Harvest Time and Taking Stock of Your Crops

Dear biodynamic gardening kin,

The weather has changed in most parts of the British Isles, from very hot and dry weather to wetter and much cooler conditions.

On top of all that, we are now nearing the day of the Equinox, when we are losing almost four minutes of daylight, with the dark nights winning over the daylight.

This will be followed by the festival of Michaelmas, when traditionally farmers and their apprentices and journeymen would have brought in the year's harvest and taken stock of what was available for the winter.

It's a turning point: a time to take stock and start preparing the fertility of the garden for next year, as well as the last opportunity for planting your covered spaces with prepared seedlings.

I suggest you do the same and take stock of the year so far. For this, I provide some crucial questions, using the four elements as a perimeter for the assessment.

Taking Stock

Review the quality of the soil, water, and fertility household, as well as the quality of your vegetables compared with last year.

Assess Physiological Perimeters (Mineral–Earth Element)

Which vegetables grew best this year?

Which vegetables did not do so well this year?

What are their colour, texture, size, scent, aroma, and organoleptic expression (flavour)?

Make a list with two columns according to families.

Add factors you observed that coincided with impairing or enhancing the growth of different vegetable varieties.

Observations About the Mineral Kingdom

What were the soil conditions like (drainage, structure), and how and when did you prepare the soil?

Is it a new garden?

What type of manure did you apply?

Did you use compost, liquid manures, or rock dust?

Did you feed the soil life or the plants?

Did you import soils, composts, substrates, manures, or concentrated organic fertilizers?

In what condition were they?

Did you make sure you helped your soil life to integrate imported organic matter or minerals?

Did you spray the biodynamic preparations and prepare your compost to help assimilate the “stardust”?

Assess the Element of Water – Processes

How was the distribution of rain?

Did you have to irrigate, and how much?

Did you experience drought conditions or waterlogging and putrefaction in the soil?

How humid or dry was the air around the plants throughout the year?

Did you use the biodynamic preparations to make plants more resilient?

Assess the Element of Air and Light

How much wind and stormy weather were the plants exposed to?

What was the intensity and timing?

Was there enough ventilation in the garden?

What were the light conditions?

How would you describe the intensity and quality of light this year?

Have you taken enough measures to break the wind and create a microclimate?

Assess the Element of Warmth

How was the distribution of warmth and cold throughout the growing season?

What were the maximum and minimum temperatures?

When were the last and first frosts?

How well did you manage covered areas – e.g. opening and closing your polytunnel?

Assess the Biological, Functional Factors and Processes

How did your plants develop?

Did they grow relatively fast from seed to develop their fruiting part?

Did you sow in seed trays, prick out and transplant, or sow directly?

Did you sow and transplant only?

Did you do direct sowings, and which seedlings did better for yield and resistance to pests and diseases?

Were plants inhibited at any point from growing well?

Did you top-dress or give liquid ferments to your plants?

Assess the Dynamic Relationship Between Plants and Environment

Which environment did your veggies grow in? Describe the surroundings.

Did you practise a sound rotation of families and different fruiting parts?

Did you grow veggies with companion herbs and flowers?

How many wild herbs proliferated in your garden?

Were they in balance with the cultivars?

How many insects and other fauna affected your plant growth, yield, and quality?

Did your veggies in your garden express a certain signature this year?

- More solid, earthy, and mineral-rich
- Watery, leggy, straggly, thin, wilting, bland in taste, and soft
- More compact, tough, fibrous, with strong flavours and a herbal character
- More pungent, spicy, bitter, and concentrated in all expressions

Link this to the first observation and listing of the growth of vegetables.

I invite you to share your observations, successes, and failures in the group so we can learn together in this creative and innovative community of gardeners.

Share with us the fruits of the year.

Next time, I will share more with you about the garden around the equinoxes.

Enjoy your garden fully,

Hans-Günther

PS: Please note that we are transitioning all our courses to Patreon, and look out for more course offers from the Wholistic Living University and the celebration of festivals.

For those interested in booking the biodynamic online gardening year course, “Grow Your Own Health,” go to the Patreon membership page.

Coming up are opportunities for volunteering in Sussex in our community garden.

Make sure you become a private member in our Seed group, formerly the WhatsApp Forum, and check out the 7-day trials on Patreon.