

# Beginning Biodynamics Adventure Together

## By a curious and often muddy-handed gardener

BHUPINDER SOHANPAL

Photos courtesy of Bhupinder Sohanpal.

Whether you're caring for a new allotment, tending an established plot or coaxing life from a few treasured pots on a sunny balcony, the world of biodynamics welcomes you with open arms.



Biodynamics is a philosophy that encourages us to see our gardens not as isolated patches of green, but as living, breathing ecosystems intertwined with nature's rhythms, celestial patterns and the gentle wisdom of the soil.

As a beginner myself, I have found this journey to be full of wonder, occasional head-scratching moments and more than a few muddy knees. But it has also been deeply rewarding. So, in the spirit of learning together, I am sharing a few reflections, experiments and simple tips from my first season exploring biodynamics.

### Seeing Our Garden as a Little Ecosystem: Observing the Web of Life

Imagine your garden as a miniature world, a symphony of soil, plants, insects, and yes, even you. Biodynamics encourages us to observe rather than control, to notice the subtle interactions that shape our outdoor spaces.

When we pay attention to which insects visit our blooms (ideally, the helpful ones, not the cheeky nibblers), we begin to understand how to nurture a resilient, harmonious environment. It's like becoming a benevolent nature detective, tuned into the whispers of your patch of earth.

#### BIODYNAMIC TIP:

This week, I'm exploring companion planting. I've learned that asparagus and tomatoes make excellent allies, so I nestled them together in the small bed I lovingly prepared. What beneficial insect or plant partnerships might you research to improve your garden's balance?

### Enhancing Our Soil with Compost: Turning Scraps into Gold with a Little Help

A successful garden depends on healthy soil, and compost is its vital nourishment.

Lately, I've been experimenting with a biodynamic compost starter called the Maudsford Starter, just adding a teaspoon mixed with water to each new layer of kitchen scraps and garden waste. I feel like I'm throwing a secret celebration for microbes: a lively, invisible gathering

of bacteria and fungi, all working their magic beneath the surface.

#### BIODYNAMIC TIP:

This week, think about ways to energise your compost. Let's honour this alchemy that nourishes everything else by balancing our materials, turning the heap (a surprisingly good workout) or trying a compost starter.

### Tuning into Nature's Rhythms: Root Days, Flower Days, Leaf Days ... and Real Life

One of the more poetic aspects of biodynamics is synchronising our planting with celestial rhythms, root days, leaf days, flower days and fruit days as mapped out in Marie Thun's biodynamic calendar.

The concept of planting in harmony with the cosmos is lovely, but in practice, life gets busy, and sometimes a root day falls on a Wednesday when we are at work. That's fine. The spirit of biodynamics is adaptable rather than rigid.

#### BIODYNAMIC TIP:

This month, try to be aware of these planting days and, whenever possible, align your crops with the rhythm. How do you find balance between these rhythms and the realities of daily life?

### Gentle Care for a Living Soil: Mastering the Art of Minimal Disturbance

Digging feels instinctive, almost meditative; however, I am learning that less disturbance can mean more life.

The no-dig approach encourages us to trust the soil's natural structure and microbial communities. It marks a shift in mindset: resisting the urge to tidy with a spade and instead allowing the underground world to carry out its silent, essential work.

This season, I vowed to prioritise caring for my soil. I laid down brown cardboard to suppress weeds, but persistent couch grass, horsetail and bindweed poked through. After careful consideration, I opted for a single dig to remove the worst offenders.

#### BIODYNAMIC TIP:

This week, minimise disturbance in a small corner. Add compost or well-rotted manure and plant directly into it. Then observe. How do these plants perform compared to those in dug beds?

### Facing Real Challenges on the Plot: It is Not Always Idyllic!

Let's be honest, those dreamy visions of an idyllic garden often feel a world away from the reality of our plots.

Currently, I am engaged in a turf war with thousands of tiny red ants that have chosen my pathways for their council meetings. The asparagus beetle has also appeared unexpectedly, compelling daily larva inspections on my spears, a delightful duty, I assure you! Then there are the weeds: bindweed, couch grass and horsetail, relentless guests who always know where the snacks are.

Embracing biodynamics involves rethinking old habits, such as the ingrained tendency to dig everything over. This journey has become less focused on perfection and more on perseverance, patience and learning. My cherished patch of earth is proving to be a wise teacher, sometimes imparting hard lessons indeed.

#### BIODYNAMIC TIP:

This week, if you come across a stubborn weed, a cheeky pest or a mysterious disease, pause before reacting. What might it be revealing about your soil, your balance or your approach?

### Exploring Biodynamic Preparations: Our Mysterious Experiments

Ah, the biodynamic preparations, those curious, magical mixtures that feel part science, part ritual. I was eager to try one.

On 6 January 2025, Epiphany Day, I set out excitedly with carefully heated flasks of water to activate the 'Three Kings' preparation. The skies, however, had other plans. Rain poured down, and my grand intentions were washed away.

Undeterred, I returned the next day. Watching the vortex form and dissolve repeatedly as I stirred the mixture for a whole hour became a calming ritual amid the usual garden hustle. I added the aromatic gifts of gold, myrrh and frankincense, and then offered it with love and gratitude to the soil. Spraying it in a spiral felt like a gentle enchantment, away to connect with the land. Charming, though I suspect the local plotters were completely perplexed!

#### BIODYNAMIC TIP:

This week, why not explore one of the preparations – perhaps BD 500 or BD 501? Let's research its purpose and, if motivated, try it on a small corner of our plot.

### Help Is at Hand: Our Biodynamic Wisdom & Support Hub

Even the most passionate gardener hits a wall sometimes. When the red ants staged their takeover and the horsetail refused to retreat, I felt overwhelmed.

It was then that I contacted the Biodynamic Association office, or my personal Biodynamic Wisdom & Support Hub, as I have code-named it (though I suspect they are onto me).

It has become a treasured learning space, where seasoned growers and kind-hearted staff share their knowledge. They don't just provide solutions; they explain the 'why' behind biodynamic practices, basing their counsel on decades of working with the land.

It's a gentle reminder that we're not alone. We are part of a lively, supportive community, and no challenge is too big when we draw on that collective knowledge.

### Autumn Reflection: Listening to the Land

As the days grow shorter and the air carries that unmistakable scent of fallen leaves, autumn invites us to slow down and listen.

Our plots begin to whisper in softer tones, seed heads rattle in the breeze, soil cools beneath our feet, and golden light casts long

shadows across the plot. It's a season of transition, of letting go and of preparing for rest.

In biodynamics, autumn is not an ending but a turning inward. The soil gains strength, the plants withdraw, and we, too, are prompted to reflect. What have we learned this season? What surprised us, challenged us, delighted us?

Let's honour this season by walking gently, observing deeply, and offering gratitude to the land that has held us through it all.

### Finding Joy in Small Steps: Celebrating the Little Victories

Despite the trials, there's joy to be found.

That first brave seedling emerging through the soil. The taste of a sun-warmed strawberry. The hum of bees weaving through my beloved apple tree.

These moments rekindle our spark and remind us why we garden. Biodynamics isn't about instant perfection; it's about deep connection, slow growth and celebrating every small success.

Biodynamic Tip: This week, take a moment to notice one thing thriving in your garden, no matter how small. The last bright blossom, a leaf turning golden-ruby or a visiting bee. Let's share these small victories and allow them to lift our spirits.

### Final Thoughts: A Garden's Whisper

Here we are, hands a little earth-stained, hearts a little fuller.

We have stirred mixtures like potions, watched microbes dance in compost heaps and learned to read the rhythms of the moon and stars. We've faced ants and bindweed, beetles and doubt, and still, we have grown.

Biodynamics isn't a checklist. It's a conversation, a relationship, a tender pledge between gardener and garden.

As autumn cloaks us in its amber shawl, may we keep tending with tenderness, listening with curiosity and celebrating each small miracle that emerges from the soil, because in the end, it's not just about growing plants. It's about cultivating wonder.

**Bhupinder Sohanpal** is a long standing biodynamic association member, horticulturist, garden writer, media figure, and inspirational speaker.