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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.

Spring Awakening

Do you feel that? Sit there for a minute. Inhale deeply, then let it all out. Doesn't that feel good? That's what Spring feels like. New breath. New life. New beginnings.

Spring is when we take all the thoughts, dreams, and plans we have crafted all Winter, and take the steps to put them into action. It may start simply - selecting the desired seed or plant, choosing the right spot; then when the conditions are right, pushing that seed into the soil. With some minimal effort, we tend the soil and nurture the plant, anticipating the rewards.

Human life takes a similar path. The decisions we make and the actions we take can have a significant impact on what our future holds. The daily choices you make as a consumer, drives businesses to make greener decisions. If you choose not to purchase certain items that support the use of harmful chemicals and opt instead for local, organic goods, that sends a strong message. If you choose to grow your own food using natural methods, that sends a message as well.

What are your thoughts and dreams for a happy and healthy future? Would you like to live in a community that values good health without the affects of unnecessary chemicals? There are simple things that you can do that make a difference. Chose your purchases with awareness. Shop your local, organic farmer's market. Discuss your dreams with others and you may be surprised by what you can accomplish to create the future you want.

You can also have fun at the same time! For example, join IOGA on Saturday, April 20 for our annual plant and garden auction. You can pick up some wonderful plants and other gardening items, support a green organization, and even make a few friends! Now what could be better than that? Visitors are welcome! See the back page of this newsletter for details.

Happy and Healthy Gardening!

-Lynne



**Lynne Sullivan
IOGA President**

Equinox



by Paul Matzek

*Comes soon the harbinger of spring,
The long-awaited equinox
Announced by muttering on-high flocks
Of sandhill cranes. They end the sting
Of snow and sleet, but with them bring
Troops of bugs and the broadleaf scourge.
No mind, comes too the primal urge
To plant, and in my garden, sing.*

Compost—Better Soil

by Doug Rohde

There are two purposes for a compost bin/heap, both beneficial. First, waste materials are disposed of in an efficient and sanitary manner. Second, the compost heap produces a product (humus) that is one of the best, if not the best, fertilizers and soil amendments you can use. The compost heap is a big pile of food for the smallest but most necessary "livestock" you are privileged to care for on your land -- soil microorganisms. Billions of minute bacteria, fungi and actinomycetes with voracious appetites eat away in your compost heap, as they do in the soil. In a well-made compost heap so many microorganisms live that numbers are meaningless. Just like with any livestock, you must feed your microorganisms a correctly balanced diet and make sure their "living quarters" are well ventilated, properly humidified and kept at the proper temperature.



Soil microorganisms eat mostly carbon and nitrogen -- carbon for growth and nitrogen for protein synthesis. They like a mixture of thirty parts of carbon to one part of nitrogen. Carbons are the harder kinds of organic matter -- dried leaves, sawdust, straw and others. Nitrogen added in the mix comes from green material like grass clippings, or soft material like kitchen waste, garbage or partially processed manure. If you don't add enough nitrogen in your mix [remember David Englert's layering mixture he demonstrated at the January 2013 IOGA meeting], your compost heap may just sit there for a long time without breaking down very fast. On the other hand, if you get too much nitrogen [think excess grass clippings without layering with carbon and some soil], the microorganisms go wild. Excess nitrogen is then converted into ammonia which seeps out of the pile in gaseous form and will cause the compost heap to stink. Just pile a lot of fresh, green grass clippings in a heap or plastic bags and you will smell a very stinky order in a short time.

Moisture and oxygen are necessary in adequate amounts to make the microorganisms happy. The compost material should feel wet but never, never soggy. If you get the pile too wet and keep it that way you end up with anaerobic decomposition. If the compost pile is too wet or too dry, little or no decomposition takes place.

Temperature: With a proper carbon to nitrogen (C/N) ratio and moisture, a compost heap will heat up a day or two after it's built. The material on the outside of the heap acts as insulation to prevent some heat loss. Normally the heap will go through a classic two stage heat cycle. The first stage peaks at 104 degrees F (40 C), the mesophilic stage. Then the pile heats on up to 160 degrees F (71 C), the thermophilic stage. At 160 degrees F harmful pathogens, if any, and weed seeds are killed. But, if the compost heap gets hotter than 160 degrees, the microorganisms can also be killed.

Ventilation: To keep the heap from getting too hot, turning is necessary. Turning is also helpful in speeding the decomposition process because organic matter on the outside of the heap is turned inward where the temperature is high. This exposes the heap to equal heat of decomposition, but also insures that all weed seeds and harmful pathogens are killed by the heat. The aeration of a heap by turning also insures adequate oxygen for the microorganisms.

Size: I have found 4 foot by 4 foot and 4 foot high is just about the right size for a compost bin . 5'x5' would be the maximum if you are working with hand tools. I usually cover two of mine to keep the rain from saturating the bins but take the covers off to get some rain at specific times. I use a lot of kitchen scraps, cut up small, even dry and add the tea bag contents along with coffee grounds. I have taken to

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washing all fruit in soapy water including bananas. I cut up banana peels and hope that a good scrub in Dawn will remove any sprays that are on the outer surfaces.

Using your compost: You can never use too much compost on your garden. You probably won't ever have enough to go around so don't waste it where it's not really needed. Apart from its fertility value, compost is most beneficial as a soil amendment. You can make topsoil with it where you have only denuded subsoil or hard clay. Apply a three inch layer of compost, digging it in to a depth of six inches with a spading fork or rotary tiller. Repeat three years in a row and you'll accomplish what it takes nature to do in at least 100 years. Compost applied literally around roots of transplants (vegetables, bushes, trees) increases the rate of survival and effects quick growth response after the shock of transplanting. A couple of spoonfuls of compost in potted plants is also a good practice, but with trees I think it a very poor use of the precious stuff. Save your compost for your garden.

Save many bags of fall leaves to continue mixing into your compost with the following spring/summer grass clippings to ensure a good carbon/nitrogen mix.

Warning: Beware of manure from horses that have been grazing on pastures that have been sprayed with herbicides. The horse manure will retain this herbicide as it passes through the horse and even though composted, it can destroy your entire garden.....for years and years to come.

Doug Rohde is an IOGA member living in Fishers, Indiana.

Doug Rohde's Three Compost Bin System

Now that the snow has cleared off my bins, here is a photo of my three compost bins. One wooden 4'x4' wooden slatted one with a 5/8" varnished plywood cover, a wire one [I have another large bag of leaves that would go into it but it's holding my mini-cold frame from blowing away], and my green plastic bin. I've had all three for well over 10 years, have to replace the wooden slats about every 4 years but it's the best of the three. 4'x4' is the recommended minimum size to achieve the best composting breakdown and I'll agree with that. My plastic one is mainly for finished compost with the wire one somewhat of a raw material holding bin that later, when the temps increase is pressed into another composting bin. Alongside of the bins is my chopping block that I use for garden plants and tougher stems prior to putting them in the bins. - *Doug Rohde*



Doug's Three Compost Bins, Plus One Chopping Block

January IOGA Meeting

The winter meeting of the Indiana Organic Gardeners Association took place January 19 at the Big Car Service Center for Contemporary Culture and Community on Lafayette Rd. in Indianapolis. President Lynne Sullivan began the meeting by welcoming everyone. Then all present introduced themselves and told where they were from. Forty-six people were present, including some guests and new members. Lynne reminded us that yearly dues, which are \$10 for an individual and \$12 for a couple, should be paid now to Treasurer Ron Clark.

Of interest to the group, Frank C brought one of his Babydoll Southdown Sheep, which he tethered just outside. These sheep can free range as they don't wander too much and will eat just about anything. Jane Gareri brought eggs for sale at \$3/dozen. Paul Matzek brought some of his walking Egyptian onion sets and invited us to take a few home. Egyptian onions are best used as green onions since the bulbs don't grow too large.

The Question & Answer period followed. One member wanted to know when to start seeds. Six to eight weeks before the last frost date was suggested, while April 1 is a good start date for tomatoes and peppers. (Editors' note: we have



IOGA Members, (left to right) Barb Jesse, Lynne Hirschman, Mary Ann Layman, and Elaine Englert Partake in the Pitch-In Lunch at the January IOGA Meeting

found that pepper seeds take about a week or more longer to germinate than tomato seeds.). Jane has had good luck starting seeds in soil blocks and gave us some tips on using them. By doing a computer web search to "soil block mix recipe," one can find lots of information on how to make soil blocks.

One member mentioned that free-ranging chickens can really damage tiny plants, though they are quite good for slug control. Ducks aren't quite as bad. Amanda Grubbs asked about growing raspberries and blueberries, which require good drainage and good sun (and an acid soil).

A member interested in starting a beehive asked how to attract the bees. A bee attractant substance can be purchased. Someone had a wild lettuce plant with yellow flowers that kept attracting the bees until November. The Indiana State Beekeepers Association offers classes on beekeeping.

Another member wanted to know where to get pine needles/straw. David Englert gets it from his dad, John Englert. Lynne has contact with another supplier, but she tends to stay away from using pine needles since they may inhibit seed germination.

Our mentoring program, in which a current member can mentor a new member, is beginning now. A sign-up sheet was passed around for those who would like to become a mentor. Charles Gareri told us that Indiana Conservation Day is on January 23. This is a chance to meet with lawmakers and drum up support for conservation-related bills that may be considered by the legislature this year.

Following the regular IOGA meeting, a short class on Soil followed. IOGA member Maggie Goeglein, Executive Director of the Fall Creek Gardeners Urban Growers Resource Center, told us about the Organic Gardening for Beginners classes. This four-part class, a joint effort of IOGA and Fall Creek Gardens, will include the following topics: 1) January-Soil, 2) February-Seeds, 3) March-Sustain, and 4) April-Harvest and Save. Then the first class on soil, taught by Maggie and David Englert, began, with each first telling a little about his/her background. Much of the information presented can be found on the Fall Creek Gardens website, www.fallcreekgardens.org. Below is an overview of what the class on soil covered.

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These Two Vegetarian Dishes Were Part of the Pitch-In Lunch at the IOGA Meeting. Also, Deviled Eggs. Yum!

The first step is surveying the area, checking for drainage and sunlight. Raised beds are an option, especially if the soil contains lead. However, it may take up to five years to make good soil in a raised bed. Cores from different areas of the garden can be mixed together and sent to a lab for lead testing. Raised beds need a lot of watering.

A compost heap should include the following: 1" of soil, 1" of straw, 6" brown and green (kitchen waste and weed plants) and then soil sprinkled over all. The straw incorporates air in the compost heap, and the soil adds microorganisms. These layers are repeated, with water being the final addition. Coffee grounds, high in nitrogen, are a good addition to a compost heap. Worms, always beneficial, will come into the pile if it is in contact with the ground. Compost tea is good for foliar feeding and general spraying. The pile should have a temperature of about 160 degrees in the center.

If the pile is stirred every day and the pieces are small enough, complete breakdown will occur in about twenty-one days, but may take longer. There must be a good balance of moisture to move the process along. It is not a good idea to put dog waste on a compost pile because dogs and humans share some parasites. Maggie told us a little about worm culture, in which the worms will break down food and paper waste, excepting meat and citrus. Much information about vermiculture is available

online.

People asked lots of questions and agreed that the class was most informative and worthwhile. All are looking forward to the three classes that will follow.

Our next IOGA meeting will be April 20 at the Zionsville Public Library and will include the annual Plant & Garden Auction

- Margaret Smith, Secretary

Look Who Came To The IOGA Meeting

IOGA member Frank C brought one of his Babydoll Southdown Sheep to the January IOGA meeting (see photo below). Frank has several Babydoll Southdown Sheep as pets, both white and black. He actually had too many, and wished to give two or three of them away. The Babydoll Southdown Sheep are very personable, easy to take care of, and very, very cute.

Frank was successful in finding homes for three sheep. Two of the sheep went to non IOGA members. One sheep went to IOGA member David Colby and his wife Judy. That sheep will reside at the Colby's Anderson Woods Camp near Bristow, Indiana.



One of Frank's Babydoll Southdown Sheep Attended the January IOGA Meeting

Making Soil Blocks

by Jane Gareri

If you want to give your garden a head start, save money, and scratch that itch to start gardening consider starting your garden plants and flowers in "soil blocks". Remember making mud pies as a child? It's that easy and you won't need containers to grow in. All you need is your starting mix which you can make yourself and one or two soil block makers. I make blocks in a plastic tub sold in the big home stores for mixing concrete. The blockers are available from johnnyseeds.com and at pottingblocks.com as well as other places on the Internet. These sites have good info and some videos to help you understand the process.

PottingBlocks.com sells a ready made mix but we use the following soil block recipe from the book, "[The New Organic Grower](#)" by Eliot Coleman:

Add and mix in the order given-
3 buckets of peat screened
1/2 cup of lime, mix
2 buckets coarse sand or perlite
3 cups base fertilizer, mix
1 bucket garden soil
2 buckets compost, mix thoroughly
Makes 2 bushels of mix.

We use a 10 qt bucket and sift or screen the compost and peat before mixing to remove sticks and stones. We make a trip to *E&R Seed* in Monroe, IN about every 2-3 yrs to get our ingredients.

The base fertilizer in the soil block recipe is the following:

Equal parts-
Blood meal
Colloidal phosphate
Greensand

We mix this and store it in a lidded bucket

We are looking into using coir instead of peat in the future but still have peat to use up for this year. The debate of peat vs. coir shipped in from the tropics is ongoing....

I like to make the mix in the fall so we don't have to do it in the spring when the compost may be frozen



Mini Blocks with Lettuce Seedlings and 2" Blocks with Mini blocks Inserted

and the weather is cold. We are lucky to have our old compost tumbler to mix in but you can also spread a tarp on the ground and mix on that. One batch can be stored in a large plastic tote or garbage can.

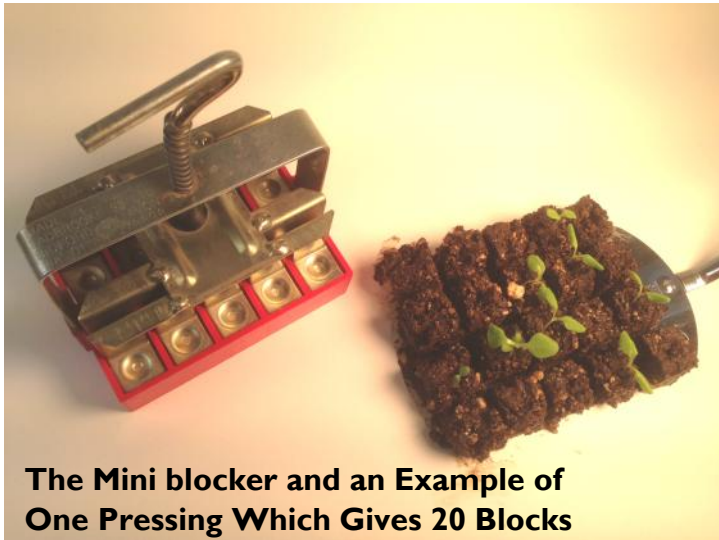
Here's a [link](#) to a video of Eliot Coleman making blocks.

We use the mini blocks to start head lettuce, peppers, tomatoes, herbs, and flowers. The mini blocks are put into the 2" blocks and then into the garden when ready. For larger tomato plants we will put the 2" blocks into a reusable 4" plastic pot and grow them a little longer before transplanting to the garden. We found the 4" soil blocker took too much soil mix and made the flats of plants too heavy. Cucurbits which are melons, pumpkins, squash, and cucumbers are started directly in the 2" blocks about 2 wks before we want to put them in the garden.

The seeds are started indoors under fluorescent lights and then finish growing in the small greenhouse which "hardens them off" before we set them in the garden. You can do this at home by setting them outside for a few days being mindful of low temperatures or too much wind. By doing this the plants will settle in and grow instead of "pouting" and suffering transplant shock.

If you choose a cloudy day (with a little rain is great) for setting out your plants they will do even better.

So listen to your inner child- play in the mud. Have fun and good food too!



The Mini blocker and an Example of One Pressing Which Gives 20 Blocks



The 2" Blocker and Some Blocks Ready for Mini Blocks



2" Blocks of Lettuce Ready for Setting in the Garden



Seedlings

Treasurer's \$ Report

1st Quarter 2013

Opening Balance Jan. 1, 2013	\$ 2651.59
Income	
Membership Dues	\$ 836.00
Donations	\$ 30.00
Total	\$ 866.00
Expenses	
Newsletter	\$ 170.00
Local Food Guide Sponsor	\$ 75.00
Hosting Gratuity	\$ 50.00
Business Entity Report	\$ 7.14
Room Deposit	\$ 50.00
Total	\$ 352.14

Closing Balance Mar. 31, 2013 \$ 3165.45

Respectfully submitted by Ron Clark, Treasurer

Ask us...!

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Jackie Martin's New Greenhouse

IOGA member Jackie Martin last Spring acquired a small 6'x8' greenhouse from Menards on sale for \$349 (plus tax). Her sister purchased the greenhouse for her on May 5 from a Menards store in Carmel. The greenhouse has an aluminum frame and is constructed with polycarbonate panels. This greenhouse currently lists for \$679 on the Menards [website](#) shipped free to a local store (plus tax).

Below is a photo of the outside of her greenhouse and a photo of the inside of her greenhouse showing lettuce growing on top of black barrels filled with water that act to absorb heat in the daytime and release it at night.

Jackie says, "I didn't get it assembled until The HOTTEST day in July, as it was a two person job. The instruction said four hours for two men. Well it took one 50+ woman and a 15 year old boy a day and a half in the 100° + sun! Of course we put in some parts wrong way up, redo, some outside in, redo, and some mistaken part #, redo. All in all a manageable project. So far it has held up under ice, snow, and high winds. My lettuce growing in trays above my water barrels is growing faster than that in my raised bed covered by a glass door. I love eating lunch in the teacher's lounge telling about my fresh picked organic lettuce from my greenhouse."



6'x8' Aluminum Framed Greenhouse

Menards website also indicates that you can get a [insert kit](#) to extend the greenhouse an additional four feet for \$349 with free delivery to a Menards store (plus tax). However, if you can buy the greenhouse on sale for \$349, you would do much better to buy two, merge them together, and get an additional eight foot extension. Jackie says, "getting a second greenhouse would be the thing to do, joining them would not be too hard a trick, as it is all standardized parts. You would end up with an extra end and an extra door end that you could use in making a hoop house fairly inexpensively."



Lettuce Growing on Top of Water Filled Black Barrels Inside Greenhouse



Jackie at the January IOGA Meeting

Help Your Garden Survive Extreme Weather

Increase Organic Material in Your Soil

Grow Cover Crops

Mulch!

As the world warms, extreme weather appears to be in the offering with too much water at some times and drought conditions at other times. Adding more organic material to your soil can increase the soil's water holding capacity while also protecting the soil from water runoff.

One can increase the organic material in your garden by adding compost, leaves, mulch, aged wood chips etc. However, one can also increase the organic material in your garden by planting cover crops like cereal rye in the fall. Jim Hoorman, assistant professor with Ohio State University (OSU) Extension says, "...one way growers can protect their crops from the increasing threats posed by extreme weather is to protect the soil through instituting cover crops which protect soil with live plants and help increase in soil carbon and soil organic matter." And, "One of the best ways to keep carbon in the soil is to increase roots in the soil, as 65 to 70 percent of soil carbon comes from roots. So using cover crops such as oilseed radish, legumes like winter peas and cereal rye keeps more carbon stored in the soil."

In order to adapt to extreme weather conditions, one should increase the organic material in your soil by 1) adding organic material directly and 2) growing cover crops. But, in addition, mulch your plants with compost or other organic material to help trap the moisture in the soil. The mulch will also be incorporated into the soil in subsequent seasons to further increase the organic material in the soil.

2013 Conservation Day at the Statehouse

The annual Conservation Day at the State Capitol took place on January 23rd. It was a very cold and blustery day. The event is sponsored by the Indiana Conservation Alliance (INCA) which is a group of approximately 30 organizations sharing a common interest in the protection, stewardship, and sustainable use of our natural resources. IOGA is a member of this organization. The program started at 1 pm in Government Center Auditorium with a presentation on INCA's 2013 legislative priorities.



INCA Crowd in State House Atrium

INCA's 2013 State Legislative Priorities:

- 1) \$2 million/year for the Indiana Heritage Trust
- 2) \$2.5 million/year for the Bicentennial Nature Trust
- 3) \$1.3 million/year for Clean Water Indiana and Indiana Department of Agriculture, Division of Soil
- 4) To support HB 1202/SB 546 (This would require retailers/lawn care professionals to provide consumer education on the need to reduce the use of lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus to protect water quality.)
- 5) To oppose HB 1194 (This would legalize the shooting of deer in fenced enclosures.)
- 6) To support passage of HB 1011 (This would improve and expand public transit in central Indiana.)

Following the presentations a reception was held in the Statehouse North Atrium. Each organization of INCA had an information table where they answered further questions from legislators and guests about the legislative priorities and also about their organization.

- *Charlie & Jane Gareri*

IOGA Mentoring Program

Do you have some gardening questions? Do you want to learn more about IOGA? If you are an IOGA member who would like a gardening mentor assigned to you, or if you are an IOGA member who would like to be a mentor, please contact Lynne Sullivan at sagaemoo@yahoo.com.

A mentor doesn't need to be an expert in all things organic gardening, but someone who is interested in connecting with others who are interested in learning more. While the level of involvement is up to each person, here are some things that mentors can do: 1) Reach out to the new member and welcome to the group, 2) Offer to carpool to meetings, and 3) Discuss gardening experiences and questions.

Earth Day Indiana *free outdoor festival*

Saturday April 27 • 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

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Mark your calendar

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

April 20, 2013
(Plant Auction)
July 20, 2013
October 19, 2013
January 18, 2014



New IOGA Members

Jon Thomas, Speedway, IN 46218
Amanda L. Grubbs, Zionsville, IN 46077
Steve and Karen Boleyn, Greenwood, IN 46143
Debbie Voepel, Indianapolis, IN 46256
Despi Ross, Indianapolis, IN 46228
Kym Varner, New Albany, IN 47150
Candace Nall, Indianapolis, IN 46239

NEW FOOD WASTE COMPOSTING SERVICE

IOGA has been contacted by Greg Walton about a new food waste composting service that provides food waste collection for composting from homes and businesses. See www.greenwithindy.com to get more information.

How do I join IOGA?

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.



IOGA
7282 E 550 S
Whitestown, IN 46075

Full Name
2nd Name (if dual membership)
Address
Phone Number
Email Address