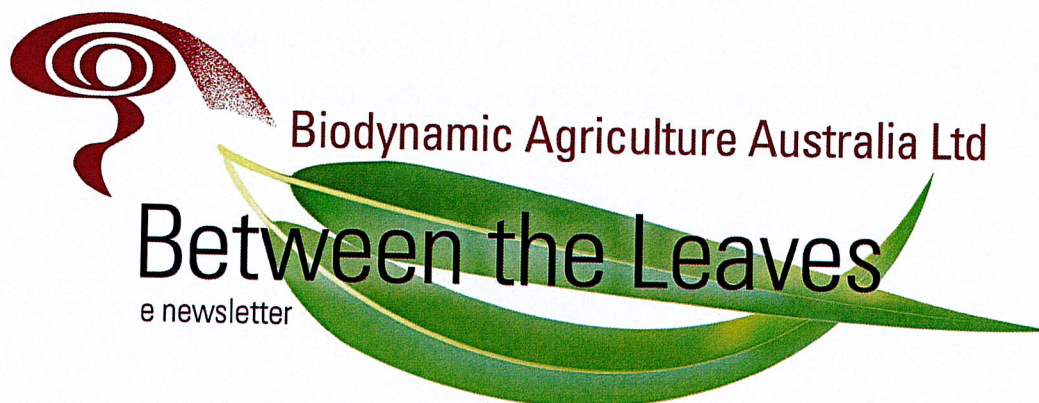


Between the Leaves, the monthly newsletter from
Biodynamic Agriculture Australia

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DECEMBER 2023



Hello Everyone,

The "bounce" after five months of way-below-average rainfall (aka drought) has been spectacular in the NSW north-east, especially on the Mid North Coast. Skinny cattle shaving the paddocks – largely because of a price slump and the need to retain breeding stock – has been a common sight hereabouts. No amount of cell grazing was able to retain feed in most grazing situations.

Until the rain came in the last fortnight or so! Woosh – grasses have shot up Lazarus-like out of a brown landscape.

In the garden, a more-than-usually dry spring has delayed growth. Only now since the rain, have ginger and turmeric shot forth.

Tomatoes and leafy vegetables were waiting for sky juice and warm days/nights and are now catching up for lost time.

We hope the summer smiles upon your crop and home garden growing efforts around the country. It's times of chaotic weather that the resilience of biodynamically grown plants should come to the fore.

We wish you all a wonderful Christmas and New Year.

Kaz and John



Sweet violet - edible, medicinal, beautiful

Kate Martignier, arealgreenlife.com, November 2023

Allow me to introduce you to sweet violet or wild violet (*Viola odorata*), a beautiful little shade-tolerant, ground-covering plant with a long list of nutritive and medicinal uses.

Sweet violet is one of many low-maintenance perennial plants that can be used as deeply nutritious food and simple, safe medicine.
([and here are 7 more.](#))

I wrote this post about sweet violet when I first brought it into our garden a few years go. I've now updated it with more images, more links, and two super-simple recipes.

Sweet violet, wild violet, *Vola odorata*

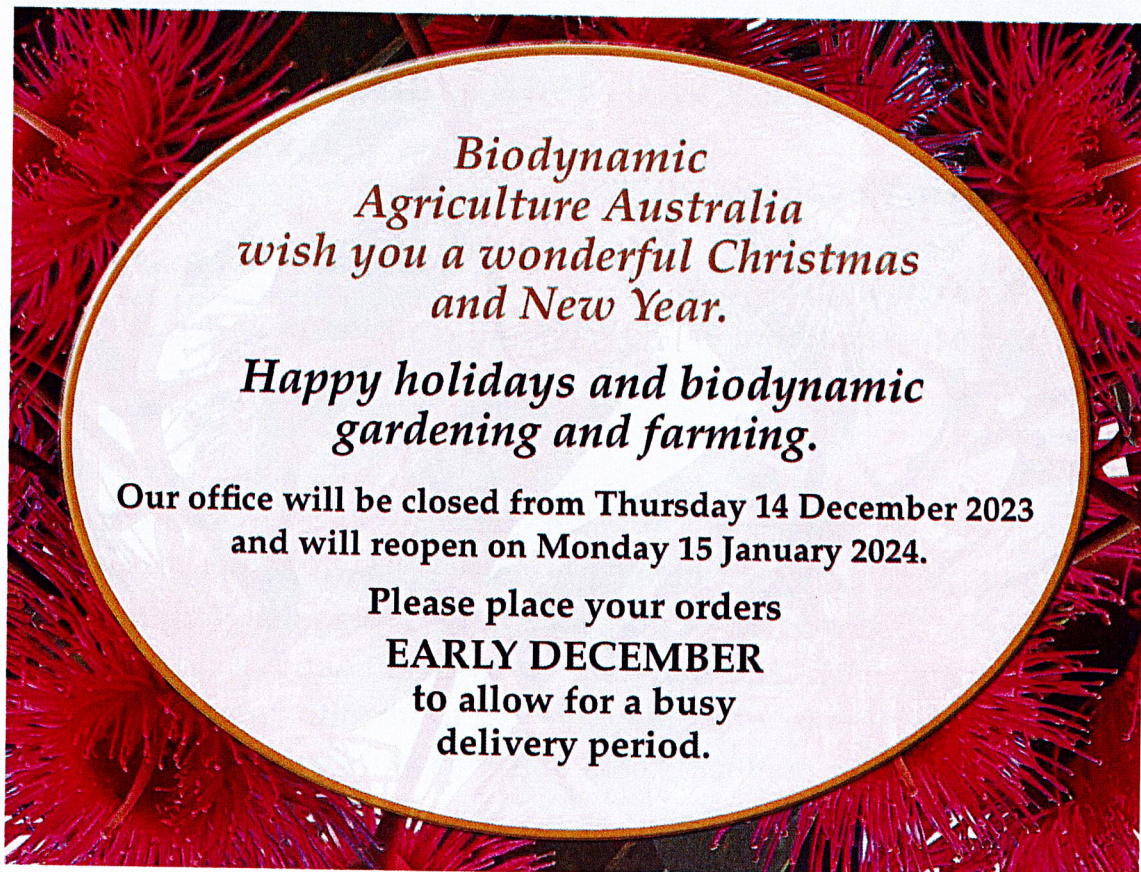
Sweet violet is one of the common names for this plant; another is wild violet. Its scientific name is *Viola odorata*.

Viola refers to the genus (a genus is a group of species that are closely related) and *odorata* refers to the species.

There are many different species in the *Viola* genus. One that can be used interchangeably with *Viola odorata* is *Viola tricolor* (its flowers have three colors) whose common names include heartsease and johnny jump-up.

(Please note that I'm **not talking about African Violets, which despite the confusing common name is an entirely different genus and are absolutely NOT edible**. Read about that one and see some pics of it, [here](#) and [here](#).)

READ MORE...





Ten ways to grow with less water

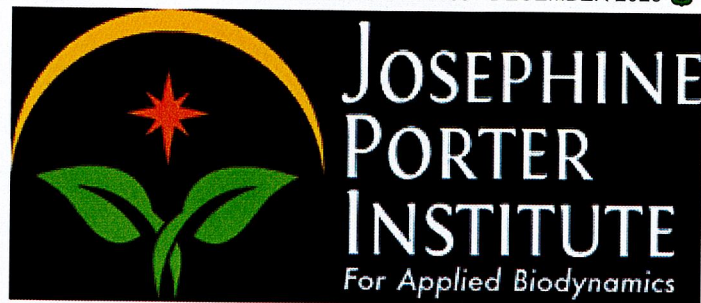
John Kersten, November 2023

Simplest watering system

I draped rope strand from an old mop into a bucket of water. It wicked 7cm (2.5") up the rope and started dripping over the edge of the bucket.

I got an old toilet cistern with a valve, connected it to my water tank (gravity fed) and drilled 10 holes around the cistern 20mm above the water level. I inserted 13mm poly pipe right-angle joins, fed the strands through them and ran pipes to 10 trees. About 1 drip every 10 seconds equates to 1 litre/day. Perfect for maintenance watering when I go away. No pumps, timers or expensive joinery, just a simple reliable way to water.

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Josephine Porter Institute (JPI) update

Mike Biltonen, JPI President, 6 November 2023

The present of JPI and its unfolding future. *LISTEN TO POST · 9:04*

Biodynamic agriculture as we know it is almost 100 years old. *The Josephine Porter Institute for Applied Biodynamics* (JPI) itself is almost 40. Conceived by Hugh Courtney, the institute's founder and long-time master preparation maker, JPI began life as an organization in 1985, and its transformation continues to this day. Under Hugh's guidance, biodynamic agriculture in the United States found a foothold with farmers and gardeners, growing its presence over nearly four decades. The organization's process of rediscovering itself continues in new and exciting ways every year.

Through inspiration and experimentation, trial-and-error, and the application of the alchemical imagination of Steiner and those who preceded him, Hugh and others paved the way for where JPI stands today. JPI continues to investigate and discover new ways of deepening the instructions given by Rudolf Steiner to farmers in 1924 in the form of *The Agriculture Course*.

Biodynamic farming is not just another style of regenerative farming or Organic 2.0. It involves concepts and practices that go beyond the mere "doing" of something. At its core, biodynamic farming and gardening improves the health of the planet and human nutrition through soil revitalization, and provides a contemplative farming practice that, more than just improving the land, improves and deepens the nature of the farmer who practices it.

Whether a backyard garden or ten thousand acres, biodynamics is scalable. As an approach, it encourages the farmer to look deeply at his or her relationship to the farm and Earth, and to learn from it in

ways that enrich and enliven the souls of both. Lest there be any confusion, biodynamics is not an instant answer to bad or destructive farming and gardening (e.g., the use of synthetic pesticides or fertilizers). Biodynamics takes time, commitment and patience, and is a balanced approach of will-force and intellect. It is the confluence of secular and esoteric sciences and thought that creates something stronger and more meaningful than that of the individual parts. A farmer who pays more attention, cares more, and does the right thing is a lot more likely to get a better result. In a way, anyone doing that is already a long way down the right path whether or not they call it "biodynamic."

As the Earth's matrix is healed, the farmer is also repaired. Steiner knew this when he first provided the *Agriculture* lectures 100 years ago next year. Hugh Courtney knew also this when he first dreamed of an organization that could help anchor biodynamic agriculture in the United States.

This does not mean that the path forward has been or necessarily will ever be easy or clear. As human evolution has been difficult, agriculture fell from relatively balanced naturalistic approaches to materialistic farming and must now undergo a rebirth by recalling the spiritual foundations of agriculture. But as winter gives the appearance of going backward as leaves fall, the decay of winter provides rich fertility for the new growth of spring. Similarly, the apparent "regression" into materialism has provided us with the scientific method, which, when put in loving service of humanity, becomes an ennobled pursuit.

When it appears that a planet in the sky goes "retrograde," it is only because of how the Earth moves relative to the retrograde planet. In reality, every planet is only ever moving forward. Once Hugh passed responsibility for the organization on to others, as often happens, those others brought a renewed vision—renewed *because* it was different—and new hands to the work.

The changes in the management forms of an organization are permeable, but as a leaf leaps to a flower in an abrupt moment, organizations can suddenly express in their form latent changes long desiring to emerge. As a young child is growing, it is "thinking" itself into being. Only later does thought become liberated and more self-aware. Organizations change as our bodies do, striving toward ever-greater actualization. As with all of us, JPI is an ongoing project of

human *becoming*. With enough time behind us, and plenty in front of us, JPI is now at a place where it can both be circumspect *and* can plan for the future as a mature organization.

One of the biggest changes we have made is our renewed commitment to embodying the ideal of the farm organism. In early April 2020, and for some time prior, we began talking about the need for cows on the farm. For the next few years and many prior to that we had been obtaining manure for our 500 horn manure preparation from neighboring pastured cattle that would graze JPI land. This year we'll get all of the manure we need for 500 and barrel compound from our own cows eating grass and pooping on-site at JPI.

Introducing cows – or any livestock – onto a farm is no small consideration. Locating and transporting suitable cows took us a year and was only possible after the hiring of our current preparation maker and farm manager, Ben Nommay. But arrive they did.

We are also in the process of migrating our preparation burial sites to more appropriate locations, expanding our biodynamic herb gardens, as well as fine-tuning the process for our **Pfeiffer™ Field and Garden spray**. Dusting off hundreds of pages of Pfeiffer's hidden notes in the JPI vault, we discovered Pfeiffer's references to things he *wished* he could locate to include in **the Pfeiffer™ Compost Starter**. Pfeiffer says that if these specific forces can be isolated, "they should be added." JPI has **brought the Pfeiffer™ products up-to-date** with some of the fruitful insights of secular scientific research, allowing the further unfoldment and improvement of the biodynamic arsenal.

JPI is conducting on-farm research to continue to assess preparation quality and its effects on plant growth. We are expanding our educational opportunities in the post-COVID world, and we are finally getting to the jumping-off point for on-farm housing that we envision leading to the creation of a larger dynamic facility where we will teach, research, and house visitors, board members, staff, and enthusiastic supporters of biodynamic agriculture.

And if that isn't enough metamorphosis, JPI is moving away from its printed format for *Applied Biodynamics*, which has been published continuously since Hugh first created it in 1994. *Applied Biodynamics* is being reincarnated in digital form hosted on Substack, which allows us to reach a larger audience while at the same time significantly reducing publishing costs.

We've already developed a line-up of authors inside and outside of JPI interested in publishing pieces on biodynamic farming. Our last published issue of *Applied Biodynamics* will be in early 2024 on the eve of the 100th anniversary of Steiner's lectures. We still have plenty of back issues to sell and distribute, in case anyone is interested. We are planning a comprehensive compendium of all back issues at some point in the future. See JPI's website for more information.

At the heart of all of this has been the JPI's volunteer Board of Directors. Board members through the years have worked through thick and thin to help JPI bring the philosophy of biodynamics and biodynamic preparations to an ever-growing audience. Despite some turbulent times, we have arrived at a strategic point where we are now acting on many of the things we've been talking about for the past years while still keeping the vision of those who came before and our other biodynamic elders as a guiding light.

Almost one hundred years ago, a small group of people concerned with the decline of nutritional quality in food convinced Steiner of their need for answers concerning how to improve their soils, crops, and food. Once again, nearly 100 years later, we have arrived at a time that begs us to think about the future we are leaving for the next generations.

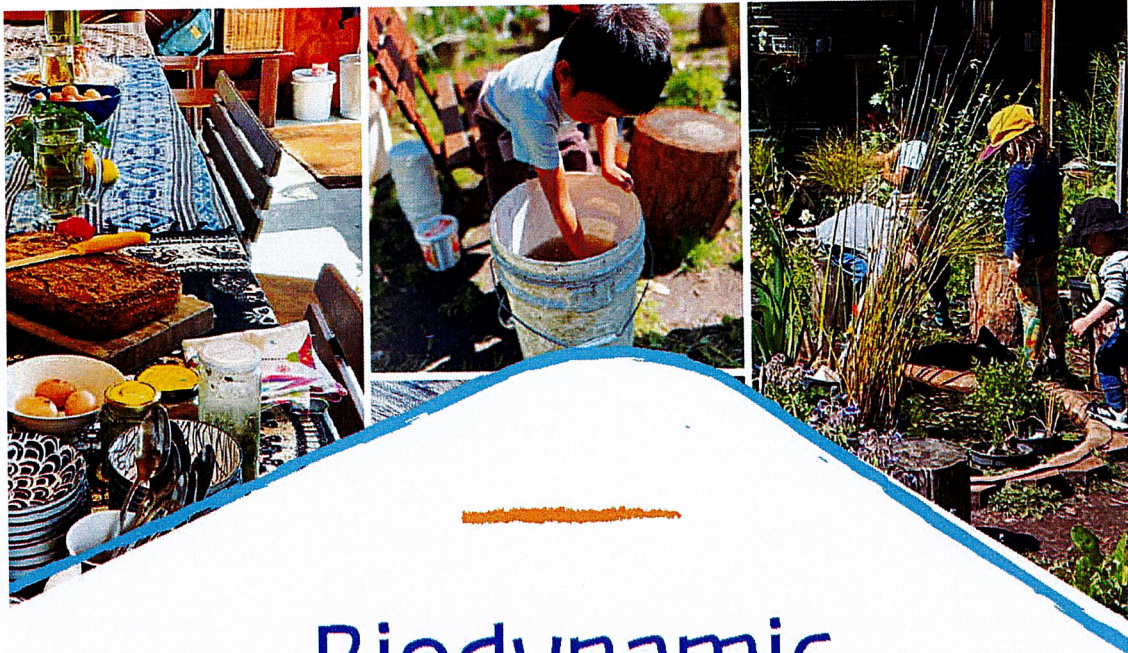
The answer to the so-called food crisis is not more *production*, but, rather, expansive thought and innovative farming and food distribution action. Biodynamic agriculture represents the next level of farming and gardening through its connection of spirit and earth, as it involves far more than placing a seed in the ground and watching it grow. As someone a bit smarter than most of us once said, "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them." How do we think in new ways? How do we rethink agriculture? How do we rethink biodynamics without prejudice as if encountering it for the first time? These are all things we must consider as we contemplate a healthy future for humanity.

JPI, like biodynamic preparations, is ever-transforming, asking deeper questions and taking on greater pursuits, asking how we can bring biodynamic farming and gardening to a broader audience committed to the health of humanity and the salvation of Earth.

Please join us as we embark on this crazy, cosmic journey and begin to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of biodynamic agriculture.

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<https://jpibiodynamics.org/>



Biodynamic

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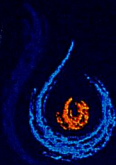
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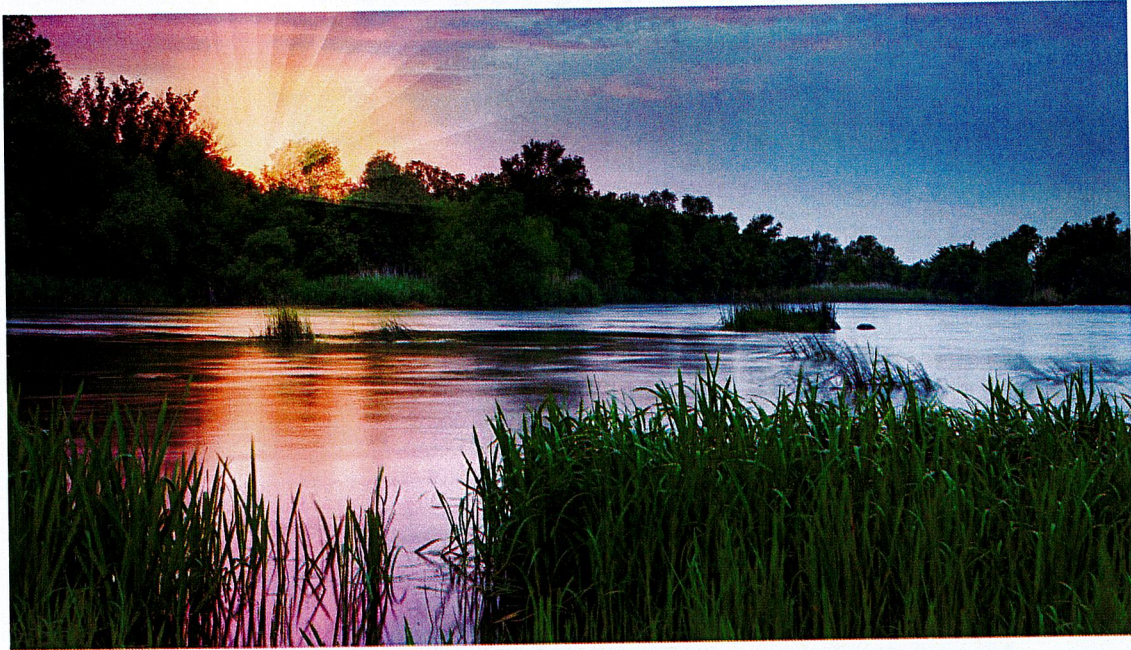
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Water, water water

Shane Joyce, Kumbartcho, November 2023

Brad Lancaster is doing some great work around water, via books and YouTube. Click on the below link to view

<https://www.harvestingrainwater.com/video/fighting-drought-with-an-ancient-practice-harvesting-the-rain/>

I've cherry picked this *YouTuber* as it a great overview of his story. Perhaps you can resonate with much of his story (history), as we watch our water resources dwindle over time. I'm now putting more emphasis in my workshops on water and how we can better manage it.

Interestingly, today I had a contractor in with 5.5 ton excavator, retrofitting old soil conservation drains, into Natural Sequence Farming CHAIN OF PONDS! Nathan is a Kilkivan local contractor and he commented that he noticed there was more soil moisture on Kumbartcho than he's come across anywhere in the district! Yes we've also got green grass, which is almost totally absent elsewhere!

As Nathan said, you must be doing something right! The right is:

Natural Sequence Farming, biodynamics, tree planting and pasture management, all things we can do.

Today we did about one third of the farm into CHAIN OF PONDS...that around 47 hectares. Man and machine here from 7.30 am arrival, till 6 pm departure.

Now that's going to "put a plug in the bath" to prevent the loss of a whole lot of rain water!

Our December workshop is filling fast, and all is on track as I prepare. Come join us and play as we explore some options around water.

<https://kumbartcho.com.au/>



The Teachings of Chuang Tzu

Master Tung-kuo asked Chuang Tzu,

"This thing called the Way—where does it exist?"

Chuang Tzu said,

"There's no place it doesn't exist."

"Come," said Master Tung-kuo, "you must be more specific!"

"It is in the ant." "As low a thing as that?"

"It is in the panic grass." "But that's lower still!"

"It is in the tiles and shards." "How can it be so low?"

"It is in the piss and sh*t."

Chuang Tzu, 22

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One small serve: a smaller, simpler approach to growing food and getting it to the table, one serve at a time

Kate Martignier, a realgreenlife.com.

There's a lot that has to happen between starting to grow food plants and putting homegrown food on the table *consistently*.

Because it's such a big, ongoing task, homegrown food is one of those things we get excited about, get started with, then find ourselves neglecting. I'd be embarrassed to admit how many food growing attempts I've started, only to let them disappear under a tangle of weeds and neglect.

So what's the answer? Wait till crisis hits (really hits, at our own kitchen tables rather than at somebody else's) and *then* figure it out?

Or start now to figure out how to reduce the friction involved in getting homegrown food to the table consistently and reliably?

What if you could start your homegrown food journey off by *consistently* putting just *one small serve* of home grown food on the table at a time? Small and often, rather than the end-of-season-glut way of traditional veggie gardening?

What if you could *keep that up*, for weeks, months, years *AND* know how to quickly get back on track every time you fell off the wagon?

That's what I want for myself. And in theory, I should know how. There are occasional days when I serve an entire meal that grew right here. Except the salt. (Keep in mind that I've been at this for nearly 15 years and have the luxury of living where we can grow our own meat, milk, and eggs, as well as veggies.)

But even with those advantages, entire zero-food-mile meals are still the exception at our place. As a rule, I don't serve nearly as much home grown food as I could. Why not?

Well, there's what we could be doing and what we actually do. Sometimes those two things intersect and very often they don't.

What tends to happen with me, the writer, is that I write down what me, the gardener, could be doing. Recently, in writing that down, I came up with a book. (And no, the process was not that simple!!)

The book is called **"One Small Serve: 7 beginner-friendly, low-maintenance, highly productive and nutritious plants to help you establish a one-serve-at-a-time habit that you'll be able to maintain"** It comes with a free series of (optional) emails sharing simple tips to support you in using it, and with free email support should you have questions along the way. Click on the above link to check out. Existing subscribers (that's you) can get half off using the code 626UTBEJ for a limited time. The code will expire on 15th December, 2023.



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