

# San Juan Islands Conservation District



## BIODYNAMIC FARMING OVERVIEW

*Edited with permission from The Biodynamic Farming & Gardening Association*

### What is Biodynamic Farming?

Biodynamics is a spiritual-ethical-ecological approach to agriculture, food production and nutrition. Biodynamics was first developed in the early 1920s based on the spiritual insights and practical suggestions of the Austrian writer, educator and social activist Dr. Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), whose philosophy is called “anthroposophy.” Today, the Biodynamic movement encompasses thousands of successful gardens, farms, vineyards and agricultural operations of all kinds and sizes on all continents, in a wide variety of ecological and economic settings.

*The foundation of a Biodynamic farm lies in its ability to generate its own fertility*

Biodynamic farmers strive to create a diversified, balanced farm ecosystem that generates health and fertility as much as possible from within the farm itself. Preparations made from fermented manure, minerals and herbs are used to help restore and harmonize the vital life forces of the farm and to enhance the nutrition, quality and flavor of the food being raised. Biodynamic practitioners also recognize and strive to work in cooperation with the subtle influences of the wider cosmos on soil, plant and animal health.

Most Biodynamic initiatives seek to embody triple bottom line approaches (ecological, social and economic sustainability), taking inspiration from Steiner’s insights into social and economic life as well as agriculture. Community supported agriculture (CSA), for example, was pioneered by Biodynamic farmers, and many Biodynamic practitioners work in creative partnerships with other farms and with schools, medical and wellness facilities, restaurants, hotels, homes for social therapy and other organizations.

## DETAILS

### 12 Ways to Learn More About Biodynamics

**1. Take a class or workshop.** One of the best ways to learn the basics or deepen your knowledge is through participating in a workshop led by an experienced Biodynamic educator. To find out about current offerings, view the Biodynamic Association’s list of educational centers and training programs and interactive calendar of events across North America and beyond @ <https://www.biodynamics.com> You can also order audio recordings of workshops from the previous years Biodynamic Conference, or take the Oregon Biodynamic Group’s free online Introduction to Biodynamics class @ <http://oregonbd.org>

**2. Read a book.** The Biodynamic Association offers a wide variety of books on Biodynamics and related topics through their web store in partnership with SteinerBooks. Introductory books recommended by The Biodynamic Association include: • Biodynamic Agriculture, by Willy Schilthuis • The Biodynamic Year: Increasing Yield, Quality and Flavour, by Maria Thun • Cosmos, Earth and Nutrition: The Biodynamic Approach to Agriculture, by Richard Thornton Smith • Culture and Horticulture: A Philosophy of Gardening, by Wolf D. Storl • Gardening for Life – The Biodynamic Way, by Maria Thun • Grasp the Nettle: Making Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Work, by Peter Proctor • Soil Fertility, Renewal and Preservation, by Ehrenfried Pfeiffer.

There are several editions of Rudolf Steiner’s texts available, based on the lectures he gave European farmers in 1924 that initiated the Biodynamic movement. One that is recommended is, Agriculture: Spiritual Foundations for the Renewal of Agriculture, translated from the original German by Catherine E. Creeger and Malcolm Gardner. This text is also available as an audio recording @ <https://www.biodynamics.com>

## 12 Ways to Learn More About Biodynamics - *continued*

**3. Join an online community.** Sign up to receive a free monthly e-newsletter – each issue features news, articles, opportunities and events related to Biodynamics @ . <https://www.biodynamics.com>. You can also read a Biodynamics Blog at [biodynamicsbda.wordpress.com](http://biodynamicsbda.wordpress.com); on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/biodynamics](http://www.facebook.com/biodynamics), or follow the Biodynamic Association on Twitter @Biodynamic.

**4. Participate in a local Biodynamic gathering.** Connect with a regional or thematic group or join a study group. Visit the Biodynamic Association resources and community page @ <https://www.biodynamics.com> to learn about: • Regional groups across North America • The Fellowship of Preparation Makers • The Biodynamic Initiative for the Next Generation • The Farm-Based Educators Network.

**5. Read the Demeter Biodynamic Farm Standard.** Demeter is the organization that certifies Biodynamic® farms. Their Biodynamic Farm Standard, which certified Biodynamic farms must adhere to, encapsulates the core principles and practices of Biodynamics. <http://www.demeter-usa.org>

**6. Watch a video.** Online, you can google several short videos: an excerpt from The Real Dirt on Farmer John about the biodynamic farm organism; Alan York of Benizger Winery talking about the concept of Biodynamics; “the Barefoot Farmer,” Jeff Poppen, making the distinction between organic and biodynamic; and ASM News’ “Why Cows Should Keep Their Horns.” The following feature-length films feature biodynamic farms and farmers: • One Man, One Cow, One Planet • Queen of the Sun: What Are the Bees Telling Us? • The Real Dirt on Farmer John • Ingredients • The Greenhorns



**7. Read the Biodynamics journal.** The Biodynamics journal is full of articles, farm profiles and helpful information for newcomers to Biodynamics as well as veterans. The journal has been published by the Biodynamic Association since 1941 and is available to Biodynamic members in online and print versions.

**8. Visit a Biodynamic farm.** Find farms in your area through the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening website under Resources & Community. <https://www.biodynamics.com>

**9. Attend the North American Biodynamic Conference.** The Biodynamic Association’s biennial conference brings together hundreds of biodynamic farmers, gardeners, educators, activists and more for four days of inspiring keynotes, informative workshops, networking and great food. For information on the next conference, visit: <https://www.biodynamics.com>

**10. Get a Biodynamic calendar.** Each of these calendars includes background information on the relationship between plants, earth and the cosmos as well as practical instructions for using the calendar to plan your farming and gardening. Calendars are available through the Biodynamic Association’s web store in partnership with SteinerBooks and include: • Stella Natura Biodynamic Planting Calendar • North American Biodynamic Sowing and Planting Calendar, by Maria & Matthias Thun • Northern Astro Calendar, by Brian Keats. <https://www.biodynamics.com>

**11. Become a Biodynamic apprentice.** If you are serious about becoming a biodynamic farmer or gardener, consider enrolling in the North American Biodynamic Apprenticeship Program (NABDAP), the Biodynamic Association’s program for beginning biodynamic and organic farmers. NABDAP combines two years of structured on-farm training and mentoring with a course of classroom study in Biodynamics. <https://www.biodynamics.com/nabdap>

**12. Talk to a Biodynamic consultant.** If you are interested in incorporating Biodynamics into your farm, garden, vineyard, or orchard, find a Biodynamic consultant to help you explore ideas and create a plan. You can find contact information for consultants across the continent through the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association’s online Biodynamic Directory. <https://www.biodynamics.com/Farmer>; Jeff Poppen, making the distinction between organic and biodynamic; and ASM News’ “Why Cows Should Keep Their Horns.” The following feature-length films feature biodynamic farms and farmers: • One Man, One Cow, One Planet • Queen of the Sun: What Are the Bees Telling Us? • The Real Dirt on Farmer John • Ingredients • The Greenhorns

11. Become a Biodynamic apprentice. If you are serious about becoming a biodynamic farmer or gardener, consider enrolling in the North American Biodynamic Apprenticeship Program (NABDAP), the Biodynamic Association’s program for beginning biodynamic and organic farmers. NABDAP combines two years of structured on-farm training and mentoring with a course of classroom study in Biodynamics. <https://www.biodynamics.com/nabdap>

### Biologically Intensive:

*“Farming practices and systems that rely on biological processes which are renewable, non-polluting and mutually beneficial to both farmers and society”*