Balancing natural flora biodynamically in field and garden

Have you observed in your garden a proliferation of one or other species of natural flora?
Do they become dominant in your garden?
Why are they appearing some years and not others?
What might have gone 'wrong' in the garden for one species to become dominant?

Can you imagine you might have to do less weeding by employing the biodynamic method I describe below? This method is often called Ashing. At some point we will have to ask the questions above and go deeper into understanding why certain plants are proliferating in your garden, but for now ashing is a helpful process.

Let us focus today on a couple of plants which may appear in your garden if there are problems with the drainage and in years when there is much more rain than sunshine. These plants we are going to deal with this week are often more predominant in heavy soils with poor drainage. We are talking of Dock (Rumex sp.) and Thistles (Cirsium arvense).

According to Maria Thun's research the ideal time to collect about 100 seedheads and burn them on a hot woodfire of embers for Dock seeds is when the moon is in the constellation of the Leo/Lion and with Thistle seeds when the moon is in the Virgo/Virgin. They are both invasive plant varieties and August/September is the best time when the first seed heads are ripe and can be collected for incineration. (If your garden provides less than 100 heads, a smaller number is doable too, just collect as many as possible.)

If you don't practice this type of weed control, it is advisable to cut the long stems with the seed heads already in July or August, before the seeds are viable to prevent them from spreading.

It was shown by Maria Thun's research that the viability of the seeds remaining in the ground after treatment is significantly lowered when using this method and in one experiment she showed that after 4 years of repeated application of incinerated mustard seeds the germination rate was only 5% compared to the level at the beginning of the experiment.

Last weekend we were delighted to help a farmer in the New Forest to start a trial with a big infestation in one of his fields with whole swaths of dock and thistles. Thirty people gathered around the dock and thistle infested areas and collected 100s of seedheads, which then were incinerated on hot embers of a wood fire.
Then we followed Maria Thun's second instruction for this method, which is to make a homeopathic preparation of D8 of the ashes of both plant varieties.

For this we took 50ml of the mixture of the ashes from the wood and the plants, we ground them with a pestle in a mortar for an hour, which is called 'dynamization' of the ashes. This insures that the ashes become homogenous and are almost the consistency of flowing water. In this form the information of the burned seedheads can be communicated more easily to the water.

To create D1 we took 50 ml of the ashes and 450 ml of rainwater and put them in a half litre jar to shake (or concuss) them for 2.5 minutes.
Then we repeated that process 5 more times to create D6.
The 500ml of D6 we then poured into a bucked and diluted with 4.5 litres of rainwater which we stirred in vortex fashion for 2.5 minutes.
To spray the big 5 acre field infested with thistles and docks we needed 50 litres. So we took the 5 litres of D7 and poured them into a barrel and mixed with 45 litres of rainwater and stirred the liquid for 2.5 minutes. After that we all filled our buckets and marched over the field once more with the 30 people, we sprinkled the liquid over the whole field in droplet form with brushes, in the afternoon. The results will be seen next spring. The results usually take affect progressively so it can good to reproduce this process several times over 3 to 4 years for full effect, but expect a significant reduction of the infestation from the first year.

In one way or another this method has been practised for millennia in the slash and burn agricultural practices of our ancestors, which kept the fields free of wild plant seedlings for three years, before the life forces returned for those seeds to germinate, when the farmers moved on to cut down a new section of the forest to burn it and grow another three years on the fertile humus produced over 40 years and ashes form burning the biomass.

Next week we will look at other natural plants and a selection of them which indicate very fertile and suitable soils for vegetable growing and what to do when they take over.

I am curious if anyone has tried out this method and would love it if you could share your results.

Happy ashing and peppering the fields for a tasty feast, as Rudolf Steiner said jokingly in the Agriculture Lectures.

Hans-Gunther