

IOGA



# Hoosier Organic Gardener

October, 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



Doug Rohde

We're into Indiana's "late summer" so garden harvesting should still be going for quite a while (watch out for those sneaky frosts however). This area in central Indiana always has a long fall, even longer in southern Indiana, and I really appreciate that. Tomatoes always grow well in my garden and it never fails that I plant too many. This fall or early next Spring I think I'll add two more raised beds, maybe three if I turn my herb area into one. I had one small disaster this summer as my ancient Gold Finch upside down feeder got really wet, all the seeds became moldy and I didn't notice it for a couple of weeks. No Gold Finches were around.

After that discovery, I headed over to [Wild Birds Unlimited](#) and got a new feeder complete with a clear plastic rain cover. Great feeder, and the Gold Finches are back.

September 22, at 10:21, EDT began our Autumnal Equinox or the beginning of autumn. This means that the sun shines directly on the Equator and the length of day and night is nearly equal (about 12 hours each). Of course that also means football season and for us gardeners, good harvesting and starting to think about what fall soil covering/green manure we want to put in. I usually stick with winter rye as I always have good luck with that ([Habig Garden Shop](#) sells small bags). Some time after our October meeting I'll sow it in. I let it grow high last Spring, just to see what would happen. I cut it down, chopped up the stems but they took forever to break down in my compost bin. Lesson learned, don't let the winter cover grow too high in the Spring.

We had a good turn out at our July meeting at Maria Smietana's [Valentine Hill Farm](#). As always the variety of very tasty food was excellent. Thanks Maria for hosting!

Margaret and I along with Ron and Claudia, are excited about the IOGA 15 October meeting at the [Paramount School of Excellence](#) which will focus on urban farming, food, health, and the environment (see the last page of this newsletter for meeting details). There is also a one day free educational event at the school on 1 October called the Turn Festival - Transforming Urban Neighborhoods. A lot of exhibits, music and foods. Check them out at [www.TURNFestival.com](http://www.TURNFestival.com).

Hope to see everyone on 15 October. Should be another interesting meeting.

Keep IOGA organic... Doug

[www.gardeningnaturally.org](http://www.gardeningnaturally.org)

# Spinosad Organic Insecticide

Spinosad is a relatively new organic insecticide derived through a fermentation process of soil bacterium. The bacterium was first collected in 1982 from an abandoned rum distillery on a Caribbean island. Spinosad was first registered as a pesticide in the United States for use on crops in 1997 and is listed by the OMRI (Organic Materials Review Institute) for use in organic agriculture (Allowed with Restrictions). Spinosad is low in toxicity to people and other mammals.



**Dead Stink Bug** to

Spinosad is a broad spectrum insecticide that is toxic to a wide variety of pest insects. Insects that eat the leaves of plants treated with spinosad become paralyzed within one hour and die within 1-2 days. Predator insects, predatory mites, and spiders don't eat the plant and should not be affected by the insecticide.

Spinosad persists longer in the environment than other organic insecticides such as pyrethrin and the biological pesticide *Bacillus thuringiensis* (or **Bt**). It takes sunlight 2-16 days (half-life) to degrade spinosad on plants. Spinosad can persist in the soil longer, and even longer in water (without sunshine). However, spinosad does not readily move through the soil. And, microbes in the top layers of soil rapidly break spinosad down.

**Warning!** OMRI approval does not guarantee that spinosad will not harm non-target insects. **Spinosad is highly toxic to honey bees and other pollinators so care must be used in its application.** Spinosad should be applied only when bees and pollinators are not active as in the late evening or early morning and not during wet conditions. Once the application has dried, spinosad should have a minimal affect on pollinators. Of course, don't spray the flowers of the plant.

According to a Dow AgroSciences study, Spinosad Toxicity to Pollinators and Associated Risks, "Field studies in which typical application methods of spinosad were used on a variety of crops have demonstrated that spinosad has low risk to adult honeybees and has little or no effect on hive activity and brood development. The collective evidence from these studies indicates that once spinosad residues have dried on plant foliage, generally 3 hr or less, the risk of spinosad to honeybees is negligible."

Because of the potential harm to pollinators, it is probably wise to minimize the use of spinosad in the garden. However, after other means of insect control have been tried, careful application of spinosad might be tried.

Some products that contain spinosad for home gardeners are the following:

Monterey Garden Insect Spray

Bonide Captain Jack's Deadbug Brew® Concentrate

Bonide Colorado Potato Beetle Beater® Concentrate

# July IOGA Meeting

The meeting on July 16, 2016 was held at [Valentine Hill Farm](#) in Zionsville. President Doug Rohde opened the meeting with an introduction of IOGA member Maria Smietana, owner of Valentine Hill Farm. Maria is a biologist who spent most of her career in medical research. In 2004 she and her husband Bill Swanson, also a biologist, decided to start a small produce farm on their property in Zionsville. They grow a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, which they sell at several farmers markets and through their CSA. Maria also founded and runs the [Farm to Fork Market at Normandy Farms](#), which is Indiana's only enforced chemical-free producer market.

Doug finished reading [Seeds of Hope](#) by Jane Goodall which was recommended by Beulah Cobbs last year. Doug also recommends the book.

During the Question & Answer portion of the meeting, Claudia Clark asked who brought the red tomatoes since her tomatoes were not ripe yet. They were brought by David Feinberg who said they were from a first year garden with brand new raised beds. Claudia said they have a new melon called [Arava](#) which is a cross between a honeydew and a cantaloupe, but it was not quite ripe so they hadn't brought it. Someone had a significant weed problem and Maria said the best solution was to [solarize](#) the area laying down 4 to 6 mil construction black plastic – don't skimp. Stretch it out and then anchor it with wood or stones. Leave it on for 1 month. Do this right before seeding. This will also kill the good microbes, so you need to till in compost or vermicompost when done. Someone asked where to buy (20%) horticultural vinegar. Maria said that you need to order it online -- just Google it and do price comparisons. Someone said that it wasn't very useful. Another person had a problem with thistles. These can be solarized to deny them sunlight. Don't pull up. Kathy Ambler had a new area that she wanted to naturalize and wondered what type of clover to use. Doug used winter rye and said don't let it get too tall, cut while still green. Squirrels eat tomatoes – just one bite. Ann Leatherman reported that she had foxes that got rid of rodents. Doug told how he had built a nest box for owls.

Following a great pitch-in lunch, Maria gave a presentation on low-tech ways to extend the gardening season. Maria said there are three year-round farmers markets in Indianapolis. We are seeing more rain, hail, winds, and longer seasons. She recommended that we read [Winter Harvest Handbook](#) by Eliot Coleman.



**Maria Smietana Owner of Valentine Hill Farm Points Out One of Their Hoop Houses**

Extending the growing season can be done on any scale. Her challenge to members was to give this a try. Low tunnels are more for home gardeners. They can be purchased from the [Farmtek](#) catalog. Farmtek sells to anyone and they also sell parts. Tunnels are easy to build from materials purchased at local box stores or can be found on [Craig's List](#). Short hoops can be made of [PVC pipe](#) and [rebar](#), then covered with commercial grade plastic and anchored by stones. You can also staple the plastic to scrap wood. Drill holes and anchor with rebar. This works with plants already growing. Flip the plastic open to harvest. This saves the plants from frost damage.

*Continued on page 4*

*Continued from page 3*

For low tunnels, bend the PVC pipe that is flexible but strong or use metal tubes. Insert rebar into the ends to go into the ground. Orientation of the tunnel doesn't really matter unless there are wind concerns.



### **A Low Tunnel Rib Made from Electrical Conduit Pipe with Rebar Inserted in Ends**

Leafy greens only need to consistently stay over 32 degrees. At near freezing temperatures plants will be smaller, but the flavor more intense. On the question of trigger points, when frost is forecast three days out be ready to cover with plastic. Flip the plastic back on hot days. Be sure to water. Don't cook the plants. There can be a 30-40 degree temperature difference inside a tunnel. We felt this when we went inside the hoop house during the tour.

In order to keep temperatures stable and above freezing, place hay between rows and around edges, use milk jugs filled with water, row covers or bed sheets. Once the plants reach three fourths of their mature height they will slowly mature unless there is a severe freeze. Keep the plants watered. You can put seeds out in January. Some leafy greens can be perennialized.

After the presentation, we toured their hoop houses.

Instead of compost beds, they fill kitty litter buckets with food waste and leave them on the porch all winter. Before planting, they solarize the soil, then till in compost. They till at least once per season to break up the crust. They leave some compost in the bottom of each bucket and place them at the end of the planted rows. The addition of rain water makes an algae flush which they put in sprayers and use as a foliar feeding. Good microorganisms colonize on leaves to ward off diseases.

With a hoop house you need to water more in spring, not much in winter. Hay bales are placed between the rows and on the sides for insulation. The hoop house keeps bugs, blight and fungus off tomato plants.

Maria had a new hoop house that was not yet complete. They plan to use solar panels for radiant heat under raised beds.

Maria said that the small greenhouse in back of their house is worth every bit of its cost. They start seeds in their basement and then move them to the greenhouse. To harden off, plants are put outside and a tarp is attached to the side of the greenhouse which can be pulled over the plants to protect from weather. You could also attach a tarp to the side of a garage.

They buy organic soil or soil from a soil farm that has not been treated with pesticides from Eagle Creek Nursery. They reuse soil by mixing in 20-30% vermiculture. No peat moss is used.

*Judy Houser, Secretary*



**Inside a Hoop House**

*Continued from page 4*



**Entrance to One of the Hoop Houses**

**Inside a Small Greenhouse  
Used to Start Plants in the Spring**

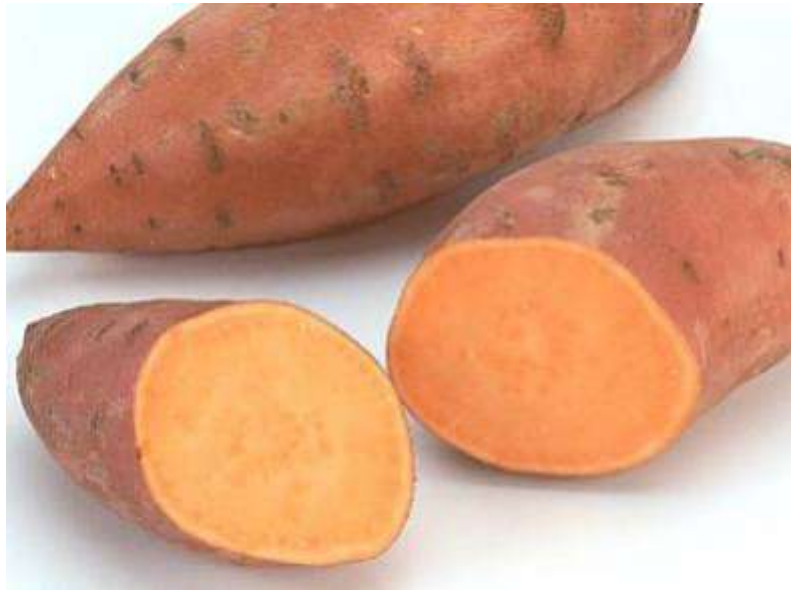


**A New Hoop House Under Construction**

# Sweet Potato Scam

by Paul Matzek

I was cheated last year. It was probably no one's fault. We put in our order for Beauregards at a local supplier, because the mail-order slips always look much more dead than alive, though they have perked up and performed well in the past. The call came, but when we picked them up, we were informed that Beauregards had not come in; the supplier substituted a different kind, supposedly similar. Long story short, there were fewer tubers, and smaller tubers. We harvested less than half than in previous years.



## Sweet Potatoes

leaves to spread on the beds. Then considering the rapidity at which mold proliferates in the bread drawer, I bet that the fungi and mycorrhizae would have plenty of time to re-establish themselves by spring, I tilled the ex-sweet potato bed deeply.

I have heard warnings about using hickory leaves in the garden, which surprised me, since I have used them for 6-7 years now. That prompted some internet research. You can believe everything you read on the internet, right? Several sources said hickory leaves and even walnut leaves are OK, but advised they should only amount to about 10% of the leaves going into compost. Another said that if hickory leaves have lain around for six to eight weeks the toxic elements will have degraded to the harmless level. Consensus was, however, that they are slightly acidic, so some lime may be of benefit.

Having set down these musings and left them in the bowels of my computer to incubate, I began to wonder if, perhaps, we might get better yields in the area near the hickory trees (thus the one that gets the most hickory leaves) if I didn't use hickory leaves. After worrying about this for a while, I pulverized equal parts of hickory and oak leaves, and planted equal numbers of tomato and pepper seeds in each (seems like I did this test before but I had to try again). Fifteen seeds came up in the hickory, sixteen in the oak

Maybe it was too rainy. Maybe it just wasn't hot enough. But I was cheated. By spring, we will have to rely on grocery store tubers; you know those places that think they're "yams".

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

## Treasurer's Report

3rd Quarter 2016

Opening Balance July 1, 2016 \$ 5750.26

### Income

Membership Dues \$ 30.00

Room Deposit Refund \$ 100.00

**Total \$ 130.00**

### Expenses

Hosting Gratuity \$ 100.00

**Total \$ 100.00**

Closing Balance Sept. 30, 2016 \$ 5780.26

*Respectfully submitted by Ron Clark, Treasurer*

## Ask us...!

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**“The best soil on the  
farm is found in the  
fence row.”**

— USDA

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

Mark your calendar

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

October 15, 2016

January 21, 2017

April 15, 2017

(Plant Auction)

July 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. Oct., 15  
11:00 am**

**October Meeting at The Paramount Farm  
3020 Nowland Avenue  
Indianapolis, IN 46201 ([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— School Overview & Farm Tour

**Meeting:** The October meeting will be a visit to [The Paramount Farm](#) at the [Paramount School of Excellence](#) (PSOE), a charter K-8 school in Indianapolis . Following the regular IOGA meeting, Barb Richardson, Director of Advancement at PSOE will provide a school overview, describe the school's farm program, and give a tour of the farm. The farm, In addition to gardens, includes chickens, goats, and bees. They also have a fruit tree orchard and a berry patch. They sell their harvest at a weekly farmers market held at the school.

**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 in Indianapolis take exit 85 and go south on N Rural St. 0.8 miles. Turn left onto Brookside Pky South Dr. and go 0.2 miles. Turn right onto N Parker Ave, and then immediately bear left onto Nowland Ave. School on immediate left (north) side of street. (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 "**Find Button**".)

**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  
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**Join us!  
IOGA Meeting  
Sat. Oct 15**