Island to oversee a biodynamic farming project in Chicago's inner city. Twenty acres await him, to be transformed from negative energy to positive energy; to sustain local inhabitants with nourishing, vital biodynamic produce.

Storch is matter-of-fact about leaving his Long Island farm: *"People around here aren't ready for biodynamics,"* he said. He questions the need for fancy cars, scoffs at the "McMansions" being erected across the street, and lambastes chemical treatments that gave Southampton residents green lawns but poisoned Lake Agawam.

"People around here have got to wake up," he said. With his wide vista, Storch is wide awake. If his green thumb will make a more significant impact elsewhere, then that is where he will be. As he taps scientific biology, ethereal mysticism, and profound respect for life, Storch realizes biodynamic farming's ultimate purpose: So the Earth may be Healed.



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