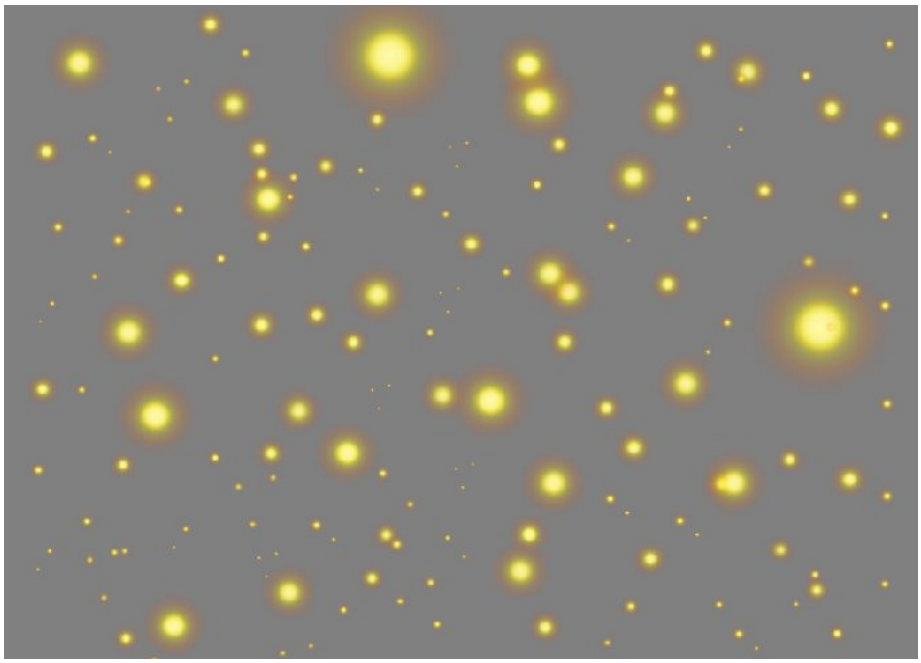
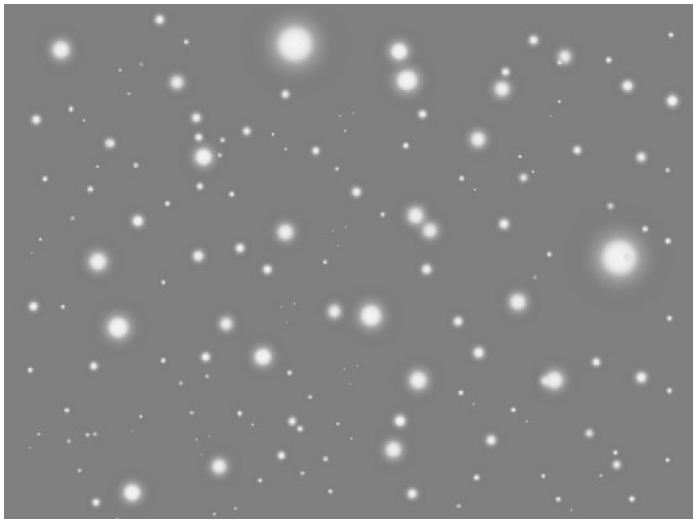
How to make bubbles from the sparks brush.

Open a new image, in this case 800 x 600 px and fill it with grey (808080).
Pick up your sparks brush, make it pretty big, (this largely depends on the size of your image.) slide the spacing all the way over to the right. This will let you paint but the sparks don't stick together so much. Experiment for different coverage. Vary brush size for effervescence.

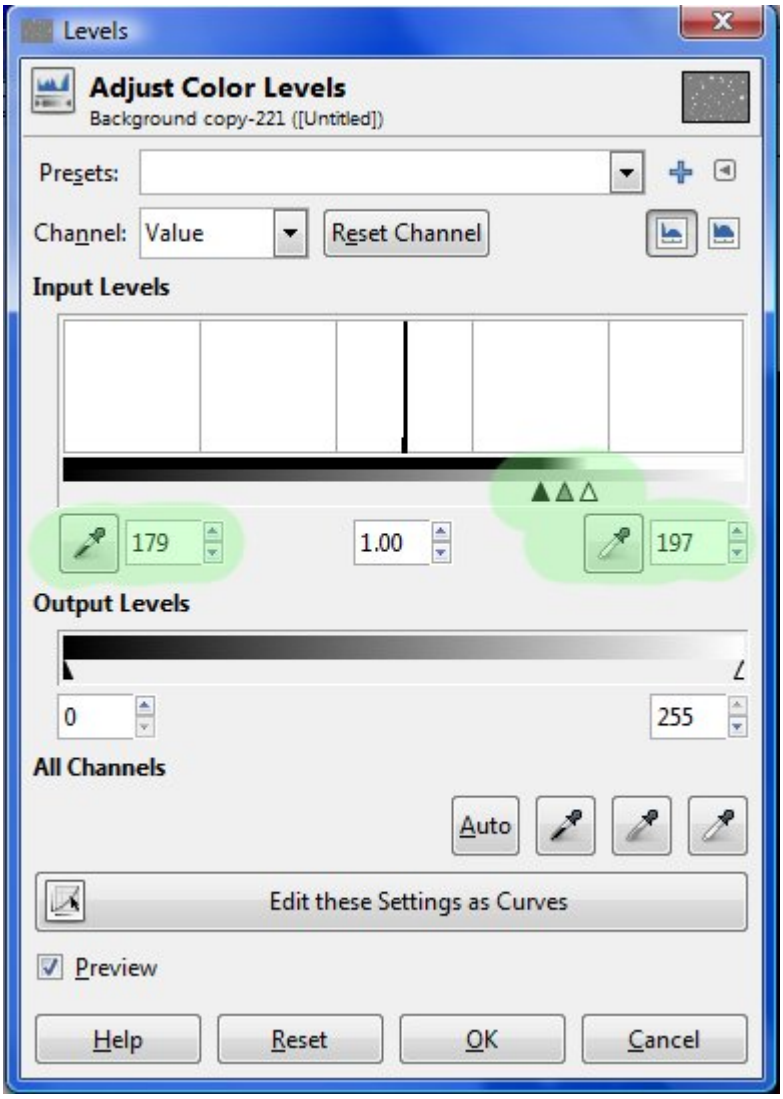


You image should look something like this now. More sparks means more bubbles, less sparks, less bubbles. Use your best judgment on coverage.

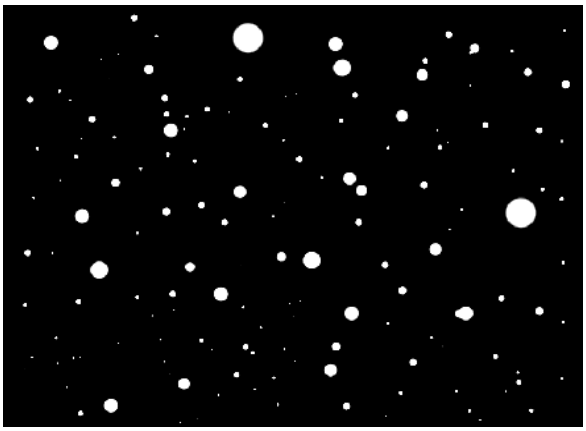
Now desaturate this layer at the luminosity setting.



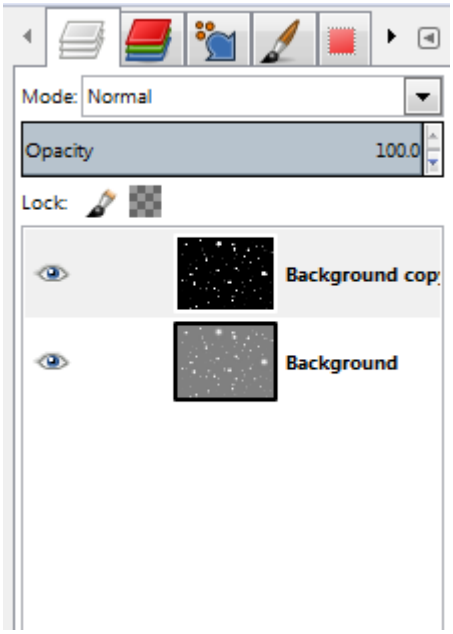
Duplicate this layer and on this new layer adjust the levels until you have a kind of polka dot thing going on. Use these settings or experiment with your own. The important part is to get some nice round white shapes without having the edges become too ragged.



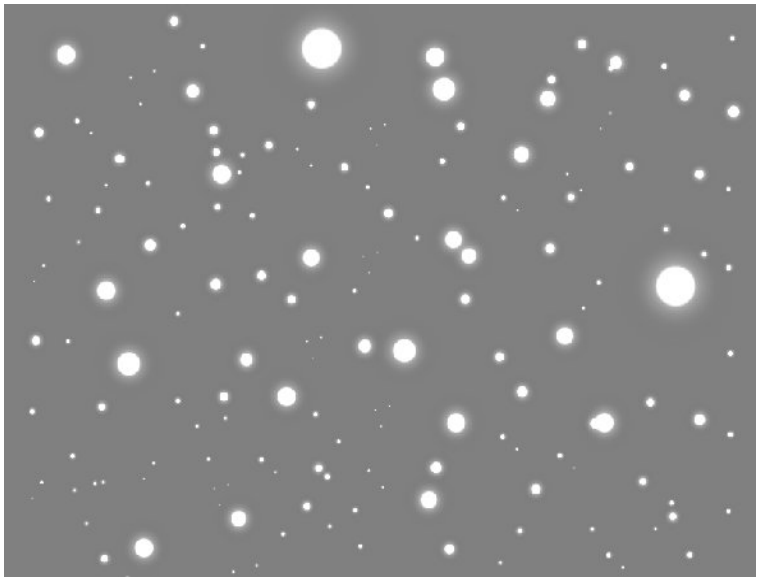
Your layer should look like this now.



These are your layers so far.

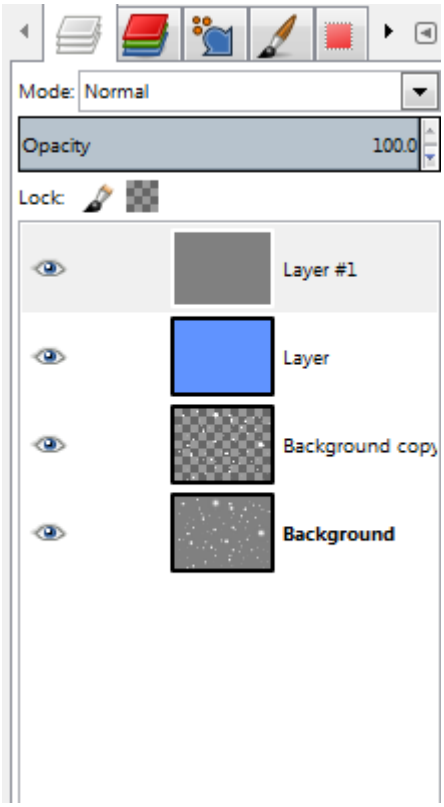


On this same crisp white dots layer, we're going to remove the black with color to alpha, leaving behind only the white dots.

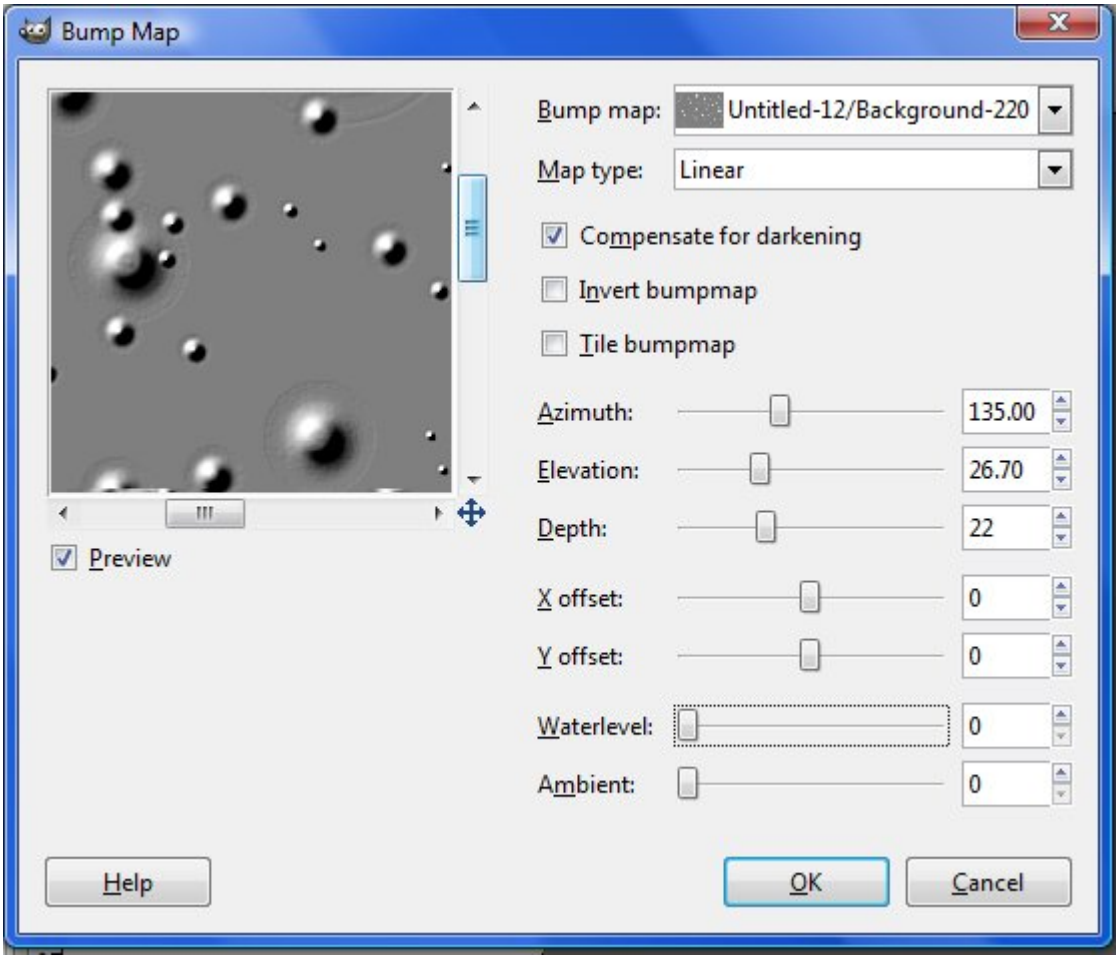


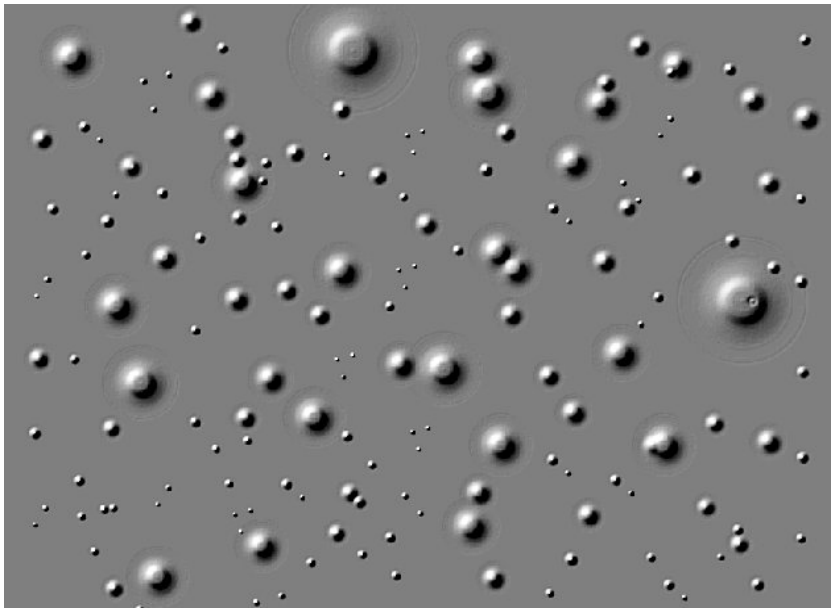
So far so good. Make a new layer and fill it with a bluish color. I used 6093ff. And another layer on top, fill it with that same grey again. 808080.

You should have this many layers in this arrangement now.

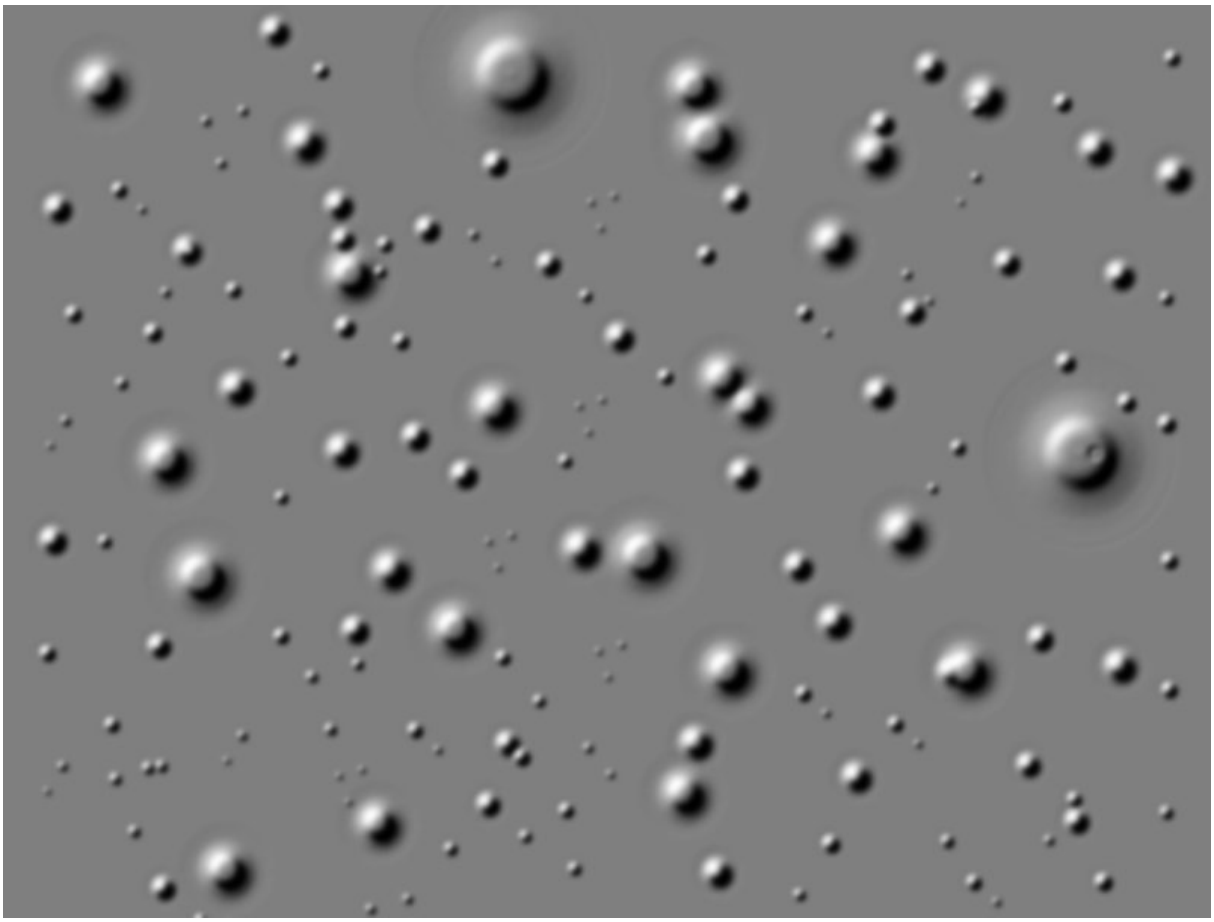


Now comes the fun part. Bump Map the top grey layer with the bottom soft grey bubbles one. You should get some bubble shapes to appear now looking something like this.

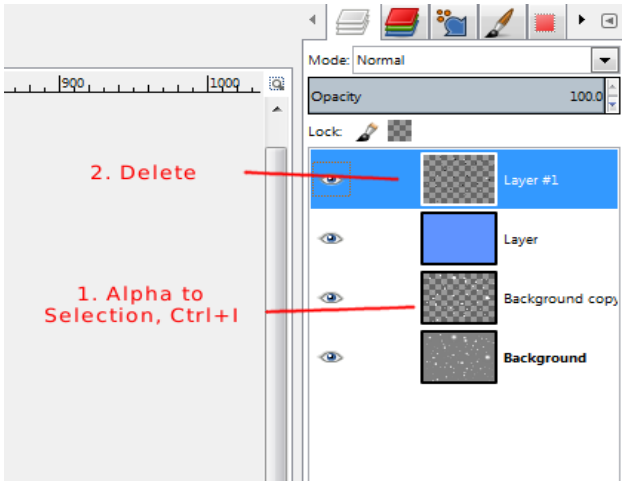




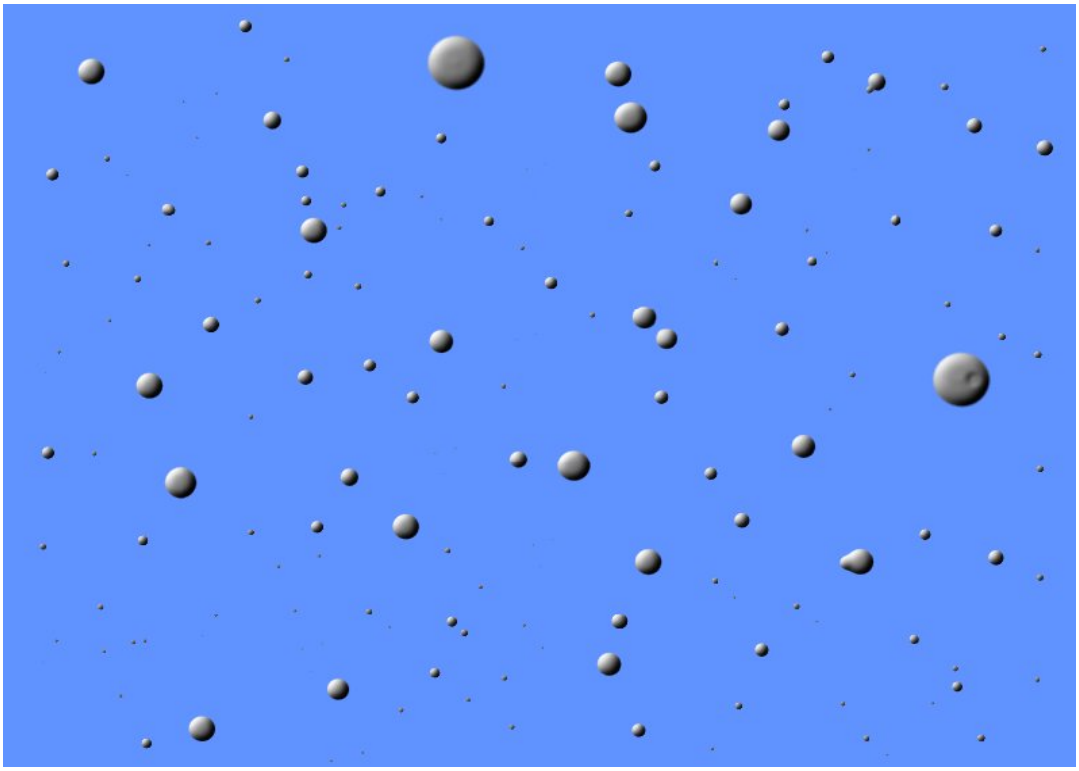
You will notice some of the bigger bubbles have some ugly traces around them and a slight gaussian blur of 1 or 2 should remove them. Look at the preview and use the lowest setting of gaussian blur that makes the lines disappear. Very subtle. In this case the default 5 setting will probably be just about enough. Use your best judgment there. You'll notice this softened the overall appearance of the bubbles and that's kind of exactly what we want.



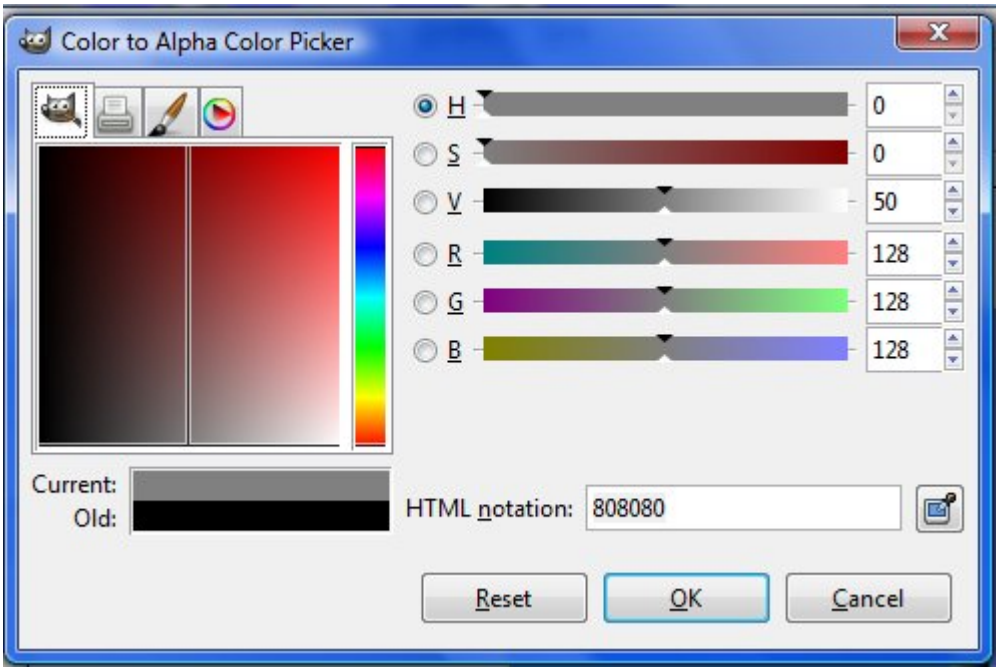
Now go to your sharp white circles layer and do alpha to selection, invert the selection (Ctrl+I) and back on the top grey bubble layer, delete the excess grey background.

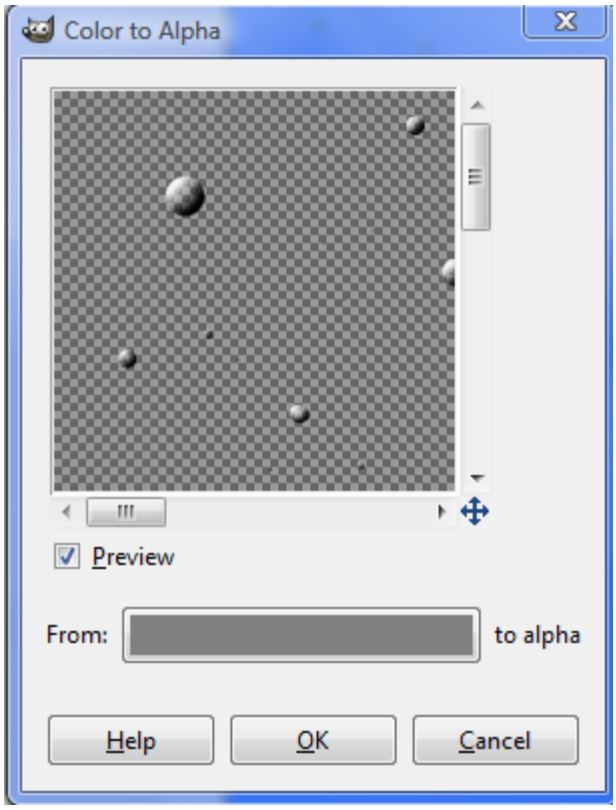


Your image should look like this now.

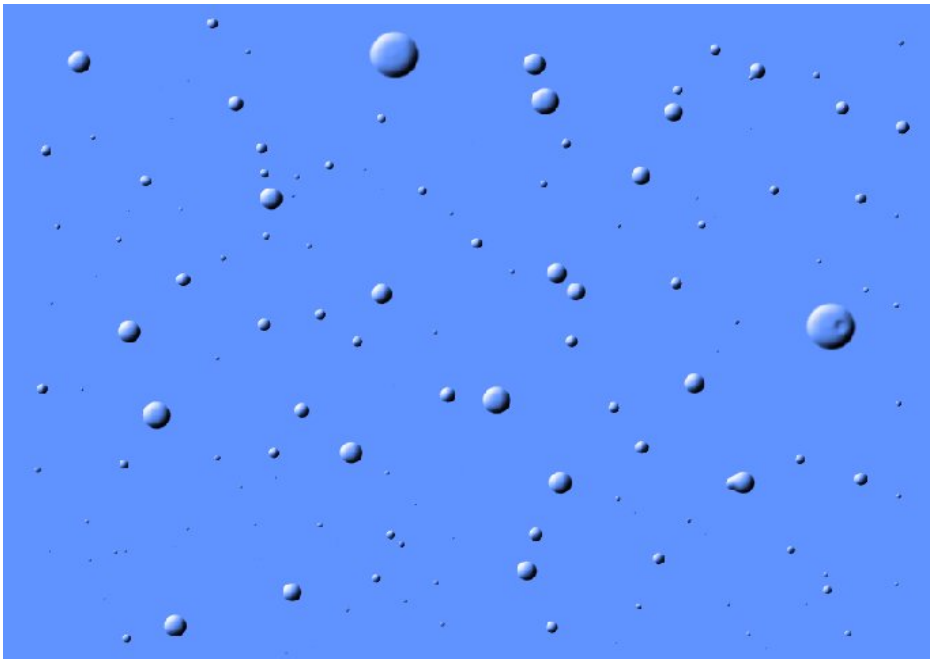


Still on this top layer, go to Color to Alpha and click on the big color bar. In the HTML notation field type 808080. this will set it to remove all the midtone greys.

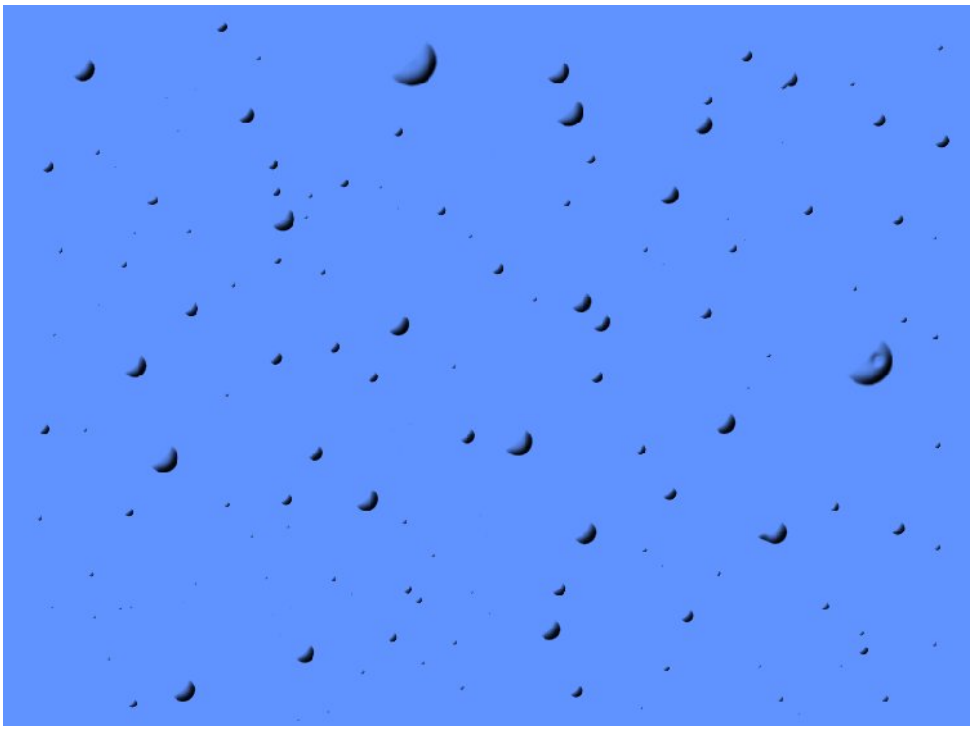


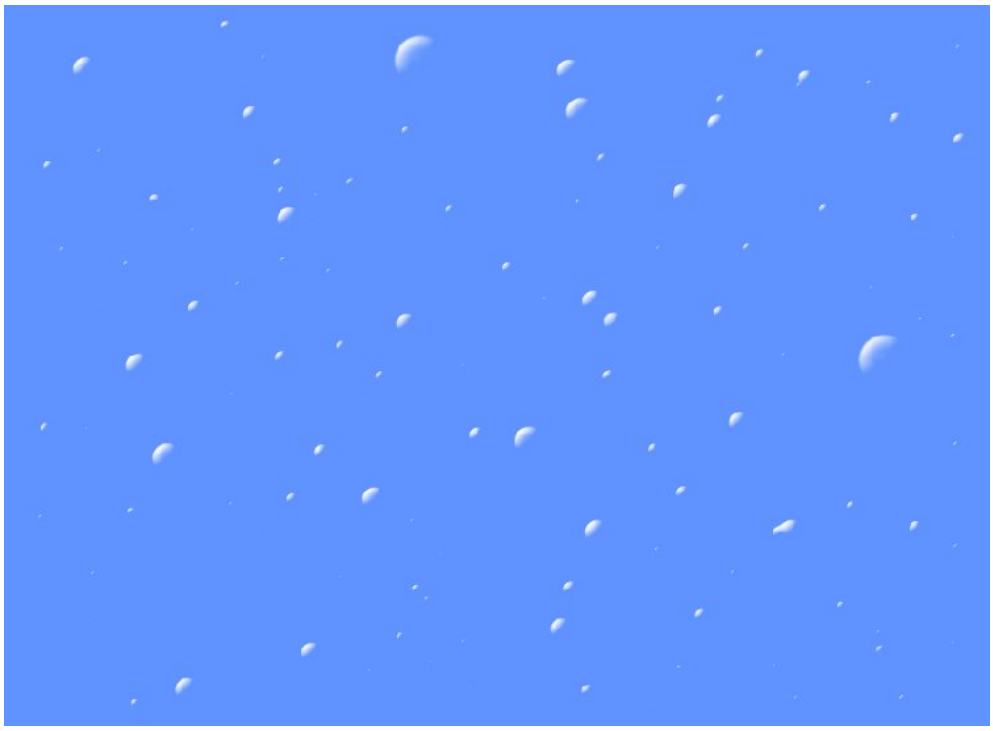


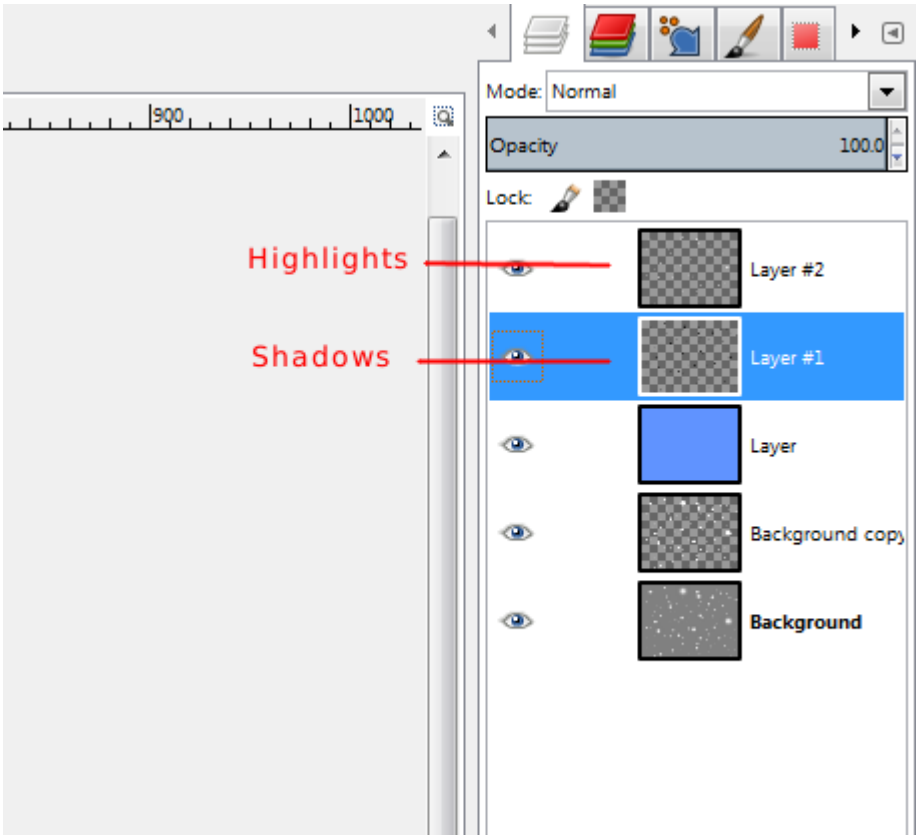
It's starting to look like bubbles already.



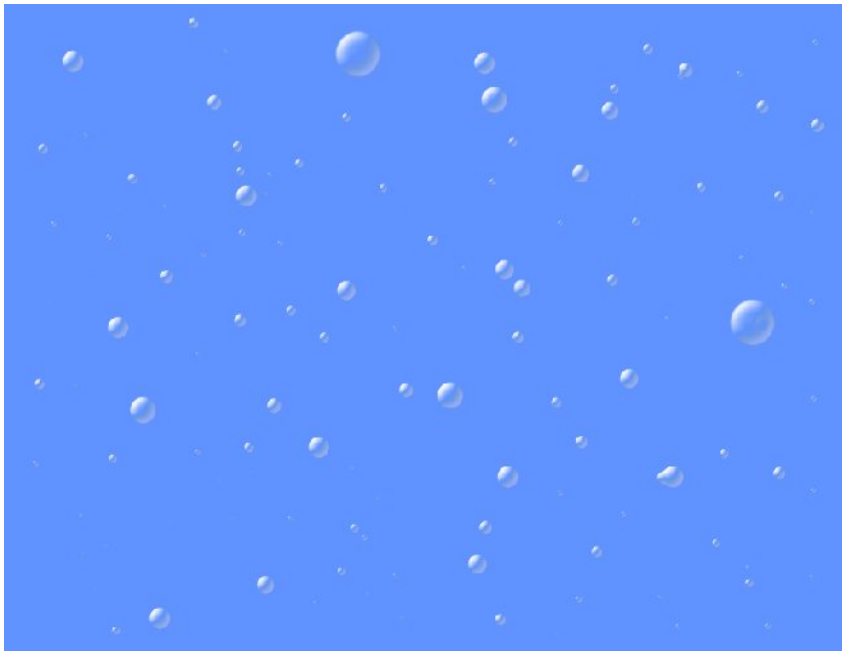
Duplicate this top layer. You should now have 2 identical bubble layers. We'll split the highlights and shadows by removing black from the top layer and white from the second layer with color to alpha. That should leave you with one highlights and one shadows layer.





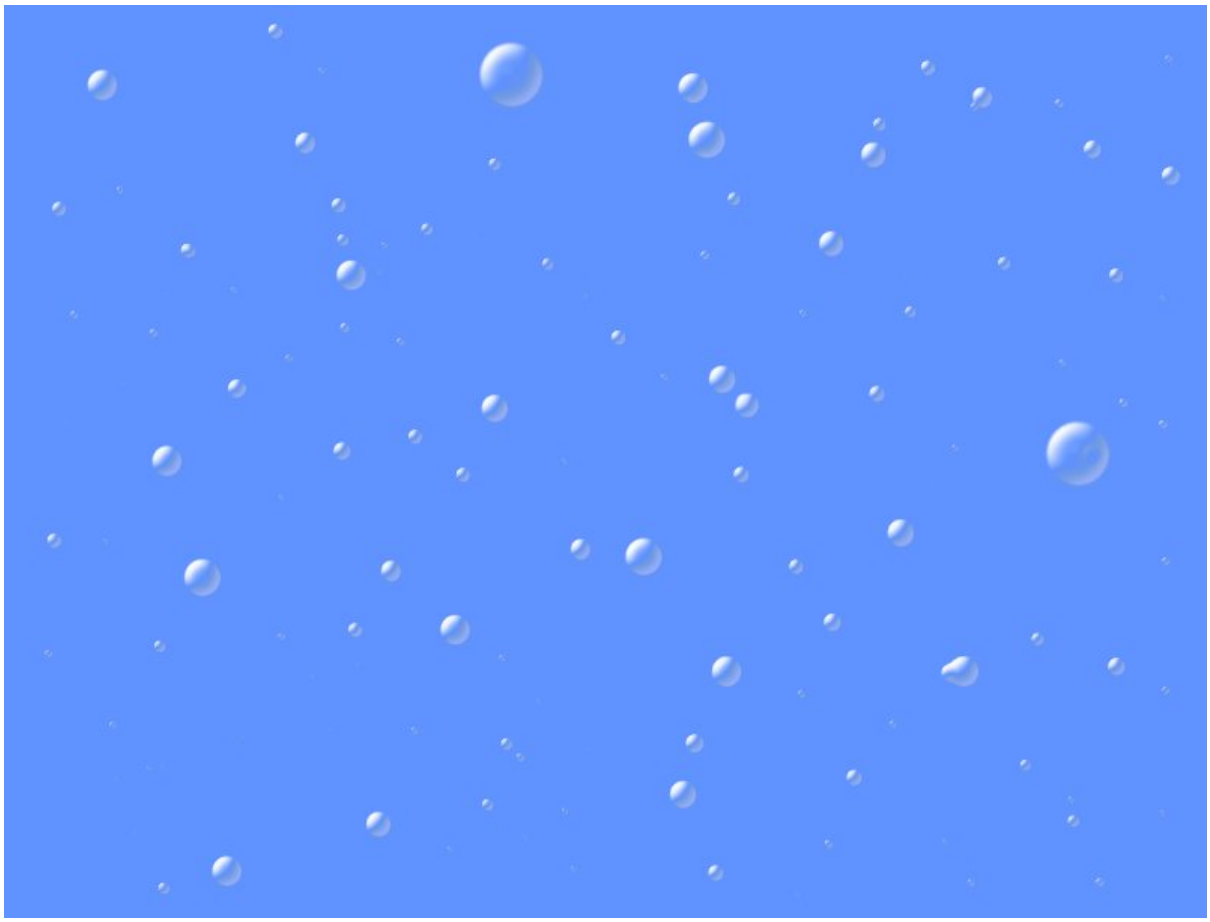


Set the layer mode of the shadows layer to grain merge, then duplicate it and invert the color on the copy to white. This should give the bottom of the bubble a nice reflection. Adjust opacity if the shadow or the light effect is too overwhelming. We're aiming for subtle here.



With layer opacity on these two layers you can adjust the reflection and shadow of the bubble to match your composition better. Play with it and see how you like it.

To really make the highlight pop, duplicate the highlight layer, do alpha to selection, shrink it by 1, invert and delete. This will give the bubbles a nice pointy hotspot.



And with that your masterpice is finished.

