Version:1.0 StartHTML:0000000181 EndHTML:0000003089 StartFragment:0000002362 EndFragment:0000003053 SourceURL:file://localhost/Users/computer/Desktop/obits/barefootfarmer.doc

I plated a valerian patch yesterday. It felt good to get my hands dirty, cleaning out the chickweed and dead nettle that sprouts up in late winter. I shook the soil off of their thick root systems and loosened the bed deeply with the digging fork.

Sand and compost were then incorporated into the bed. they clay soils we have benefit with the addition of sand, it helps keep them open. Compost goes on everything around here.

A clump of valerian were gently wiggled, and yielded then individual plants. I tucked them into the flower garden about 18” apart. A little water finished the transition to their new home.

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The strong smelling roots indicate valerian’s medical value. Valeo is the Latin word meaning strong, an allusion to its medical uses and the root of the name. A strong sedative is made from valerian roots, but that’s not what I use it for. I make a medicine with the flowers for the compost heaps and the farm.

Valerian sends up a four foot tall stalk with beautiful white flowers tinged with pink. I snip off the florets and grind them in a mortar and pestle. Next, I add four times their volume of water and let it ferment a few weeks. Then it’s strained and stored in a dark bottle, but I leave the lid a little bit loose at first in case it hasn’t finished fermenting.

When I have an abundance of blooms, I make valerian juice. The flowers can be put through a juicer, or ground up in a corona mill and pressed to extract the juice. It has a strong smell and

gets stronger after it sits and ferments. The valerian preparation, either way it's made, store well in the root cellar, surrounded by peat moss.

There are different ways to add the valerian to newly made compost piles. Yesterday I simply poured a small amount in a hole. More frequently I stir a dropperful in a gallon of water for 20 minutes, alternating directions like in stirring the horn manure and horn silica preparations. Then I pour half a gallon into a hole and sprinkle the whole pile with the other half gallon.

If I add it the first way, without diluting it, I then stir and sprinkle the finished compost pile with valerian right before I spread the compost on the fields. Valerian helps the compost with phosphorous, getting it active and into the organic process. Sometimes valerian is stirred and sprayed on fruit blossoms to help ward off a late spring frost, but this did not work when I tried it.

Valerian is a pretty addition to the perennial garden. A dark green rosette over winters, and the flowers in spring are quite showy. It is one of the characteristic plants in old gardens, prized for it's spicy fragrance and proliference of blooms. Although an old world plant, valerian has a place in today's garden, too.