



July 2015

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.

The Chinese Mantis

by Tony Branam

It seems we spend a lot of time and energy on controlling insect pests in our gardens and farms, but give little or no consideration to the beneficial insects who can be our allies. Organic growers, though usually more holistic in approach, can be just as guilty of the indiscriminate application of natural and/or organic pesticides. It is ingrained in our psyche to control what we fear, don't understand or just find creepy, leading us to kill any and all bugs, good or bad. It's time to allow for a more natural approach.



Chinese Mantis Approx.
5 Inches Long

Over the past five years of gardening naturally, I have observed an increased number of beneficial insects such as honeybees, ladybugs, lacewings, gall wasps and garden spiders. However, in 2014 the top predator in my garden hands down was the praying mantis. I was able to count three mantises at one time within one row of tomatillos alone; and judging by the number of egg cases found, more were lurking about in the garden foliage.

I was surprised to learn the praying mantis I am so familiar with in my garden is actually the Chinese mantis (*Tenodera aridifolia sinensis*). This insect was introduced into the United States from China in the 1890s as predators for the purpose of controlling pest insects. There are 20 species of mantis in the U.S., including the non-natives from Asia and Europe. The Chinese mantis grows to an overall length of about 5 inches, while the native Carolina mantis (*Stagmomantis Carolina*) only grows to 2.5 inches long. The Missouri Department of Conservation provides a good description of the Chinese mantis at <http://mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/praying-mantis-0>.

The life cycle of most mantises is similar, with egg cases of 100 to 300 eggs hatching in late spring. Once hatched, the young mantis nymphs begin eating anything they can catch — including one another — and continue to grow to adulthood by late summer. Breeding occurs in late summer to early autumn, with the notorious females often eating their male partners. The general life span of a praying mantis in the northern U.S. is one year, assuming they aren't eaten by a sibling when hatching or consumed by their sexual partner as an adult.

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The egg case is a light brown, hard foam pod attached to clumpy plant stems, shrub twigs or tomatoes cages as seen in the photo. I have found nine egg cases so far around my lawn and gardens, and all have been about waist high off the ground on outer south or east sides of the plants. The placement of the egg cases is intentional to ensure warmth, dryness and good air circulation until hatching in the spring. I mention clumpy plants and shrubs because the dense foliage will provide refuge for the nymphs upon hatching and ambush cover for adults. If you find or purchase mantis egg cases, you can relocate them to your gardens by attaching them to a sturdy stake or tree limb at a height of 3 feet in full sun.

As mentioned earlier, the Chinese mantis was imported to the U.S for the purpose of controlling insect pests, and their role and importance have not changed since. In an article published in the April 2006 issue of BioScience, authors John E. Losey and Mace Vaughan estimate the economic benefit of natural insect control on American agriculture in 2003 at \$4.5 billion annually. The contributions by praying mantises in controlling insect pests begins once they hatch and begin feeding on aphids, mites and other small, slow-moving insects (Yepsen, 1984). As the mantis molts and grows in size, so does its appetite for non-specific prey of flies, hornets, beetles, grasshoppers, stinkbugs, salamanders and possibly rodents. My sworn garden enemy is the cucumber beetle, and in 2014 I saw very few of these bacteria-laden beetles. I can only assume the low numbers of these and other pests can be directly attributed to the high numbers of Chinese mantises.



Praying Mantis Egg Case

Literature Cited and Additional Sources:

Losey, John E. and Mace Vaughn, The Economic Value of Ecological Services Provided by Insects, BioScience magazine, April 2006, Vol. 56, No. 4, pp 311 – 323.

Yepsen, Riger B. Jr., editor, The Encyclopedia of Natural Insect & Disease Control, 1984, Rodale Press, Inc., Emmaus, PA.

<http://gardeninsects.com/prayingMantis.asp>

<http://insects.about.com/od/roachesandmantids/p/mantodea.htm>

<http://www.theprayingmantis.org/>

<http://prayingmantisfacts.com/>

Election of Officers at the October Meeting

IOPA members will elect officers for a two year term at the IOPA October meeting. The elected officers will take office in January. The IOPA offices and their duties are the following:

President: The President presides at meetings, appoints the newsletter editor and committees, and provides executive oversight of IOPA activities.

Vice President and Program Director: The Vice President / Program Director arranges for meeting places, programs, speakers, etc.

Secretary: The Secretary keeps minutes of meetings and serves as corresponding secretary to other organizations.

Treasurer: The Treasurer is in charge of dues and finances, keeps the membership list current, and keeps the not-for-profit status of IOPA current.

The President appoints a nominating committee in July. The nominating committee presents a slate of officers to be voted on at the October meeting. If you wish to serve on the nominating committee or be an officer, please contact Lynne Sullivan sagaemoo@yahoo.com

April IOGA Meeting

The spring meeting of the Indiana Organic Gardener' Association took place at the Zionsville Library. The meeting started at noon following the delicious pitch-in luncheon.

One member asked where organic, non-GMO seeds can be purchased. Lynne suggested that a list of these seed companies be compiled and put in the newsletter or sent out by group email. Likewise, members should let Lynne know of any useful tips, such as good sources of free compost.

(Editors' note: most non commercial seed companies sell only non-GMO seeds and many of the companies have a selection of organic seeds. Two companies, [High Mowing Organic Seeds](#) and [Seeds of Change](#) sell only organic seeds. In the Indianapolis area High Mowing seeds are sold at the [Georgetown Market](#), [Agrarian](#), [Good Earth Food Company](#), Fishers Ace Hardware, and [Tuttle Orchards](#). Some organic seeds, mostly from [Burpee](#), can be found at several locations locally including [Lowes](#) and [Home Depot](#).)

Jennifer Kost-Baker is looking for a good source of bulk soil/compost/mulch. [GreenCycle](#) at its various Indianapolis locations would be one source. The five pound bags of worm castings from [Sophia Organic](#) would be helpful. Compost and soil with high peat content is quite acidic and hard on the

environment. Thus gardeners should try to buy compost and soil with the least amount of peat in it, although sphagnum peat moss may not be as bad.

Another member asked about tumbler composters, which are acceptable if space is limited. However, a regular compost heap that is in contact with the ground is preferable since worms and other breakdown organisms can get into it. If critters are a problem, a fence should be built around the compost heap. If chemically treated grass is put on the heap or on the garden directly, it will have a negative effect for years.

The owner of [Urban Farmer](#) would like five more people to grow plants for seed, but it is a time consuming process. Paul Gaston sent a letter about Senate Bill 60 (on genetically modified food), but he got a letter back saying this is an issue best left to the federal government.

Paul Matzek divided his asparagus last fall, and after replanting, it is doing well. Lynne Sullivan had not cut hers back, and this seems to have brought on the asparagus beetles. Yet another who had not cut back did not seem to have the beetle problem. Some seem to have had luck with putting salt on the asparagus to kill the pests.

Karen Nelson will be gone for two weeks in July and wondered if placing straw between the plant rows would be an effective way to keep out weeds.



IOGA Members and Guests Getting Ready for the IOGA Plant & Garden Auction

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Most thought this would be a good idea. Karen and husband Don will be moving to Minnesota. We will certainly miss them. Karen is our current IOGA vice president. We will need a new vice president to replace Karen. The vice president's job is planning programs for our meetings. Karen has a few ideas for our July meeting and future meetings. Lynne also mentioned that IOGA shirts, bags, and hats are available for sale at the meeting.

A short business meeting was next. Lynne announced that Earth Day is April 25, and that two more people were needed to handle the IOGA booth at the White River Park in Indianapolis. As it turned out, no one volunteered; so we did not participate in Earth Day festival this year. (Editors' note: Non participation this year may have been just as well due to the severe rain storms that occurred that day. We will do better next year.)

Then it was time for the plant and garden auction with Ron and Claudia Clark in charge.

Twenty different types of tomatoes were auctioned.

After the tomatoes were all gone, other plants and items were auctioned that included eggs, various wildflowers and perennials. Strawberries, raspberries, pepper plants, and even celery plants were auctioned too.

Some of the most unusual items were tall sticks, carved to a point at one end and on the other end were tied two praying mantis egg cases. The stick can be thrust into the ground and the praying mantis can thus be put right into the garden.

An extremely impressive basket of home-canned pickles and other canned vegetables was a big hit.

Proceeds from the auction were \$708. The sale of IOGA bags, shirts, and caps brought in an additional \$50. The meeting was attended by 38 IOGA members and 5 visitors.

- Margaret Smith, Secretary



IOGA President Lynne Sullivan Conduction the Business Meeting



Some of the Plants Ready for the Auction

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Following the Auction IOGA Members and Guests were Able to Purchase these Books for a Small Donation.



Kathy Ambler Brought Two of These Beautiful Gourd Bird House that She Made to the Auction



For the Auction Tony Branum Brought Praying Mantis Egg Cases Tied to Stakes Ready to be Placed in Your Garden

LETTERS:



Letter from Beulah

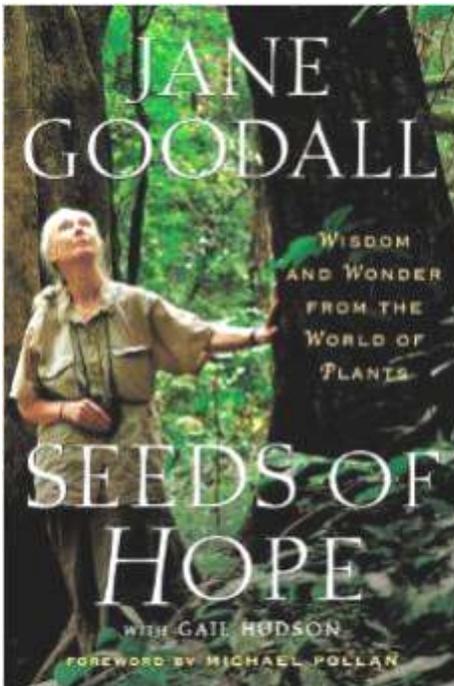
(Editors' note: Beulah and Clarence Cobb are the only charter members of IOGA still members of IOGA. Beulah attended the first organizational meeting of IOGA in the early 1970s.)

March 27, 2015

I found this book "Seeds of Hope" and I immediately ordered extra copies to give to interested friends. I think everybody that thinks about our EARTH should read it.

Enjoy the book.

Beulah Cobb



Seeds of Hope: Wisdom and Wonder from the World of Plants, Jane Goodall and Gail Hudson (Foreword by Michael Pollan), Grand Central Publishing, August 27, 2013.

Seeds

April 21, 2015

I order a lot of my seeds from Annie's Heirloom Seeds in Michigan and usually have good luck. They moved their farm to Beaver Island about two years ago in an effort to isolate themselves from the winds of Monsanto.

I also order from Seed Savers Exchange. Their website states they are a not for profit 501(c)3 and I thought they shipped seeds/plants from various locations across the country in an effort to match your climate conditions. I ordered pepper transplants last year and they came from Michigan.

I enjoyed the plant sale and seeing everyone again.

Tony Branam



A Frog Took Up Residence in Our Bird House this Summer

Editors' Corner

An Interesting Design for a Raised Bed Garden

Last winter while visiting Florida we decided to take a guided tour of the ECHO Experimental Farm near Ft. Myers. The purpose of the [ECHO](#) organization is to fight world hunger and improve the lives of small scale farmers worldwide. At their experimental farm in Florida they work to identify, validate, document and disseminate the best practices in sustainable agriculture and appropriate technology.

Below is a unique raised bed that we saw on the tour. We thought this esthetical and functional design might appeal to the more artistic, raised-bed gardeners in our group

By the way if you are ever near Ft. Myers you might wish to take a guided tour of the farm. [ECHO's Global Farm Tour](#) is a fascinating guided, walking tour of the most creative working farm you have ever experienced. You will find demonstrations, plants, and techniques useful to farmers and urban gardeners in developing countries and might find a few ideas to apply to your own garden.

An Interesting Design for a Raised-Bed Garden at the ECHO Experimental Farm Using Locally Available Materials



Spring Planting

by Paul Matzek

The Ides of March, 2015, and warm weather being upon us, Annie and I started the garden. While she cleared some flower beds, I raked the mulch off the vegetable beds. Having been protected from pounding winter rains by a six inch layer of leaves, the ground was easy to rake and smooth. Last fall, theorizing that, since Mother Nature leaves nothing uncovered long, and that she knows far more about growing things than I do, and that there was probably a reason for this, I covered all the beds with the deluge of leaves we received.

I had planted peas in February when the winter was mild and it felt like spring was close. To help things along I had covered the row with clear plastic. Then winter hit in earnest. There were no peas showing when I pulled back the plastic, but there were vole tunnels and I was concerned they had feasted on the pea seeds in the miniature greenhouse I had made them while it was covered in a foot of snow. But careful digging revealed a seed with a root and a sprout, both about a half inch long. I should get one plant at least.



It is confession time. Several years ago I expounded upon the difficulties I had getting a stand of sweet corn started, blaming moles for eating the seed. In my ignorance, I was off- but only by one letter. Moles are carnivorous, eating grubs and worms. Voles eat seeds and plant parts, etc., and were the villains. My apologies to the mole population in our yard for so maligning them.

Though we don't enjoy bouncing over the mounds with the lawnmower, I do believe the burrowing rodents serve a purpose, as do most blessings and plagues nature gives us. The tunnels most certainly help rain water percolate into the soil, and allow air for plant roots. So I don't mind coexisting with diggers until they start damaging vegetables excessively. Annie's tabby cat, aka the "Grey Death" in rodent circles, has thinned the vole population noticeably. I'm sure she didn't bring all she caught into the house for our admiration, so she probably took out three of four a day all summer and fall. At any rate, for the first time, we had no teeth marks on our sweet potatoes.

But I digress. We planted onions, carrots, lettuce, cabbage and broccoli seed, beet, radish and more pea. The ground would have been too wet for traditional tilling of the beds, but after seven years of improving the soil, tilling is kind of pointless unless we have to pull up hills for sweet potatoes.. We just rake and plant. And evidence shows there are still enough voles to carry on their work of conditioning the soil.

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



Purdue University

Vole



Purdue University

Mole

\$ Treasurer's Report \$

2nd Quarter 2015

Opening Balance April 1, 2015 \$ 4435.87

Income

Membership Dues	\$ 208.00
Plant & Garden Auction	\$ 708.00
IOGA T-Shirt/Bags Sales	\$ 50.00
AmazonSmile Foundation	\$ 5.00
<u>Room Deposit Refund</u>	<u>\$ 100.00</u>
Total	\$ 1071.00

Expenses

<u>Website Repair</u>	<u>\$ 100.00</u>
Total	\$ 100.00

Closing Balance June 30, 2015 \$ 5406.87

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.

- July 18, 2015
- October 18, 2015
- January 16, 2016
- April 16, 2016
(Plant Auction)



New IOGA Members

- Jaci Johnson, Carlyle, IL 62231
- John & Jane Herbst, Sellersburg IN 47172
- Tara Renner, Indianapolis, IN 46280
- Bill Spitz, Zionsville, IN 46077



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. July 18
11:00 am**

July Meeting at the Home of Ron and Claudia Clark
7282 E 550 S
Whitestown, IN 46075 ([Map](#))
11:00 Arrive and Welcome Guests
11:15—12:00 Great Pitch-in Lunch
12:00— 1:00 Introductions & Gardening Q&A
1:00— 1:15 Business Meeting
1:15— Garden Tour

Meeting: The July meeting will be held at the residence of Ron and Claudia Clark in Boone County west of Zionsville. Following our regular meeting we will have a tour of the Clarks' gardens. Bring additional chairs for outdoor meeting.

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-65 North take the Zionsville/Whitestown Exit 130. Go east on Whitestown Parkway (old S.R.-334) 1.0 miles to C.R. 700 E. Turn left (north) on C.R. 700 and go 0.9 miles to C.R. 550 S. Turn right (east) on C.R. 550 S and go 0.3 miles to your destination on the north side of the road. Look for an IOGA sign and a black mailbox with 7282 on it. (For precise directions and time of travel from your home, click the word "Map" above, then "Directions" in the upper left part of the web page, enter your home address, and click "Get Directions".)

Everyone welcome! Questions, or if lost, call Lynne Sullivan cell phone (317) 313-0693 .

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. July 18**