

# **Guidelines for undertaking an ongoing phenomenological process of studying natural phenomena such as plants**

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## **Initial impression –**

- Allow yourself to be touched by something in the world and want to enter into a conversation with it.
- How and where does it grow?
- How does it place itself in the environment?
- Be gentle in the first stages of 'getting to know'.
- Pay attention to your first impressions, note them down but don't get attached to them.
- Sketch or record in some way to ground your impressions.
- Keep an open attentiveness in your sensing.
- Experience the qualities without conceptualization.
- See things freshly, or 'new', even the 1000th time (such as Thoreau).

## **Inner Picturing (Exact sensorial Imagination) –**

- Re-member your observations in your mind as concretely and intensely as possible.
- Enter into whatever the encounter meant for you, feeling your way back through it internally.
- After the encounter, the plant is no longer with us, but some of it remains in our memory, so notice what that is for you.
- Notice what you can't remember, and revisit those parts on your next observation.

## **Go into detail –**

- Let yourself be led by the phenomenon.
- Use your tools as a sensing human being to open up to what the phenomenon has to offer.
- Adapt yourself to what the phenomenon requires of you.
- Note physical form and qualities.
- Keep holding back from conceptual frameworks, or if you use it, make it conscious.
- Describe in detail what you see.
- Acknowledge that there is detail to be taken in, every visit, more than initially meets the eye.
- Remember that the process is not about what you do, but what is there in front of you.
- You are not trying to explain anything, just observe and participate.
- "Let the thing speak" Goethe
- Your understanding grows in conversation with the phenomenon, so keep at it.

## **Inner re-picturing (Exact sensorial imagination) –**

- When you just go into detail you enter a realm of form, pattern and relationship but you could forget that this is a dynamic, developing being. So repeating the exact sensorial imagination after every stage builds a living picture of the phenomenon inside you. Already

in the plant's completed form in a sense of time, process and life, so allow this to develop when you re-imagine the plant in your mind.

- Re-member, re-create and re-form.
- This is an inner corrective and a way of connecting deeply with the impressions that the world has left within you. In entering into the memory we are participating with the phenomenon with an inward activity, rather than the outward activity of observation. The process allows us to become aware of our own activity.

### **Realising the Pattern –**

- After re-visiting the phenomenon over several occasions, patterns within the phenomenon may begin to become apparent to you.
- Patterns of form, quality, detail, or some repeated essence that feels essential to the phenomenon.
- Through entering into form and movement, we participate in the living process and so details reveal themselves that may not be able in the first instance.
- Through a process of continued conversation, outer observation and inner re-picturing, realizations of patterns, wholeness and connections have the potential to emerge, but this does take time, and commitment to the process of delicate empiricism that is required for phenomenological inquiries.

### **Comparing and Contrasting –**

- By comparing and contrasting phenomena, they illuminate each other.
- For instance compare a plant in a sunny paddock with one growing in shaded woodland.
- Notice the relationships of gesture and form within the particular context of each plant
- Sometimes you can get stuck in the conversation of the inquiry, so comparison can help you to become unstuck and reveal new aspects to the phenomenon
- Let one phenomenon illuminate the other, entering into one perspective to understand the other
- Enter into a way of being that allows for a distinguishing process to arrive, if you compare something fairly close you will have more details to compare. (For example, two of the same plant in different growing conditions, rather than a plant and a cat).
- If you pay attention there is always something new and fresh that breaks through any preconceptions.

### **There is no end....**

The beauty and mystery of the natural phenomena surrounding us is such that as much as we may try, whether through phenomenology, or mechanistic experimentation, they may never fully become known and there will forever be something more, something deeper, left for us still to get to know.