



Anthroposophical Society PORTLAND BRANCH

Newsletter

Special Summer Weeding Edition 2020

From the Editor:

Normally the newsletter team takes a hiatus in July, but this year is anything but normal. There is a restaurant I enjoy in Corvallis named *Nearly Normal's*; their philosophy is "growth through challenge." Such an ideal creates a mood of collaboration where the guest feels a warm bond with the host. They call it 'gonzo cuisine.' Gonzo became part of the lexicon through the writing of Hunter S. Thompson with a style of journalism marked by a seeming lack of objectivity due to the writer's immersion in the subject and participation in the activity being documented.

In this time of pervasive fear and doubt objectivity is a challenge to characterize. Science, the realm where pride in objectivity is greatest, is anything but. Today, especially on the themes of viruses and vaccines, but also global warming, the concept of "the sanctity of science" is the battle cry. Maybe it's the sanctimonious scientist not science that is the culprit. The threefold division of the human soul into Science, Art and Religion, or Truth, Beauty and Goodness, is more fractured than ever. We need a gonzo science, but also a gonzo art and religion.

In such a cafe as *Nearly Normal's*, weeding becomes a vital part of the cuisine. With their collaborative quality "weeds" will inevitably pop up. The capacity to recognize what the weed is indicating points to the solution, not simply pulling it off the menu or rearranging the tables. This is where weeding or winnowing becomes an art.

All the above is akin to how weedy the social garden has gotten over the past months. Sandra Burch, a writer on our team, felt we could not take time off just as the weeds are most intensive, literally too. Thus we are putting out this little special edition on the theme, call it our *Weeding Edition*. I have taken the opportunity to also spread some aphorisms and poems on the theme. Thank you Sandra for keeping us stooping when the tendency is to soar.

For this special edition *The Calendar of the Soul* will be a sampling of Owen Barfield's translation and paraphrasing for the English ear. Let us know what you think of it.

~ Christopher Guilfoil, Editor

Urban Biodynamic Gardening with Sandra Burch

Weeds: Messengers in Disguise

What else is there to talk about in July? Weeds win. My introduction to gardening was weeds. My mother would send us kids out to the garden when she could no longer see the vegetable plants. The weeds would have overtaken them. We had to pull weeds for what seemed like an eternity, and yes the sun was hot! It has taken me almost four decades to get past the dislike, disconnect and avoidance and find ways to weed weeds that work for me. Here is how I finally managed to settle down and become someone who actually likes to deal with weeds.

These words, written by Ehrenfried Pfeiffer helped me: "Weeds want to tell a story, - they are nature's means of teaching man."



Well, I had not been listening.

Ehrenfried Pfeiffer in his book: *"Weeds and What They Tell"* gave me a whole new perspective. He tells us "that weeds may be grouped according to their peculiarities, into three major groups, and they teach us by indicating through their mere presence and multiplication what is wrong." First group: weeds that live in acid soil. Sorrels and Docks are two of these. The second group grows where there is a hard crust formation in or on the soil. Morning glory and quack grass are in this group. And the Third category: "weeds that follow in human

steps and cultivation, frequently spreading out with compost, manure and wherever man 'walks'". Lamb's quarters, dandelion, pigweed, and plantain are a few in this third grouping. I totally recommend this book. Pfeiffer goes on to tell of minor groups of weeds too. These show: sandy soil, alkalinity, too much potassium or an absence of lime, or too much lime and many other conditions. Weeds really can be a way of learning what our soil is asking for. Pfeiffer is able to interpret the message a weed brings us and gives specific suggestions for when to pull a weed and even what weeds might be useful in a compost pile - perhaps to increase the potassium content. He packs lots of info in less than 100 pages.

Long live the weeds that overwhelm
My narrow vegetable realm!
The bitter rock, the barren soil
That force the son of man to toil;
All things unholy, marred by curse,
The ugly of the universe.

- Theodore Roethke, *Long Live the Weeds*

As an aside: who is this gentleman with the interesting name - Ehrenfried Pfeiffer? Number five on the list titled: *The Origins of Biodynamic Farming: Six Things You Probably Didn't Know is:* It was Ehrenfried Pfeiffer who introduced biodynamics to the world. While Steiner is well known as the instigator of biodynamic farming, Dr Ehrenfried Pfeiffer doesn't get the credit he deserves. After the Steiner Agriculture lectures there was a gestation period of 14 years while his experimental circle worked on the details. Biodynamics was released to the world in Pfeiffer's book *Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening*, published in 1938. Pfeiffer moved to the USA in the 1940s, and carried on his work here. ... 'Pfeiffer alone took BD public.'

Check out the complete list here: wineanorak.com/2020/05/11/biodynamic-farming-seven-things-you-probably-didnt-know/

In my garden this year most of the weeds have come from my very generous cultivated plants: borage and buckwheat mainly. Of course, there are dandelions too. I decided that while carefully thinning radishes I would also pull all the edible weeds and make myself a microgreen salad. It worked: I got a bowlful of greens while weeding my garden.

And here's another idea: power weeding. Just decide how much time you can spend pulling weeds each day and then do it. 15 minutes a day adds up to almost two hours in one week. And it's a great will-strengthening exercise.

As the situation in our nation and world becomes more fraught with difficulty and discord daily, I find myself glad to have the simple task of pulling, hoeing and digging weeds. It does me good to have something I can do. It is clear what needs to happen and I can see the positive results immediately.

In a biodynamic enterprise, whether a farm or backyard garden, one of the principles to keep in mind is that we want to: "create a farm system

"What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Fortune of the Republic*

that is minimally dependent on imported materials, and instead meets its needs from the living dynamics of the farm itself. It is the biodiversity of the farm, organized so that the waste of one part of the farm becomes the energy for another, that results in an increase in the farm's capacity for self-renewal and ultimately makes the farm sustainable." from: demeter-usa.org/learn-more/biodynamic-principles-practices.asp This self-sustaining capacity is harder to make happen on a city balcony. And yet, this is another place where weeds can help us. In a full system garden, weeds are included. They actually help us: as messengers, as ornery meditation masters and also as fertilizers. Think of how many of the preps used to build an amazing compost pile are made of what we often might consider weeds: yarrow, horsetail, nettles and dandelion. More on compost piles coming soon. Start saving your scraps.

Peter Proctor in "Grasp the Nettle" gives two helpful guidelines: Hoe early in the morning when dew can be incorporated into the soil. And most importantly: Hoe before you need to hoe. And if you want to get fancy: Cultivate the soil (with a hoe or garden rake) lightly at the time when the moon is in the constellation of Leo. This encourages growth

of all seedling plants. As weed seeds germinate, lightly hoe them off. Those weeds are goners and it just took a little focus and minimal effort. As you cultivate the soil, you bring in influences from the cosmos. "Hoe before you need to hoe," that says it all. Don't put off weeding, do it before it even needs to be done.

If you are wanting a way to deal with weeds, by taking a broader action, Charles Walters tells us: "the simplest way to start weed control is to adjust the pH of the soil. Weeds are an index of what is wrong with the soil" Now, that is another whole project, figuring out what is needed to change the pH of the soil. Just keep it in mind for now.

And yet another gift that weeds give us: you can get a lot of mental work done while weeding. You can work through whatever is on your mind, or at least work it over. Maybe even finding a solution while mulling the thorny issue over.

In weeding, you can also engage with helpful nature spirits who are glad for your presence and attention. Or would you rather engage the elementals that come from binge watching the next alluring series on Netflix? You do have a choice. What will you choose?

One more idea, I am calling it the walk away weed technique. After you think you are all done weeding a patch of garden, walk away from the plot and then come back, but look at the garden sideways, or with your peripheral vision. It is pretty much guaranteed that you have missed a few weeds. I think they go invisible while I am crouched down, in active weeding mode. It is a game of hide and seek. Some of the most vigorous weeds seem to elude my perceptions when I am only inches away from them. The 'walk away' tricks them. Aha! I found you. Yank, there goes another weed!

From another perspective, so as to enlarge our picture of gardening. We know that there are a lot of challenging events happening in our city, nation and world. Weeds can help us to practice our stance in relation to the unskillfulness and difficulties we see in the world. Rudolf Steiner gives us a radical way of confronting these types of imperfections (or



evils). We can ask ourselves: "How can I attain to the enlightenment which will show me that on a higher plane this evil is transformed into good by the wisdom of the cosmos? How can I learn to tell myself: here you see naught but imperfection because you are as yet unable to grasp the perfection of this imperfect thing? Whenever man sees evil he should look into his own soul and ask himself, why am I not yet able to recognize the good in this evil that confronts me?" – page 95, "Gospel of St. John in Relation to the Other Gospels," by Rudolf Steiner. So, we can ask, in relation to any event, as we also may ask when we come upon a weed: "Can I see why this is given to me, why is this unpleasant 'weed' in my way?"

I wish for you many hours of weeding, of all sorts, in this summer season.

"We plant seeds that will flower as results in our lives, so best to remove the weeds of anger, avarice, envy and doubt, that peace and abundance may manifest for all."

~ Dorothy Day

RECIPE

Warm Dandelion Greens with Roasted Garlic Dressing

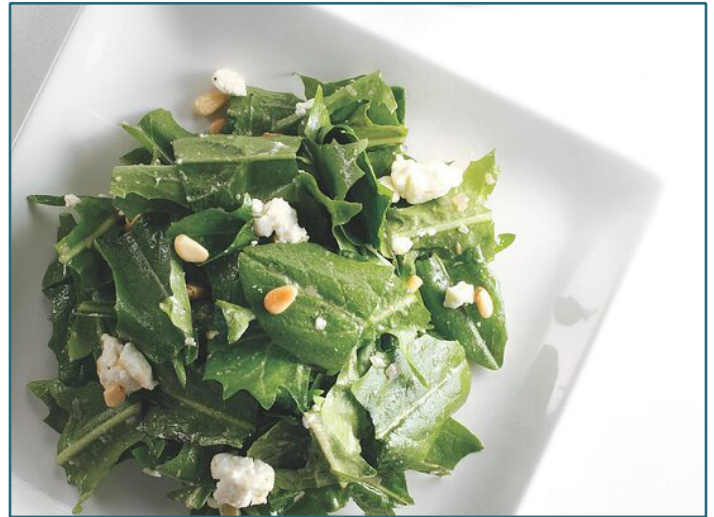
INGREDIENTS

Roasted Garlic Dressing

- 1 large head garlic, roasted
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar or red-wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 1/8 teaspoon salt

Salad

- 1 medium shallot, finely chopped
- Freshly ground pepper to taste
- 1/4 cup pine nuts, toasted (see Tip)



- 2 ounces goat cheese, crumbled
- 6 cups bite-size pieces dandelion greens or spinach (about 1 bunch), tough stems removed
- Freshly ground pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS CHECKLIST

Step 1

To prepare dressing: Squeeze roasted garlic pulp into a blender or food processor (discard the skins). Add oil, vinegar, lime juice, salt and pepper and blend or process until smooth.

Step 2

To prepare salad: Transfer the dressing to a small saucepan and place over medium heat until warm, 1 to 2 minutes. Add shallot and simmer until the shallot is softened, 3 to 5 minutes.

Step 3

Place dandelion greens in a large salad bowl. Pour the warm dressing over the greens and toss until they are wilted and coated. Add pine nuts and goat cheese and toss again, slightly melting the cheese with the warm greens. Season with pepper.

Tips

How To Roast Garlic

Rub off the excess papery skin from 1 large head of garlic without separating the cloves. Slice the tip off the head, exposing the ends of the cloves. Place the garlic on a piece of foil, drizzle with 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil and wrap into a package. Bake at 400°F in a small baking dish until the garlic is very soft, 40 minutes to 1 hour. Unwrap and let cool slightly before using.

Tip: To toast chopped, small or sliced nuts, cook in a small dry skillet over medium-low heat, stirring constantly, until fragrant and lightly browned, 2 to 4 minutes.

Enjoy the bounty of weeding!

Calendar of the Soul

Week 13

Now that my senses are at home on high
I hear my soul re-echo from her depths
a fiery message from the gods:
'Welcome the hint, seek thine own deep relation
to Spirit in the Spirit's own foundations.'

Week 14

Captive to all the pageantry of sense
I lost the pressure of my single being;
thoughts like to dreams
were spiring myself away, it seems;
now – now in what the senses make appear
the Thinking of the World itself draws near.

Week 15

I feel the Spirit weave
trance-charmed in the world's array;
in drowsiness of sense
in muffled my sole self
to tender me the strength
myself I am too poor to furnish forth
helpless within these narrow bounds.

Week 16

A hint of warning: harbor well
the Spirit's bounty, gifts from gods
are there to ripen, there to swell
earthed in the soul and, fructifying, bring
the fruits of Self to light.

Translated and Paraphrased for an English Ear
by Owen Barfield

The Portland Branch Newsletter is published monthly to serve Branch members and friends. To learn more about the Portland Branch of the Anthroposophical Society, contact Diane Ramage at 971-271-7479.

To submit an article or a calendar item email it to Christopher Guilfoil: c.guilfoil@gmail.com. The deadline for submissions is the 15th of the month preceding publication. Items selected for publication may be edited for style, content and length.

To sign up for our newsletter/email list go to:

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The newsletter and calendar are posted on the Branch website, www.portlandanthroposophy.org. Paper copies are available at the Pohala and Healthbridge Clinics; and the Cedarwood, Michael, Portland and Swallowtail Waldorf Schools.

Our current newsletter team: Editor, design, layout, and illustrations: Christopher Guilfoil; Editing and proofreading Wes Burch; Calendar: Jeremy Davis; Printing and distribution: Jerry Soloway; Webmaster Angelica Hesse; Treasurer: Ruth Klein

The Portland Branch thanks the following Members & Friends for their Dues and Generous Donations in 2020:

Virginia Berg, Diane Bolduc, Wes Burch, Sandra Burch, Jeremy Davis, Stacy Durych, Amanda Eastman, Sara Genta, Deborah Ham, Valerie Hope, Mark Hope, Marsha Johnson, Lauren Johnson, Tish Johnson, Lisa Jones, Donna Patterson Kellum, Bob Kellum, Tom Klein, Ruth Klein, Timothy Kennedy, James Knight, Anne Kollender, Martin Levin, Judith Levin, Robin Lieberman, Patricia Lynch, Lisa Masterson, Brian McClure, Jennifer McNeal, Cheri Munske, Padeen Quinn, Robin O'Brien, Nancy Peirce, Jeff Rice, Walter Rice, Susan Rice, Diane Ramage, Rebecca Soloway, Jerry Soloway, Linda Sussman, Elizabeth Webber, Brian Wickert

Your 2020 dues will be gratefully received:

Thank you for helping to make our lively community life possible. A typical contribution is \$50, but no amount is too large or too small. You can send a check to The Portland Branch, c/o Ruth Klein, 12286 SE 41st Court, Milwaukie, OR 97222. Or you can donate online at portlandbranch.org.

You can also make your contribution online, by clicking 'pay here' toward the bottom of the right-hand column on the home page of our website, portlandbranch.org.

We would like to gratefully acknowledge the following who generously provide spaces for our many activities: Dr. Joan and John Takacs for their long-standing donation of Bothmer Hall; the Portland Waldorf School; and the Cedarwood School.

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