



Biodynamic Agriculture Association of Ireland

BDAAI

MEMBERS NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2024

Imbolc *The celebration of Imbolc originates from the Celts*

IN ANCIENT IRELAND, THE CELTIC YEAR WAS DOMINATED BY THE FOUR KEY FESTIVALS OF **IMBOLC**, **BEALTAINE**, **LUGHNASA** AND **SAMHAIN**. Imbolc symbolises the halfway point between the winter solstice (Yule) and the spring equinox (Ostara). The beginning of Spring. The name Imbolc is given various translations including 'ewe's milk' and 'in the belly'; both these two, suggest the natural world preparing for new life as the lambing season comes around.

Growth

Growth is underway but for the most part happens out of sight, not yet ready to push out into the world. The Waldorf Steiner schools celebrate this season by lighting candles set in the earth, helping along the slow warming of the soil by the rising sun and giving warmth to the new life hidden in the soil.

Rudolf Steiner said in *Midsummer and Midwinter Mysteries*, 23rd Dec 1922—

The light and the warmth sink down, as it were, into the soil of the earth, so that in Winter the Summer is still there, under the soil. During Winter it is Summer underneath the surface of the earth. And it is this Summer under the surface of the earth in Winter time that enables the roots of the plants to thrive'.

The effects are further explained by Hugh Lovel in *Quantum Agriculture*.

'It is even more apparent in the abundant upwelling of sugars in



Canadian Maples in the Spring. The amount of sugar produced by Maple Tree roots beneath the winter snow speaks volumes about what warmth and light do within the earth'.

From my point of view, using the winter preps on the 14th January last year was such a positive force. Here in Leitrim we had rain almost every day from July 1st. Yet we had an abundant and extended harvest. We had a slug issue with the spuds but the extended season could only be explained by the winter preps. A major thank you

Noel's photo of the buried horns absorbing the Winter energy

to David Wallis for his research and follow through on Feldspar Silica and it's effects. If you have not used it this year, I would urge you to go for it next year.

Gratitude

To all members, the board wish you a healthy and happy new year. In the last few years a serious amount of research and dedica-

tion by some core members has ensured that the quality of our own preparations has improved immensely. Special thanks to Noel Higgins, Timmy Martin, David Wallis, Stuart Rogers and Thomas O'Connor, for their unselfish application, their time and attention to detail.

With a prep day coming up we also want to thank Trevor Harris for his significant contribution to the prep days over the years. Besides supplying beautiful biodynamic produce, he has demonstrated farm scale instruments and shared his knowledge and experience freely.

We are delighted to say that as a result of tremendous work by David Wallis, the association has sourced a hand stirrer. Based on this model, Michael Blake has taken on the task of getting hand stirrers manufactured to an exceptionally high standard. Sincere thanks to both of you. The following article by Michael gives you so much more detail.

Ireland's own all New Hand Stirring Instrument

The new hand stirring instrument along with its 20ltr Stainless Steel Bucket is based on a model from Australia. The Australian model consists of a frame with attached gear box and handle all in mild steel and coated with a zinc paint. The stirring instrument which is

now in production, will be manufactured in food grade (316) stainless steel, there is a very good reason for this. In my 50 odd years of gardening and DIY of every conceivable project I have learned especially when I look at my many tools and machines—our climate is extremely aggressive on mild steel! And we don't want little specks of rust dropping into the prep when we are dynamising it. I also questioned the idea of galvanised steel and the answer was always that it would probably cost as much or more than Stainless. I had the experience of stirring the winter preps with the Australian model—it worked very well I have to say.

An initial production line of ten stirring instruments has been commissioned and the production facility has created a computer aided design and 3d model of the new instrument. I understand that all of these are accounted for and will be used for research and the

accumulation of data in the coming year. I anticipate further enhancements to this instrument over time, but that requires additional research, so may be a while in coming to fruition. Meanwhile we will commission a second production run as soon as we see the demand for it. So if you are interested please let us know. Some of you might wonder why it is referred to as an instrument: like many of the 'fine' devices which are used in the creation of potent preparations based on Rudolf Steiner's directions the version we are creating is a precision designed and manufactured 'instrument' which:

- a) precisely aligns the the axis of the stirring paddles above the centre of the bucket;
- b) the paddles are precisely designed to create the optimum vortex in the bucket;
- c) I hope that due to the quality of the material used in the manufacture it will last a lifetime even in our inhospitable damp climate.

Michael Blake

The Website and Online Shop

Work is progressing and we are very hopeful to have both up and running soon. We are aiming for a secure, robust, easy to navigate and most informative website which will really enhance the sharing of knowledge with members. To some it may sound like a simple task. To me, it's more like



nuclear science! So I take my hat off to Thomas O'Connor who is leading this project. You're a mighty man Thomas, thank you.

Continuous learning

"It is important that we discover an educational method where people learn to learn and go on learning their whole lives." RUDOLF STEINER
 Maybe it's because I am getting on a bit now that I appreciate the importance of this quote. I now understand the proverb 'when someone dies, a library burns'. I can't say that I would have when I was a young person and felt bullet proof running through life. The learnings from Biodynamics have lasted 100 years, let us ensure that the direction and the pathway set out by Rudolf Steiner is never lost.

Why do we the members and indeed others practice Biodynamics. What stirred (pardon the pun) our interest, what keeps us here. Are we still learning, are we stuck in a system or a routine? Do we really understand the difference Biodynamics makes, are we all using the preparations. I have no doubt that there are many among us who are very much in tune with the complexities, the simplicities, the depths, the evolution and the wonder of Biodynamics. There are also many of us who struggle along the way, and most likely some of us who plod along. All perfectly normal for any association.

So if we had one wish, it would be

to get more people using the preps, and using them as correctly as they can. But most important is to get them out. Then learn from the experience, learn from others, read up and go as far as is comfortable for you. If you can, get to the associations prep days and share your knowledge and your stories.

There is no doubt that some are more in tune with Biodynamics than others. This is as it should be. Nelson Mandela said "When we lose the right to be different, we lose the privilege to be free". So no one should ever feel out of place in our association. For those of you who are 'more in tune', please share your knowledge. For those of us who are 'less in tune', please seek the knowledge.

Best practice for Stirring, spraying and storing BD preparations

Horn manure also known as 500 and horn silica known as 501 are the two field sprays used in biodynamic agriculture. Horn manure works mainly on the soil and roots of plants, helping to build soil structure and the formation of humus. It also encourages soil microbial activity including bacteria and fungi and increases populations and activity of earthworms. It supports root development and the interaction between plants and soil biology allowing plants to get all the nutrition they need through microbial interactions.

500 should be sprayed at least

twice during the year, spring and autumn. In conversion to biodynamics it can be used more frequently and especially here in Ireland we feel it can be used more often until the pattern of the preparations is built up. Traditionally 500 is used when the soil starts to warm up, just after cultivation and just before or at the time of sowing or planting. It can also be used after cutting hay or silage, spreading manure or turning in a cover crop. Just to note the use of the combined winter spray has a different purpose than using the preparations during the growing season.

Use 100gm of horn manure in 25 to 35 liters of water per hectare and spray it out in late afternoon. Water quality is important, clean, fresh rainwater is best. If tap water is all you have available, leave it in a clean bucket outdoors for a couple days before use. A stainless steel pot is best for warming the water, but use what's available. The water is warmed to between 35-37°C. Stir regularly while warming to avoid hot spots in the water. Do not allow the water temperature to go over 37°C as this will reduce the ability of the water to take on the 500P/501 patterns during stirring. Wood or gas heating is best to warm the water. Heating with electricity is not advised as the water structure is negatively affected. Also note that mixing of hot/very hot water with cold water to get a temperature of 35-37°C is not recommended.

The warmed water can be stirred using a mechanical stirring machine

or by hand. A clean plastic bucket is ok, stainless steel is best. Avoid using a galvanised steel bucket. If using a new plastic bucket, fill it with water and leave outdoors for a few days. Change the water daily. This should remove the “plastic” smell from the new bucket. If stirring by hand it is important to be comfortable, get a chair or stool that allows you to stir in the bucket with ease. If it is your first time stirring, it would be best to do a trial run for a short while without the preps to ensure you are as comfortable as possible. An hour is a long time to stir and being comfortable whilst stirring is important. When the water is warmed, crumble the preparations into the warm water and stir for exactly one hour. Stir vigorously in one direction until a deep vortex is formed, (approx. 15-20 sec) then immediately change direction thus creating chaos in the water and

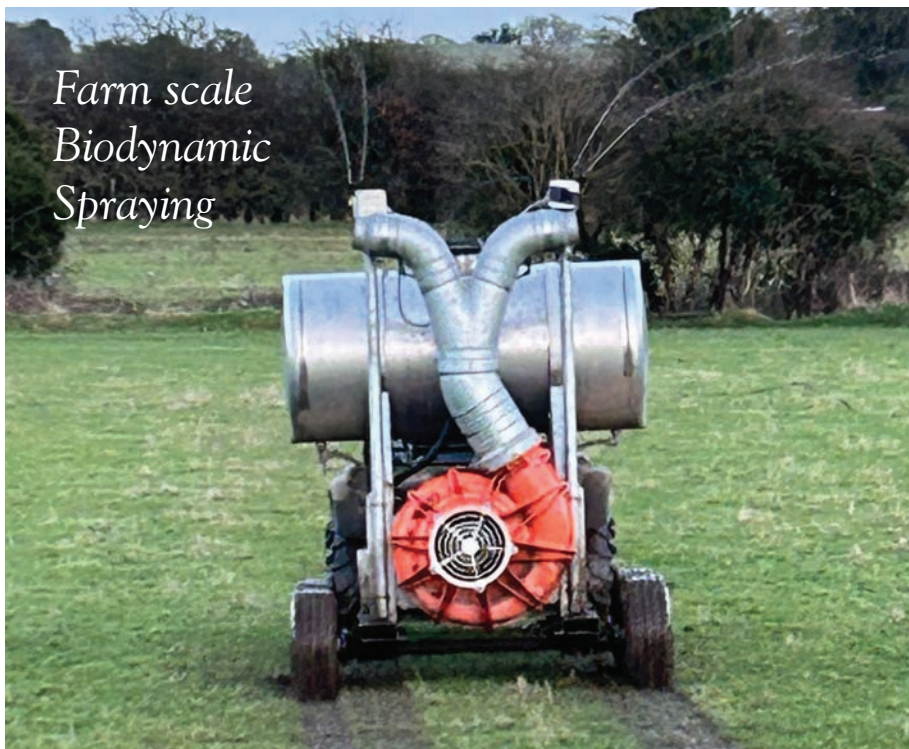
bringing in lots of oxygen, stir in the opposite direction again creating a vortex. Continue this process consistently throughout the hour. Each time a vortex is formed, laminar flow creates surface tension between the layers of water. This “stretches” the hydrogen bonds in the water allowing the pattern of the preparations to be imprinted into the water. In this way, water is the perfect medium to transfer the information patterns of the 500P/501 to the land. As you stir, after 20 minutes or so, you will notice the water “softening”. Stirring should only be done out in the open air and not under a roof. Make sure you won’t be distracted during the hour, put your phone away and keep your attention focused on the task in hand.

Spray the preparation as soon as the stirring is finished. If using a sprayer it needs to be clean and

have never been used for anything harmful. The liquid should be filtered through a fine stainless steel sieve or cotton cloth to avoid any blockages. It should be sprayed on the ground in large droplets at low pressure. It can also be done with a bucket and brush. Ideally the droplets should make contact with the bare soil. On pasture it can be sprayed before light rain to help bring it down onto the soil.

Prepared horn manure or 500P is used in the same way as 500, the difference being it has all the compost preps added to it. It was developed by Alex Podolinsky in Australia. As the areas of land were too large to get biodynamic compost out on to and in any case there wasn’t enough compost to cover it he developed 500P as a means to get the patterns of the compost preps out with the 500. It is made by adding the compost preps to 500 and leaving it to mature for a time. It may not need to be used as often as 500, a spring and autumn application being adequate with 500 being used at other times.

Horn manure and horn silica work together on below ground and above ground processes. The horn silica is applied as an atmospheric spray and works on blossoming, fruiting and ripening, it increases the ability of the plant to absorb light and so increases photosynthesis, which in turn means better protein synthesis, stronger root exudation and overall a more



*Farm scale
Biodynamic
Spraying*

robust and resilient plant. Horn silica is stirred in the same way as horn manure except it is used at a rate of 4gm in 25 to 35 litres of water and is sprayed out as a fine mist in the early morning.

Horn Silica applications can start after horn manure has been applied. It is best applied just after sunrise when there is still dew on the plants but before it gets hot. In our Irish conditions when it is often cloudy it can be applied later. It should only be applied when plants have their true leaves and are growing strongly. It can be most effective when crops are reaching maturity helping to synchronize ripening and increasing protein content in cereals.

In the often overcast and cloudy weather we have in Ireland horn silica is the preparation that is most frequently needed as it brings more light. It can be used more often than horn manure but caution is needed as use of horn silica should always be supported by horn manure (unless it is being used for some specific purpose, for example, ripening) The frequency and interval between the use of the two will depend on how often the preparations are used and soil type, a clay soil holding on the pattern of horn manure longer than a sandy soil. The use of horn silica without the foundation of horn manure can push a crop to go to seed prematurely.

Traditional uses of the preparations can sometimes lead to dogma and this does nothing for

the development and evolution of biodynamics. Stienner encouraged farmers to experiment, every farm is an individuality having different climate, different enterprises and different context. When we get a better understanding of how the preparations work and start to develop a relationship with using them we can then get more creative with using them. They can be put into teabags and suspended in water troughs where grazing animals can spread the patterns throughout the farm. If time and stirring equipment is a limitation, stir in a bucket and walk the boundary of your land with a backpack sprayer or a bucket and brush. This is a great way to connect with the preparations and your land.

Another modality which our association has been working with is the use of potentised preparations. This is something which is gaining momentum in biodynamic circles around the world. There are practical limitations to the area of land which can be covered using live preps and also difficulty in obtaining enough cow horns for horn manure. (We currently buy our cow horns from France but this may not always be available) Potencies are made by serial dilution and succussion of the preparation which separates the pattern of activity from the substance. Different dilutions or potencies can work on different levels and a little can go a very long way. Eugen and Lilly Kolisko did extensive work and research into the use of potentised preparations and pub-

lished that body of work in "Agriculture of Tomorrow" Other resources for the use of potentised preparations are Mark Moodie's website www.considera.org and Glen Atkinson <https://garudabd.org/>

STORAGE

If using preparations on a regular basis it is essential to have proper storage. Horn manure is a living substance and needs to be kept in a colloidal state and not allowed to dry out. An earthenware pot, ceramic or glass jar can be used for storage. This is then placed in a double walled wooden box. The cavity of the box including the lid should be 6-8cm and filled firmly with dried peat. Any available untreated wood can be used. (not ply) It will need to be T & G so that there are no gaps. The joints in the box should be tight fitting so that no peat can fall out. The peat should never be allowed to come into contact with the preparation. The size of the box will depend on how much 500 you need to store but for example a 1 litre jar will hold about 1 kg of horn manure. For larger amounts you will need a larger earthenware pot with holes in the bottom for drainage. The box should be placed in a dry, cool well-ventilated and quiet and frost free area away from strong smells, electrical outlets or motors, computers or electromagnetic fields. I plan to have some small storage boxes available at the spring prep day if people are interested. Also for anyone who wishes to make their own I can send on more detailed plans.

Horn silica can be stored in a glass jar with a lid but not airtight. It can be placed inside or outside an east facing window where it catches the morning sun, if outside it should have a cover over it to protect it from the rain. I'd like to thank everyone who availed of the winter prep offer, its very encouraging to see Irish preps going out on more acres around the country.

Looking forward to see you at the spring prep day. *Noel Higgins*



*Sept '23
Getting ready to fill
and bury 1,000 horns.*

Spring Prep Day Details

DATE: 11th May 2024.

LOCATION: Kim McCalls farm, Calverstown Co. Kildare.

R56AY82

TIME: 11am-4pm.

All are Welcome!

Centenary Celebrations

100 years ago Rudolf Steiner gave 8 agricultural lectures in Koberwitz Germany (now Kobierzyce Poland). This as we all know was the birth of biodynamics. For us in the biodynamic community this year is an opportunity to celebrate, to share experiences, to learn and if your interest has waned, then why not rekindle it, refresh, reinvigorate and reconnect. For those who are very much still in tune, please share and encourage. Our Horn Dig Day is on 11th May in Kim McCalls Farm, Co. Kildare. Please attend if you can and enjoy the celebration. We hope to have

as many as possible there so I would like to remind you that please do not have mobile phones with you when we are emptying the horns. You may have them away from that area.

Three farm walks planned

Also as part of our celebration, we are planning 3 'farm walks'.

Dates are not confirmed yet but will most likely be in the July/August time. To be confirmed in our next newsletter (May).

Stuart Rogers, Thomas O'Connor and myself will be hosting the walks. Three very different days, there has to be at least one that you can or want to attend.

Stuart Rogers

Co Meath

This year Stuart is planning a few different things on the farm, one is an anaerobic compost pile with

BD compost preps, he is also planning 3 to 4 acres of sunflowers, that will be a sight to behold. He will be applying both live and potency preps on cereals along with fermented seaweed which will have the compost preps in it (Hugh Lovel). Also putting in numbers of acres of a forage/cover crop for the sheep to graze and to improve and counteract compaction issues with the soil.

Thomas O'Connor

Co Kerry (Farm Overview)

Manna Organic Farm is 25 acres of a certified organic mixed farming system. Based on the dingle peninsula, Co Kerry. Our farm includes Horticulture, Native woodland, Native Irish orchard and Agroforestry. All our produce is provided directly to our farm shop. www.mannaorganicstore.ie based in Tralee Co Kerry. We have been certified organic for 15 years and implementing Biodynamic practices since then. We have no doubt of the benefits of Biodynamic practices in producing nutrient dense food, through a healthy

ecosystem in which plant, animal and people can reach their potential. On the day we will look at why we at Manna Organic Farm and Store are committed to Biodynamics and how we apply the principles and practices to ensure our farm is both physically and energetically enhanced.

Dave Kelly
Co Leitrim

So now in complete contrast to the previous farms, we have the grand total of 0.9 of an acre, including our home. We have typical Leitrim soil (blue daub) so we must regenerate and build. The main goal has been to grow the most nutrient dense food we can, so discovering biodynamics has been key to getting us to where we are. You can sense the energy especially after a prep spray. A visit here will most likely suit gardeners. We have a polytunnel, an orchard, numerous raised beds, wild flower meadow,

mini forest, chickens and a few quirky bits. I will probably learn more from you, than you will from me. Being relatively new to growing, it has become a passion. I want to take this opportunity to thank Jim Cronin for his advice and encouragement along the way. Here's hoping for a bountiful year.

Books recommended by the BDAAI

The Maria Thun Biodynamic Calendar 2024

Some Irish sellers where as I write this, it is available—

Sheelagh Na Gig. Cloughjordan Co. Tipperary.

Dingle Bookshop. Dingle Co. Kerry

I could not find any other Irish sellers with the book in stock.

A Biodynamic Manual by Pierre Masson

This book is full of wisdom and very practical. Pierre Masson turned his skills from working on a biodynamic mixed farm for 22 years, to training and advising in the field of biodynamics. I had a quick look through it before I wrote this and there are so many sections that I have underlined in pencil. I feel the need to read it again. Pierre has a broad and practical vision of biodynamics.

Video recommendations

A suggestion from Michael Blake, The Biggest Little Farm, on Netflix. I don't have netflix myself but this comes very highly recommended.

Dave Kelly
