

## "Considera" By Mark Moodie

In last year's *Stella Natura* there was mention of the web site that I created to collate experiences you have had from using this calendar. The site is called 'Considera,'\* which is a cobbled Latin version of 'with the stars.'

The activity of giving consideration used to mean looking for favourable conditions as encrypted in the relations between us and the stars and planets. The art of considering once involved direct communication with the stars via the clairvoyant consciousness common amongst our ancient forbears. This relationship has evolved with us and in our time most of us must calculate and experiment, considering our findings using the modern meaning of that verb. This is good and proper in at least two ways. Firstly, because the discipline of science offers the chance of a way without dogma which can leave us free. Second, because it is one route out of the current dogma of materialism, one of whose certainties, ironically, is that the stars cannot and never did have anything to say to us.

Can we take the best of the old consideration and the best of the new and make a viable alloy? Can we use the tools and disciplines of science in the field of the supersensible? I contend that we can. The planting calendar is one part of this, and I am of the opinion that a complementary aspect would compile and analyse the results from such engagement openly and with disinterested rigor. Considera offers itself as the second part. The third essential is the actual activity of planting by the stars and this is open to all of us who consider the endeavour has value.

The biodynamic planting calendar is based on general indications from Dr Rudolf Steiner in his *'Foundations for the Renewal of Agriculture'*, and the experimental work of Maria Thun. If other practitioners do not renew both this experimental work and the emerging guidelines the prescriptions in the calendar are in danger of becoming dogmatic themselves, based solely on external authority.

I realise that I am not sufficiently focussed or of the calibre of these great pioneers, and I am unable to devote the time to emulate their work alone. But perhaps there are more of us out there with similar thoughts who might each do, say, one experiment a year well enough to pool our contributions into a collection of genuine value. I call such public collaboration 'democratic research', too important to be left to institutions and experts alone.

The idea that the arrangement of the heavens has anything to do with our farming and gardening is not an easy one for the educated modern mind so I have made one part of the site to lure in those with some curiosity and good will. This 'tester' page suggests planting times which should result in inferior crops compared to times which are soon before or after. If one were to plant the same seeds in the same soils on these days the results are likely to support the hypothesis of the calendar and the contrast could encourage the neophyte to continue with more experiments.

For instance, on March 29th, 2006, at 10:15 am GMT, there was an eclipse of the sun by the Moon in front of the constellation of the Fishes. (Aires in the tropical zodiac.) At this time and for the three days before and after this notoriously unfavourable alignment, we planted 2 rows of potatoes at the same hour. We harvested on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August in the afternoon. Whilst we harvested 3 boxes per row for the days before and after, both rows planted during the eclipse yielded only 2 boxes. (The taste, storage, and disease susceptibility were indistinguishable.) I suggest that most farmers would have liked to have a 33% yield increase just for avoiding one particular day of planting.

This year we will plant the potatoes from the different rows all at the same time to see if there is any 'nach bau' or subsequent effect on the potatoes.

Having created the necessary infrastructure to collate and analyse the results of planting, it became clear that we could use a slightly adjusted version to investigate another biodynamic enigma which might benefit from communal attention – 'peppering'. This activity follows a suggestion in Dr. Steiner's agricultural lectures about how we might moderate the unbridled assault of weeds and animal pests. Parts of these are burned and sprinkled around the effected areas. The practice receives its name from the visual similarity between the resulting ash and culinary pepper, and from the common act of sprinkling small amounts for the desired effect. If you go to the site you will see a section dedicated to the method and results of peppering.

The creation of the pages for these two aspects of biodynamic practice preceded the implementation of the original impulse to create 'Considera' – the Biodynamic preparations (see Dr. Steiner's agriculture course). Like so many of those to whom I have talked, these enigmas first drew our attention to biodynamics. So much promise lies therein – promise, at the very least, of superior crops but also hints of the real nature of the interface between common materials and the processes of growth.

In this 'Preparations plus' section of the web site we have a tool for evaluating what is observed to happen on the ground when Biodynamic Preparations are used. The section enables people to submit their findings into a structured compendium, or to search through existing submissions to get suggestions which might assist them in their own situations. It also proved useful to organise what various practitioners have published about their experiences of the Preparations.

Now if you look at the '507' (Valerian Preparation) page, you will find it primed with what half a dozen authors have found occurs on their fields, compost heaps and crops when using valerian petal juice. And if you have any experiences to add, you will be part of the collaboration.

I was blessed with the good fortune to find the research of a dozen innovators who have worked independently and on their own potentized formulations – a combined experience of over 200 years from New Zealand, Germany, Italy, India, Pakistan, Brazil, Australia as well as the USA! (I remain fascinated that so few of these pioneers knew of each other's presence and work, and that so many of them began work in the 1980s.) Because their formulations are also non toxic and work upon the same issues as the classical biodynamic preparations, I have added them to the site so they can also be given the same scrutiny and elaboration as those which biodynamic growers have used for 80 years. After all, Dr Steiner voiced his regret at the end of the course that there was still so much more to tell ....

Perhaps some of you may feel some disquiet about this analytic tool – I do! It can never be a good farmer. It is only analytical and cannot reason, let alone have heart or limbs. But whilst it is a limited tool, I hope you will find it genuinely useful. It is something like the tool that I would like to have had when I first met biodynamics. If you are motivated to join in this work, its usefulness will grow for future biodynamic growers through all our contributions and it will have fulfilled its potential.

Whilst aware of the site's limitations, let me also say that it **has** contributed to my appreciation of biodynamics as a living whole. So much has come out of the murk as a result of it. It has helped me build on the foundation we were given and I hope it will continue the renewal of agriculture for farmers of field and firmament. Perhaps it has a role to play in this stage of our evolving conversations with the heavens.

\*<http://www.considera.org>. For those who do not get on with computers, results can be sent to Considera, Oaklands Park, Newnham, Gloucestershire, GL14 1EF, UK.