

Guidelines 2: Biodynamic Compost Preparations

Compost Preparations

The set of biodynamic compost preparations consists of 5 small packs containing about 5mls each of the preparations yarrow, chamomile, stinging nettle, oak bark and dandelion. In addition there is a small 5 ml bottle of liquid valerian extract. With the exception of the valerian which is in a bottle, they are rolled up individually inside five plastic bags. These should be opened up immediately on arrival so that they can breathe. They should then be used within one week. If they need to be kept longer they should be stored in the following way.

Storage

Each of the preparations (apart from valerian) should be placed individually in a container with a loose fitting lid. Unglazed earthenware pots are best but glass jars or ceramic containers will also do. These pots should then be placed in an untreated wooden box and surrounded on all sides with peat. Valerian should be stored in its bottle or another dark glass bottle. It can be kept in the peat box with the other preparations or stored separately in a cool dark place.

The box should be stored under cover in a cool, dark and frost-free place away from the injurious influences of electro-magnetic and microwave radiation (phone masts etc.) as well as other potentially toxic influences. Peat is used because it has the property of being a radiation barrier. Since these preparations work through their radiating power, peat is an ideal material for preventing the dissipation of their properties during storage. When stored in this way the preparations will maintain their vitality for more than a year.

The six compost preparations are

used to treat garden compost, manure piles, deep litter beds, liquid manure and slurry. Their purpose is to regulate the many organic processes taking place inside an active compost heap. Each preparation has its own unique function in relation to the various soil nutrient processes. Working together they help to bring harmony, balance and stability to the soil.

One set of compost preparations is enough to treat a heap of about 6ft long by 4ft wide (2m x1m). Sections of a long windrow heap can be treated as individual heaps for the purpose of applying the preparations. Each of the solid preparations should be placed separately in single holes spaced evenly around the heap. They should not be mixed together.

How to apply to compost

Using a stout stick or crow bar, make five evenly spaced holes (about 3ft apart), along the top of the heap. They should slant somewhat towards its core and penetrate about a third of the way in - roughly 12 to 18 inches deep. If the stick is waggled a bit, a reasonably clean hole will be formed. It is usual to make one hole in each corner of a 6ft x 4ft heap and one in the centre. On longer heaps holes can be made 3ft apart along each side or along the centre depending on the width of the heap.

One portion of each preparation (a level teaspoonful or 5ml) in turn should then be mixed into a small piece of moist (clay) soil or compost, kneaded into a ball and dropped into one of the holes. Once the preparations have been inserted, the holes should be filled with compost material or pushed together to ensure that the preparation comes into full contact with the soil and does not hang in an air pocket.

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Adding valerian

When the solid preparations have been inserted the valerian should be added. Take a gallon of rain water warmed to hand temperature and add the portion of valerian (5ml). This should be stirred vigorously for ten minutes and then sprinkled over the whole heap using a hand brush.

Once the heap is treated it can be covered and left to mature. If the heap is turned a few months later, the preparations can be added once more.

Liquid manure and slurry

To ferment liquid manure in the garden or treat slurry liquids on the farm, the following method may be applied. Make a wooden cross out of laths of wood and tie them together. Then sew a portion of each solid preparation into a small porous bag (of sack cloth etc) and hang them from the end of each piece of wood and from the crossing point. The construction is then floated in the liquid. The inclusion of a small stone in each bag will help to hold it in place. One set of preparations will be needed for about 25 cubic yards (20 m) of liquid. The valerian is stirred in the way described above and added to the liquid.

Other applications

The compost preparations can be added directly into deep litter as it collects during the course of the winter. The solid preparations are inserted with a crow bar in the manner described above and the valerian is sprinkled over the whole area. Two applications can be given during the winter - one around Christmas and the second shortly before livestock is turned out. Good results have also been achieved through applying the compost preparations directly to the fields. The whole field is treated as a compost heap and the preparations

are inserted in the grass sod at equal distances some 40 yards apart from one another. Valerian is then sprinkled on the area where each solid preparation has been inserted.

Where compost is accumulating on a daily basis as for instance kitchen compost or the daily cleanings from a cow byre, Maudsford starter, barrel preparation or birch pit preparation are recommended. These are special manure concentrates which have been treated intensively with the preparations. These can be applied on a daily basis and make a more frequent application of the compost preparations possible. See Guidelines 3.

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Further Reading:

Handbook on Composting and the Biodynamic Preparations - George Corrin

The Biodynamic Spray and Compost Preparations – Directions for Use - Edited by Christian von Wistinghausen

Principles of the Biodynamic Spray and Compost Preparations - Manfred Klett

Available from the BDAA