Sowing seeds is the climax of the spring preparations. Cover crops are mown, tons of well-aged, biodynamic compost have been spread, the fields are plowed, rebroke and harrowed a few times, adequate rock minerals, like limestone, have been incorporated, and it's finally time to plant. I like to say that most of the garden work happens before I plant, but I am simply implying how important it is to do those other jobs correctly.

We sow and transplant everything by hand. Furrows are usually made with the tractor. Or the very small seeds, we will make shallow furrows with a hoe. A seed is usually covered with soil about four times it's own thickness. For instance, a half-inch long pumpkin seed would be planted two inches deep.

I pour seed from a packet into my left hand. For the small seeds, such as lettuce and carrot, I pinch some with my right thumb and forefinger, and by rubbing them together let a stream of seed fall. I gauge the thickness of the sowing by how they fall through the sir, because I can't see them once they hit the furrow. Each seed should be an inch from the next one, ideally. Wind can be a problem, I just have to bend down closer to the ground.

The bigger seeds, like beans and squash, are dropped about six inches apart. Instead of focusing on one every six inches, I try to put six or eight seeds every yard. It goes faster this way. Sweet corn is planted a little further apart, maybe eight or ten inches, unless I think turkeys are going to get it, in which I plant deeper and thicker. You can always thin extra plants out later, but replanting seldom results in a good, uniform stand.

Beets and radishes are sprinkled be shaking my hand and tossing them into a wide furrow. Any that fall too far out of the furrow are cultivated out. Smaller ones are thinned out to leave room for the rest to get big.

Melons are sown eight or ten seeds per hill, then later thinned to the strongest two plants. A small circle is made in each hill with my finger, the seeds are dropped and they're covered and patted down. A mixture of sand and compost, lightly dressed on top, prevents crust formation and makes the first weeding easier.

The furrows are raked over, or maybe covered up with our feet, or by pulling a harrow over the row. If the soil is dry, as it often is when planting the fall garden, we walk directly over the row to firm the seed and soil together. We don't do this in damp soil. If the soil is heavy clay, be careful not to plant too deep.

I'm reluctant to use mechanical seeders. I like to feel the seed in my hand, and place it where I want it. I don't talk while sowing, it's a nice time to be quiet and peaceful. I feel grateful afterward.

I suppose the real climax of the garden is the harvest, but there is a great satisfaction in sowing seed. Faith, hope and love are called forth; faith in the seed and soil, hope for good weather, and love for Mother Earth. We open her up, leave our seed, and let her do her thing with joy.