

IOGA



# Hoosier Organic Gardener

January, 2016

Indiana Organic Gardeners Association

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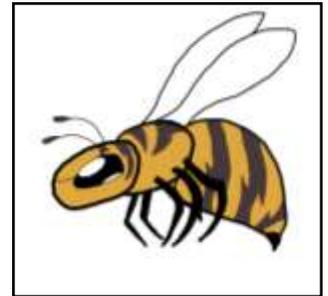
## IOGA MISSION:

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.

## President's Message

Here we are, 2016 and into January. When January 1st arrives I always think that no matter what the weather does, Spring is on the way and getting closer. Seed catalogs are arriving or will be shortly and that's a definite sign!

As your new president, I'll do a good job. I'm a real organic type. I'm also a Master Gardener (MG) so if you have the inclination to learn a lot more about gardening, I certainly recommend signing up for the MG course. It's a bit of work and effort but you'll sure learn a lot. I'm also a member of the Indiana Plant and Wildflower Society (INPAWS) which is another outstanding organization that you might find interesting. I attend the annual Indiana Beekeepers School and Purdue's Pollinator meetings several times a year. I try to make organic gardening a complete circle of life as everything growing is dependent on the other forces around it whether it be the mycelium underground, the bacteria in the soil, the plants themselves, the weather, the sun and moon and pollinators, they are all inter-connected.



IOGA has great board members with Margaret Smith moving up from Secretary to Vice-President, Kathleen Krueger as Secretary, and Ron Clark returning as Treasurer. Claudia Clark, of course, is the co-editor of the newsletter, along with Ron. In addition to our annual IOGA Plant & Garden Auction next April 16, on Earth Day April 23, we also staff the IOGA table/booth, downtown. Ron, Claudia, Ann Leatherman, Paul Gaston, myself and numerous others have an interesting day as we represent IOGA. We field a lot of organic gardening questions, meet some wonderful gardeners, wannabe gardeners along with observing some of the more "unusual" people on the earth but it's a lot of fun.

A lot of us are big composters. I compost almost everything that is recommended to be composted. In fact, after visiting Larry and LaVella Bills neat house and garden last October, looking at their extremely well-made raised beds and the great compost bins, I made a new one. My old wooden one had seen it's last days so now I have another one, perhaps not quite as good as Larry's but it'll take second place.

We'll be planning things to do, organic places to visit and hold our meetings as well as putting out more interesting articles in the IOGA newsletters. Please send in your thoughts, articles, great ideas and pictures to Ron/Claudia for the newsletter. I'll do my part and keep you informed on gardening, pollinators, as well as our nemesis "neonicotinoids".

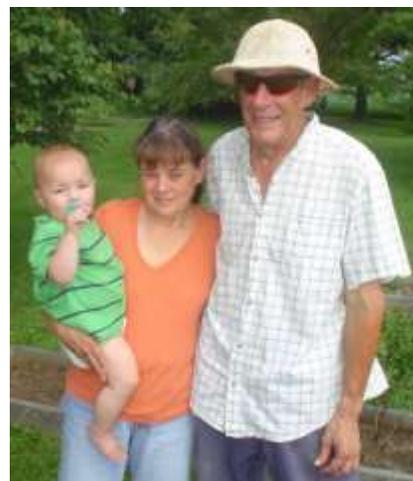
Keep IOGA organic! Doug (Rohde)

# TWENTY SIX RAISED BEDS!

(Last summer your editors visited the home and gardens of IOGA members Larry and LaVella Bills. We were so impressed with their gardens that we encouraged the Bills to host the IOGA October meeting in the Fall which they agreed to do. (See October IOGA Meeting.)

Larry and LaVella Bills live in an old farm house in rural Tipton on less than an acre that is filled with 26 raised beds! It is truly impressive. The beds are 4x8 feet and are packed with both vegetables and three beds of buckwheat used as a cover crop. They use a spreadsheet to be sure they rotate the crops each year. This year's buckwheat will be a vegetable next year. Where there are beans this year, another crop will be grown the following year.

They are experimenting with planting buckwheat on top of this year's potato crop, removing the vines and leaving the potatoes in the ground, and then planting the buckwheat on top. Buckwheat dies and rots so it does not have to be removed from a bed before spring planting of another crop. When planting potatoes, they dig a shallow hole, place the potatoes in the hole, and then build their hill on top of the potatoes. As the potatoes grow, they cover the hill of potatoes completely with dirt, even covering most of the leaves.



**Larry & LaVella Bills with Their Grandson**



**One raised bed with Russian Kale and Cucumbers Climbing a Trellis**

They plant Contender and Topcrop and Blue Lake beans, varieties your editors have also found that work well in Indiana. They plant nasturtiums to help prevent squash bugs on the cantalope. They spread rock salt on their asparagus to help with weed control. To prevent fungus and powdery mildew like we have had last summer, they spray a mix of 1 T. baking soda, 2 ½ T. vegetable oil, and ½ tsp. of liquid castile soap in one quart of water. They spray only as needed, after first seeing evidence of fungus.

To help eliminate the Colorado potato beetles, they use Spinosad. They use it only after they start seeing

A new crop this year is Kalette, a combination of kale and Brussels sprouts developed in the United Kingdom and available through Johnny's Seeds. They always plant Russian kale because the taste is not as strong as regular kale and it takes the heat of hot summer days. They plant a lot of Daikon, the long rooted white radish, just to loosen up the soil.

To start a new bed, they dig down one spade (about 8 inches) in depth and fill the rest of the bed with compost that is mixed with the soil, like double digging. The total depth of the soil and compost is about 12 inches. They plant multiple vegetables in each bed, and have cucumbers on a trellis in the middle of the other vegetables. It seems to work very well, as the plants all looked very healthy.



**Buckwheat Cover Crop**

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bugs. (Your editors use Spinosad alternatively with BT (Bacillus thuringiensis) to combat problems with worms that occur on broccoli and cabbages.)



**Hand-Made, Three-Compartment Compost Bin**

The Bills plant garlic cloves in October and harvest them in June or July. They dry them on a swing for two to three weeks. They also grow herbs and have Egyptian walking onions. They have a big hand-made compost bin on the edge of the garden.

We asked the Bills why they started using raised beds and they said because they are labor saving. They really like raised beds and use them at the one acre community garden where Larry works about eight hours a week and supervises and plans the gardening. He is trying to convince all the Master Gardener volunteers to use organic methods and is having some success with that. The vegetables from the

community garden go to twelve local charities. Last year they grew 20,722 lbs of vegetables, including over 6,000 lbs. of tomatoes, over 2000 lbs. of potatoes, 1,514 lbs. of zucchini, 1,913 lbs. of cucumbers, and 2,514 lbs. of corn. Extremely impressive!



**Garlic**



**Garlic Raised-Bed**



**Asparagus Raised-Beds**

# October IOGA Meeting

The fall meeting of the Indiana Organic Gardeners Association took place on October 17 at the lovely home of Larry and LaVella Bills located in rural Tipton. After the delicious pitch-in luncheon, President Lynne Sullivan started the meeting at 12:30 PM. First, all present introduced themselves, told where they were from, and how their gardens had done this year. Lynne said she grows vegetables, herbs, and garlic in her garden. Steve Leatherman said they have about an acre near their house where they have twelve raised beds. Nancy Otten and Dwight Lamb have a small plot downtown Indianapolis. Dwight likes the fact that gardening is seasonal here. He is always excited in the spring, but by fall he is glad to take a break from gardening.

Susan Irwin-Simmons, who moved to Middletown a year ago, has a new 40' by 60' garden where she grows blackberries and raspberries along with other vegetables. She also has chickens and says her goal is not to have to go to the grocery. Jackie Martin lives south of Terre Haute, where she has twenty acres with lots of vegetables as well as alpacas and chickens. Mikel Thorne has an 18' by 30" garden in Irvington with all kinds of vegetables and herbs, and black and red raspberries. He sold over one hundred pounds of his Early Girl tomatoes.



**Beth Englert With Future IOGA Member**



**Part of the Pitch-In Lunch**

Heidi Watson said all the rain caused problems with her tomatoes. Others noticed lower tomato production too. Heidi's blackberries did well, as did her three Asian pear trees. Ron Clark added that they had problems with their tomatoes too, but when they returned from vacation in September, the tomatoes had revived and were producing again. Ron tried a copper fungicide on his squash to stop the mildew and had good results.

LaVella said they lost two-thirds of their tomatoes from blight, but the rest did well. Dave and Beth Englert put in raised beds last fall, which turned out to be great for root crops such as potatoes, carrots, beets, and parsnips. Their compost heap seems to be attracting rodents. Some suggested getting a cat or two to take care of the problem.

Doug Rohde lived in Germany for twenty years, where he learned a neat, orderly type of gardening, with lots of composting and worms. He became a Master Gardener five years ago. He is involved with the Hamilton County Master Gardeners Association and has a special interest in bees and pollination.

There are many types of bee pollinators, and bumblebees which have fuzzy bodies, that pollinate tomatoes. Doug put in raised

beds this year. In them he planted a cover crop of winter rye, which he can either cut and compost or till it into the soil.

Tamara Shockley lives in Irvington and has an extra lot for gardening. She likes her plums, but this year they had little taste because of all the rain. She was also pleased with her Mexican sunflowers, which she had bought at our April IOGA Plant & Garden Auction. These plants grew thirteen feet tall and had lots of

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flowers. She brought many of the flower heads with her that members took home for their gardens next year. She used a lot of peat moss on her blueberries, and they did quite well. Unfortunately, Tamara got badly stung by yellow jackets living in the ground in her yard.

The Indiana Museum of Art has put in solitary bee and wasp houses this year, which has helped the pollinator population. Doug has his own houses, which he puts on fence posts. They draw all kinds of pollinating bees and insects. Lynne asked Doug to write an article for the newsletter on how to make a solitary bee and wasp house. We might even have a workshop to make our own houses.

After these introductions, there was time for a few more gardening questions. David asked what greens can be overwintered. Kale, Swiss chard, collard greens, mustard greens, and endive can overwinter, especially if they are covered. Covers are available at Johnny's Seeds. It was noted that peppers do better if there is lots of rain. Golden Sunshine Peppers are especially productive. If few peppers develop, there may be a pollinating problem, in which case pollinating can be done by hand.

Next, Lynne presented the slate of new officers, which included the following:

President - Doug Rohde  
Vic-President - Margaret Smith  
Secretary - Kathy Krueger  
Treasurer - Ron Clark

All voted in favor of accepting this slate. Ron and Claudia agreed to continue as IOGA newsletter editors.

Lynne said that Farm to Fork Market, located at 79<sup>th</sup> and Marsh Road in the Traders Point area of Indianapolis, is the only completely organic market around here. Larry told us about a two-day Indiana Small Farm Conference coming up in March. It costs \$100 for both days and \$75 for one day. He brought pamphlets from the one this past March.

After the meeting we all went outside for a tour of the Bills' garden, which was made up of 26 raised beds. He rotates the beds on a seven year plan, with one bed laying fallow each summer.

In preparing the beds, Larry uses high quality English-made tools, a fork valued at \$100 and two cobra-



**Larry Bills (Right) Discussing His Approach to Raised-Bed Gardening**

*Continued from Previous Page*

headed hoes, one with a short handle and the other with a long handle. He puts in clover for the nitrogen and buckwheat as a cover crops. He had gotten soil from GreenCycle, but lately has just gotten compost from them. He adds shredded leaves, peat moss, and compost from their three-part compost bin. He mixes into each bed a cup of Chickity Doo Doo from Menard's. He uses Dipel DF as well as his own soap and oil solution to fight pests. Dipel DF is a biological insecticide, a dry, flowable version of BT (Bacillus thuringiensis)

When making a new bed, Larry removes the turf and throws it on the compost heap, as he had a terrible slug problem when he left the turf in place. He then puts down newspapers and straw. In January the Bills germinate their seeds indoors under a grow-light. Then about March they move the plants outside to the greenhouse, which is a metal structure covered with reinforced plastic. The sun is then the only source of light.



**A Dry Version of BT**



**Polish Linguisa Tomatoes**

The tomatoes were still producing abundantly. We got to sample the delicious Polish Linguisa tomato, a longer, denser tomato with an excellent taste. The Early Girl tomatoes looked fantastic.

Larry does not cut down his asparagus until spring. He applies salt to kill the weeds, which does not hurt the asparagus. He grows the ever popular Jersey Knight asparagus.

We saw one very large radish plant, which would be left in the bed. The greens could be used in a stir fry, but the root would be left to break up and then enrich the soil. The beans were still producing, as was the kale. Larry will soon plant small potatoes for an early spring crop.

At the end of our visit we all agreed that the Bills' garden is most impressive, and that we had learned much about successful organic gardening.

*Margaret Smith, Secretary*



**Cobra-Headed Hoe**



**Tools of the Trade**



**Lynne Sullivan & David Englert**

# More Meeting Pictures



**One More Raised-Bed**



**Jackie Martin & Ron Clark**



**Examining the Remnants of the Okra Raised-Bed**

# Chicken Gardening

by Susan Irwin-Simmons

I had the pleasure of sharing my garden with Ron and Claudia and they asked me to submit information on my new project-Chicken Gardening. I had attended a presentation at the Mother Earth Fair and purchased the presenter's book, Free Range Chicken Gardening by Jessi Bloom.

We recently moved and I had the opportunity (curse) to start anew, so why not make my little chickies work harder. I fenced (8 feet high with one foot buried in the ground for predators) a 60' x 60' area. In this space I placed my mobile chicken coop (for night-time and inclement weather keeping) and our 3 hens - a Silver Brahma, a Buff Orpington and a Sussex. We built twelve raised beds and planted nine fruit trees with blackberry bushes along one side of the fence and an asparagus patch as well.

The idea is to have the chickens free range the garden; eating bugs, distributing manure and tilling the raised beds as they take dirt baths and search for the reclusive gourmet night crawler. Their eggs are rich with the material they consume as they also have access to our 3-unit compost pile which they routinely scratch through and pick out what suits their fancy. They are pretty smart gals as they now understand that me and a fork/hoe/shovel equal opportunity to grab a bug, as I manipulate soil. I have to shoo them away to get any work done.

So far, so good! I have had to use a net fencing in early spring to keep them out of freshly sown beds and recently discovered they will indeed eat ripe cucumbers and tomatoes off the vines, so still learning a lot. It's a give and take idea and you determine what to tolerate and what to change. I bordered my fruit trees with comfrey plants and they will eat the flower buds right off the plants. For the most part they leave things alone, lulling about under the tall asparagus plants when it is hot. I have not had asparagus beetles and I am hopeful they are the reason why. I am certainly no expert but it offers opportunity to expand on my diversification within my garden. Perhaps you have had like or more experience? I like the fact all creatures are contained in one area and this has reduced some of the workload as well as served multi-functions.



**One of Susan's Girls, a Silver Brahma Chicken**

## Mixed Vegetable Recipe (From the July IOGA Meeting)

Mix all of the following well.

- 1 can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can garbanzos, rinsed and drained
- 1 bag frozen corn
- ½ red and ½ green pepper, chopped
- 1 bunch green onions, chopped (or chives)
- 1 can diced green chilies
- 1 tablespoon sugar

½ bottle sweet and sour dressing (or more-suit to taste)

¼ cup chopped cilantro

½ teaspoon ground cumin

2 cloves minced garlic

A little salt

You could add kidney beans or black eyed peas too if you wish.

Refrigerate overnight-keeps well. Serve with nacho chips, salad greens, or alone.

- Margaret Smith



It was a day in late December, Christmas in fact, the tail end of unseasonably warm weather. Though it was in the low fifties, I resolved to stay in and catch up on relaxation after some busy weeks. But I had mentioned garden fever and Annie, in her wisdom, shooed me from the house, knowing I wouldn't stand it long.

Mowing debris off the asparagus bed is gardening, right? And too, there were volunteer plants in an annual vegetable bed to transplant to the area of their ferny ancestors. The poop tray under the chicken roost was full so I drove the mower out to the wood splitting area for the utility trailer and headed toward the chicken house. Passing the sink hole on the way, I admired the trees, young and old growing there. Other than firewood from the occasional dead tree, its pretty worthless, but there seems to be something magical about it. The hole at the bottom admits gushes of water when it rains, and various animals when it doesn't. What subterranean world do they know that I'll never see? Is there a cavern to equal Mammoth Cave beneath my house?

After loading I coasted down the hill to the garden. The hill is steeper and higher now than ten years ago, thought that doesn't bother me until the return trip when I'm afoot. But I far prefer it to flat ground. I spread the manure on the asparagus, then mulched it, hoping to hold more of the nitrogen in place. Then I put the trailer and mower away, and when passing the sinkhole again, gave thanks for trees, and hills, and holes in the ground.

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

## Our Speaker for the January IOGA Meeting

Jo Ellen Meyers Sharp grew up in Indianapolis. She has been a newspaper reporter and now works as a freelance writer, editor and photographer. Her work appears in several national and local publications. She writes the Hoosier Gardener column in the Indianapolis Star. Besides freelancing, she has worked seasonally at a large independent garden center for many years. She was the founding editor and a part owner of [Indiana Living Green](#) magazine. She is a popular speaker about garden-related topics and sustainable living. Jo Ellen blogs at [hoosiergardener.com](http://hoosiergardener.com).



**Jo Ellen Meyers Sharp**

Jo Ellen is treasurer of Garden Writers Association, former director of the Marion County Extension Board, a director of the Indianapolis Museum of Art Horticultural Society, president of the Friends of Garfield Park Inc., and past president of the Business Ownership Initiative of Indiana. She is an Advanced Master Gardener in Marion County.

Jo Ellen also volunteers at WFYI, the Indianapolis City Market, Capital City Garden Project, and Garfield Park. She is a member of the Indiana Historic Landscapes Alliance, the Indiana Historical Society, and Indiana Landmarks. She is also a former IOGA member.

The January IOGA Meeting will be held at the Franklin road branch of Indianapolis Public Library in southeastern Indianapolis. Her topic will be ***Where the Wild Things Are***. See the last page of this newsletter for details.

# Organic Gardening for Beginners

## Winter Class Series 2016



The Indiana Organic Gardeners Association (IOGA) is happy to partner with Fall Creek Gardens again this year to offer classes on Organic Gardening for Beginners! Please join IOGA member and local wonder woman **Constance Ferry** as she teaches the four part series covering the following topics in four consecutive months:

**January: SOIL** (January 16, 1:30—3:30pm)

*If you can grow healthy soil, you can grow anything*

**February: SEEDS** (February 13, 1:30—3:30pm)

*What to grow and how to get going*

**March: SUSTAIN** (March 19, 1:30—3:30pm)

*What to do about weeds, pests, droughts, and other calamities*

**April: SAVE** (April 2, 1:30—3:30pm)

*Harvest and enjoy—and save those seeds for spring!*

All classes take place on Saturday afternoons in the Community Room at Unleavened Bread Café, 3001 Central Avenue, Indianapolis 46205.

**Constance Ferry** is owner, grower, and herbalist of Hobbit Gardens, an Organic Herb Farm/Gardens and Shop located on 27 ½ acres of woods, ravines and pastures in west central Indiana, Putnum Co. She brings over 25 years of experience in organic practices to our classes!

You can learn more about the classes on Fall Creek Garden's webpage [fallcreekgardens.org/events](http://fallcreekgardens.org/events) which provides links to the Eventbrite page for registration. Each class is \$10 plus a \$1.54 fee (or register for the discount package - all 4 classes for \$25 plus a \$2.37 fee).

To register directly with Eventbrite, go to [organicgardeningclasses.eventbrite.com](http://organicgardeningclasses.eventbrite.com).



A collaboration of  
Fall Creek Gardens, [fallcreekgardens.org](http://fallcreekgardens.org)  
and  
Indiana Organic Gardeners Association (IOGA),  
[gardeningnaturally.org](http://gardeningnaturally.org)  
*Find us on Facebook!*



## Ask us...!

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## Treasurer's Report

4th Quarter 2015

Opening Balance Oct. 1, 2015 \$ 5404.17

### Income

AmazonSmile \$ 6.49

Membership \$ 50.00

**Total \$ 56.49**

### Expenses

Stamps \$ 49.00

Check Printing \$ 37.21

Misc. Expense \$ 41.00

**Total \$ 127.21**

Closing Balance Dec. 31, 2015 \$ 5333.45

*Respectfully submitted by Ron Clark, Treasurer*

## Green Tomato Suggestion

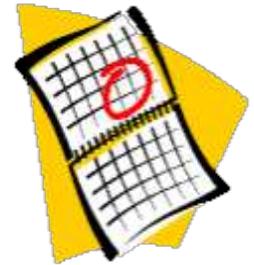
At the end of the season bring in your remaining green tomatoes. They will continue to slowly ripen inside. You can increase the ripening by placing the green tomatoes inside crumpled newspapers or inside a bag, but that is extra work and inconvenient. You can also store complete branches of tomatoes by just hanging the whole plant inside, upside down.

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

Mark your calendar

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

January 16 2016  
April 16, 2016  
(Plant Auction)  
July 16, 2016  
October 15, 2016



## 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. Jan. 16  
10:45 am**

**Franklin Road Branch, Indianapolis Public Library  
5550 S. Franklin Road  
Indianapolis, IN 46239 ([Map](#))  
317-275-4380**

10:45 Arrive & Welcome Guests  
11:00—11:45 Great Pitch-in Lunch  
11:45—12:00 Business Meeting  
12:00—12:30 Gardening Q&A  
12:30—12:40 Break  
12:40— Speaker & Questions

**Meeting:** Jo Ellen Meyers Sharp, the [Hoosier Gardener](#), will give a talk, ***Where the Wild Things Are***. Make sure the wild things are in your landscape and garden, where they pollinate plants, eat bugs and add beauty to the scene. Learn which plants provide food and shelter for butterflies, beneficial insects, birds and other wildlife.

**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:** Take exit 96 on I-74 to south Post Rd. Go 0.6 miles south on Post Rd. and bear right (southwest) onto Northwestern Ave. Follow Northwestern Ave. another 0.6 miles and turn left (south) onto Franklin Rd. Go 1.1 miles south on Franklin Rd. to the library on the right (west side). (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 Margaret Smith cell phone (317) 698-0526

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



**Annual Dues Are  
Due in January!**

**Join us!  
IOGA Meeting  
Sat. Jan. 16**