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Nature freely supplies much of what a plant needs to grow in the air(carbon, nitrogen, and oxygen) and water (hydrogen and oxygen). Air often contains sulfer, and rain can provide silicic acid, lead, mercury, and arsenic in the minute quantities plants need. On the other hand, we must till and manure the soil properly to have the right amounts of phosphate, potash, and limestone. The earth also contains trace elements, and plants need all of those things available to them to flourish.

Unlocking and freeing up the earth elements is the job of microbes, and compost is the key. Even if the soil is well fertilized, it is of no use unless the plants have the power to receive the influences the soil contains. Soil bacteria and fungi feed larger microbes, whose life and death releases earth elements they've incorporated into their bodies. Now these elements can be used by the plants. Microbes are propagated in compost.

Variety is the spice of life, and in the compost pile I say the more the merrier. Small amounts of many different ingredients insure a greater diversity of microbes, capable of catalyzing various life processes. Living forces are as important for plants as are substances, and we can use specific herbs, specially prepared to impart to the compost a tendency to that living vitality. This will enable the compost to bring the right vitality to the Earth itself.

Yarrow helps bring sulfer into a good relationship with potash and the other earth elements in the plant. It is a feathery-leafed, white flowered plant found in meadows and along the hay fields, and we encourage its growth because of its beneficial microbes. Medicinally, yarrow stops bleeding and is used to treat bladder infections.

In June we take wildflower hikes and gather the umbrella-shaped bouquets in bushel baskets. With scissors, I clip off the tiny white blossoms. I dried a few gallons and used the rest.

What is present in yarrow is intensely preserved by the process, which takes place between the kidneys and bladder. We can influence our compost pile with a preparation made by enclosing yarrow in a stag's bladder. A small amount of the resulting humus product enlivens the compost so that the earth it is used on can receive what it needs. The bladder gives the yarrow the power to enhance the forces it already possesses, to combine sulfer with the other substances, especially potash.

A buck, with his antenna-like antlers, is a very nervous animal, quite aware of the surrounding environment. When we are nervous we have to pee, we are sensitive to the outer world through our bladder, but not as much as the buck. The bladder is located at the end of a long tube connecting it to the male genitalia.

A hunter recently brought me a stag bladder. I rehydrated the dried yarrow flowers with a tea made from fresh yarrow leaves. Then I stuffed them into the bladder. I couldn't believe how much it held. The bladder kept stretching and I had to brew more tea and soak more flowers. It must have been a big buck, it held a half a gallon of yarrow and was the size of a softball. I sewed it shut with a needle and thread.

I wrapped it in a piece of nylon screen, to keep the birds off, and hung it in the south eave of the barn. The next one I got held about three pints of yarrow. Now I'm blowing them up tying them off, and hanging them to dry. They'll be rehydrated in spring and filled with fresh yarrow flowers. Attention hunters: I need more bladder, but it must be from a buck.

After they hang in the sun a while, I bury them about a foot deep in good, humus rich soil. They are dug up in May, and small amounts are added to all of our compost piles. A year later the compost is spread throughout the gardens, helping our plants get what they need. The biodynamic compost preparations are so simple to make, don't cost anything, and create superb compost. They are substances we can use to insure that microbes and life forces are allowing the elements to work together properly, in the compost, the soil, the plants and animals, and eventually in us.