

Discussion 2

15th June, 1924.

QUESTION: In speaking of the bladder of a wild deer do you mean that of the male deer (stag)?

ANSWER: Yes I meant the male deer.

QUESTION: Did you mean the annual or the perennial nettle?

ANSWER; Urtica dioica.

QUESTION: Is it advisable to roof in the manure yard in districts where there is a great deal of rain?

ANSWER: The manure should be able to stand the normal amount of rain. On the other hand, to be completely without rain does it no good, and to be soaked in it is equally harmful. One cannot make any general pronouncement on this matter. On the whole rainwater is good for the manure.

QUESTION: Should one not have roofed-in sheds for manure in order not to lose the liquid manure?

ANSWER: In a certain sense rainwater is necessary to the manure. It might possibly be good to keep the rain off by spreading peat-moss over it. But there is no object in keeping the rain off completely. The manure would only suffer.

QUESTION: Does this method of manuring stimulate the growth of useful plants and of weeds to the same degree, and must special methods be adopted to destroy the weeds?

ANSWER: This question is a very reasonable one. I shall be speaking of weeds and ways of attacking them during the next few days. The method of manuring I have described is favourable to plant growth in general and will not help to remove weeds. But the plants that have benefited by it are better able to resist parasites and pests, being supplied, as it were, with a remedy against them. Weed control has not been covered by what we have been discussing so far. The weed shares in the general growth of plants. We shall have more to say about this later. All these things are so connected that it is not good to take any one of them separately.

QUESTION: What is your view of Captain Krantz's method? By piling up the manure in loose layers and thus causing it to produce its own warmth he has succeeded in making it odourless.

ANSWER: I have purposely abstained from speaking of methods which have been developed on rational lines. I preferred to relate what Spiritual Science can give as an improvement of such methods. The method you mention certainly has a great many advantages. But it is relatively new, it has not been tried for long, and I think one may suspect that it is one of those methods which are a great success at first, but which in the course of time are found to be not so practical as had been expected. At firsts while the soil still has its "tradition" so to speak, anything can serve to freshen it up. But if you go on too long, the same thing happens as with medical remedies. Any remedy, even the most unlikely, may help the first time it enters an organism; but after a time it ceases to work. With such a method also it takes some time before one discovers that it does not work so well as one had originally believed it would. The important thing is the generation of heat in the manure, for the activity thus called into play is highly beneficial to the manure. The loose piling up of the manure may prove a drawback to the method, and - well; I am not convinced that it really loses its smell. If it does it would be a good system. But the method has not been tried out over a period of many years.

QUESTION: Is it not better to store the manure above ground rather than sink it into the earth?

ANSWER: In principle it is right that the manure heap should be placed as high as possible. But the place chosen should not be too high, because the manure must remain in the appropriate relation to the forces that are under the earth. The manure should not be placed on a hillock; but if it be piled up at the earth-level, that will be the most satisfactory position.

QUESTION: Can the same compost methods be applied to the vine which has suffered so much recently?

ANSWER: It can, with a few modifications. When I come to speak of fruit and vine cultivation I shall mention these. But what I have said today holds good in general as an improvement of any kind of manuring. I shall deal later on with the special cases of meadow, pasture, or cereals and fruit and vine cultivation.

QUESTION: Should the foundation of the manure heap be paved?

- ANSWER: If we go by what we know of the whole structure of the earth and of its relation to manure, we do mischief if we pave the manure area. If we do so we ought really to limit the paving to a ring outside the manure area, so as to allow for the interaction between the earth and the manure. We spoil the manure if we separate it from the earth.

QUESTION: Does it make any difference whether the soil underneath is sand or clay? Often people put a ground layer of clay where the manure is to be, so as to make the ground impervious.

ANSWER: It is quite true that different kinds of soil have a definite influence which proceeds from the particular qualities of the soil in question. A sandy soil does not retain water; it is therefore necessary to put some clay with it before laying the manure on it. If, on the other hand, you have a clay soil, you should break it up and strew sand over it. A middle course would be to have alternate layers of sand and clay. Then you ,

have the earth consistency as well as the "watery influences. Without this combination of the two kinds of soil the water will percolate away. For the same reason, loose soil should certainly not be used as a foundation for the manure heap as it would have no value for the manure placed over it; in this case it is better to make your own foundation.

QUESTION: With regard to the growing of the remedial plants you have mentioned, is it possible to introduce a plant into a district where it did not previously grow, simply by sowing? In cattle-farming the Greenland Society have generally supposed that yarrow and dandelion were dangerous to cattle and the Society do their best to keep their pasture land free from them. We are engaged upon this very task at the moment. And the same with the thistle. Should we now sow them round our arable fields but not on our meadows and pasture land?

ANSWER: (Question by Dr. Steiner) Well - in that way did you suppose these plants to be harmful to cattle?

ANSWER: (Count Keyserlingk): Yarrow is said to contain poisonous substances, and dandelion to be unsuitable for cattle food.

ANSWER: (Dr. Steiner): This should be watched. In the open field you will not find an animal eating what is harmful.

COUNT LERCHENFELD: With us the reverse is the case. The dandelion is looked upon as an excellent milk producer.

ANSWER: These views are very often only the prevailing opinions and nothing more. Nobody knows whether they have been tried out. It is possible for there to be something harmful among the hay, but I believe that in that case the animal would leave the hay untouched. An animal will not eat what is not good for it.

QUESTION: Has not yarrow been largely removed by large doses of lime? It surely requires a moist and acid soil?

ANSWER: If you want to have yarrow growing wild then a very small quantity properly spread out will suffice for a large farm. This is the sort of homeopathic use I meant. If we had a little yarrow growing wild in the garden here there would be enough for the whole estate.

QUESTION: I have noticed that on my meadows the cattle enjoy eating the dandelion shortly before it flowers, but cease taking it once it had begun to flower.

ANSWER: You must remember the following: this is the general rule. You must remember that an animal has an exceptionally fine instinct for what is good for it and may be trusted not, to eat dandelions if they will do it harm. There is also another thing to remember. When preparing a product for a particular purpose we often use an ingredient which we would not eat by itself. For example, we use yeast to bake our bread for daily consumption. But no one would dream of eating yeast every day. What can even act as a poison when consumed in large doses can in other circumstances have the most beneficial effects. After all, medicines are usually poisonous. The important thing is the process not the substance. I think we may take it that the view that dandelions are harmful to animals can readily be dismissed. These contradictory opinions are strange. It is a curious thing to hear emphasis being laid upon the harmfulness of the dandelion when at the same time Count Lerchenfeld talks of it as the best promoter of milk to be found. In districts lying so close to one another, the effects cannot be so very different. One of the two conflicting views must be wrong.

QUESTION: Perhaps the sub-soil is the decisive factor. My statement, was based on veterinary observations. Should one then deliberately plant yarrow and dandelion in meadow and pasture land?

ANSWER: Quite a small area is sufficient.

QUESTION: Does it depend upon how long the preparations should be kept with the manure after they have been taken out of the earth?

ANSWER: Once they are mixed with the manure it is meaningless to ask how long they should be kept with it. But it should all have been done before the manure is spread on the fields.

QUESTION: Should the various manure preparations (in cow-horn, "sausage" etc.) be buried together, or each separately?

ANSWER: A certain importance attaches to this because one preparation should not disturb the other while this reciprocal action is going on. If I were working a small farm, I should look for the most widely separated points on its boundaries and bury the preparations at the greatest possible distances from each other in order to prevent any one of them disturbing the other. On a large estate, you can quite easily choose suitable sites.

QUESTION: Can the earth above the buried preparations be allowed to grow anything?

ANSWER: The earth can do what it likes. As a matter of fact it is quite a good thing for something, even cultivated plants, to be grown on the covering earth.

QUESTION: How should the preparations be administered to a manure heap?

ANSWER: I recommend the following procedure: where the manure heap is a large one, bore a hole about ten inches deep into it and place the preparation inside it so that the manure closes around it. The exact measurement does not matter. The important thing is that the preparation should be completely shut in by

the manure. The whole thing depends upon radiation (see Diag. 20). If this is the manure heap and this is a little of the preparation, then the radiations go so. If it is too near the surface, it will not be so good. At the surface the streams of force are deflected and take on a particular curve. They do not leave the heap. A depth of 20 inches will do. If it is too near to the surface it will lose a considerable part of the rays of force.

QUESTION: Should the holes be made close together at one place, or should they be evenly spaced around the heap?

ANSWER: It is better to space them out, not to make all the holes in one place. Otherwise the streams of force disturb each other.

QUESTION: Should all the preparations be put into the manure heap at the same time?

ANSWER: When the preparations are being put into a manure heap they can be placed side by side. They do not influence each other, but only the manure as such.

QUESTION: Can the preparations all be put into one hole?

ANSWER: Theoretically it ought to be possible to do this without their disturbing each other. I could not, however, guarantee beforehand that no disturbance would take place. I would therefore suggest that the preparations be placed in proximity to each other but not actually in one hole.

QUESTION: What kind of oak had you in mind?

ANSWER: Quercus robur.

QUESTION: Should the bark used be taken from a living tree or from one that has been cut down?

ANSWER: If possible from a living tree, and even from one in which the resin may be presumed to be still fairly active.

QUESTION: Should the whole of the bark be used?

ANSWER: Actually only the upper layer, the part which crumbles as one picks it off.

QUESTION: In burying the manure preparations should one go no deeper than the cultivated spit or should the cow-horns be buried deeper?

ANSWER: It is best to leave them in the cultivated spit. There is even reason to think that if put into the sub-soil the material would not be so fruitful. It must also be considered that should the cultivated spit extend further down than is usual, that would provide the best possible conditions. Look, therefore, for a place where the cultivated depth is as thick as possible, but remember that below it no useful effect can arise.

QUESTION: In the cultivated spit the preparation would always be exposed to frost. Would this do any harm?

ANSWER: The time when it was exposed to frost would be the time when the earth was exposed through this very frost, to the most powerful cosmic influences.

QUESTION: How does one grind quartz and silica? In a small hand-mill, or in a mortar?

ANSWER: The best method is first to grind it to a fine powder in an iron mortar and you will need too an iron pestle. In the case of quartz the process must be continued on a glass surface. For the powder must be very fine, and this is difficult to obtain with quartz.

QUESTION: The experience of farmers shows that when a beast is well fed the substances which were lacking in its body increase. There must therefore be a relation between feeding and the intake of nourishment out of the atmosphere.

ANSWER: Remember what I said. I said: The essential thing about nourishment is that forces should be developed in the body. Whether the animal develops enough forces to enable it to take in and transform the substances in the atmosphere depends upon whether it absorbs its food in the right way. To make a comparison. If you want to put on a close-fitting glove you don't do it by squeezing your fingers into it. You first enlarge the glove with a stretcher. In the same way we must bring elasticity into those forces which are to take out of the atmosphere what is not produced by food. Through the food the organism is stretched and thereby enabled to take in more of what it needs from the atmosphere. This may even lead to hypertrophy if too much food is taken in. This has to be paid for by a shortened life span. The middle course must be found between the maximum and minimum.