



# Hoosier Organic Gardener

October 2024

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

Welcome to fall Gardeners! After we had 9 days of 90 degrees or more in September, I'm ready for some cooler weather.

It's still warm as we head into October, but the nights are cooler. I see some leaves turning fall colors and a few are falling now.

I hope you had time to get some fall crops planted. I always struggle to get things going in August and September while it's hot and dry.

I did get some Sugar snap peas going after a couple tries with old seed. But no lettuce. There's some big cabbage and cauliflower plants ready to plant out. And my Giant noble spinach is up, I'll put some row cover over it to keep the varmints honest. Also I have a new row of bush green beans that are 10" tall and may give some beans if we continue to have mild weather. Then there's 2 rows of beets that are about golf ball size, we are planning to can some of those. Oh and last, I did get another large plot of wildflowers started in June, they are still flowering now. The local rabbits moved in and they're happy, so they have stayed out of the garden.

For me fall is all about the leaves. I collect all I can and shred them up to use for mulch and compost. Fall also is when we harvest the last of the garden and put it to bed for the winter. But let's not rush it, there's some growing season left and plenty of time to get the fall chores done. We hope to see you all at the next meeting. Bye and happy gardening!

Steve



Steve Beers

## Welcome New Members

*Welkom*

Dave Mason  
Sam Mason

# IOGA Meeting Minutes

## July 20, 2024

The July meeting was held at Christian Park Community Center on the southeast side of Indianapolis. Ten members and two guests attended.

After the pitch-in lunch, people headed over to Hannah Messer's home for a tour of her "food forest" backyard. Almost every plant was edible, including creeping charlie and burdock. There were a lot of pawpaw trees, elderberry and pokeweed. She lets everything that is not invasive grow and hopes to fill the back fence line with pawpaw trees.



The main topic was mushrooms. They can be grown in many different ways. Hannah has grown many kinds including lion's mane and turkeytail. Hardwood logs in decreasing sizes were stacked, then inoculated with a paste made by mixing mycelium with grains or sawdust that was spread along the exposed edges and sprayed with water. Keep moist and mushrooms should start growing. It doesn't have to be in full shade.

Hannah makes teas and jellies (including red bud jelly) from what she finds in her yard. One of her favorites is lemon balm and mushroom tea. She also has a plant dryer powered by solar.



She demonstrated taking oyster mushrooms, chopping them roughly, placing them in a freezer bag with water, and shaking to make a slurry. She put a bale of straw (not hay) in a kiddie pool along with water and lime and let it start to decompose. She placed some of the straw into a laundry basket with holes on the side, adding some of the mushroom slurry, another layer of straw, then more slurry until the basket was filled. She leaves the basket outside in good weather, moving it into her basement on tarps in winter.



### Upcoming Meetings

IOGA generally meets quarterly on the third Saturday of the month.

Mark your calendar for upcoming meetings.

October 19, 2024  
January 18, 2025



## Introduction to Lazy Bed Gardening

A lazy bed is a deeply prepared garden bed whose growing area, with its closely spaced plants, can produce up to four times more than an equivalent area prepared less deeply and planted in rows. A lazy bed means less work for the gardener with only one bed to dig, one bed to fertilize, one bed to water, and one bed to weed. And, a lazy bed uses only one-quarter the area it would take to produce the same yield by other methods.

It's soil is:

Loosened 2 feet deep,  
Evenly moist because water can pass through it easily,  
Full of nutrients and organic matter provided by compost,  
And planted with a variety of crops, closely spaced to provide a "living mulch," reflecting nature's diversity.

Because the soil is loosened so deeply, the plant roots are able to penetrate deeply into the soil, instead of needing to spread out in search of water and nutrients. For that reason, plants can be spaced more closely in a lazy bed, so that there can be more plants in a lazy bed than in a garden plot using other soil preparation methods. Water is more readily available to plants in a lazy bed because more of it is retained in the deeply loosened soil.

A lazy bed is not a modern invention. Before there were farmers and gardeners, nature kept the soil covered with a profusion of plants suited to their particular environment. Plants grew best where the soil was the richest and they did not grow in rows. Some of the earliest gardeners tried to mimic nature at her most productive. The Chinese began using biologically intensive, (Biointensive) raised beds in food production over 5,000 years ago. The Greeks realized 2,000 years ago that crops grew better in the loose soil of landslides. Indigenous people in Latin America also as early as 2,000 years ago created extensive areas of large raised beds between irrigation channels. In the wet season they planted their crops on the raised surfaces. During the dry season, when the raised fields were dried out, they planted in the irrigation channels to make use of the water stored with n the soil.

In more recent times, the Irish developed their version of raised beds for planting potatoes. They called them lazy beds because they knew this method produced more food for their efforts. Intensive raised-bed systems are not new. They are a proven method for successfully raising large quantities of food, sustainably, over long periods of time.

The keys to lazy bed gardening are two main ones: double digging the garden and compost making.

1. To double dig, (using the standard raised bed dimensions of 4 x 8 feet) dig across the narrow end of the bed, dig a trench 1 foot wide and 1 foot deep with a sharp SPADE. Put the soil into buckets or a wheelbarrow or piled it on the ground.
2. Loosen the soil in this trench an additional 12 inches with a spading FORK. Dig the fork in to its full depth (or as deeply as possible) and push the handle downward so the fork tines lever through the soil, loosening and aerating it. You should only go as deep as the tool will loosen easily.

Continued on page 4

Lazy Bed Gardening cont.

3. Dig out the upper part of the second trench 1 foot deep and 1 foot wide with the spade. Lift out the soil spade pan, tip the spade pan downward and slide the loosened, aerated soil into the upper part of the first trench. Move each spadefull of soil forward in the same way until you have dug across the entire second trench.
4. Loosen the lower 12 inches of soil in the second trench with the fork as you did in the first trench.
5. Continue in this way with the third trench and as many more trenches as you need to finish the bed.
6. When you have loosened the lower part of the last trench, add any of the soil from the first trench that you have in your wheelbarrow and level the bed with a rake.
7. Spread a 1 inch layer of cured compost over the surface of the bed and sift/mix it into the top 2 inches with a spading fork or rake.

Once the bed has been done, do NOT walk on it! Compaction destroys the structure of the soil. To be sensitive to soil processes, we should avoid rototillers.

Doug Rohde

## Blister Beetles



Beetles of the family Meloidae, so called for their defensive secretion of a blistering agent, cantharidin, are commonly called blister beetles. They are the bane of my potato growing. By some unknown sensor, they know in the fall where I'm going to plant potatoes the following spring, and lay their eggs in that bed. On some signal, imperceptible by humans, on an evening about the end of June, they hatch en masse and attack my potato plants. By the following evening, when it has cooled enough for me to venture out to the garden, they have pretty much denuded some of the plants. If I catch them soon enough, I can get them under control by hand picking and squishing them. My fingers are too tough to get blistered from them.

This year I planted garden huckleberries. The two patches were going great until one evening I found one bed, loaded with berries and missing nearly all the leaves. Though the beetles' second line of defense is to drop to the ground and hide in the mulch, the culprits were obvious. There were too many to pick, so I mixed a batch of pyrethrin with some insecticidal soap. Not wanting to spray it on the berries, I sprayed a liberal dose on the mulch around the plants. I found them, too, starting on the second bed. I dosed them too. This treatment wiped out most of the population. Being out of pyrethrin, then, I resorted to hand picking the following days, but the few left ate 24 hours a day. The second patch now has few leaves also. All the plants are loaded with berries, so I hope they will ripen properly.

The lesson learned is that garden huckleberries make a great trap crop for blister beetles. My potatoes are untouched.

Paul Matzak

# Is using Canadian Sphagnum peat moss bad for the environment?

Well according to the "Garden Fundamentals" podcast: Environmental Myths about Peat Moss - Why you should keep using it.

Here is some food for thought:

Only 1/2 % of Peat is used for Horticulture! The greatest danger to the world's peat bogs/peat lands is caused by draining them for other land uses. Like 51% for agriculture, 26% for forestry, 22% is used in the tropics, 1/2% for heating, and 1/2% for Horticulture.

So who has the most peat? Well in millions of tons we have Finland at 6000, Belarus at 2600, Russia at 1000, and Canada at 720 million tons. Also of the world's 400 million Hectares of peatlands, 86% are undisturbed and 14% have been disturbed.

In Canada only .02% is currently harvested. Canada's peatlands are very large. About 3 times the size of California, but the area harvested is about the size of Fresno, CA. Is Canadian peat moss a renewable resource? Every year 20 million tons of new peat moss grows, and 1 million tons is harvested.

How is it harvested?

- 1) They clear the field and drain the water down a couple inches.
- 2) Then they till the top 2 inches and leave it to dry.
- 3) Now they can remove the dried peat.
- 4) Depending on how deep the peat is, this can go on for 10 to 50 years.
- 5) Finally they re-plant with live sphagnum peat moss.

The bog is restored in 5 to 10 years, wildlife returns, trees, etc. So most countries now call peat a slow renewable resource. But peat does contribute to releasing CO2 into the atmosphere. Of course all decaying plants release gases. Like garden weeds, leaves, grass clippings, wood chips, etc.

So I have no problem with using some peat for potting soil. It's a last resort for me because I mix my own potting soil with compost, ground up leaves, and garden soil. At least I feel better knowing Canada is doing way better than other countries protecting their wetlands and peat bogs. Happy Gardening.

Steve Beers

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## Winter Cover

If you only have enough garden space to grow the vegetables you need every year, then obviously you can't devote half that space to a legume that demands a full growing season. That's when you should choose a winter legume like sweet clover or grain like rye to plant in the fall after your vegetables are harvested. Mulching with leaves or hay over winter won't give soils nearly the same boost that green manuring does. And thick mulches will take longer to break down in the spring than green manure crops - which could delay early spring plantings a bit. If you leave the ground bare in the fall, nutrients like nitrogen calcium and potash will be leached out by rain. Cover crops that grow fast in cool weather quickly absorb the most easily leached nutrients and hold them safely until spring. When you till them under in spring, the nutrients are released for your vegetables.

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## Winter Cover cont

Winter rye is the old standard green manure and cover crop to plant in the fall. In truth, winter wheat and barley can also be sown, but rye is used more frequently because it is the hardiest of all winter grains. Rye has an amazing tolerance for cold weather - seeds can germinate when the thermometer reads only 33 degrees F., and the plant can grow in the fall until the temperature drops below 40 degrees F. It resumes growth when the temperature rises to 40 degrees F. in the spring. Rye can survive a bristling 40 below zero in the dead of winter.

Rye can be established later than wheat and starts to grow earlier in the spring. It can be planted any-time from August up to mid-October in the North and even later farther South. Planting rye in late sweet corn is an excellent strategy. After frost kills the corn, the rye still has about a month or six weeks when it can grow and cover the ground.

Several legumes can also be planted in the fall. The best choices are the sweet clovers. And the best sweet clover is common white clover because it is so winter hardy. Hairy vetch is hardy too. One of the side benefits of vetch is that by planting it as a fall cover, your soil will benefit from the additional 80 pounds of nitrogen per acre the legume "fixes." And that can only help next year's crops. Some people like to use a special cover crop mixture which includes vetch, wheat oats, rye and Austrian winter peas.

You can get Winter Rye at Habig's nursery and garden supplies on 82nd Street (across from the Nora shopping plaza/Whole Foods) on the corner.

Doug Rohde

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## Self Sufficiency

For those who have at least 5 acres (or far less), here's what most people knew a hundred years ago and some know now.

How to: plough a field, sow wheat, plant corn, planting and maintaining a garden, make hay, malt barley, rotate crops, grow vegetables, harness a horse, milk a cow, slaughter a cow, shear a sheep, pluck a chicken, cure a ham, brew beer, make wine, bake bread, churn butter, press cheese, pickle onions, prune trees, can fruit, dry herbs, keep bees, track game, set a snare, bail a hook, skin a rabbit, fillet a fish, tan a hide, sink a well, build a small barn, mend a wall, fix a fence, fire bricks, dress a stone wall, split wood, spin flax and wool, coil pots, weave a basket, thatch a roof, construct an oven, store produce, make fuel, generate light, harness the wind, collect the rain, trap the sun, turn the soil, follow the seasons, respect the land, reap the harvest, waste nothing, stay healthy and live well.

A lot of craft people can still do many of these things and society has different names for some of the descriptions, but on the whole, there's still a lot of people that can do these things and we have better equipment to enable them to do it.

Doug Rohde

## Ask us...!

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## Treasurer's Report 3rd Quarter 2024

Opening Balance July 1, 2024      \$5,009.36

<b>Income</b>	
Dues	22.00
<hr/>	
Total	\$22.00

<b>Expenses</b>	
Newsletter	87.38
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Total	\$87.38

Closing Balance Sept. 30, 2024      \$4,943.98

*Respectfully submitted by Larry Bills, Treasurer*

## 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, make your check out to Indiana Organic Growers Association and mail to:

I.O.G.A.  
7159 W 200 N  
Tipton, IN 46072-8637



Please include ALL of the following information:

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

I prefer my newsletter to be \_\_\_ e-mailed \_\_\_ mailed.



# Irvington Library

5625 E. Washington St., Indianapolis, IN ([Map](#))

11:00—12:00 Pitch-in Lunch, Meeting  
12:00—12:30 Meeting, Q&A  
12:45 Program at 7995 Dunston Dr., Stonehenge Apts

**Lunch:** Bring a favorite dish filled with food ("home-made" and/or "organic" appreciated) to share and your plate, fork, and drink. Kitchen facilities will be available.

**Program:** Robert Giffin, III will be joining us as a seasoned small space gardener to show us a few things that have given him success in small spaces and with limited resources such as apartment porch gardening when no ground is available. He has a lot of experience experimenting in square foot gardening, container and grow bag utilization, aquaponics, and rain gutter grow garden self-watering systems. He will have a functional setup for the gutter and rain barrel/bucket fed system for ideas and suggestions as well as examples from his currently working porch setups to share.

**Directions:** The Irvington branch library is located on the southwest corner of W. Washington St. and Audubon. Ave. Stonehenge Apartments is south of English Ave./Rawles Ave. and west of Franklin Rd. For more information, click on MAP above.

Everyone welcome. Questions call Tamara Shockley at 317-437-3767.

.Remember to carpool, if possible.

Join us and bring a friend!



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