

## Guidelines 3: Barrel Preparation and Maudorf Starter

### Barrel Preparation

This special compound preparation or manure concentrate was originally developed by Maria Thun. It has been known in English by a number of different names including 'Cow Pat Pit', Cow Pat Preparation or even 'The Maria Thun'. It is now generally referred to in this country as 'Barrel Preparation'. The Maudorf Starter is essentially the same thing. The main difference is that it has been dried and can be stored in that form for longer periods.

Barrel Preparation is made from carefully fermented cow manure to which is added small amounts of basalt meal and ground egg shells. The whole is treated with several applications of the biodynamic compost preparations. Directions can be given for those wishing to make it themselves.

### Storage

The *Barrel Preparation* comes in a moist compost-like form. On arrival it should be removed from the bag and placed in an earthenware pot or jar and kept cool and moist until used. For longer term storage it should be kept in a box surrounded by peat in the manner described for the compost preparations.

*Maudorf Starter* is best placed in a pot, jar or other dry container and stored in a cool place till it is used.

### Benefits

Barrel Preparation stimulates soil activity and enhances the humus forming processes of the soil. It also helps to initiate the correct fermentation of manure and in compost activates organic matter

conversion. As a compound preparation it allows the effects of the different compost preparations to be distributed more widely over the land than is otherwise possible. Intensive use of the barrel preparation allows for a more directed use of the horn manure preparation.

Research carried out after the Chernobyl disaster showed how it helped to reduce the effects of radioactive fallout on land where it was applied (see Guidelines 7).

### Application

Barrel Preparation and Maudorf Starter can either be dissolved in water and sprayed out over the soil and compost or used in solid form by sprinkling out small amounts into composts, manures or planting mixes.

Maudorf Starter is best left to soak for several hours or even overnight before spraying

### Stirring and Spraying

A handful of barrel preparation (2 heaped tablespoons) is added to a bucket (5 litres) of hand warm rain or pond water and stirred for 20 minutes. It is then sprayed out on the soil, over the manure or in compost piles in the same manner as horn manure using a hand brush. Late afternoon is the best time to apply. For larger areas a stirring barrel may be used and spraying carried out with a knapsack or tractor mounted sprayer using the droplet nozzles (as for horn manure). Roughly 100g per 10 litres of water is used per acre.

Once it is stirred the preparation may be used over the following four days (unlike Horn Manure which must be used

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immediately).

It may also be added to a horn manure stirring 15 minutes before it is completed.

The stirred preparation has many uses and can be applied in the following ways:

### Grassland

Spraying is carried out on pasture land when livestock is moved off a field after grazing. In a rotational system where dairy cows move on frequently, this could mean spraying a paddock every three days. This helps the sward to recover and encourages rapid re-growth. It should likewise be applied to fields cut for hay or silage.

### Accumulating manure and slurry

A regular weekly or even daily spraying on deep litter, in slurry channels and on midden piles will have the effect of getting the right fermentation going at the earliest opportunity. The earlier it is applied the better will be the end result and the less there will be of putrefying odours.

### Compost

Regular applications either as a spray or in solid form, can be particularly beneficial for composting domestic garden and kitchen waste. A handful of barrel preparation should be sprinkled regularly into the composting box as it accumulates.

### Green manure

An application on newly incorporated crop residues and green manures will speed up organic matter conversion and encourage earlier stabilisation.

### Garden beds

An autumn and early spring application will

help stimulate soil life and improve soil structure.

### Potting Mixes

A handful of barrel preparation can be added to each barrow load of potting mix. This gives the vitality and stability needed for healthy seedling growth. It can also be used as a dip for cuttings to encourage root development.

### Trees

The bark of fruit and other trees can be sprayed in order to stimulate cambium growth and help to heal pruning cuts. Mixed with clay it can be painted on to help seal and heal larger pruning cuts.

### Plant health

It can be applied as a compost tea once a month to improve health and control fungal growth. If seed potatoes are dipped in it for five minutes prior to planting, it will help them to resist blight.

### Tree Paste

Tree paste used to feed the trunks of fruit trees can be enhanced by adding a small amount of Barrel Preparation.

Bernard Jarman May 2011

### Further Reading

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

*Handbook on Composting and the Biodynamic Preparations by George Corrin*

*The Biodynamic Year - 100 helpful tips for the gardener or smallholder - Maria Thun*