

Eurobodalla BioDynamic Group (EBDG)

Newsletter

Issue 4 August 2016



Stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*)

Who are we?

The Eurobodalla BioDynamic Group (EBDG) is a small group of active biodynamic gardeners and farmers on the south coast of New South Wales practicing biodynamics for more than 10 years. We also incorporate permaculture principles, which together help produce high quality and nutritious food. We also practice natural bee keeping using top-bar hives. The aim of the group is to share these methods of gardening and farming. Anyone interested in learning about biodynamic practices or permaculture principles will gain much from joining the group or attending bi-monthly meetings.

Last meeting held at Kyle Levier's place

The meeting was held on 1 May at Kyle's market garden at Turlingah. Kyle has become a serious BD practitioner since doing his BD Foundation Course this year. Read more from Kyle under The Biodynamic Method below. Many members attended (see image below) and we stirred (see image below) and put out BD 500 on the extensive market garden.

Images from Turlingah



Stirring BD 500



Members preparing BD 500

Biodynamic Terms explained CATION EXCHANGE CAPACITY (CEC)

In a previous newsletter we had explained that our main purpose in using biodynamic methods is to create HUMUS. When soil humus levels are maintained (and built up) nutrients are made available to plants. The important plant nutrients calcium (Ca), magnesium (Mg), potassium (K) and others are available to be taken up by the plant roots as cations(+). Now we know from science that both the clay in the soil and humus have the ability to attract and hold both the positively charged cations (+) and the negatively charged anions (-).

Why then is humus so important when clay can do the same as humus? The short answer is - humus can do it so much better! So what is the cation exchange capacity? It is the process whereby ions, electrically charged particles, are exchanged between the plant, the soil solution and the humus or clay. It is a complex biochemical process and hard to explain in simple terms but the fact is humus can hold and store nutrients without leaching. This means they remain available to the plant's "intelligence", until their fine feeder roots "demands" them. The plant, by splitting water into H⁺ plus OH⁻, gives the humus a positively charged cation and H⁺ in exchange for a positively charged calcium, potassium or magnesium or other cation, whichever it needs for its growth and other processes. Nothing is lost. The soil keeps its pH level with becoming too acidic. The table below shows how much higher the CEC of HUMUS is in comparison to clay.

Comparison between CEC for Clay and Humus

	CEC (milliequivalents/100g)
Clay (kaolin)	3 – 15
Humus	150 - 300

Plant Profile – Stinging Nettle

Today we are looking at another one of our compost preparations. The common stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*). It is a perennial, which can grow to 1 meter in height. It likes rich soil and can tolerate shade. Nettle has many uses in medicine and gardening, as it is an excellent source of iron, calcium, sodium, chlorine, nitrogen, potassium, lecithin and vitamin A. In BD practices we are using nettle as the BD compost preparation BD 504.

It is prepared by cutting the plant at the flowering stage and then it is buried for 12 months in the soil. Nettle is under the influence of Mars (sting). It acts in a way that the right quantity of iron (Fe) is brought into the soil. It is called the “jack of all trades” because it can do so much. It improves the soil’s porosity, unlocks micro-nutrients and is generally a strengthening tonic for all plants.

The BioDynamic Method – Another approach to soil fertility

by Kyle Levier – local grower

Back in late April/early May I participated in the Biodynamic Education Centre’s Foundation Course for Biodynamic Farming and Gardening, hosted by well-known and passionate local biodynamic practitioner, Walther Kohler-Bond. The course runs over three weekends and gives participants, as the name suggests, an understanding of the foundations of biodynamics.

It quickly became apparent that Walther is extremely knowledgeable and passionate, which creates a great learning environment. The delivery of the workshop was well-balanced, consisting of theory, visual aids, group exercises and practical lessons. The biodynamic composting was a highlight, as I love a good compost heap, so too was applying BD500 (a focal point of biodynamic applications). However, there was also some very informative theory to stimulate the cosmic receptors between our ears. Biodynamic translates to ‘life forces’ and working with things in the living realm is paramount.

From my experience in the pursuit of managing an efficient business, nurturing the soil and environment, while providing community with clean, nutritious food, I’ve found organic methods a very sound approach to gardening and working with natural processes. However, biodynamics seeks to go beyond the natural processes and focuses on the energy behind these processes. Attempting to understand and harness these energies from astronomical influence is complementary to organics...it makes organics work, without the use of commercial products. Utilising what is on your land and eliminating external inputs empowers individuals to be productive and independent. Creating and building colloidal humus is the (Cont. over)

main focus of soil work, as this humus holds stable nutrients and moisture, both imperative for health plants. It does get a little cosmic and spiritual, but I found it a holistic approach to gardening and living which supports my ecological and ethical values.

Since the workshop, I have applied the biodynamic preparation BD500 several times. This is generally applied in autumn to activate microbial activity and improve soil profile. Over the next few months I will be applying BD508, which is a fungal preventative, and manure concentrate, which is used to promote the conversion of organic matter to humus, part of sheet composting, or composting in situ. It's early days and I am super enthusiastic, and love everything biodynamic is, but the proof is always in the pudding, so it will take time to see results. I will continue to practice biodynamics into the future, and increase my understanding. In the meantime, if you have any questions regarding biodynamics there is plenty on the net or you could just ask Walther.

BIODYNAMIC COURSES IN 2016

Contact: Walther Kohler Bond

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Courses at Jurlique, South Australia

Biodynamic Foundation Course (6 days)

1-2 October, 4-5 October, 8-9 October 2016

Biodynamic Introduction Courses for 2017 will be advised in next Newsletter.

Next Meeting

To be held at 3pm on Sunday 4 September at Kyle's place, 4168 Princes Highway, Turlingah. Directions: heading south past the Tuross turn, continue onto Turlingah, when safe make a right-hand turn into Turlingah, do a U-turn back onto the Princes Highway heading north, approx. 150 meters turn into Kyle's driveway on your left. We will be making a BD compost heap. This is a good chance to see what Kyle has achieved in his market garden.

Compiled by Walther Kohler, Kyle Levier and Jody Warren