



Hoosier Organic Gardener

July 2007

IN THIS ISSUE

Beneficial
Beasties

Compost
Chronicles

Animal
Vegetable
Miracle

Plant Auction
Pictures!

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.

Immigrants, Volunteers and Chief Seattle

By Rosie Bishop



This spring the news has been filled with immigrant issues and so has our yarden (garden yard). People who are doing important work have come to a place that needs them and does not always welcome them. New arrivals in our rich, fertile soil are not always welcomed either. We call it “our” yarden, but it is just the space of which we are currently stewards—custodians—guardians. The soil is dark and fertile, having been fed loads of leaves and wood chips every year since 1994! Where Indiana clay once bent the tines, now remarkably loamy soil is the rave of all who dig into it. Its mulchy mat of humus offers wayfaring plant prospectors opportunity! Without a statue or a beacon light, it broadcasts unstated hospitality, “Give me your seeds, your roots, your huddled clusters yearning to just be.” And uninvited visitors with flocks of kin creep, float, and drop in, hoping to stay.

It is hard to remember that they have come to be helpful and to do a necessary job. We have been taught and advertised to scorn them as “WEEDS.” (Hmmm. At our place, *grass* is a weed.) *I remember learning how grateful we should be for weeds*, hardy plants whose deep roots retain moisture and anchor themselves firmly to prevent erosion. Most of them are beautiful, many non-natives that were introduced for desirable qualities, many edible, medicinal, fragrant, most beneficial in myriad ways. And I really believe they hold great mysteries for us.

As I hold on fiercely to my determination to not use Round-up, the rave chemical of our time, there is a lot of digging going on. I have entered into spirited competition over the years with thistle, ground ivy, wild strawberry, henbit, knotweed, honeysuckle, poison ivy, mulberry, and unknowns I haven’t been able to identify. There are also self-seeding annuals and vigorously spreading perennials, all flocking to enjoy the extraordinary conditions—greening immigrants seeking Life for themselves and their progeny.

“What belongs to everybody, belongs to nobody.”

The thoughts of Chief Seattle remind me that I am visiting, also that I am loving this place, cherishing it, hoping to pass along healthy cells in Earth’s body to coming generations. Thriving tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, snow peas, berries and carrots are doing well out there. I am overjoyed to find “volunteers,” like the self-seeded lettuce patch at the edge of the raspberries, wandering offspring from lettuce that was encouraged to seed. Abundant celosia, rudbeckia, morning glory and cleome starts will delight visiting butterflies and neighbor kids in relocated homes. Fascinating labels we humans use for things we like and those we don’t: “transplants,” “invasives,” “aggressive,” “natives,” volunteers.”

Volunteers! That takes me to our group.

The July meeting means thinking about a nominations committee for new officers in “08.” Please consider your contribution: will you serve if called for the committee? For an office? Our greening efforts seem more vital than ever.

As I write, I am back in the city of immigrants, in Manhattan, where so much of the small island is devoted to common space and public parks. And what an astonishing site graced us by the nearby lake yesterday! Newcomers! Invited or just flown in? *Weeds* that I have nurtured and welcomed in Indiana! I know these young upstarts that weren’t there last year when we followed Monarch butterflies down Broadway. In a space 15 x 45 feet, *I counted 84 milkweed plants!* Were they planted there by park naturalists? Did they volunteer from some roadside in the Bronx? I hope they will be given a gracious welcome and the important job of delighting and amazing passersby with their gorgeous blossoms and heavenly fragrance. Caterpillars, children, butterflies and elders—I picture them delighting in the surprises at that public place, and remember *“What belongs to everybody, belongs to nobody.”*

IOGA Auction

April 2007



Above: Auctioneer Ron Clark and his lovely assistant and wife Claudia keep the plants moving from table to crowd!



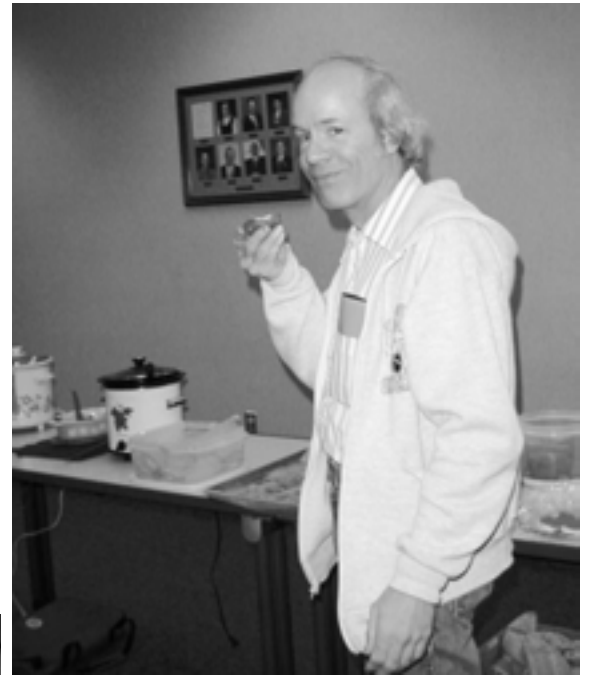
Right: Jane Gareri is pleased with the plant purchase, but Charlie looks doubtful!

Below. Jane and Charlie Gareri of Dover Organix in Thorntown, are among the hopefuls watching for the great deals. The auction brought in nearly \$500 for IOGA!





Left:
Great plant, satisfied auctioneer! Ron Clark delivers the booty to the winning bidder while Claudia finds another super plant. Hundreds of plants were donated by members.



Above: There's more than plants at the IOGA Auction. Paul Gaston displays pleasure at some of the great pitch-in foods brought by members!



Left: IOGA Treasurer Maria Smietana and President Rosie Bishop did their share of bidding and buying at the main fundraiser for programs of IOGA.

Right:
Heidi Watson takes a quick rest from the frenzied bidding ... or maybe she's just trying to keep herself from bidding on just one more plant!





Nominations and Commitment: Volunteer Opportunities

Working with other like-minded people who are bound together by issues, joys or concerns—that’s how brilliant science/leadership writer, Meg Wheatley inspired an environmentally concerned audience recently. Speaking on HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD, she described how Nature works through small beginnings, cooperation and overcoming challenges.

You have an opportunity to participate on the nominating committee and to take an office in our group. “A leader is anybody willing to help,” Meg said. She used the example of Wangari Masaa, Nobel Prize winner, honored for tree planting in Africa. It is a story of small beginnings, friends working together, and failures. A few people concerned about deforestation got together and planted seven trees. Only two survived. They learned from failure, chose better native trees and corrected course. Meg outlined the small efforts that is credited with 30 million tree plantings! They grew, as does a tiny seed, by venturing out to meet challenge and share opportunity. Come on! Volunteer!

Call or Email Rosie,
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“For a Good Time”

(And an important message) visit:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=BkloPHbJJHc

Treasurer’s Report—2nd Quarter 2007

Opening Balance April 01, 2007 **\$1721.50**

Income

Dues '07	\$106.00
Donations with Dues	4.00
Plant Auction	486.50
Bank Interest—Mar-May	<u>6.26</u>
Total	\$602.76

Expenses

April 07 Newsletter	\$125.95
Not-for-Profit Entity Filing	12.24
Misc. Printing/Postage	61.05
Printing-Gardening with Nature	159.00
Bank Service Charges—Dec-Feb	<u>00.00</u>
Total	\$358.24

Closing Balance March 26, 2007 **\$1966.02**

Respectfully submitted by Maria Smietana, Treasurer

IOGA Meeting Minutes April 21, 2007

At our April gathering, a brief business meeting preceded a fun and successful plant auction. President Rosie Bishop began the general meeting with a discussion period and asked those present to introduce themselves.

A member noted that the National Sustainable Information Service – or ATTRA - was in danger of having funding cut and urged members to protest. ATTRA offers the latest in sustainable agriculture and organic farming news, events and funding opportunities. It also lists in-depth publications on production practices, alternative crop and livestock enterprises, innovative marketing, organic certification, and highlights of local, regional, USDA and other federal sustainable Ag activities. This service is funded under a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. For more information concerning possible funding cuts, call 800-346-9140 or log onto www.ATTRA.org

Other topics covered during Q & A were tips on growing asparagus, using Plant Skydd for deer control and applying coffee grounds to stop carpenter ants.

The Business meeting was officially opened at 11:40. January meeting minutes were approved as published. A discussion of dues disclosed that those who paid IOGA dues at the fall conference are fully paid for 2007.

Lynn Jenkins proposed that IOGA look into having the “100 Mile Diet” group from Vancouver, B.C. present a program in Indianapolis. The concept is that consumers support local growers by only eating food grown within 100 miles of their home. Alisa Smith and J.B. MacKinnon of Vancouver successfully followed these eating guidelines and Random House published their book, *The 100 Mile Diet, A Year of Local Eating*, in March of this year. We are looking for volunteers to pursue a visit by the authors to discuss their book and the concept.

Suzanne Stevens announced that IOGA would again have a booth at Orchard in Bloom. Several members volunteered on the spot and Maria Smietana offered to email a call for volunteers to the membership. Ann Leatherman described IOGA’s presence at Indy’s Earth Day celebration and called for volunteers for that event also.

The Web Development project was discussed. The Committee consists of Charlie Gareri, LeTava Muhammed and Linda Rosier. Rosie suggested the group explore the idea of including a “Green Map” of our area in the Web Site Development.

The business meeting was adjourned at this point and the fun began. Claudia and Ron Clark, once again, conducted the auction. There was an excellent inventory for auction which set off a lively and competitive bidding process. Members had a good time while raising funds to cover IOGA operating expenses.

Respectively Submitted, Suzanne Stevens, Secretary

Big-eyed bugs, *Geocoris* spp. (Heteroptera: Lygaeidae), are voracious predators of pest insects. They are often the most abundant predators in crop fields, and are known to eat huge numbers of pests. Because they are small and skittish (with their big eyes and excellent vision, they can see you coming and run away), they are difficult to count and easy to overlook.

Big-eyed bugs are one of the most distinctive-looking predators in agricultural fields. They are small (1/4-inch or less in length), oval-shaped insects with large, protruding eyes on the sides of their heads. The adults have wings and are able to fly, while the juveniles look like smaller, wingless versions of the adults. The eggs are oblong, ribbed, and pink or yellowish white. Eggs hatch in 5-10 days and the nymphs begin feeding immediately. They pass through five nymphal stages before becoming adults. The adults are long lived and have very high reproductive potential. The adults live 3-4 months and females lay 1-2 eggs per day for that entire period.



BEB adult: Jack Dykinga



BEB nymph: Gregory Cronholm

Unlike specialized biological control agents such as parasitic wasps, which often only attack a single prey species, big-eyed bugs are generalists. They feed on a wide variety of pests, including aphids, thrips, whiteflies, fleahoppers, spider mites, caterpillars, insect eggs, and beetle larvae. Big-eyed bugs feed using piercing-sucking mouthparts. They attack prey by spearing it on the end of their mouthparts, then sucking out its body fluids.

Big-eyed bugs are active throughout the growing season, from mid-May until early October, and go through several generations per year. Active big-eyed bugs can even be seen on cold, windy spring days with temperatures below 50°F, and on hot, dry summer days with temperatures over 100°F.

The Big-Eyed Bug



by Damian Sherling

Big-eyed bugs are somewhat unusual predatory insects because they also feed on plants to a small degree, piercing the plant tissue and feeding like aphids. Such feeding is too infrequent to result in any noticeable plant damage, but it allows big-eyed bugs to stay alive in agricultural fields when pest insects are not abundant. This allows big-eyed bugs to form a first line of defense when pests begin to colonize fields.

Despite their small size, big-eyed bugs are voracious predators. Research has shown that a single big-eyed bug can eat more than twenty aphids per day. They can also eat up to ten caterpillar eggs or five small larvae over the course of a few days. Naturally occurring big-eyed bug density is approximately two bugs per plant. At this density, in a row of 50 plants, big-eyed bugs can consume more than 2000 aphids per day—quite a lot of pests for such a small predator! This is at naturally occurring levels. Imagine how many aphids, caterpillar eggs or other pests these little bugs would consume if their numbers were augmented through a release of commercially available adults. This bug is a rare example where saying “their eyes are bigger than their stomachs” could be quite misleading.



BEB egg
Jack Kelly Clark

Beneficial Beanties

Damian has his MS in Entomology, and enjoys his backyard garden where he teaches his three young daughters about the wonderful world of insects.

Book Review

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle, A Year of Food Life

by Barbara Kingsolver with Steven L. Hopp and Camille Kingsolver

With the same insight that has permeated her other works, Barbara Kingsolver presents us with a story of transitions: a family moving from the Southwest to Appalachia, from the Tucson's desert suburbs to a rural farmstead in Virginia, and a family wanting a shift in food dependency.

Like many of her other books, her stories are based on life experiences. But *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* is more; it is the ongoing story of her family's recent evolution back to a land that could feed them without "traveling farther than most families go on their annual vacations." In the desert, even though they belonged to an urban homesteading group, it was nearly impossible to align their lives with the food chain without "robbing Mexico's water or guzzling Saudi Arabia's gas." So the journey begins.

The entire family made the year commitment to local foods, and Kingsolver's husband and oldest daughter share in the story telling. Camille Kingsolver, a college freshman studying biology and nutrition, shares her memories of childhood, and her more recent observations of working on the family farm. She includes menus and recipes featuring seasonal foods. Steven Hopp's short essays, placed in mid-chapter, discuss the story's relevant topic as it affects the wider community. His occasional essays concern such matters as genetically modified foods, the control of agri-business, or government support for local foods in schools.

As always, Kingsolver's words flow eloquently. The year commitment of

the family covers 350 pages, but the read is fast, filled with unadorned tales and heart-felt stories, simple pleasures and profound moments. Anyone who understands the



therapeutic effect of working a vegetable garden, he who knows the joy of the first tomato of the season, who comprehends the pleasantly addictive qualities of gardening, or she

who longs to taste the connection with the earth should read *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*.

Also available on audio CD.

By Lynn Jenkins

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www.IndianaLivingGreen.com

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Good Ideas from Claudia!

Gleaned and shared by Claudia Clark from an article in the Christian Science Monitor:

"A greener planet begins under the kitchen sink" is the title of a recent article about BigGreenPurse.com that urges women to spend more on Earth-friendly products. Founder Diane MacEachern says "Women could be the most powerful force for economic and environmental change in the 21st century." She bases this on the idea that women spend 80 cents of every dollar in the marketplace. On average people spend \$18,000 a year on groceries and household goods. If each woman would shift at least \$1000 to green products, and if a million people did that, it would have a \$1 billion impact.

Her six suggestions are:

- buy organic, locally grown food
- buy energy-efficient appliances
- buy fuel-efficient cars
- buy nontoxic cleansers (we really need only water, baking soda, vinegar, and liquid soap)
- buy shade-grown coffee
- buy phthalate-free cosmetics (phthalates are plasticizers, linked to health problems in lab animals, found in some perfume, nail polish, deodorant and more.)

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Mark your calendar

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



October 20, 2007
January 19, 2008
April 19, 2008
July 19, 2008
October 18, 2008

The Compost Chronicles

Diary of a Start-Up Organic Farmer



by Maria Smietana

Small-scale vegetable farming, and probably all farming, is an exercise in appreciating the small victories. So when I went out to water the other evening, and caught an utterly frustrated groundhog (probably the same one whose babies ate most of my legumes last summer) unable to poke through the wire-and-plastic mesh of our newly erected fence, I did a happy dance right there in the tomato patch.

While I am pleased to report that no tomatoes were harmed during this spontaneous display of delirium, I am nonetheless glad that no one but the groundhog was watching, 'cause my dancing is not a pretty thing. This came on the heels of the small victory we had already chalked up when we noticed that the snow peas were making rapid vertical progress for the first time in weeks, a direct result of no longer having their heads chewed off by the deer.

I must admit, we held our breath for the first week after Steadfast Spouse had installed the fencing. The project had involved quite a bit of grunting and sweating on his part, not the least of which was generated by hand-digging a trench around the entire perimeter of the plot, and pounding metal poles far enough into the ground to keep the fencing vertical for what we hope will be a great number of future growing seasons.

We hated to think that such an effort would not have had its intended result. So we're relieved that as of today, the only non-bug-or-bird breachers of the

barrier have been one feral cat and those creatures smart enough to open the gate (fortunately limited to myself, Steadfast Spouse, and the little neighbor girl, whose sole goal to annoy her parents by getting as wet and muddy as possible under the irrigation sprinklers. You go, kid!).

As the feral cat's carnivorous nature makes him unlikely to require a side of bush beans with his mouse-al-fresco, I welcomed him as an ally in the fight against the smaller herbivores, and even forgave the damage he did in the process of climbing the fence. Not to be outdone, my own geriatric cat took a cue from the feline "guest" and added deer repeller to her already impressive list of skills. With back arched and tail bristled to bottle-brush size, she is now the self-appointed defender of the kitchen garden. At dusk, she has regular stand-offs with a large but puzzled young buck who comes to graze around the compost bin. Thanks to her territorial courage, the baby lettuce and the onion sets have thus far been spared decapitation.

We would gladly have been satisfied with so much going right in only one season. But while planting tomatoes one morning, I was struck by the large imbalance in weediness from one side of the plot to the other. I suddenly

remembered we had experimented a bit with solarization in the earliest days of March, spreading large sheets of black plastic over half of the partially frozen soil for a few weeks with the initial goal of warming it up enough to allow slightly earlier planting. I'd totally forgotten that the other benefit of the technique was to bake resident weed seeds to oblivion before they have a chance to sprout and create later herbaceous havoc among the crop plants.

With the striking results of both halves of the experiment laid out side by side before me, the lesson was clear for future years: spread more plastic, weed less later. I was ready to perform another happy dance, but caught myself just in time. When something as simple as effective fencing and low tech weed control can make you ecstatic, you know you've reached some sort of turning point in your sanity. No need to prove it to the onlookers, even if they're just plants.

Maria Smietana is a regular vendor at Traders Point Farmers Market where she sells home-baked bread and organically grown vegetables. She gardens in Zionsville, IN and is treasurer of IOGA..

