

SOUTH WEST BIODYNAMIC GROUP

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2021



I love to see the summer beaming forth
And white wool sack clouds sailing to the north
I love to see the wild flowers come again
And mare blobs stain with gold the meadow drain
And water lilies whiten on the floods
Where reed clumps rustle like a wind shook wood
Where from her hiding place the Moor Hen pushes
And seeks her flag nest floating in bull rushes
I like the willow leaning half way o'er
The clear deep lake to stand upon its shore
I love the hay grass when the flower head swings
To summer winds and insects happy wings
That sport about the meadow the bright day
And see bright beetles in the clear lake play

John Clare 1793 -1864

News from Growers

Teign Greens at Oxen Park.

The summer solstice has been and gone, and the crops here in the field are relishing it. Seedlings seem to double in size from one day to the next, while we rush around with hoses and watering cans to keep them all at their best. The monumental challenge of a cold, waterlogged Spring is fading into the heat haze of a late Devon June. Around the farm our biodiverse field margins are full of life. Cornflowers jostle with poppies and oxeye daisies while bolted brassica flowers teem with bees and other insects. Midsummer is a joyful - if still very busy - time to be a biodynamic farmer in the Teign Valley.

We enjoyed learning from the wisdom of Frankie van der Stok when he visited last month to help us apply our compost preps and explain some other biodynamic methods to the Teign Greens team - some of whom are quite new to the world of Biodynamics. Also this month we had a successful inspection from Tom Petherick from the BDA - and it's great that Oxen Park Farm is on track to complete its Organic conversion in July, with full Biodynamic status completed next summer.

And as the vegetables grow, so does Teign Greens CSA. For the first time in six months we are able to take on new members of our community-supported veg box scheme. The project is a radical way of connecting local people with where their food comes from, and rejecting our broken, unsustainable supermarket systems. It's a way for our local community to support local food growing while also supporting wildlife to thrive in the valley thanks to our regenerative, biodynamic techniques. We've also been cultivating the land alongside children and adults visiting the land as part of the On The Hill programme - a brilliant example of the strength of partnership between the farm, the CSA and the land-based learning social enterprise.

Now may be the time to revel in summer's bountiful harvest - but there is still much work to be done before plunging into the river at the end of a hot day. Community Supported Agriculture relies on brilliant volunteers joining us to help work the land, plant future crops and harvest current ones. If you're interested in dropping by the farm for one of our regular volunteer days (Tuesdays and Thursdays) please drop us a line - and look out for our Saturday opportunities once per month too. <https://www.teingreens.co.uk>



Goethean Science Project at Whites Farm.

Alasdair and Denise have recently bought Whites Farm at Lower Dean, Buckfastleigh. The 3 acre site was most recently known as Dean Prior Garden Centre and includes an orchard, market garden plot, polytunnels and barns. The Dean Burn flows around the northwest border of the land and there are thickets providing homes for wildlife. It is a little known haven situated not far from the A38.

The site is an ideal location for a land based Goethean Science Educational Project which Alasdair has been planning and developing over the course of many years. Looking ahead, this will support learners of all ages, whether groups of young people (school age and teenagers) or adults who are interested in connecting with the land and learning new skills. Wider community involvement to support the development of the project is very welcome.

The educational activities will be based on an underlying theme of cultivating the art of science and different areas of interest are planned arising through land based activity. Vegetables and fruits will provide food for a Field Kitchen, herbs will supply a distillery which in turn will provide oils for soapmaking and other practical science themes.

The intention is to work towards incorporating a pottery, green woodturning and carpentry workshops and a forge. Using Goethean practice, they are currently observing the land while repairing and tidying the existing structures. They have begun teaching (Alasdair has held Pinhole Camera workshops and Denise is working with a small home-ed group) and friends and members of the local community are beginning to visit and get a sense of the project.

Please email alasdair@ignitingflames.com or deniselaurenj@icloud.com if you are interested in becoming involved



Stoney Orchard Project – nr Sidbury, East Devon.

The harmonious balances of plants, the soil, the wildlife and us is a key belief at the project. It aims to provide a stimulating, creative and calming natural environment for people to come, learn and engage with the natural world.

This project now has a rewilding area called Knapp Hayne – a home on the hill for wildlife. Volunteers and visitors welcome.

One mile East of Hare and Hounds Honiton (A375), on the Seaton road. Stoney Orchard, Seaton Road, Farway Hill, Sidbury EX10 0QG
Contact : plum.pebble@gmail.com Telephone : **07974 802598**

Facebook : [facebook.com/foodandforagegarden/](https://www.facebook.com/foodandforagegarden/)

Velwell Orchard:

Jacob continues to do a wonderful job of managing the garden. This week the garlic will be harvested, and there is chard and lots of mange tout peas and of course the famous VO salad that Jacob has taken to the next level with the addition of lots of tasty herbs. Potatoes are on their way now too.

Sasha has now been with us for over two years and is working 3 days a week with Jeremy. It's amazing to see how strong and skilled she has become in this time and is now proficient in hedge laying, gate making and mowing with a scythe.

Rajni has now joined the team, working on a part time basis in exchange for accommodation and food.

Kate, Lola and Jago help out where they can too, especially on Wednesday and Friday mornings when Jacob oversees a few friends who help out in the garden. We are still working to put the correct protocols in place to allow us to open up to volunteers later in the year and this will be announced on our website in due course. In the meantime you can get produce from Derek in Buckfastleigh.

Monday 21st of June not only marked the solstice but also the tenth anniversary of Jeremy opening a Ki Aikido Club in Buckfastleigh. He's decided to open a new club in Totnes to celebrate and will now teach in Buckfastleigh on Mondays and Totnes on Wednesdays. Aikido means "The Way of Unification of Life Forces", so it fits very well with the study and application of Biodynamics.

We continue to distribute the preparations from Velwell Orchard. You can come and collect or we can send them out to you. Contact Jeremy: 07962 432317, velwellorchard@yahoo.co.uk

Excerpt from Local Anthroposophical Newsletter which mentions Biodynamics.

Another promising green shoot is the centre, just opposite Hood Manor, where Gamal Ibrahim and his wife Barbara Idzikowska have bought and restored a former Dartington estate property, so that a number of young residents with special learning needs (mainly from the Middle East) can receive inspiring support. It is very pleasing to see how much Gamal is incorporating anthroposophical ideas into his work. Dr Dyson offers advice to them during his regular visits to the area. Cathy Day helps with their language skills. Mick Young (counselling) and Katrina Sloan (massage) have use of a room there one day a week to work privately as well as with the residents. The project has acquired about 5 acres of land away from Lower Hood Barns (near Holne). Joe Couling and Said are employed to work with residents on this land which will employ biodynamic methods. Ian Twist, Christine Walton and Frankie van der Stok also help out with this project.

By Christopher Cooper

APRICOT CENTRE and HUXHAMS CROSS FARM.

The summer is finally here and after a slow start to the growing season, our fruit and vegetables are starting to ripen. We are very relieved to be welcoming our first strawberry and courgette harvest this week. It has not been an easy start to the summer for those of us working the land. The persistent bout of rain we experienced in May brought with it a deluge of slugs, which merrily munched their way through our newly planted crops and the late cold snap in May caused the tender, beautiful blossom on the apple trees to die off, which will sadly mean no apple harvest this year.

On a more positive note! The summer solstice is nearly here and we are rejoicing and rejuvenating in all the light the long days bring (both physically and metaphorically!) . The horn silica has been prepared and sprayed on the land by our Schumacher volunteers and the nettle preparation is going to be dug, prepared and stored. Our compost heaps are quietly working away absorbing vitality from our 6 compost preparations. We make as many of the preparations as we can ourselves at the farm, storing them and sharing them with the South West Biodynamic Group. We used our new flow form (see pictures) a few weeks ago to stir the horn manure and then distribute it by tractor on the larger fields, it was a successful process that enables us to biodynamically manage larger areas of land.

Our lovely cows Damson and Daffodil have been enjoying their time out in Far Week eating their way through our green manure mix and leaving their own fertilising gifts on the soil. The farm is in full flow now with simultaneous veg bag packing, seed sowing, harvesting, planting and weeding. We have re-skinned one of our polytunnels that had been damaged by seagulls and we have expanded our intensive growing area, which consists of 20 meter beds. This has given us the space to grow more to supply our lovely veg bag customers and expanded our space for flower growing.

Earlier in the year we held our Introduction to Biodynamics course. Which gave an insight into the biodynamic calendar, history and preparations. Being one of the apprentices on the farm this course was invaluable in building my understanding of what it means to be working with the land biodynamically. It was exciting to have the opportunity to do the stirrings, make the preparations, spread them or store them and dig some up. The uncovering of the horn manure was particularly interesting as it was coated in a network of fine white mycelium. Understanding the positive role of biodynamics in the vast improvement of the soil at The Apricot Centre was fascinating.



In other Biodynamic news... There is an exciting potential opportunity for collaboration on the horizon! We are currently in discussion with the Diocese of Exeter who are exploring a new way of managing its glebe (church) land in Dartington. They are in consultation with us and other local partners: Brock Park Glebe, River Dart Wild Church and The flow Partnership. The project seeks to demonstrate regenerative land use that mitigates climate change, through carbon sequestration, whilst providing food for the local community, supporting biodiversity and providing space and support for community and

spiritual engagement practices on the land. The glebe lands are 25 acres between Dartington and Week, the land is adjacent to The Apricot Centre boundary and could be a wonderful opportunity with the potential to collaborate and celebrate regenerative land and livelihood practices. If this goes ahead we could be managing 100 acres biodynamically.

There is an increasing demand for the Biodynamic preparations across the South West with two new Biodynamic farms in the area- 'On The Hill' at Oxen Park Farm and Hapstead Farm in Buckfastleigh. As Covid-19 restrictions are beginning to lift the South West Biodynamic Group are proposing to meet at the Apricot Centre to make Biodynamic Preparations on 9th September 2021 followed by the 24th April 2022.



Stuffed Courgettes

This is an idea for left-over cooked vegetables when there is a glut of courgettes

Ingredients

Courgettes – as many as needed.

1 onion finely chopped

Oil for sautéing

Ready cooked vegetables –eg – celery, carrots, pepper, leek, all cut fairly fine.

Cooked grain

A few olives

Herbs

Salt and pepper

Well flavoured white sauce made with rice flour. vegetable stock and a little milk, garlic, apple juice and seasoning, plus a dollop of cream.

Grated Mature Cheddar/ strong cheese



Method:

1. Cut courgettes in half lengthways and scoop out seeds to make little boats. Place a knob of butter in each boat and cook on a greased baking tray in a hot oven until just done (about 10 minutes).

2. Saute onion in a little oil and add precooked vegetables.

3. Fold into cooked grain.

4. Add a few olives (halved), herbs and seasoning. Check for taste.

5. Put grain mixture on the courgettes and return to oven until cheese melts (Approx 20 minutes)

6. Serve with the white sauce..

From The Biodynamic Food and Cookbook by Wendy Cook. Published by Clairview

Biodynamic Produce for Sale

GREENLIFE SHOP, TOTNES. 01803 866738. Some Demeter products, Biodynamically grown vegetables in season and Seed Cooperative organic open pollinated seeds.

TEIGN GREENS, OXEN PARK FARM, Lower Ashton, EXETER, EX6 7QW – in conversion to BD. Contact Tim Dickens for availability of produce. www.teingreens.co.uk

VEGETABLES FROM HUXHAMS CROSS FARM: We deliver weekly vegetable bags or boxes. The boxes contain Huxhams Cross Farm own produce as well as several small BD and organic growers who will be providing vegetables at certain times of the year . We can add eggs, fruit and water. You can order online at www.apricotcentre.co.uk.

Enquiries to Bob Mehew: 07507 841 158 or bob.mehew@apricotcentre.co.uk

Hapstead Farm Meat:

All produce from animals that are managed according to high welfare, organic, biodynamic regenerative farming principles. Contact Tobias Goulden about what is available. - Email: tobiasgoulden@yahoo.co.uk.

FRUIT CORDIALS from CHAPEL STORES.

There are still stocks of sloe £6, rosehip £5 and mixed fruit £6 all 500ml bottles There will also soon be raspberry and blackcurrant too.

We buy in or pick fruit from biodynamic growers wherever possible. We also use some fruit from other sources, all free from pesticides, and some picked from hedgerows away from main roads. Only apple juice and apple concentrate (all organic) are added to the fruit . A small amount of lemon juice is added to the elderberry and sloe juices. The concentration is approximately 7:1 when water is added.

For further information and orders please contact: Derek Lapworth, 10, Chapel Street, Buckfastleigh, TQ11 0AB Tel: 01364 644010. Email: dereklapworth@gmail.com

South West Biodynamic Group

The South Devon Biodynamic Group's purpose is to inform those interested in BD methods of gardening and farming of what is happening in the area. As a member you receive

- A quarterly newsletters and seasonal gatherings where we make the biodynamic preparations. These are then made available to members free of charge.
- A library of Biodynamic books kept at The Apricot Centre.

We charge an annual subscription of £15 per person and £20 for a couple. We offer a concession of £10 a year if needed. Sort Code 20-60-88 Acc. No. 13509680

Preparations are available from Velwell Orchard. Please contact Jeremy Weiss 07962 432317, velwellorchard@yahoo.co.uk

If you wish to join, please contact Diana White (Treasurer) at dianawhite35@hotmail.com or phone 01803 473551 or 07747 398 839

southwestbiodynamicgroup.org

