

Biodynamic  
Association of  
Northern California

# BDANC

Fall 2011 Newsletter



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- Our Fall Meeting
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*The activated Pfeiffer BD compost starter is applied to the compost feedstock during the initial grinding stage*



*Windrows are formed and are carefully monitored and kept between 50%-60% moisture content, and brought up to or above 131°F (55°C) for at least 15 days to allow involved biology to stabilize the ingredients into a living and hygienic fertility amendment. The pile is monitored to maintain proper moisture content to ensure optimum microbial activity.*

## FROM THE COMMUNITY

### *Sonoma Compost*

*By Christine Condon*

A few years ago, after attending Harald Hoven's wonderful year long Biodynamic training and summer intensive at Rudolph Steiner College, I enrolled in a commercial composting class at Santa Rosa Junior College through the Sustainable Agriculture Program. Fortunately for me the instructor was Will Bakx, Sonoma County's composting master, soil scientist and co-owner of Sonoma Compost. Sonoma Compost operates the Sonoma County Organic Recycling Program on behalf of the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency. Since 1985 they have diverted 1,320,000 tons of yard and wood debris from the landfill and converted it to organic compost, mulch, recycled lumber, firewood and bio-fuel.

Several weeks after the class was over, Will contacted me and asked if I'd be interested in working with him to develop a process for making Biodynamic compost on a commercial scale at Sonoma Compost. He had been contacted by a Napa Valley wine grape grower with a request for BD compost. Sonoma Compost already had a beautiful, clean process for making high quality, rigorously lab tested, OMRI listed organic compost, but Will understood and respected the fact that there were some important issues to consider when making Biodynamic compost and he wanted someone who really cared about the process to be oversee the conscious and intentional handling of the

Biodynamic preparations.

After talking to Harald Hoven at Steiner College and Hugh Courtney at Josephine Porter Institute about the project, we decided that the best way to go would be to create the BD compost using the same process used to create Sonoma Com-



post's organic compost with a few important differences. We treat the initial feedstock with Pfeiffer BD compost starter at the grinder. After the temperature stabilizes (6-8 weeks) the windrows are screened and formed into new windrows, two to three feet high, six to eight feet wide and a length to accommodate the volume of compost and then are carefully inoculated with the BD compost preparations #502-507 and allowed to mature in a static pile for at least 4 months.

During our first trials we also created a control windrow at the same time as the windrows with the BD preps and samples were sent for nutrient and microbial testing. There were some compelling statistically significant increases in some microbial levels in the Biodynamic compost compared to the control that warrant further investigation.

In April 2011, Sonoma Compost successfully achieved Demeter certification for their Sonoma Biodynamic® compost and their Hi-Test Biodynamic® compost, (with added chicken feathers for nitrogen loving crops). While it is always preferable for the BD farm and vineyard to generate its own fertility, many farms and vineyards need trusted sources of additional inputs and these high quality composts are a great solution.

Compost is such a miraculous manifestation and expression of the cycle of life. It has been an unexpected blessing to be working serendipitously in my own small way as a catalyst in this important work of turning waste into a very valuable resource while spreading these healing medicines over the planet on a relatively large scale.



*After the temperature is below 120°F, the compost is screened to 3/4 inch particle size and formed into windrows no taller than 3 feet. The Biodynamic Compost Preparations; BD #502-507 are added to the compost windrows either by insertion or stirring and spraying, as appropriate for the individual preparation.*



*The inoculated Biodynamic compost windrows are cured for a minimum of 4 months.*

