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Ramblins

IOGA MISSION:

To educate ourselves and others in reasons for and methods of environmentally friendly gardening; and to encourage the reduction of chemical dependency in gardens, lawns and farms.

Bean Scene?

Even though it did not feel like we had a winter this year, the thought of Spring still stirs my soul. I could not resist a large seed display at Whole Foods today. While I like to support local seed grower Nature's Crossroads and heirloom seed supplier Seed Saver's Exchange, the Botanical Interest's display at the entrance of the store enticed me to pick up several packets of my favorites. They had a larger selection of USDA Organic seeds than years past (how great is that?!), so who could resist the Black Seeded Simpson lettuce, Bloomsdale spinach, or varieties of sweet, succulent peas?

It has been tradition in my Irish family to plant peas on Saint Patrick's Day, but who knows, with this weather, I may break from tradition and plant early. It wouldn't hurt anything to press a few beet and carrot seeds into the soil, too.

However, this may be the Year of the Bean in my garden. In addition to the standard bush and pole green beans, last year I had much success with *Trail of Tears* Black Beans from Seed Saver's Exchange. They are easy to grow and keep very well, dried, in glass jars in the pantry. I've also had success with black-eyed peas, so this year I may expand to some other traditional bean varieties out there, maybe a cannellini? I have heard that garbanzo beans do well in Indiana. Also, I have learned that lima beans need to be started early, so this may be the year to try again. Oh, so many choices!

I have a mild obsession with keeping glass jars from other products and using them later to store bulk foods and herbs that I purchase or grow. So I'm already planning ways to fill the jars with tasty goodies that we can enjoy next winter. The beans will look beautiful, all shiny and awaiting some favorite recipes, stocked in the jars on the pantry shelves. I had better get busy!

Other thoughts of spring include IOGA's Annual Plant and Garden Auction that will take place Saturday, April 21st at the Zionsville Public Library (see last page of newsletter for details). This is a fun and entertaining time when IOGA members can bring divisions of their plants along with other various garden items to auction off. Our annual fundraiser, proceeds from the auction go toward continuing educational programs and providing outreach. This year, as a special treat, we plan to have some bags of pure earthworm castings (pooh) to sell from our friend Michael Yager of *Sophia Organic* sophiaorganic.org/about/. (See Worm Pooh page 11 of this newsletter). These castings are a great natural fertilizer for houseplants, but can certainly be applied to outdoor plants as well!

I hope to see you at the Auction!

Happy and Healthy Gardening

-Lynne



Lynne Sullivan
IOGA President

From drought to record rains. It's a cycle we'd better get used to. The days of Indiana's regular and consistent precipitation seem to be gone, along with the more temperate summers and tolerable winters. Even spring and fall are no longer dependable seasons. Climate change is taking its toll with erratic weather patterns. Hoosiers can expect more severe swings like we saw (last) summer with a record number of 90-degree days.

The summers of 2010 and 2011 (were) among the warmest on record. Spring 2010 brought some record warmth as well, along with snow in spring 2010 and 11. Snow is not usually recorded March through May. The winters 2009-10 and last year also put us in record books among the snowiest of winters. These major swings in our wet-dry and hot-cold patterns do more than just confound us as we walk outside to ever-changing weather. These wild fluctuations create less than desirable conditions for crops an important part of Indiana's economy.

Backyard gardeners may also have experienced the frustration that comes with such unreliable weather. Drought means more watering, and excessive heat can completely wither some plants. It's been projected that if the climate continues on its current path, Indiana will experience summers similar to the hot, dry Texas summers.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently released the new version of its Plant Hardiness Zone Map (PHZM), updating a useful tool for gardeners for the first time since 1990 with greater accuracy and detail. The new map is available online at www.planthardiness.ars.usda.gov.

Compared to the 1990 version, zone boundaries in this edition of the map have shifted in many areas. The new map is generally one 5-degree Fahrenheit half-zone warmer than the previous map throughout much of the United States. This is mostly a result of using temperature data from a longer and more recent time period; the new map uses data measured at weather stations during the 30-year period 1976-2005. In contrast, the 1990 map was based on temperature data from only a 13-year period of 1974-1986.

Plant hardiness zone designations represent the average annual extreme minimum temperatures at a given location during a particular time period. They do not reflect the coldest it has ever been or ever will be at a specific location. Low temperature during the winter is a crucial factor in the survival of plants at specific locations.

For the first time, the new map offers a Geographic Information System (GIS)-based interactive format. The map website also incorporates a "find your zone by ZIP code" function.

The new map shows Central Indiana in Zone 6a (lowest average temperature -10 to -5 degrees F), which registers a bit warmer than Zone 5b (lowest average temperature -15 to -10 degrees F) where we've been since 1990.

IOGA member Heidi Watson and her husband Don bought an older house in Whitestown, Indiana five years ago and have done a lot of work, cutting down trees and bushes to achieve a lovely shade garden where hummingbirds are frequent visitors to the hosta. A small fish pond does have gold fish in it now, but it currently also has a net across the top to prevent a heron from again coming to visit. The heron ate all of the gold fish the first time, so now a net protects the new fish. It's amazing how the heron even found the tiny pond, but he surely had a good dinner on that first visit. After getting caught in the new net, he has not returned!

Don considers gardening an adventure, and both he and Heidi love to garden. They have lovely flowers and many sunflowers in the sunny areas of the yard. They also have unique plants which they enjoy. A weeping mulberry provides a cozy tea party hide-away for the young grandchildren. Heidi keeps the lower branches trimmed so the tree is like an umbrella over the area the children enjoy. A new fruit tree is supposed to have five different varieties of pears on its branches, but they haven't had a harvest yet so they aren't sure what will happen. They have tried blueberries, but that is a very difficult crop to grow in Indiana so they have only had a few berries plus that area of the yard may be too shady. But they enjoy experimenting each year and finding new plants to enjoy. Heidi draws up designs for the gardens and the yard, and Don implements them!



Heidi and Don's Fish Pond with Net Over the Surface of the Water to Deter a Heron



Heidi and Don Watson in Front of Their Weeping Mulberry Tree

Since Heidi has a Chinese background, she is trying a few Asian vegetables along with the more traditional asparagus, grapes, cucumbers, eggplant, zucchini, and Brussels sprouts. They had kohlrabi last year.

Heidi and Don have a rain barrel and Heidi was dismayed to find mosquito larva in the water. Your editors suggested using Mosquito Bits that are supposed to kill larvae within 24 hours. It is a biological mosquito control and may be sprinkled in any containerized standing water

Don bought a special trumpet vine for which he built a 15-20 foot tall trellis so the vine could shade the dog in the yard. A side benefit is that birds and especially hummingbirds love it so it is enjoyable just to watch and see what birds come. Heidi and Don, like many IOGA gardeners, really love gardening and enjoy the adventure of trying new plants. That really makes gardening fun – experimenting each year with something new!



Multiple Variety Pear Tree

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Compost Pile Constructed from Wood Pallets and a Feedlot Panel

Some Pictures of Heidi & Don Watson's Gardens



Vegetable Garden



Shade Garden



Asparagus Garden



Flower Garden

The January 21, 2012 IOGA meeting was held at the Greenwood library. After a delicious pitch-in lunch, Lynne Sullivan started the meeting. All present introduced themselves and told where they were from and where they got their seeds. One member got seeds from Peaceful Valley Farm, while other members thought Johnny's provided the best organic seeds. Some members bought organic seeds locally from Nature's Crossroads. Another member plants seeds from milkweed pods in her garden, some of which she brought to share. Catalogues such as Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds and Harris Seeds are good sources. Others get seeds from friends or co-workers or from a seed-savers exchange. Several members carry seeds from their own gardens from year to year. Seeds from plants in your own area will do best.

Question & Answers (Q & A):

John Englert asked about how to keep algae from growing in rain barrels, which seems to plug up his soaker hose. Treating with copper sulfate might help with this problem.

Marilyn Spurgeon and her husband will soon be moving to a retirement home near Berne, Indiana; so she graciously brought in many of her gardening

books and magazines for the members to take home with them. We will all miss Marilyn, as she has been a faithful, long-time member of IOGA.

Michael Yager told us about his earthworm business sophiaorganic.org and the worm castings that he sells. In the castings it is the beneficial bacteria that are most important. Seeds germinate very fast in pure worm castings and have no diseases. The castings can be used as either a broadcast fertilizer or around individual plants -- the roots will take right off. Castings work better than manure because manure can burn, but some manure can be added to the castings. Lynne called Michael's castings "worm magic." He will probably sell the castings at the Traders Point Creamery Green Market and Zionsville Farmer's Market. He does not sell worms to those wanting to start their own colonies. (His worm castings will be available for sale at the IOGA Plant & Garden Auction at the April meeting.)

Paul Gaston told the group about an OEFFA (Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association) Conference 2012 that will take place on Feb. 18-19. You can join this organization, which started in 1979, for \$35.

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IOGA Members and Guests Listen to IOGA President, Lynne Sullivan, at the January IOGA meeting at the Greenwood Library

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Business Meeting:

The following officers for 2012 were elected and then introduced:

Lynne Sullivan-President
Beth Englert-Vice-President (new)
Ron Clark-Treasurer
Ron and Claudia Clark-Newsletter
Margaret Smith-Secretary

Lynne reminded us that annual dues for 2012 may be turned into Ron Clark, the IOGA treasurer. She also encouraged us to keep connecting on our Facebook page, as it is a great way for us to exchange information. There have been 617 connects so far.

The 38th Street Branch of the Indianapolis - Marion County Public Library has a Garden Club, and on March 17, Lynne will speak to them. All of the library branches will be promoting this event

A discussion about GMO (Genetically Modified Organism) corn ensued. There is a movement to get all GMO food labeled. If stores could not stock GMO corn and other GMO food, their shelves would be empty. Some people may be allergic to GMO food.

Dave Englert, Volunteer Coordinator, talked about Earth Day, which will be at the White River State Park. Ann Leatherman will coordinate our participation in this fun event.

Beth Englert, Vice-President, said if anyone has ideas for speakers and programs to let her know.

Our Annual Plant & Garden Auction will be April 21 at the Zionsville Library; so IOGA members need to be thinking about what plants and garden items they might bring to auction.

Laura Karr:

Following the business meeting, Lynne introduced our speaker, Laura Karr, who holds two doctorates in science and entomology. Laura's KG Acres Farm & Featherwerks in Lebanon, Indiana specializes in small-scale, sustainable production of free-range and pastured Heritage poultry, honey, herbs, and vegetables. She also offer unique feathered hair adornments, jewelry, and home décor.

Laura first spoke about pest management for the



Laura Karr of KG Acres Farm
Featherwerks

organic gardener using a holistic approach. Laura then turned our attention to chickens. She started by passing around some magazines such as *Journal of Poultry* and *Backyard Poultry*. Laura had more to tell us, but time ran out. Laura's notes for her presentations were mailed to all IOGA members and are also posted on her website kgacresfarm.com. Links to her notes are the following: [Pest Management for the Organic Gardener](#) and [Chickens 101](#).

- Margaret Smith, Secretary

Mark your calendar

IOGA generally meets quarterly on the third Saturday of the month. Mark your calendar for upcoming meetings.

April 21, 2012
(Plant Auction)
July 21, 2012
October 20, 2012
January 19, 2013



Hi Bobbie 😊

Editors' Corner

The city of Indianapolis Office of Sustainability is promoting their [new rain garden and native planting area program](#). Their website outlines everything you need to use storm water as a valuable resource to create beautiful rain gardens & native planting areas.

You can find all the information for a fun do-it-yourself project at [build your own rain or native plant garden](#).



Rain Garden

Rain gardens allow for more infiltration than turf grass lawns or conventional landscaping. Storm water travels through the plant roots and the soil, filtering out contaminants, bacteria and nutrients typically found in storm water runoff. As storm water flows through and is absorbed by the rain garden, soil and plant roots use natural processes to improve water quality by filtering pollutants from storm water. Rain gardens are effective in removing up to 90 percent of nutrients and chemicals and up to 80 percent of sediments from storm water runoff. Compared to a conventional lawn, rain gardens allow 30 percent more water to soak into the ground.

Rain gardens, which are planted in low-lying areas, are designed to catch storm water runoff from downspouts, driveways, parking lots and roads. These gardens are planted with deep-rooted, native plants that thrive on, absorb and slow storm water, which reduces flooding and filters pollutants from storm water before it enters a waterway.

Rain gardens reduce the amount of storm water runoff and reduce drainage and flooding concerns in neighborhoods.

The procedure that we have used for years to grow tomato and pepper seedlings is the following:

1. We mix potting soil with water – 4 or 5 measure soil with 1 measure water. (We use *Happy Frog* potting soil from *Worm's Way*)
2. We place the potting soil mix in paper cups (with holes in the bottom for drainage). Then place 2 or 3 seeds in the cups (thin or transfer them later) and place the cups in trays.
3. Next we place the trays in plastic (transparent) bags on the floor with an electric blanket under them to speed germination. In a few days the tomato seeds germinate. Pepper seeds take about a week longer.
4. Once the seeds have germinated, we place the trays on portable platforms that I had built next to two south facing windows. We water the plants from the bottom so they won't mildew. We occasionally use a liquid organic fertilizer solution.
5. When the plants are a few inches tall we place them outside behind some old storm windows that lean against the house on the south side. We close off the ends if necessary when it gets close to freezing at night or bring the trays inside if it looked like it might get real cold at night.

The last two years we have used some grow lights (6 florescent bulbs). This speeds up the initial growing process. Prior to getting the lights, we just followed the procedure described above and it worked fine.



Wow! Asparagus March 17 — We Will Probably Pay for this Early Spring Weather with a Hot, Dry Summer

Treasurer's Report

1st Quarter 2012

Opening Balance Jan. 1, 2012	\$ 1987.58
Income	
Membership Dues	\$ 776.00
Donations	\$ 40.00
T Shirt & Hat Sales	\$ 5.00
Total	\$ 821.00
Expenses	
Newsletter	\$ 164.60
Liability Insurance	\$ 200.00
Hosting Gratuity	\$ 50.00
Business Entity Report	\$ 7.14
Room Deposit	\$ 100.00
GreenPieceIndy Ad	\$ 25.00
Misc. Stamps	\$ 44.00
Total	\$ 590.74
Closing Balance Mar. 31, 2012	\$ 2217.84

Respectfully submitted by Ron Clark, Treasurer

Ask us...!

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Conservation Day Report:

January 24 was Conservation Day at the Indiana Statehouse. IOGA is part of the Indiana Conservation Alliance, which is made up of various non-profits. The Alliance supports several important bills that are coming up for consideration.

The bill of greatest interest to us is House Bill 1032 that has to do with restricting phosphates in lawn fertilizer. Established lawns don't need phosphates, which just wash into the sewers and cause algae blooms in bodies of fresh water. House Bill 1032 will 1) restrict the use of fertilizers containing phosphorus to those situations where it is really necessary, 2) promote the use of phosphorus-free fertilizers and 3) educate the public about the problems associated with excess phosphorus pollution of Indiana waters. (Status: This bill was not read this session.)

The major obstacle for property owners to invest in energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy systems is the lack of upfront capital. Another bill addresses this problem by authorizing cities and counties to issue dedicated bonds that provide the upfront capital for property owners who willingly and voluntarily seek to make those clean energy purchases. (Status: This bill was not read this session.)

The meeting at the Statehouse also encouraged continued funding of the 'Sustainable Natural Resources Task Force' and the 'Indiana Heritage Trust and Clean Water Indiana'..(Status: Funding is not taken up until next year.)

Outside the initiatives mentioned above, I spent the afternoon talking to supporters of the above causes.

Not too much traffic at the IOGA booth at this event this year or year's past.

-David Englert

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2/12/12 Spring Fever. In January, it seems the earth is poised, gathering strength, waiting to spring forth into the beauty of spring. It seems thus this year especially, warm as it's been. Our daffodils are five inches high, with a swollen bud at the tip, waiting. Last weekend, Feb 4, we saw daffodils in full bloom in town, where it is usually a little warmer still. I'm getting the fever to plant peas.



Overwintered Cabbage

The day before, we had trekked down the hill to the garden to inspect. Last fall we had built a cold frame and planted lettuce, spinach, and some cabbage plants. One cabbage had made a solid head and another a loose head last fall, both of which we consumed. The rest of the plants were left with nothing to carry them onward but hope. Now, lifting back the old windows that covered the straw-bale cold frame, we found lettuce ready to pick. The spinach must have been shaded by the cabbage too much, as it was still in baby leaf stage. But ahhh, the cabbage. There are two grapefruit sized heads and a couple baseball size. The outer leaves bear the ravages of the cabbage worms from last fall. But the solid, worm-free, beautiful red heads have been slowly, slowly expanding through the winter. Cabbage slaw, here we come! And way before anyone else.

Each "inspection" walk to the garden always turns into a harvest, so Annie picked some lettuce and a few leaves from some earlier spinach that overwintered without protection, and couldn't resist digging under the pile of tree leaves for a short raid on the carrot patch.

Climbing back up the hill, we stopped at the upper cold frame, made from scrap lumber and an old storm door. We had planted some spinach and lettuce last fall, which has supplied a steady, though small trickle of greens through the winter. What I didn't remember was the broccoli seed we had thrown in. To our surprise there were plants about the size we would set out toward the end of April. Guess we will leave them where they are except to move some to avoid crowding. We harvested some more greens, and had enough to last us half through the week.



Paul & Annie's Cold Frame Constructed from Scrap Lumber and an Old Storm Door

I'm attributing these successes to our prowess as gardeners. The mild winter had nothing to do with it. That's my story and I'm sticking to it!

3/14/12 Spring Prep. Between the rains and the one freak snow we had this spring, I was able to start working the plot we use for large and sprawling things, like corn and melons and sweet potatoes. The first chore was to spread out the piles of rotted llama manure I obtained over the winter and to pick out the large chunks of gravel that came with it. It was free and the guy loaded it for me. Picking out the gravel is a lot easier than throwing the manure onto the truck by the shovel-full.

Next was to till it in. Now there are those who maintain one shouldn't use power equipment on a garden, that it creates "tiller pan" and soil compaction. Before those of you of that persuasion make a blanket

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condemnation of us gasoline junkies, pick out a plot of Indiana clay sod to garden and let me know how your program works. This is the second year for this plot. My weapon of choice is the tiller.

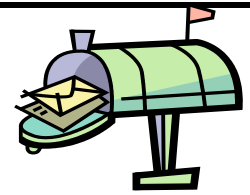
My little rear-tine tiller has a tendency to grab and throw itself forward about ten feet whenever it hits a hard spot, dragging me face down in the dirt until I can get it stopped. So the first tilling in the spring is with the old front tine. And I must interject here, that some things were better in the old days, and some weren't. One cylinder gasoline engines are one of the things that weren't. Starting the old Clinton garden tractor of my youth was a good plan for building up biceps pulling the starter rope, and once you got it to going, it had enough power to pull up a few earthworms, but that's it. Today's high energy ignitions systems are a dream, and even after the front-tine sat all winter, it took only three pulls to start it, just as in the last ten years. The ground was a little damp, but breaking it up will let it dry out some so I can prepare a proper seedbed with the rear tine without my having to eat a share of it.

The raised beds I have been working on for five years are starting to get to the no-tiller condition. Two were prepared with only a hoe and rake. A third had some spare dirt added over winter so I broke it up with the tiller but watched with delight as it easily buried itself full depth so I had to help it along. To these beds I had added several inches of some loamy dirt I discovered in the woods in our sink-hole, and several inches of some rich, fluffy stuff that at one time been a hickory tree trunk, plus some of the llama leavins'.

Between the row of peas that are peeking through the surface and the beets Annie planted several weeks ago, I planted another row of peas and some carrots and spinach. I leaned forward to push a two foot stake in at the end of a row and about fell on it when it pushed in easily to over half its length. The beds have come a long way from the yellow clay I started with. Maybe by the time I am too decrepit to till any more I won't have to.

Paul and Annie Matzek are IOGA members living in Elizabeth and Brownsburg, Indiana.

LETTERS:



From Laura Karr's Blog:

A fun Saturday! 1/21/2012

Today I dragged poor Giff down to the Winter Market in Indy to man my stall so I could leave early to go to Greenwood to give a couple of presentations to the Indian Organic Gardeners' Organization (IOGA). Everyone was so kind and interesting there, and there was a huge pitch-in to boot! Good to see a lot of friendly faces twice in one day! Anyhow, thanks to IOGA for inviting me, and welcoming my friend, Michael Yager to your meeting!

It was nice to talk to each of you at the January IOGA meeting. I mentioned that *Johnny's Selected Seeds* was rated by the readers of *Mother Earth News* as #1....here's the rest of the list:

1. [Johnny's Selected Seeds](#)
2. [Seed Savers Exchange](#)
3. [Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds](#)
4. [Burpee Seeds and Plants](#)
5. [Territorial Seed Company](#)
6. [Seeds of Change](#)
7. [Ferry-Morse Seed Company](#)
8. [Southern Exposure Seed Exchange](#)
9. [High Mowing Organic Seeds](#)
10. [Fedco Seeds](#)
11. [Nichols Garden Nursery](#)
12. [The Cook's Garden](#)
13. [Botanical Interests](#)
14. [Renee's Garden Seeds](#)
15. [Peaceful Valley Farm and Garden Supply](#)

I double dug both of my long 4 X 30 foot gardens [whew, that's hard work!] several years ago. Early this fall I planted winter rye in one and fodder radishes in the other so this spring it should be a lot easier preparing the soil. The double digging was necessary as I was having a drainage problem since the soil seemed to have a lot of clay about a foot or so under the soil. After the double dig and using a pick axe to break up the clay around the 2 foot level, the garden seems to drain nicely now. I also use a broad fork, one of the things I got from *Johnny's*, to loosen up the Spring soil. *Doug Rohde*

The Hoosier Environmental Council has named Lynn Jenkins Environmentalist of the Year for her work in publishing *Indiana Living Green*, her magazine that is focused on sustainable living. Lynn has recently sold her magazine, but she started it five years ago with the goal of fostering a sustainable lifestyle. The magazine discussed the many ways citizens could be “greener” in their daily lives. Congratulations to Lynn!



Lynn Jenkins

Earthworms digest large quantities of organic matter in our soil as they feed, which they then expel as a residue known as worm castings – in short, worm poo. Gardeners know this to be the most nutrient-dense organic matter available.

- Sophia Organic’s *GROW: Earthworm Bounty*™ is 100% organic earthworm castings is an excellent soil builder and can be used as an additive to your own favorite potting mix.
- In soil, castings retain water and release nutrients in a form that is easily used by plants.
- They are safe for children and pets, even immediately after application – and no odor!
- Most importantly, *GROW: Earthworm Bounty*™ provides beneficial bacteria which is the key mechanism to all healthy plant growth.

Jennifer Kost-Barker, Carmel, IN 46032
 Jennie Gaines, Indianapolis, IN 46229
 Lynne Hirschman, Indianapolis, IN 46220
 Maggie Goeglein, Indianapolis, IN 46208
 Rebecca & Richard Cohrs, New Palestine, IN 46163
 Rebecca McGuckin, Carmel, IN 46032
 Danielle & Brian Robinson, Zionsville, IN 46077
 Susan Knose, Indianapolis, IN 46268
 Tracy Schug, Indianapolis, IN 46219

Earth Day Indiana
free outdoor festival

Saturday April 28 • 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Fun, Exhibits, Food, Children’s Activities, Live Music

Celebration Plaza
at White River State Park
 801 W. Washington St., Indianapolis

www.earthdayindiana.org


Visit the IOGA Booth

Dues are \$10.00 per individual member, and \$12.00 for a dual membership (same address, one newsletter).

To join, please send your annual dues to:

Please include ALL of the following information:

I prefer my newsletter to be ___ emailed ___ mailed.



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 2nd Name (if dual membership)
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 Phone Number
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