

Bio-Dynamic Compost Making Workshop



Traci adds the first layer of green material over the base of hay biscuits.

Photo: Linette Vint

Traci and Lynette from the WWOOF Australia office are both passionate gardeners, often, as the end of the day draws near their husbands can be heard calling them in as the darkness sets for the night.

Because WWOOF Australia has many hosts who use Organic, Biodynamic, Permaculture, Regenerative and many more farming practices, we learn from them and experiment on our own properties.

"Our soil is volcanic, and needed lots of tender loving care, we are both continually striving to improve it using various practices". Said Lynette.

"April 1st, we had the opportunity to attend a Bio Dynamic compost hands-on workshop run by the Organic Agriculture Association (OAA), in Bairnsdale Vic, this was led by Sharon Dent. It was a great day; Sharon has deep knowledge in Biodynamics and is deeply passionate about teaching this to others.

We learnt a perfect compost heap requires the four elements which are the framework for biodynamic practices: water, air, earth, and fire, they must be in a balanced relationship:

Water – Critical in every stage for the series of organisms to thrive as they arrive in the heap to participate in its living process.

Air – Make sure the compost is not too tightly packed so that oxygen is available for aerobic bacteria. Different sizes of organic matter help to create the desired air flow, the compost needs air to breathe.

Earth – The solid matter in the heap, greens, dry matter, manures, minerals, wood chips, some old compost and biodynamic compost preparations.

Fire – The initial heating in the compost heap due to the living activity of metabolising substances. Each compost heats differently, and the composting time can vary greatly, the most important thing is the organisms have the right mix of air, moisture, and earth."

Rudolf Steiner was the founder of the biodynamic approach to agriculture, he believed that there is more to the health and vitality of a garden than simply the chemical and physical processes we observe. He lectured to farmers and wrote books about the

importance of the “dynamic” forces which include metaphysical, etheric, and astral influences. These non-material elements of the garden are taken into consideration when planting, harvesting, making compost, along with other tasks.

A major component of biodynamics is the use of “preparations”: herbal and animal-derived products that are used to heal the earth and create balance within the garden's life energy.

Six of these preparations are used in making biodynamic compost.

Biodynamic Preparations

The six compost preparations are each made from the following herbs: stinging nettle, oak bark, yarrow, chamomile, dandelion, and valerian. Four of these are then wrapped in animal organ sheaths, and five are buried in the ground for a specific amount of time. Another non-herbal preparation is also sometimes used in compost, called horn manure.



Traci mixes the additives for the heap.

Photo: Linette Vint



Heap nearing full size.

Photo: Traci Wilson-Brown

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This is made from a cow horn stuffed with manure, which is also buried for a specific length of time. All the preparations are made during the appropriate solar, lunar, and astrologic phases. (Sourced: <https://www.biodynamics.com/what-is-biodynamics>)

After the workshop Traci was thrilled to create her first Bio Dynamic Compost heap:

WWOOF Australia has many hosts who would love to teach WWOOFers (volunteers) about the biodynamic practices they use on their property and why. Contact www.woof.com.au if you would like to learn more.

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Traci Wilson-Brown

Following page: Traci was so impressed with the process of building a BD compost heap she immediately made her own at home.

Photo: Traci Wilson-Brown

Below: the finished heap at the organic centre.

Photo Heather Stuart





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