

## Terra Simpacto – Biodynamic Compost

Through the art of gardening, we can experience our relationship with the soil in a way that is both intimate & local, while as an activity is practiced worldwide connecting and deepening our rapport with our earth Gaia.

“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.” ( Biodynamic Association Resource Catalog).

Gardening in Santa Fe since 1981, I have come to know her soils rather well. Over the years, we have responded in a thoughtful manner, which has proven to be mutually beneficial. Given the changing weather patterns of our planet inclusive of the Southwest, harvesting and organizing water, land contouring, cultivating and restoring the soil, while balancing its alkalinity, are all essential to ensure renewing, sustained vitality and beautiful, healthy results. It is also wise to group plants compatible in cultural and moisture needs. An appropriate layer of mulch buffers temperature extremes, retains moisture and soil coolness.

Integral to Biodynamic practices is building a soil/plant partnership that is self-regulating i.e. – plant growth in direct proportion to vitality in the soil to actively decompose organic materials. So the intention in our cultivating practices is aimed toward improving the *receptive* capacity of our soil - its inner liveliness. This process is enhanced by the quality of *balanced life force* found in Biodynamic compost. Reference to these life forces is 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 compost is built in layers, utilizing dry-green matter, manures, garden soil or similar, water and six compost preparations inserted into the body of the pile.

These preparations are specially made plant derived substances which radiate *energies* through the pile and which organize and balance aerobic fermentation in the breakdown process. They serve as *catalysts*, directing the decomposition and buildup of materials in the pile while bringing about a speedy and even breakdown...in other words, they 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. These preparations facilitate transference of cosmic forces into an organic connection.

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.

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). James Lovelock, in his latest book on Gaia (2006) reminds – “it is the ‘underworld of Nature’...for the most part, these denizens of the soil, the micro-organisms, the fungi, worms, slime molds and the trees – that keep Gaia going.”

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.” These activities include strengthening life forces, stimulating root growth, soil micro-organism production and humus formation.

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 *carriers 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. They can be experienced in the heightened fragrance and subtler colours in flowers, in the unique character of a specific place - its *terrior*...more fully expressed in flavor, taste and nutritional value, in disease resistance, in the storage capacities of these foods and crops and in the viability of seeds and healthier livestock.

As the topsoil becomes deeper, it is less subject to erosion, the living substance is improved. “The humus in the compost becomes *colloidal* (held in suspension) 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.” (from phone interview with Hugh Courtney, July 2005)

Gaia is an animate and responsive, self-regulating intelligence whom we can trust to teach us what we need to know – for there is a reciprocal and rejuvenating connection bonding human nature to Gaian nurture. If we remain grounded and awake to this connection, we deepen our potential to grow, evolve and illumine our earthly divinity.

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