

**The North American Biodynamic Apprenticeship Program's
Second Annual Farmer Mentor Workshop:
"The Art of Mentoring Apprentices"
February 12-14, 2010, Hawthorne Valley Farm
www.biodynamics.com/nabdap**

**Friday, February 12th:
Evening Session with Mac Mead**

Mac Mead, gardener and teacher at The Pfeiffer Center in Spring Valley NY spoke to us on the art of mentoring. He shared different experiences from his youth to expound on some of Rudolf Steiner's ideas about the pedagogy of teaching or working with young people i.e. the significant role of imitation in the 1-7 year old group, the role of the word and authority in the 7-14 age group, and then the role of judgment in the 14-21 year age group. He also shared some of the perspectives that Rudolf Steiner brings in his lecture series The Karma of Vocation concerning the deep significance vocational work has for future evolution. One insight is that our vocation in a previous life works into our present life in our earlier childhood years greatly influencing our physical gestures, stature, and other outer characteristics but that after the ages of 14-16 these forces metamorphose and can bring in a strong impulse toward forming a new vocation that may or may not be based on one's previous characteristics of the earlier years. He shared how in his own life and also in the case of many of the teenagers that he has lived and worked with that often in the time around 16-17 years old an individual will get a new impulse toward the future in relation to their role in the world. He strongly encourages young people to have confidence in who they are and in following fresh impulses that may arise in their souls. To have a strong impulse toward a new vocation that doesn't necessarily come from one's background in the earlier years of life seems to be very characteristic of many young adults approaching a career in agriculture today.

In the Study of Man (Lect 3, p.44) Steiner mentions how when just the intellect and mental pictures are used to approach nature that one is just dealing with the dying aspect of nature. He continues to say that "what brings us into contact with the external world through the senses – including the whole range of the twelve senses - has not the nature of cognition, but rather of will." Perhaps this is another reason why so many young people feel starved for actual living experiences in nature and want to approach agriculture as a vocation.

With the young adult you have an individuality, an ego, that is trying to unfold and develop the faculty of independent judgment. How do you help to mentor such an individual into a life's work in nature and the world? As most of Mac's working life has been doing farming and gardening in therapeutic communities (either caring for special needs adults in Camphill communities or caring for the elderly in the Fellowship Community) a guide for him has been the role of healing in agriculture. He shared how in spiritual science our present stage of evolution, Earth evolution, can be viewed as having a first half called the Mars stage before Christ and a second stage after that called the Mercury stage. The being of Mercury has to do with healing and is very connected with the archangel Raphael. Rudolf Steiner describes that this being is very connected with those who feel destined to help bring plants to the earth.

In the Apocrypha is a legend that has been important to many involved with therapeutic work and has been a leading image for Mac in farming and in mentoring. This is the story of Tobias whose father, Tobit, has gone blind, who cannot see his way in the world anymore. Tobit prays for a way to be healed and looks to his young son to find a guide to find the means to heal him. In his search for a guide, Tobias comes upon Azarius (who is actually the archangel Raphael) who leads the youth on an initiation journey whereupon they find the elements of nature that can provide the healing cure.

Tobias is even led to help heal another individual, Sarah, whom he falls in love with and as a result of extreme conviction and courage is able to realize his love in marriage to her. Finally he returns to his father and is able to heal him using the natural substances as taught to him by his guide. Mac passed around several prints of paintings depicting Raphael leading Tobias on this path of not only healing but also becoming an individual. This legend characterizes what could be called the servant leader, one who leads and is yet at the same time the servant. Another aspect of leading in a mentoring way is what might be called roving leadership where perhaps at times the 'pupil' can be the leader. You may never know in certain life situations whom might have the necessary insight or ability to be the leader. It is important to foster such capacities in our charges. Mac highly recommended working with the *On Farm Mentors Guide* published by the New England Small Farm Institute for more detailed ways to develop healthy practices of mentoring.

He ended by sharing how when in 1997 the Fellowship Community bought the neighboring farm which had been done conventionally for over a hundred years he had asked the retiring farmer, John Duryea if he might be a consultant for them, especially for a twelve acre apple orchard. John hemmed and hawed and said he couldn't likely do such a thing. The next day though, he invited Mac on a walk through the farm and proceeded to share everything he knew about each variety of tree, where the first fungus might appear or a certain insect, where to expect the first frost. As they walked through the woods he shared casually all the names of the trees, birds and rocks and in glancing up at the sky pointed how the clouds were moving and that we would probably have rain in two days. He shared the best spot on the farm to watch the stars and a myriad other special aspects of the farm he had grown up on. John was the best mentor Mac had ever had.

Saturday, February 13th: Morning Session with Miranda Smith

Miranda Smith, editor of *The On-Farm Mentor's Guide*, spoke to the group on Saturday morning. Miranda has been teaching farming since 1971. Having grown up working in her parents' organic nursery, Miranda developed "a healthy disregard for chemical farming" at a young age. After a number of years with a street theater troupe, Miranda returned to her agricultural roots and began to teach farming. She found that educating new farmers was not so different from reaching people through guerrilla theater- they are both about igniting *consciousness*.

Miranda first went around the room and asked each person to name an issue they are working on as a farmer mentor. It was a long and varied list, which revealed in itself many of the intricacies of working with apprentices.

Questions and Issues that Farmer Mentors are Working On:

- Developing effective evaluation and constructive feedback mechanisms
- Giving direction while still allowing some independence.
- Figuring out how to respond when an apprentice believes they know more than you do.
- Communicating with different people and learning how to know what people are really taking in and understanding. Developing a commonly understood communication style.
- Providing challenges to apprentices
- Apprentices don't necessarily realize how much they are *learning* through *doing*, and this can lead to some frustration. When a task is unpacked/explained in great detail, the educational value of the work is far more apparent. But on a production farm, there isn't always the time to talk through everything in such depth. How can we balance work and learning when we are also running a business?
- "The July Question" : Apprentices often get bored/tired/frustrated sometime in July. How can we stimulate/motivate them through this time?
- How much transparency should we have with apprentices?
- Can we make the NABDAP into an accredited institution so that apprentices can get credit towards degrees?
- Helping apprentices to become aware of their surroundings.
- Working with *many* apprentices at once.
- How to approach cultural differences.
- In mentoring past apprentices as they go on to start their own operations, how does one lead and advise without being prescriptive or dogmatic?
- How to honor and realize a depth of relationship with an apprentice- how to "meet the karmic encounter".
- Managing and delegating to avoid being spread too thin.
- Listening.
- Providing mentorship to people who already have many skills.
- How to explain to somebody else what comes as second nature to you.
- Providing guidance in culture and lifestyle, not just work.
- We are all good at growing crops- can we grow farmers?
- How to meet the *person* in the *feeling realm*, rather than seeing the apprentice as just a *doer*. How to set aside the need to get things done. How to move beyond right and wrong, good and bad.
- How to convey to apprentices that *their outlook and attitude* will determine how a given situation will go, specifically in the way that they approach working with large animals.
- Balancing different interests/sources of motivation among apprentices.
- How to get support as a mentor.

For the next hour and a half, Miranda worked on addressing some of the questions and concerns in the room. "First," she said, "you have to make an inner commitment to be a *teacher*, and you must realize that, beyond specific skills, you are teaching apprentices to develop *sensitivities*." Miranda recommended having apprentices create a list of goals to start out the season. From the beginning of the season, she suggested, set time aside for classroom work. If the time is set as part of the

schedule, it won't get lost or swept aside by the more pressing concerns of the season. Take a weekly walk through the farm with your apprentices. This can count as classroom time! Encourage them to take notes, and then sit down together to create the agenda and the schedule for the week. If apprentices are involved in this process from the beginning, you will be able to hand over some responsibility for a particular crop or area of the garden, *before* you reach the downturn of July.

"Set up boundaries at the beginning of the season," Miranda told us. Keep your private life as private as you can- it has to be off-limits in order to preserve a teacher-student boundary. You develop a certain "shine" in the apprentice's eyes as a teacher. The shine wears off eventually, but strive to preserve it as long as you can by centering around the apprentices' *learning*, not their *life*. Apprentices will often try to put you into a parental role and play out their parental issues with you. Don't play along! Be clear with them that you are not their parent. On the question of transparency, Miranda recommended not to share the farm's finances until the second year of apprenticeship.

On the question of finances and the legality of apprenticeship programs, Miranda recommended the following set-up to keep your program legal. Pay your apprentices minimum agricultural wage, as required by the law. Then charge them for room and board and the education you are providing. You can figure out what you need to charge to make it work for you financially, but as a guideline Miranda recommends \$75.00 per hour for instructional time. In this situation, both you and the apprentice will be paying taxes on their wages, but you will not be at risk of being shut down by the Labor Department!

Miranda recommended that we motivate and inspire our apprentices by introducing two ideas:

1. Meditation in farm work:

Give apprentices an appreciation for the opportunity for meditation that comes through farm work. Explain to them the *joy* of having that time in the field, and help them to ease into it early in the season by giving them little 'sitting' assignments. Have your apprentices sit quietly outside somewhere for ½ hour at first, and gradually increase the time to an hour. If apprentices can find a joyful way into work that can otherwise feel monotonous, they will have their own relationship to it, and an inner motivation. You might also help them to see how this meditative time and space clears the clutter in their minds and helps to feed their other artistic endeavors. Encourage them to write or paint or make music in their spare time. When you're assigning a task and an apprentice says, "I've done this before", you can say "Yes, that's great! You know how to do it, so now all you have to pay attention to is anything that's different or unusual. And other than that, this is your time with yourself. Enjoy it!"

2. Life-long Learning:

Give your apprentices an appreciation for the chance to keep learning and growing through their adulthood. Share stories of your own continued growth as a farmer, and how you continue to learn new things each season.

Miranda reminded us to make sure to build in time in the seasonal schedule for personal days and vacation. If you plan well enough in advance, it can even be possible to allow for vacation time in July and August, which might be the best thing at that point in the season.

Apprentices often lack the same sense of urgency that a farmer has about the work at hand, because they aren't yet able to see the whole picture. They can feel like they are being dragged along and jerked around. Miranda stressed the importance of providing apprentices with a consistent and reliable schedule, with rigid starting and stopping times. The key is for you to stick to it! You need to be punctual, and you need to provide apprentices with rhythm and clarity. Often there are after-hours emergencies that need to be taken care of immediately. If you aren't able to send your apprentices

home at the regular stopping time and take care of the after-hours work yourself, you should at least strive to give them advance notice of the extra work, and perhaps try to give them some other time off in compensation.

Miranda reminded us that apprentices often need to be taught how to work. This can only be done through example. Sometimes people don't learn the first time, or the second time, or the third time. Sometimes it will take some playful competition to encourage apprentices to work at the speed you need them to. Set up a little weeding race and see who can finish first- the 20-something apprentice? Or the 60-something farmer?

Miranda gave us a 4-part method for transferring hands-on skills to apprentices:

1. First, you must **prepare the student to learn**. Get them motivated for the task at hand by giving them an understanding of why they are doing it. You will have to learn about your apprentices to do this successfully, because different people are motivated by different things. Analogies with the body are often successful. On the question of transparency, Miranda recommended not to share the farm's finances until the second year of apprenticeship.
2. Next, **demonstrate the task**, talking all the way through. Explain what you are doing and make note of how you are doing it. Draw their attention to the motions of your body. Show them how *not* to do it. During your explanations, you can draw connections to your earlier description of why you are doing this task.
3. Now the apprentices can **imitate the task** under your supervision. Put them at ease here- tell them stories about all the times you've made mistakes while doing this particular thing. Give them feedback as they go along- let them know what they're doing well and where they can work on doing something differently. Get feedback from them too. How does it feel? What is challenging about it? What questions do they have?
4. When you feel confident that the apprentice has got the hang of a task, they can **practice it independently**. Check in on them from time to time and continue to give and get feedback. Remember, there are no poor students, only poor teachers.

You can reinforce the conceptual knowledge derived through classroom material in your hands-on work. For example, if you are learning about plant physiology in the classroom, take advantage of that previous discussion when you are teaching apprentices how to water. Make reference to what your students have learned about water uptake as you are explaining and demonstrating the skill. This will help apprentices to really understand the particularities of how much to water and when.

Miranda recommended having apprentices teach each other as much as possible. This can be a help in addressing several of the issues brought up by mentors in the group. When you are working with people with different skill levels, asking the more advanced apprentices to teach a skill can provide them with an added challenge, and give them an opportunity to see how much they do know and understand. You will still want to supervise to be sure that nothing gets missed and to see that the new students are catching on. Regardless of differences in skill level, safety is one topic that is good for apprentices to teach each other. It's a good way to really drive safety home for them. Teaching each other is also a good way to relieve boredom during the 'July syndrome.' Again, it's a challenge, and it reveals to apprentices just how much they have been learning so far in the season.

Miranda stressed the importance of supporting yourself. Build time into your schedule to replenish your energy and spirit. You won't be able to provide support to your apprentices if you don't take care of yourself. One way to do this is to delegate some of your responsibilities by teaching other people to do things that you might normally do yourself. Miranda gave the example of cooking. Have your apprentices

cook the mid-day meal. They will learn a valuable skill and relieve you of a responsibility as well.

After lunch, Miranda asked the group to pair up for an exercise. Each person in the pair would have a chance to role-play one of two situations- teaching a new skill to an apprentice or developing a work and learning contract with an apprentice. After the exercise, groups shared what they had learned from each other.

Lessons and Ideas Learned from Pairs Exercise:

- Collecting stories from past apprentices to share with incoming people
- One pair decided that when they asked their apprentices to write down their educational goals for the season, they too, as farmers, would write down their own educational goals. They planned to share these with each other and make sure to check in on their progress during the season.
- It's important to decide which skills are best to teach individually and which skills can be taught to a group of apprentices.
- One person learned how much better it is to hoe with their thumbs pointing up!
- When you're teaching, it's important to give the rationale behind a task before you demonstrate it. Then, as you demonstrate, revisit the rationale, incorporating the reasoning into your explanations.
- When making your work and learning contract, recall the initial interview
- Stress often your commitment to the apprentice, and the apprentice's commitment to the farm. Explain that you will do your best to meet the apprentice's needs, but that the needs of the farm must be met as well. Explain that there must be a balance.
- In a demonstration of transplanting, one farmer spoke of the earth's breathing rhythm. This inspired his partner to give more
- Whenever a stressful or scary situation arises, or a mistake is made, be sure to debrief about it afterwards. You can help an apprentice to be grateful for the opportunity to learn and grow from these kinds of experiences.
- It's important to completely unpack particular skills for your apprentices. Really give them a step-by-step breakdown of how to do something. Then you have hooks for inserting information about the rationale behind it.
- Be aware of when you are using codified language, and try to elucidate.
- Pick up on your apprentices' questions. They are teaching you to teach better.
- When you're teaching someone a task they have already learned on another farm, it's important to be prepare them to be open-minded to a different way of doing things and to be accepting and respectful of your needs and the farm's needs. Be sure to validate the other methods, and explain some of the conditions that have led to your decision to do it differently.

Afternoon Session on the Skills Checklists

Rachel Schneider facilitated a panel discussion of the Skills Checklists with three of the farmer mentors in the NABDAP who have some experience working with the checklists: Julia Smagorinsky from Woodbridge Farm in CT, Katy Lince from Hawthorne Valley Farm in NY, and Nathaniel Thompson from Remembrance Farm in NY.

Rachel: How did you introduce the checklists?

Nathaniel: It had been several years since I had actually taken apprentices on my farm, and I was returning to it specifically because I wanted to be a part of the NABDAP. I was only interested in working with apprentices who would be enrolled in the NABDAP, and I made that clear to my apprentice. We looked at the checklist during our initial interview, and we used it when we made up our work agreement. Then we pretty much forgot about it until the end of the season. We returned to it only in the end, when we used it as a kind of exit interview. That worked fairly well, but I think I will try to have a mid-season meeting about it this year. One thing I had to decide for myself was that the phrase 'perform independently' meant that an apprentice could perform a task independently on **my farm**, but not necessarily on any farm.

Julia: I was using an older version of the checklists, which did not specifically instruct the farmers to discuss with apprentices exactly which skills they could promise to teach them. I asked my apprentices to identify 3-4 specific skills areas that they would like to concentrate on during the season. I planned to meet with the apprentices every 3 to 4 weeks, but ultimately found that to be unrealistic. We ended up meeting every 3 months. Both the apprentice and I would fill out the checklists and then we spent our discussion time talking about the areas of difference between our two copies.

Katy: I didn't actually use the checklists this year, but I intend to use them for everyone this season, regardless of whether or not they are enrolled in the program.

Rachel: What challenges did you experience while using the checklists?

Nathaniel: In general, I am not a good record-keeper. I don't write things down. While I realize that working with apprentices does require me to write some things down for the sake of clarity, the checklists were still challenging for me.

Julia: When I asked my apprentices to identify 3-4 specific skills areas they were interested in, they chose skills that I couldn't promise to teach them that season. So the apprentices had high expectations, and were disappointed when they didn't learn those things, even though they did learn a lot of other things! I'm hoping that the new system, where we go through the checklists and agree on each skill that I can promise to teach, will work better. For now, I will only use the checklists with apprentices who are committed to the program. If I am going to take the time to go over the lists with people, I want to know that they have a certain level of commitment.

The panel discussion generated some conversation among the audience members. Here are the major points that came forth:

- *Each mentor farm should start a new checklist, rather than adding checks to the old one. If an apprentice has received three checkmarks in any given skill on another farm, they should still be trained in the same skill according to the practices on the new farm.*
- *The burden of paperwork and documentation should fall on the apprentice in this program. We should see the program structure as an empowerment of the*

apprentice, an opportunity for them to take charge of their education and actively pursue a full spectrum of knowledge. So don't be afraid to specify that your apprentices should be the ones scheduling check-ins with you, making copies of the checklists, and mailing them to the regional and central coordinators.

- Each farm has the freedom to use the checklists in the way that works best for them.
- The website version of the checklists (with X's next to every skill that could possibly be learned on the farm) might be misleading to potential apprentices. They might easily assume that they can learn all of the X'd skills in the first year. One option is to always look at the checklists and circle the X's during the interview. Another option might be to post a different version on the website, on which first year skills are circled.
- Do we have an equal sense of responsibility to all of our apprentices, whether or not they are enrolled in this program? Should we ask people to stay on one farm for two years?

Evening Session with Leonore Russell

On Saturday evening, we were joined by Leonore Russell. Leonore has been teaching eurythmy for over forty years, and most recently has been providing consulting services to various groups. She got us moving with a eurythmy exercise designed to foster an appreciation and understanding of the three different learning channels- **visual, auditory, and kinesthetic**. The exercise was a group problem-solving process. With minimal instruction and guidance, Leonore divided us into three groups and asked each group to physically draw out a shape while moving together. She asked one group to draw a line, one group a circle, and one group a figure-eight. Gradually, with much repetition, and, at times, some demonstration and/or explanation from individuals, each group figured out how to create their shape. Then Leonore added a poem by Rudolf Steiner:

Ecce Homo

In the Heart- the loom of Feeling
In the Head- the light of Thinking,
In the Limbs- the strength of Will.
Weaving of radiant Light,
Strength of the Weaving,
Light of the surging Strength:
Lo, this is Man!

-Rudolf Steiner

With the addition of the poem, we began to attempt to draw our shapes *simultaneously*.

The exercise reached us through all three learning channels, and on the most basic level the eurythmy drew our attention to how we as individuals learn best. Then the words of the poem gave us a deeper understanding by drawing a correlation between the learning channels and human faculties:

- **Visual** learning, represented by the group drawing the line (**light**), is related to **Thinking**, the **Head**.
- **Auditory** learning, represented by the group drawing the figure eight (**loom**), is related to **Feeling**, the **Heart**.
- **Kinesthetic** learning, represented by the group drawing the circle (**strength**), is related to **Willing**, the **Limbs**.

As we worked on performing our movements simultaneously, we found that the Visual/Thinking group (drawing the line) needed to take a step back and get out of the way in order for the other two groups to have enough room to fully draw their shapes. We extended this lesson as an analogy in two ways. First, we thought of the three channels as parts of the farm organism. Visual/Thinking = farm manager, Auditory/Feeling = apprentices/workers, and Kinesthetic/Willing = forces and cycles of nature. In this case, we saw that the farm manager often needs to take a step back in order to allow the farm to function fully. When they are in too close to the action, they can easily impede it.

We also thought about this lesson for the Visual/Thinking channel in a more literal way. In the discussion that followed the exercise, Leonore reiterated what Mac had pointed to earlier- that in our mainstream educational system, there is usually a deficit of kinesthetic learning, which emphasizes repetition and discipline and helps to foster a strong will. This gap in education, combined with the overwhelming influence of media, results in the weakening of the will. You will find this to be the case with many of your apprentices.

Leonore encouraged us to think through how we can address all three learning channels in our apprentices. "It's not enough to say something forty times," she said. "You have to say it forty different ways." She also encouraged us to take the time to give apprentices a thorough orientation. "If you take care of their physical needs, and they feel completely comfortable, then they can focus and be totally present for the work and learning."

Learning Channel Preferences (handout from Leonore Russel)

We do not learn equally through the same sensory channels. One study has shown that, on average, we have roughly the same preference for three learning channels:

- 37% of learning is *haptic* or *kinesthetic*, through moving, touching, and doing
- 29% of learning is *visual*, through pictures and images
- 34% of learning is *auditory*, through sounds and words

Most of us use all three channels to a certain extent, but not equally. We each have individual preferences for the balance of attention we pay to each channel.

Haptic Learning

People who are learning haptically will pick things up and handle them. They will walk around the learning domain and want to physically try things out. When they are listening they may well slump and almost seem not to be paying attention. They will take fewer notes, which will use action-oriented words. When talking, they often have deeper voices and speak more slowly.

Visual Learning

People who are learning visually will look intensely at both the teacher and the item being learned. They like pictures, colors, diagrams, but also are often comfortable with written texts (especially if broken up with headings and diagrams). When they read, they make pictures in their heads of what they are reading. They will draw what they are talking, waving their hands about artistically. They may use mind-maps or other visual forms of note-taking. When talking, they speak fast in order to keep up with the blur of images that are racing through their minds. This speed often leads to shorter breaths and a higher pitch of voice.

Auditory Learning

People who are learning through sounds will listen carefully to what is said, perhaps tilting their head in order to better hear the sounds. They prefer to be told than to read, although reading is relatively easy for them, especially if it is well-written with effective use of words. When talking, they pay attention to the sound of their own voice, using effective words and intonation.

So What?

Take time to watch how people learn, and then pour your messages down the channels they use most- in the same proportion that they use them. If you are not sure of their preferences, then spread your message across all sense channels.

See also <http://www.thelearningweb.net>

Sunday, February 14th
How do we talk about Biodynamics?

Sunday morning's agenda was to take a look at how we talk about biodynamics to other people. When someone asks us, "What is biodynamics?", what do we say? Steffen Schneider of Hawthorne Valley Farm spoke for about half an hour, giving us his full answer, which he often presents at conferences and workshops. We encouraged Steffen to put his presentation into written form, and hopefully he will share it with us in the near future! One of his most striking talking points was a look at Sir Albert Howard's vision of sustainable agriculture. "Everything here," Steffen said, "I would also include in an explanation of biodynamics. And then there are some ways in which biodynamics goes beyond this vision."

Sir Albert Howard's Vision: What a self-sustaining (or BD) farm should include:	Ways in which biodynamics goes above and beyond:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livestock • Mixed Crops • Erosion Prevention • Fertility Reserves • Rainfall Storage • Compost • No Waste • Balance of Growth and Decay • Healthy Animals that resist disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The farm is a living being in the context of a larger cosmology • Polarity is a key reality of life- we must be able to work with it! • Conscious relationship with cosmic rhythms and unseen physical forces • Forge, cultivate, and practice a meditative personal relationship as a farmer to the farm and its beings • Grow food with the potential to strengthen human individuality • Farm must be fundamental to all social and economic relationships

Steffen's talk was followed by some exercises with Robert Karp, executive director of the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association. Robert asked us to do some reflective journaling in response to the following questions:

- What is attracting you to biodynamics? What speaks to you about it?
- How has biodynamics helped you to become a better farmer? Give some concrete examples. If you are just coming to biodynamics, what do you think it might be offering you?
- What is baffling to you about biodynamics? What is your biggest stumbling block? Where are your biggest questions?

We shared our journal responses in pairs, and then returned to writing once again. This time, we worked on completing the following sentences:

- To me, biodynamics is....
- My biggest question about biodynamics is.....

We came together again and shared our explanations and questions with the whole group. "Biodynamics isn't a *thing* we can describe and convince people to do," Robert reminded us. "We need language that is anchored in our own integrity, so that we can really speak to the hearts of others. There needs to be poetry in the language we use."

Here are some of people's explanations:

"To me, biodynamics is....."

"...a way to harmoniously and respectfully link the earth and its fertility to the energy of the sun."

"...an effort to practice agriculture in a harmonious and holistic fashion."

"...a way to nourish all aspects of life while doing the greatest good."

"...a way to connect myself to my own body, vocation, and understanding of my place in the cosmos while at the same time growing life-sustaining nourishment for others."

"...a human form of agriculture, which recognizes that both we and the earth have body, soul and spirit, and that there are certain methods for unfolding and interacting with these."

And some of their questions:

My biggest question about biodynamics is..."

- On the subject of polarity: We have passion and feeling but we also need scientific data to back it up. What can we do about research?
- How is biodynamics evolving and changing?
- Has biodynamics become fixed in earlier concerns without meeting current pressing needs?
- How do we keep corporations from taking ownership of biodynamics?
- Who am I in relation to biodynamics?
- How do we enter rationally into the processes of nature?
- What is really happening when we use the preps?
- Can the specific elements of biodynamic practices change from region to region? i.e. can/should we use native plants in the preps, or goat horns instead of cow horns?
- How can we pass farms along? Or how can we make space within existing farms for new young farmers to develop what they want to do?
- Am I making enough space and effort to develop the capacities in myself that drew me to biodynamics in the first place?
- How do we resolve the question of land ownership?
- How can we pass our farms along to the next generation?