



North American Biodynamic Apprenticeship Program

Farm Journal Guidelines

adapted from *Becoming a Biodynamic Farmer or Gardener: A Handbook for Prospective Trainees*,
by Malcolm and Susan Gardner

Keeping a daily journal of your activities, observations and experiences on the farm is the simplest way to ensure that you have a record of your on-the-job training to refresh your memory in later years. A daily journal will also help you improve your current powers of observation. When writing your entries you will discover that you can't quite remember certain details—and this will stimulate you to notice those things the next day. Taking time for journaling creates a space for daily reflection, helping you to finish off each day and fully absorb what you have learned.

If you keep a “double entry” journal—with your factual observations on the left side and any personal comments, questions or reflections on the right side (see example below)—you will train yourself to think carefully and not make assumptions or jump to conclusions. For instance, if you see some wilted cabbage seedlings, it is not safe to assume that they need more water; they might also be suffering cutworm root damage. If you record this in your journal, your observation of the wilting would belong in the left-hand column, while your speculation that they might be suffering from drought would belong in the right-hand column.

Your farm journal, however, should not become a private, personal diary. During your participation in the North American Biodynamic Apprenticeship Program, you will be required to share your journal with your mentor; this will be one way that he or she evaluates the progress of your training. For this reason—as well as for your own benefit in future years—you need to write in an orderly and legible manner. Some people may want to type their entries into a word processing program, but this may make it more cumbersome to include sketches and drawings in your journal.

Keeping up with your journal writing will be easiest if you do it regularly each evening. Try to spend at least five minutes on this task. Start each entry with the date and a general note about the weather—every farmer has to learn to pay close attention to the weather. You might also want to include seasonal markers like the return of the first swallows in the spring or the first wildflowers. Then describe in some detail your own activities and what you observed on the farm, including perhaps the activities of your farmer mentor. With a double-entry journal all this would go in the first (left-hand) column, while in the second column you would record your comments—or even other people's comments—about the events in the first column. If your mentor farmer makes a weekly work plan for the farm, you would record this in the second column, while in the first column you would make note of when the planned tasks were actually accomplished.

The kind of notebook you choose—large or small format, lined or unlined paper, bound or loose-leaf—makes little difference. If you choose a small-format notebook, you can use two facing pages for the two columns of a double-entry journal; if you choose a larger notebook, you can divide each page into two columns. A bound notebook is probably more permanent and durable than a loose-leaf binder, but the latter allows you to easily insert pages (for instance, your own sketches or information sheets that you may receive from your mentor).

Sample Farm Journal Format

[factual descriptions/observations]	[personal questions/opinions/plans]
<p><i>Date:</i></p> <p><i>Weather:</i> [high/low temp., rainfall, wind speed & direction, first frost, etc.]</p> <p><i>Wildlife & Flora:</i> [first swallow in spring, first groundhog, first apple blossoms open, etc.]</p> <p><i>Farm Life:</i> [what you did or observed on the farm]</p>	