



# Hoosier Organic Gardener

October, 2014

Indiana Organic Gardeners Association

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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.

## Dance of the Monarchs

So a few years ago, I wanted some milkweed in our backyard - partly for the monarch butterflies, but partly because I think they are amazing plants. The flowers are complex and fragrant, the mature seedpods are fun to play with on a breezy fall day, and it has an incredible defense mechanism - poisonous milky sap that deters most insects and animals from eating it. That is, except for the amazing monarch larvae, which are not affected by the poison. Monarch caterpillars eat only milkweed plants, which then in turn makes them unappetizing to predators.

I had seen some milkweed growing along a fencerow down the street behind a neighbor's house. So with shovel and bucket in hand, I walked down and asked if he would mind if I dug some up. With an expression mixed with disbelief and amusement, he responded that I could have all the milkweed I could find.

I learned that milkweed doesn't transplant well. Evidently, it has a very deep taproot that likes to stay where it is. So that fall, I gathered some of the pods of downy seed transporters, put the seeds in an envelope, then pressed them into the soil the following spring. Nada. Nothing. Undeterred, I took to the Internet where I learned that milkweed seeds need to go through winter cold to make them viable. So the next batch of seeds I placed in a moist paper towel, in a ziplock, and put them in the refrigerator until spring - a process called stratification.

Not long after planting the stratified seeds, little green stems and leaves started pushing up from the soil. Hooray! That was three years ago, and I now have a healthy stand of milkweed plants. Knowing that the number of monarchs is in decline, I was still disappointed that I had not seen any of the majestic butterflies - that was, until this spring. Over the last couple months, I saw an occasional monarch float around the milkweed taking sips of the nectar found in the fragrant flowers. But as the flowers gave way to thick seedpods, so went the monarchs.

Then just a few days ago as I let the dog out, I noticed a single monarch flitting about the milkweed. Rising, floating, then dipping from plant to plant, she landed on the underside of a leaf, depositing a single, little white egg. She went about her carefree frolic fluttering this direction, then that, until she would descend upon the chosen leaf. She deposited a single egg per plant, allowing each of her young caterpillars ample food to grow rapidly before building its chrysalis. The egg will hatch in 3-4 days, then a hungry caterpillar will eat the milkweed leaves for two weeks before it builds its chrysalis. It will remain in this state when two weeks later it will emerge as an adult monarch butterfly, just in time for its arduous journey to Mexico or California where it will spend its well-deserved winter vacation. (See page 3 for picture of the Monarch butterfly on Lynne's milkweed plant.)

Happy and Healthy Gardening!

Lynne



Lynne Sullivan  
IOGA President

# Wood Ashes

Wait! Don't throw away those ashes. Wood ashes from your fireplace can be used as a fertilizer for your garden and a way to increase the alkalinity of your soil. However, **Warning!** do not add wood ashes to soils with pH higher than 6.5 (for most plants) or on soils where you grow acid soil loving plants. Do not put ashes on areas in your garden where you will be growing potatoes.

Wood ashes are a good source of potassium (K), phosphorus (P), calcium (Ca), and magnesium (Mg), but no nitrogen (N). Wood ashes also contain trace amounts of other micronutrients needed for plant growth. Compared to commercial fertilizers, the (N-P-K) of wood ashes is about (0-1-3). Calcium is the most abundant element in wood ashes.

Wood ashes increase the pH of the soil. (Soil pH is a measure of how acid a soil is with a pH of 7.0 being neutral. Anything lower is acidic, and anything higher is alkaline. In general, most plants, but not all, like a slightly acidic pH of about 6.5.) A soil pH above 7.0 tends to reduce nutrient availability to the plants. The alkalinity of wood ashes is about one half that of agricultural lime.

If you have a high acid soil (low pH), adding wood ashes to your soil may be a beneficial way to increase the pH of your soil since you will also add some needed plant nutrients at the same time. Most plants prefer soil pH between 6.0 and 7.0. Some plants such as blueberries, potatoes, raspberries, strawberries, and sweet potatoes grow in acidic soil with a pH between 5.0 and 6.0. Other plants such as asparagus, beets, cabbage family, celery, green beans, lettuce, melons, okra, onions, parsley, spinach, swiss chard all like slightly alkaline soil with a pH between 7.0 and 8.0.

## Do's

1. Perform a soil pH test before applying wood ashes to your garden.
2. Collect ashes from fireplaces and stoves during the wood-burning months.
3. Store the ashes in a metal container with a watertight cover to keep the ashes dry until you spread them on your garden
4. Spread the ashes in the garden at the start of the planting season. Mixing the ashes into organic amendments and mulches before spreading will slow leaching
5. Mix the ashes thoroughly with your soil.
6. Use about five pound of ashes per 100 sq. ft.

## Don't's

1. Don't use wood ashes in excess.
2. Don't add wood ashes to your garden if the soil pH is greater than 6.5 (for most plants).
3. Don't add wood ashes to the part of your garden where you grow potatoes. (Because potatoes are increasingly prone to scab disease at a higher pH, they should be grown with a soil pH between 5.0 and 5.5)
4. Don't use wood ashes around acid loving plants
5. Don't spread wood ashes around newly planted seedlings or seeds.
6. Don't spread ashes too early—rain and snow will leach away the nutrients in the ashes.
7. Don't use wood ashes from treated lumber or fireplace "logs"

## Charcoal

The charcoal pieces in the wood ashes are also of great benefit to your garden. Charcoal has a honeycomb-like structure with a huge surface area that provides a perfect habitat for beneficial soil microorganisms to



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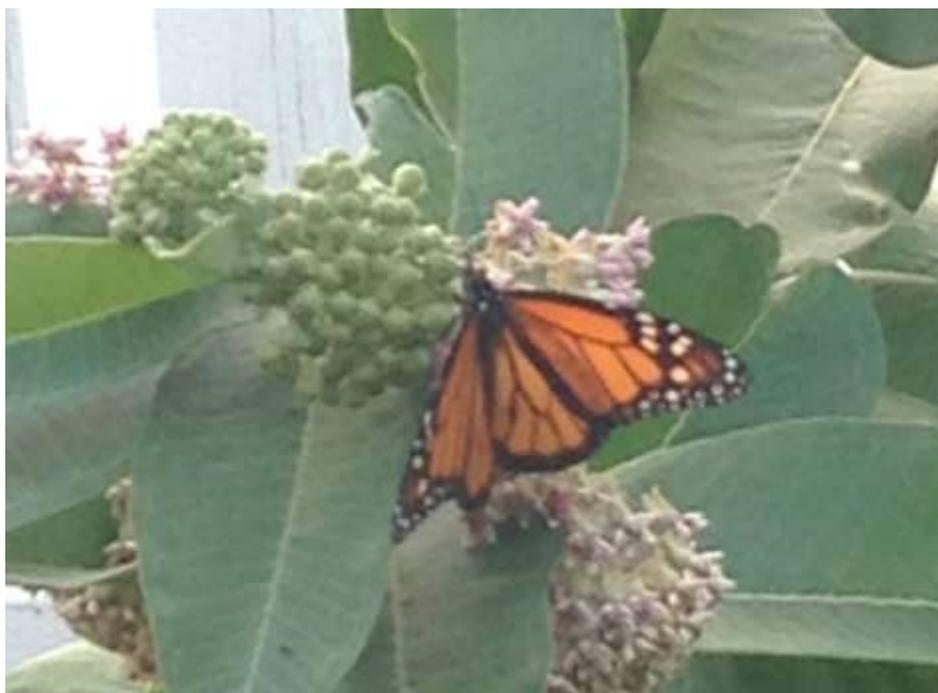
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flourish. Charcoal acts like a sponge, holding moisture and lessening the risk of drought. Charcoal also helps to hold plant nutrients, preventing them from leaching out of the soil. Charcoal does not decompose and will stay in the soil for decades.

### **Other Uses for Wood Ashes in the Garden**

**Root Maggots:** Wood ash will discourage root maggots that attack crops in the cabbage family (broccoli, cauliflower, etc), radishes, and onions. Spread wood ashes around the stem of the plants or along the row for radishes. Reapply the wood ashes after every rain.

**Slugs a Problem?** Place a ring of wood ashes around your plants to deter slugs. Wood ashes are caustic and slugs don't like them. Reapply the wood ashes after every rain. But remember too much ashes will increase the soil pH so use sparingly and use them only where the increase in soil pH will not affect the growth of your plants.



**Monarch Butterfly on a Milkweed Flower in Lynne Sullivan's Backyard**

# July IOGA Meeting

The July 19 IOGA meeting was at White Violet Center for ECO Justice on the campus of St Mary-of-the-Woods College northwest of Terre Haute, IN. The meeting started with members introducing themselves and telling how their gardens were doing. It was noted that the hard winter had had its effects, but overall gardens were doing well. Many reported big tomato plants but no ripe tomatoes yet. However, Anne Matzek, who lives further south near the Ohio river, said her two tomato plants were really producing. One plant is a determinate, in which the tomatoes come on all at once (a good choice if you want to can or freeze). The other plant is indeterminate, and thus keeps producing all season. Of note, Rutgers is a determinate tomato that was developed by the Campbell's Soup Company in the 1930's.

Ron and Claudia Clark had lots of cucumbers, zucchini, strawberries and raspberries, but few blackberries. Jackie Martin had had good asparagus and strawberries. She also had kale, Swiss chard, volunteer pumpkins, potatoes, and sweet corn, some of which was almost ready to eat. Deppie Voepel reported powdery mildew on some zucchini leaves. It was suggested that once powder mildew has started it is difficult to stop. You must treat it preventively.

Heidi Watson grows daikon, a large white radish. It can be prepared in several ways and is quite nutritious. She peels and chops it up, steams it for twenty minutes, and pours sesame seed oil or a special Taiwanese sauce over it. The greens can be eaten raw like celery. Another member had not planted squash for a few years because of squash bugs, but not having seen the bugs this year, felt it was okay to try again.

We were all grateful to Tina Hill, Anne Matzek's daughter, who took on the project of developing our new website and did a great job.

The Question & Answer period provided more useful information. One member asked about watering and learned that on a sunny day it is best to water early in the morning, watering the soil and roots directly. Kale, which comes in red and green, is just as easy to grow as Swiss chard and even



more nutritious. Doug Rhode has been growing huge tomatoes in his raised beds.

The Business Meeting was next. Lynne Sullivan said *Farm Indiana*, a small newspaper, has contacted her, and they may want to feature our organization in their paper. They were also putting together a cookbook. Our members could submit recipes by sending them on line by July 27. Our mentoring program is going well. Those who wish to participate in it should contact Lynne. Lynne said we have had 11,017 contacts on our Facebook account, from people near and far.

Those with program ideas should tell Karen Nelson, our Vice President, about them. Finding a speaker is not as difficult as locating organic gardens to visit. Altum's has interesting workshops every weekend, which could be a resource for future programs. Paul Gaston has some friends who could give a program.

Lynne pointed out that shirts, bags, and caps, all with our logo on them, were available for sale.

Following the Business Meeting, we all enjoyed the delicious pitch-in lunch. After lunch, Candace Minster of the White Violet Center started the program by telling us the history of the Center. The Center is a ministry of the Sisters of Providence, and its purpose is to foster a way of living that recognizes the interdependence of all living things. The Center manages the 343 acres of Indiana state certified organic cropland. They have about five acres of organically grown gardens and two acres of organically grown orchards.



Candace Minster of the White Violet Center

In the past the sisters had a cannery, meat house, and orchards, which enabled them to be almost self-sustaining. Then as their numbers declined and the sisters had less and less time to be out on the grounds, they started buying food from the outside. Now, with the help of many volunteers (currently 72) who help with the gardening, the Saturday morning farmer's market, and the alpaca morning chores, the farm has returned to its past and gotten back to nature. Some of the food produced is given to local food banks.

The Center has about 55 animals, including the alpacas, the chickens, and one llama. They have a no-kill policy, which means that animals are never slaughtered. The wool from the alpacas is made into garments that are sold in the newly-opened gift shop, and the chickens supply eggs. Unfortunately, last summer the flock was decimated when raccoons got into the coop and killed all the chickens. This spring thirty-five baby chicks arrived via the mail, and we got to see the young chickens on our tour.

Candace took us on a tour of the gardens. We first saw a reflection garden with a pond, flower gardens, and some old orchards of pear, cherry, and peach trees. We saw a high tunnel which is a plastic greenhouse with open sides. The tunnel had kale, melons, Swiss chard, and carrots growing in it. The kale will bolt if it is planted too early in the season. The temperature in the tunnels must be monitored constantly, especially on sunny days. We also saw some smaller tunnels. The real greenhouse was currently being used to dry garlic.

To avoid transplant shock the gardens use a soil block system where the seedlings develop a strong root system. By the time they go into the ground, transplant shock is minimized. The soil blocks contain a rich mixture of compost and other nutrients.

The gardens use buckwheat, clover, and vetch as cover crops to smother the weeds. Since these cover crops are all legumes, they also add nitrogen to the soil. Their raspberries had been troubled by a fruit fly with spotted wings that lays its eggs on the unripe fruit. Some varieties of berries are more susceptible than others. We got to see ground cherries, an interesting plant similar to a tomatillo. The husk of the small, sweet-tasting fruits are removed before eating. The foliage is poisonous since it is in the nightshade family.

As our visit to the White Violet Center ended, we all agreed that it had been a most informative and inspiring day.

- Margaret Smith, Secretary



Some of the White Violet Center's Alpacas



Tamara Shockley During the Q&A Portion of the IOGA Meeting. James Hill (Back)



Heidi Watson (Left) Discusses Her Preparation of Daikon Radishes. Barb Jessie (Right)

## IOGA Meeting at the White Violet Center



Candace Minster Answers Questions During the Farm Tour. Note the Tunnel Frame Structure Over the Basil Plants in the Raised Bed, Getting Ready for the Fall Cold.

# Veggie Review - Asparagus Beans

by Paul Matzek



Asparagus Beans



**Asparagus Beans Climbing Paul's 16 ft  
Cattle Panel Doubled Over**

One of last year's (2013) experiments was Asparagus Beans (Yardlong Beans, Snake Beans, Chinese Long Beans). It must have been in the full of the moon when I ordered the seeds, since we have green beans in the pantry and the freezer from 2011 and 2012. They had caught my eye and curiosity a few times, so I got sucked in. The thought of picking one bean and having the equivalent of three of four normal beans intrigued me.

Considering the current bean supply, though, I planted only two five ft. rows, and 10-12 plants emerged. When they started vineing in earnest, we bent a 16 ft cattle panel double and stood it over the rows, making a trellis about seven ft. tall, considering the rounded top. The plants took their time reaching the top, then proceeded to amass there.

In time blossoms appeared, large whitish double blossoms on each blossom stem, from which twin beans soon appeared. Once they reached harvest size, Annie picked beans every morning and when she had enough for a batch, canned them. And then picked more, and more.

The squash in the same bed had succumbed to a virus carried by cucumber beetles. Since we already had too many beans, I tore out both crops and planted experimental plots to test some new soil amendments, which will be fodder for a future article.

Asparagus Beans are also called Yardlong Beans and could very well get that long if left to grow, but are best picked at about 18 inches. They are a good tasting bean, quite stringless, and great producers. They look great snapped to the length that will stand up in a pint jar, then packed vertically. We probably will grow some more. Well, maybe in 2016.

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

# Share Your Garden with a Child

by Ann Niednagel

What is one of your first memories or fondest memories of being outside? How old were you? Where were you? If we were in a room together today, I would have you each share these memories. I have done this with other groups and learned about lassoing a June beetle while at grandmas, hugging a giant oak in the neighborhood, or roaming the fields beside a subdivision hunting for critters to sell to friends. One of my stories includes walking over to the Otten's (Claudia Clark's childhood home) and getting to stay up past my bedtime to watch the evening primrose bloom. Today, because of an IOGA auction years ago, I have the same evening primrose in my yard, and I hope to invite my neighbor's children over to experience the sense of wonder I see each time they bloom.



I would bet most of the trips down memory lane for you had to do with childhood memories. In these early years, we were exposed to and experienced our natural environment around us. Our stories are endless.

However, for children today these stories are not so endless. Children spend much less time outdoors and more time in front of screens. Studies showed that in 2010 the average American child spent more than 50 hours/week in front of a screen inside – that is more than 7 hours per day (Kaiser Family Foundation Study, 2010). That statistic continues to rise. Children have less unstructured, creative play in the outdoors than ever before in human history. Parents are scared to allow children to adventure around because of the perceived dangers present outside. The radius around children's homes that they are allowed to roam on their own has shrunk to a ninth of what it was in the 1970's (Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, 2005). However, it is as safe now as it was then to roam the neighborhood.

In his book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children From Nature Deficit Disorder*, Richard Louv directly links the absence of nature in the lives of today's wired generation to some of the most disturbing childhood trends: the rise in obesity, attention disorders, and depression. This was the first book to bring together a body of research indicating that direct exposure to nature is essential for healthy childhood development and for the physical and emotional health of children and adults.

As a result, this book inspired a national and international grassroots movement to get children outside. To support this effort, the Children & Nature Network (C&NN) [www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org) was developed to collate research, connect local organizers, and provide 'how to' materials. There are over 100 collaborations around the country that bring together people from many aspects of society such as the health community, governments, nature organizations, scouts, preschools, schools, etc. to encourage outdoor play. Organizations work with pediatricians, mother's groups, neighborhood associations, daycares, and more.

Indiana is joining the national movement to get children outdoors by starting our own regional project, the Indiana Children and Nature Network (ICAN) [www.IndianaChildrenAndNature.org](http://www.IndianaChildrenAndNature.org). This project fosters collaborative efforts to encourage children to spend time outdoors. ICAN will bring together government, businesses, nonprofits, academia, individuals, and families to impact a societal change that allows and encourages children to spend more time outdoors.

The mission of ICAN is to connect children, families and communities to the natural environment so they can receive the physical, emotional and intellectual benefits of being outdoors, while building a lifelong love of nature. ICAN will do this by raising awareness of the physical, emotional and spiritual health benefits of connecting children with nature, promoting unstructured play and time outdoors for children and adults with family nature clubs, engaging a diverse network of people fostering collaboration.

ICAN is a project of the Environmental Education Association of Indiana (EEAI) [www.eeai.org](http://www.eeai.org), a 501(c)(3) professional environmental education organization.

As a long time, albeit not too active, IOGA member I recognize the importance of making our natural spaces healthy and safe by using organic practices. I invite all of you to share your love of being outdoors with some children. Check out the ICAN website to see how you can get involved, or simply ask a child and/or family over to share in the wonder your garden provides. **Share a bloom!**

*Ann Niednagel is an IOGA member living in Indianapolis, Indiana*

## \$ Treasurer's Report \$

3rd Quarter 2014

**Opening Balance July 1, 2013      \$ 4981.01**

**Income**

T-Shirt Sales                                 \$    25.00

Membership Dues                             \$    30.00

**Total     \$    55.00**

**Expenses**

Newsletter (Stamps)                        \$    58.80

Website Construction                        \$  350.00

Hosting Gratuity                               \$    120.00

**Total     \$  528.80**

**Closing Balance Sept. 30, 2014      \$ 4507.21**

*Respectfully submitted by Ron Clark, Treasurer*

## Ask us...!

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## UPCOMING MEETINGS

Mark your calendar

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

- October 18, 2014
- January 17, 2015
- April 18, 2015  
(Plant Auction)
- July 19, 2015



## New IOGA Member

Leslie Warner, Indianapolis, IN 46280



## 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

**IOGA  
Meeting  
Sat. Oct. 18  
11:00 am**

## Fields of Agape at the Carthage Mill

201 East 2nd St.

Carthage, IN 46115 ([Map](#))

10:00 — 11:00 *Carthage Co-op Market Purchases (Optional)*

11:00 — 11:15 Arrive and Welcome Guests

11:15 — 12:00 Introductions & Gardening Q&A

12:00 — 12:30 Great Pitch-in Lunch

12:30 — 12:45 Business Meeting

12:45 — 1:30 Fields of Agape Presentation

1:30 — 3:30 *Field Tour (Optional)*

1:30 — 4:00 *Carthage Co-op Market Purchases (Optional)*

Meeting: Fields of Agape is a 100% certified organic grain, seed, and bean cooperative located 40 miles east of Indianapolis. We will meet at the Carthage Mill, a newly renovated historic lumber mill which also houses the Carthage Co-op Market, that will be open for purchases (10:00 am to 4:00 pm). Various organic garden items as well as flour, flax, and beans will be for sale. Owner Anna Welch will describe the crops they are growing, including wheat, soybeans, beans, and others. Afterwards, a four mile wagon ride to the fields is optional.

Pitch-in lunch: Bring a favorite dish filled with food ("home-made" and/or "organic" appreciated) to share and your plate, fork, and drink.

Directions: From I-70 take Exit 115 south onto SR-109 towards Knightstown. Go 3.5 miles south on SR-109 to Knightstown and turn left (east) onto US-40/ W Main St. Go east 0.3 miles and turn right (south) onto IN-140/ S Jefferson St. Go 0.9 miles and turn right (southwest) onto N Carthage Pike. Go 4.0 miles to Carthage and turn left (south) onto E 2nd St.. Go two blocks to the Carthage Mill on the left at 201 E 2nd St. (southeast corner of E 2nd St. and N Walnut St.)

Everyone welcome! Questions, or if lost, call Karen Nelson cell phone (317) 366-1954.

Remember to car pool, if possible.

Join us and bring a friend!

Hoosier Organic Gardener  
Claudia and Ron Clark, editors  
7282 E 550 S  
Whitestown, IN 46075



**Join us!  
IOGA Meeting  
Sat. Oct. 18**