



Hoosier Organic Gardener

July 2017

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

Ah yes, July...hot. Interesting IOGA meeting coming up, 15th of this month, on straw bale gardening at Darlene and Gary Miller's, and I'm looking forward to it. See Ron's attachment on driving directions. Hopefully the weather is sunny so bring your broad brimmed hats and sunscreen.

We had a good day at Earth Day this year. It's always fun and interesting. As always we meet many people interested in gardening and who ask a lot of good questions. We were right next to Rosie Bishop, one of IOGA's past presidents, who had one of the most interesting tables. From her box turtle to catching tadpoles, most people and especially the kids, learned a lot about nature.

After our April IOGA meeting I happily went home with four different tomato plants that I wanted to try. I normally grow my own from seed but these were different. I waited a few weeks before putting them in the ground...just to make sure of the night temps. Anyhow, several weeks later I noticed that three of them had lost their leaves which for my heavily composted garden was rather strange. I checked them out and was going to dig them out, rescuing them so to speak, sticking them back into pots for a while when I noticed the stems were nipped off about an inch from the ground. There was a large rabbit that I had chased out of the yard three times a few days before so I guessed he or she was the culprit. What to do.....since I always have far too many of my own tomatoes growing from seed I have replacements but those new types that I had gotten at our IOGA plant sale were the only ones chomped off. Next thing is to of course, was to build a tomato plant fortress which I did. First a mad rush to Menards to get chicken wire, boards, then wire up my tomato cages plus build a removable wire box around another potentially rabbit targeted small raised bed. The fortress is now secure.

Another thing I learned and that is that exceeding the seed date on the seed package by too long results in a lot of wasted time as quite often they don't come up. I even soaked some of the old seeds over night but to no avail. Talking to them didn't work either.

My prairie garden is looking good though. After the rabbit attack I also wire-encircled some of my milkweed plants, just in case. Right now my backyard veggie garden looks like a prison system. It's a war against the squirrels, chipmunks, and one wayward rabbit. I think that damned rabbit nibbled off all my new bush beans too. BTW, if you are having bird problems, try tying an old CD on a stick, inserted into the ground at about 30-45 degrees. When the wind blows, that flashing seems to keep them at bay or at least wary.....it apparently doesn't bother rabbits though.

If you made it to any of the other plants sales, especially the Hamilton County Master Gardeners sale in Noblesville, you should have a good selection of plants.

Keep IOGA organic!

Doug



Doug Rohde

Herbs for Butterflies

by Tony Branam

Like so many discoveries in my life, the use of culinary herbs in the garden for the benefit of butterflies was completely accidental. I use Italian flat parsley in a lot of my cooking and had a single plant out the back door for taste as well as aesthetics of green foliage. During the period between July and the first frost in September that single parsley plant was host to 14 Black Swallowtail butterfly caterpillars. But



Black Swallowtail Caterpillar (Left), Butterfly (Male Center, Female Right)

not all at one time. First, four little black worms appeared. As they fed and grew larger over the course of a couple weeks it became evident what they were, and then they disappeared. The parsley plant recovered its leaves and five more little worms appeared repeating the cycle until summer lapsed into autumn. I was still able to pick parsley leaves for recipes being careful not to harvest a caterpillar in the process (eew!).

My second herb discovery was borage. I was intrigued by a story I heard on NPR (National Public Radio) regarding borage and how Charles Dickens made a punch using borage blossoms, sherry and brandy. I also learned that shredded fresh borage leaves can be added to lemonade as a non-alcoholic summer drink alternative to Mr. Dicken's recipe. Once planted in the garden and blooming I found that honey bees were crazy for borage blossoms. As an added flare to your borage enhanced lemonade or Dicken's punch make ice cubes in advance with a borage blossom inside each cube. Yes, this article is about butterflies and hope you will forgive my detour for the bees.

The third accidental discovery was the common Rue and it's attraction to the Giant Swallowtail. A friend gave me a Rue plant and not knowing what to do with it I left it on the porch in a pot. One summer day while passing by I noticed an obvious lack of foliage and three plump, satisfied caterpillars on the stem. They were alien in appearance for sure with little orange horns raised as a warning that I was invading their space. Since I had no intended use for the Rue plant I was not concerned when these smug little thieves had devoured almost all leaves. Now I make it a habitat to plant at least three plants to encourage more Giant Swallowtails to lay their eggs on the herbs.



Giant Swallowtail Caterpillar (Ugly!)



Giant Swallowtail Butterfly

Listed below are five herbs I plant often in the garden and flower beds primarily for bees, butterflies and other beneficial insects. This is in no way an exclusive list because any plant with a blossom and palatable leaf will be good for your garden's biology. An excellent resource for identifications, facts and tips to protect and support native populations of moths and butterflies is *Butterflies and Moths of North America* at <http://www.butterfliesandmoths.org/>. If deer and rabbit browsing are a problem in your gardens try placing aromatic herbs like basil, thyme and rue on the outer edges to discourage entry.

Borage (also known as a **starflower**) - The five pointed blue blossoms are small in proportion to the plant, but bees love the blossoms. Borage can be planted as a companion plant in your garden to repel tomato horned worms. The Xerces Society suggests staggered planting dates for an extended bloom season. Plus you can use the leaves or blossoms in your drinks. Cheers!



Borage Flowers

Dill - Host for black swallowtail caterpillars (from my personal observations) and possibly host for Monarch caterpillars if milkweeds aren't available. As a companion plant Louise Riotte, author of *Carrots Love Tomatoes*, recommends planting dill with members of the cabbage family. Dill will also attract hover flies, lady beetles, parasitic wasps, bees, spiders and other predatory insects.

Garlic Chives - When allowed to bloom these plants provide nectar to multiple species of pollinating flies, bees, wasps, beetles and butterflies. In the photo at right these three clumps of garlic chives with their white blossoms have attracted twelve adult Buckeye butterflies (brown spots on blooms), one Crescent butterfly and numerous bumblebees, honey bees and hover flies. A winter hardy herb garlic chives really should get more use on salads and in recipes.



Garlic Chives

Parsley - Again a favorite of Black Swallowtail caterpillars. This herb can also be winter hardy if temperatures are mild enough. The clumping nature of this plant provides cover for other beneficial insects to lay eggs, ambush prey or just escape the sun during the heat of the day.

Rue - The citrus smell of this ancient herb may not appeal to cats or deer, but Giant Swallowtail caterpillars are attracted to it. The first time I saw these worms I was amazed with their odd figures and color patterns. I learned that when they are alarmed they will show their little orange horns. The black swallowtail caterpillars will also feed on this herb as seen in the photo above right.

A suggestion by Sally Jean Cunningham, author of *Great Garden Companions*, is planting a trio of one parsley family plant, one aster family plant and a vegetable. Examples of parsley family are coriander, dill and parsley and members of aster family area marigolds, sunflowers and daisies. Herbs in the garden will not only attract pollinators, butterflies and predatory insects, but may discourages the pests you don't want. My advice always is if you find a worm or any small insect in your garden and flower beds determine what it is before killing it because it might be a butterfly in the making.

And one more note on the topic of butterflies, pollinators and transplants purchased for beneficial insects: buy from dealers who do not use systemic insecticides or growth inhibitors. According to <http://hattiesgarden.com/> most flowers and herbs available through garden centers and box stores will actually kill the beneficial insects you hope to attract due to chemical treatments they receive in the greenhouses. Buy local and ask questions.

Tony Branam is an IOGA member living in Nashville, Indiana

April IOGA Meeting

The meeting on April 15, 2017 was held at the Zionsville Library. There were 25 members and 2 visitors in attendance.

Starting at 10:00, donated plants for the auction were brought in and sorted. Everyone was trying to decide what they might bid on. There also was a table of magazines and books that had been donated.

We had a great pitch-in lunch which, as always, included many home-made and organic dishes.

During introductions, Gary Miller mentioned that he and his wife had been scheduled to do a presentation on straw bale gardening at the July meeting, but had been switched to October. After Gary mentioned that October would not be a good time for them, it was agreed that the Fitness Farm tour should be moved to October and the straw bale gardening moved back to July.

President Doug Rohde demonstrated a solitary bee house which he had made from a section of 4x4 with various sized holes drilled and then this was attached to a garden stake.

Tom Wafford talked about his product **mama j's Growth Spurt** (Digester Plus), a natural soil and plant amendment that loosens soil, improves nutrient uptake, and reduces toxic contaminants. **Growth Spurt** contains microorganisms in a nutrient package. The product may also be used on compost. Further information about the product can be found at AdvancedSoilRestoration.com.



Some of the Pitch-In Lunch Offering
Tom donated one bottle of **Growth Spurt** for the auction and had others for sale.

Doug mentioned other plant sales going on soon and also that IOGA will have a booth at the Earth Day Festival the next Saturday at Military Park.

The plant auction was then held. Ron Clark was the auctioneer. Heidi Watson assisted him.

Judy Houser
Secretary



IOGA President Doug Rohde Conducting the Business/Q&A Portion of the Meeting.



Pepper and Tomato Plants Galore



Susan Irwin-Simmons (left)
& Judy Houser (right)



Auction Assistant Heidi Watson



Lynne Hirshman (left) &
Lynne Sullivan (right)



Worth the Stretch! Jodi Swinford Receives a Tomato
Plant from Auctioneer Ron Clark



This article is a reprint of a brochure authored by the Cornell Waste Management Institute.
 (See <https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/44638>)

What is Compost?

Compost is a dark, crumbly, and earthy smelling form of decomposing organic matter.

Why Should I Make Compost?

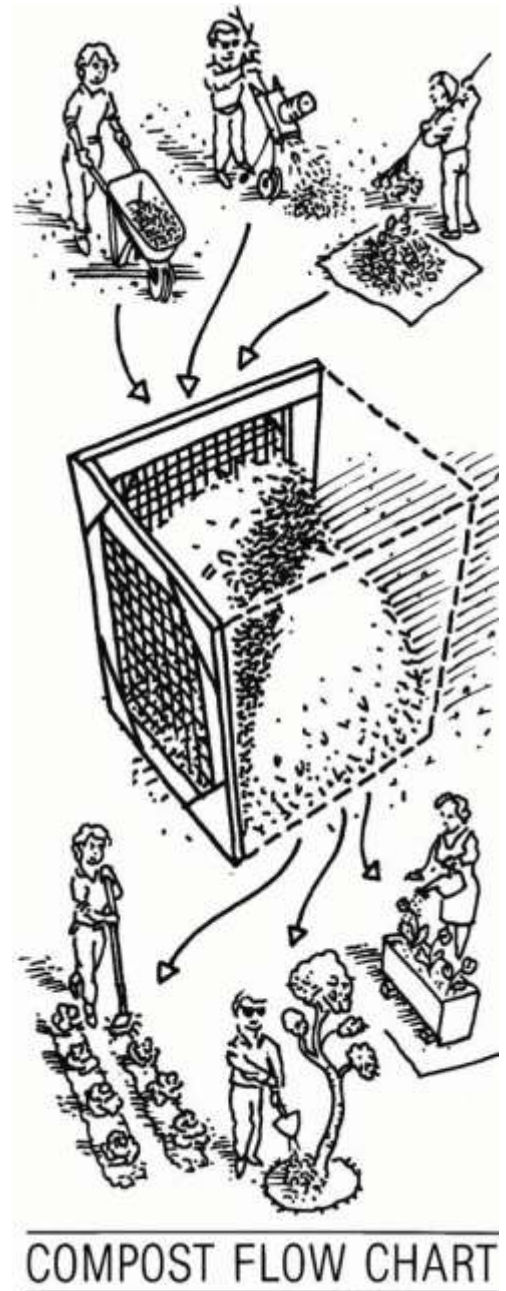
Composting is the most practical and convenient way to handle your yard wastes. It can be easier and cheaper than bagging these wastes or taking them to the transfer station. Compost also improves your soil and the plants growing in it. If you have a garden, a lawn, trees, shrubs, or even planter boxes, you have a use for compost.

By using compost you return organic matter to the soil in a usable form. Organic matter in the soil improves plant growth by helping to break up heavy clay soils and improving their structure, by adding water and nutrient-holding capacity to sandy soils, and by adding essential nutrients to any soil. Improving your soil is the first step toward improving the health of your plants. Healthy plants help clean our air and conserve our soil, making our communities healthier places in which to live.

What Can I Compost?

Anything that was once alive can be composted. Yard wastes, such as fallen leaves, grass clippings, weeds and the remains of garden plants, make excellent compost. Woody yard wastes can be clipped and sawed down to a size useful for the wood stove or fireplace or they can be run through a shredder for mulching and path-making. Used as a mulch or for paths, they will eventually decompose and become compost.

Care must be taken when composting kitchen scraps. Compost them only by the methods outlined in this brochure. Meat, bones and fatty foods (such as cheese, salad dressing, and leftover cooking oil) should be put in the garbage.



How Can I Use Compost?

Compost can be used to enrich the flower and vegetable garden, to improve the soil around trees and shrubs, as a soil amendment for houseplants and planter boxes and, when screened, as part of a seed-starting mix or lawn top-dressing. Before they decompose, chipped woody wastes make excellent mulch or path material. After they decompose, these same woody wastes will add texture to garden.

Continued on page 7

The Essentials of Composting

With these principles in mind, everyone can make excellent use of their organic wastes.



Biology

The compost pile is really a teeming microbial farm. Bacteria start the process of decaying organic matter. They are the first to break down plant tissue and also the most numerous and effective composters. Fungi and protozoans soon join the bacteria and, somewhat later in the cycle, centipedes, millipedes, beetles and earthworms do their parts.



Materials

Anything growing in your yard is potential food for these tiny decomposers. Carbon and nitrogen, from the cells of dead plants and dead microbes, fuel their activity. The micro organisms use the carbon in leaves or woodier wastes as an energy source. Nitrogen provides the microbes with the raw element of proteins to build their bodies.

Everything organic has a ratio of carbon to nitrogen (C:N) in its tissues, ranging from 500:1 for sawdust, to 15:1 for table scraps. A C:N ratio of 30:1 is ideal for the activity of compost microbes. This balance can be achieved by mixing two parts grass clippings (which have a C:N ratio of 20:1) with one part fallen leaves (60:1) in your compost. Layering can be useful in arriving at these proportions, but a complete mixing of ingredients is preferable for the composting process. Other materials can also be used, such as weeds and garden wastes. Though the C:N ratio of 30:1 is ideal for a fast, hot compost, a higher ratio (i.e., 50:1) will be adequate for a slower compost. Table 1 provides an estimate for the C:N ratio of common materials.



Surface Area

The more surface area the micro organisms have to work on, the faster the materials are decomposed. It's like a block of ice in the sun-slow to melt when it's large, but melting very fast when broken into smaller pieces. Chopping your garden wastes with a shovel or

machete, or running them through a shredding machine or lawnmower will speed their composting.



Volume

A large compost pile will insulate itself and hold the heat of microbial activity. Its center will be warmer than its edges. Piles smaller than 3 feet cubed (27 cu. ft.) will have trouble holding this heat, while piles larger than 5 feet cubed (125 cu. ft.) don't allow enough air to reach the microbes at the center. These proportions are of importance only if your goal is a fast, hot compost.



Moisture & Aeration

All life on Earth needs a certain amount of water and air to sustain itself. The microbes in the compost pile are no different. They function best when the compost materials are about as moist as a wrung-out sponge, and are provided with many air passages. Extremes of sun or rain can adversely affect this moisture balance in your pile.



Time & Temperature

The faster the composting, the hotter the pile. If you use materials with a proper C:N ratio, provide a large amount of surface area and a big enough volume, and see that

moisture and aeration are adequate, you will have a hot, fast compost (hot enough to burn your hand!) and will probably want to use the *turning unit* discussed in the next section. If you just want to deal with your yard wastes in an inexpensive, easy, non-polluting way, the *holding unit* (also discussed on the next page) will serve you well.

Material	C:N Ratio
Sawdust	200-750
Peatmoss	50
Straw	50-150
Cow manure	20
Poultry manure	3-15
Horse manure	20-50
Leaves from oak	40-80
Sun-dried grass clippings	20
Fresh grass clippings	15
Fresh garden debris	20
Vegetable wastes	~12
Garbage (food waste)	~15
Hay from legumes	15-20
Hay-general	15-32
Corrugated cardboard	~560
Newsprint	~400-850

Table 1
Some Typical C/N Ratios
(based on dry weight)

Continued on page 8

Composting Yard Wastes



Holding Units

These simple containers for yard wastes are the least labor and time-consuming way to compost.

Which wastes? Non-woody yard wastes are the most appropriate.

How? Place the holding unit where it is most convenient. As weeds, grass clippings, leaves and harvest remains from garden plants are collected, they can be dropped into the unit. Chopping or shredding wastes, alternating high-carbon and high nitrogen materials, and keeping up good moisture and aeration will all speed the process.

Advantages & disadvantages For yard wastes this is the simplest method. The units can be portable, moving to wherever needed in the garden. This method can take from 6 months to 2 years to compost organic materials, so you need to be patient. Because it does not get hot, weed seeds (and pathogens if present) may persist in the compost.

Variations Holding units can be made of circles of hardware cloth, old wooden pallets, or wood and wire. Sod can also be composted with or without a holding unit, by turning sections of it over, making sure that there is adequate moisture, and covering it with black plastic.

Turning Units

This is a series of three or more bins that allows wastes to be turned on a regular schedule. Turning units are most appropriate for gardeners with a large volume of yard waste and the desire to make a high quality compost.

Which wastes? Non-woody yard wastes are appropriate. Kitchen wastes without meat, bones or fatty foods can be added to the center of a pile if it is turned weekly and reaches high temperatures.

How? Alternate the layering of high carbon and high nitrogen materials to approximately a 30:1 ratio. These should be moistened to the damp sponge stage. The pile temperature should be checked regularly; when the heat decreases substantially, turn the pile into the next bin. Dampen the materials if they are not moist, and add more high-nitrogen material if heating is not occurring. Then make a new pile in the original bin. Repeat the process each time the pile in the first bin cools. After two weeks in

the third bin, the compost should be ready for garden use. See the *Rodale Guide to Composting* in your library for more information on hot composting.

Advantages & disadvantages This method produces a high-quality compost in a short time utilizing a substantial input of labor.

Variations The unit can be built of wood, a combination of wood and wire, or concrete block. Another type of turning unit is the barrel composter, which tumbles the wastes for aeration.

Sympton	Problem	Solution
The compost has a bad odor	Not enough air.	Turn it. Add coarser materials.
The center of the pile is dry.	Not enough water.	Moisten materials while turning the pile.
The compost is damp & warm in the middle, but nowhere else.	Too small.	Collect more material & mix the old ingredients into a new pile.
The heap is damp and sweet-smelling but still will not heat up.	Lack of nitrogen.	Mix in a nitrogen source like fresh grass clippings, fresh manure, bloodmeal or ammonium sulfate.

Composting Food Wastes



Mulching

Yard wastes can be used for weed control and water retention.

Which wastes? Woody yard wastes, leaves, and grass clippings.

How? You can simply spread leaves or grass clippings beneath plantings. For woody materials up to 1" in diameter, rent or purchase a chipper/shredder. Tree services, if they are in your neighborhood, often will deliver wood chips free.

Advantages & disadvantages All yard wastes will work first as a mulch and then, as decomposition proceeds, as a soil enrichment. A disadvantage of mulching with woody yard wastes is that you may have to buy or rent power equipment or make arrangements with a tree service.

Variations Use chipped materials for informal garden paths.

Soil Incorporation

Burying your organic wastes is the simplest method of composting.

Which wastes? Kitchen scraps without meat, bones or fatty foods.

How? Everything should be buried at least 8 inches below the surface. Holes can be filled and covered, becoming usable garden space the following season.

Advantages & disadvantages This is a simple method, but because of the absence of air, some nutrients will be lost. Rodents and dogs can become a problem with wastes buried less than 6 inches deep.

Variations Using a posthole digger, wastes can be incorporated into the soil near the drip line of trees or shrubs and in small garden spaces.

Earthworm Compost

Feeding earthworms in wooden bins is a good way to make high quality compost from food scraps.

Which wastes? Kitchen scraps without meat, bones, or fatty foods.

How? Fill a bin with moistened bedding such as peat moss for the worms. Rotate the burying of food wastes throughout the worm bin. Every 3-6 months the worm population should be divided and moved to fresh bedding. Refer to *Worms Eat My Garbage* by Mary Appelhof (available at some library branches) for more information.

Advantages & disadvantages This is an efficient way to convert food wastes into high-quality soil for houseplants, seedling transplants, or general garden use. The worms themselves are a useful product for fishing. However, worm composting is more expensive and complicated than soil incorporation for dealing with food wastes.

Variations A stationary outdoor bin can be used in all but the coldest months, or a portable indoor/outdoor bin can be used year-round.

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Strawberries

by Paul Matzek

Plant strawberries in the spring, right? Then wait a year and several months for the harvest. But--but---nature plants them through the summer and fall. Notice all those runners the plants send out after fruiting?

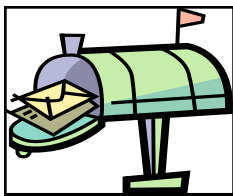


Last year we decided to plant as nature does, since our old bed was overgrown and a mess. We dug up plants spilling from the old bed and planted to a new one. The plants took hold, died back in the winter, of course, then sprang forth in the spring. They set on an abundance of berries, and since they were well established, we picked berries. Before long, though there were plenty of green berries, we never found any ripe ones. Near season's end, I put two and two together and put up a low electric fence to keep the raccoons out, and we got a few more berries. The bed has since gone berserk, sending out runners with thousands of new plants.

We have purchased 12 acres in Kansas. My first attempt to dig up soil samples for testing was difficult, the sod being dry and hard. But the dirt was black and crumbly, and I hoped it was not the "black gumbo" from my childhood home there. On our next trip to "the farm", several rains had fallen. I planted strawberries on the north side of a shed to keep the direct sun off, hoping some rain runoff from the roof would provide enough water to keep them alive until our return. To my delight, the soil was soft and damp, like a mix of mature compost and potting soil, with some sand thrown in.

Two weeks later we found the strawberries looking great! The 'end-of-season sale' roses and pecan tree we planted were quite happy too. We had garden beds plowed and will transplant strawberries this summer for berries in the spring. This trip, I brought back a bucket of the dirt to put more strawberry starts in. After snipping 30 rooted runner plants from their parents, I bedded them into small individual containers, and could hear a small "aaaaah" as I slipped each into that wonderful Kansas dirt.

Paul and Annie Matzek are IOGA members formerly living in Elizabeth, Indiana, now reside in Meriden, Kansas



How Do I Freeze Tomatoes?

Beth Maschino

1. Wash tomatoes. Do nothing else. Put them (6 or 8) in a bag. Freeze. When ready to use, simply pull out the one or more that you need and run it under warm or hot water for about a minute and the skin will slide right off. The tomato is still frozen, but if you are putting it in soup, spaghetti, etc. then just cut off frozen chunks and put them in the pot and they will cook just fine.

2. 2nd option...Remove skin from tomatoes first by dipping in boiling water for 1-2 min. You will actually see the skin wrinkling and you take the tomato out of the boiling water. Put it on a plate to cool, and when not too hot then remove the core and the skin will slide right off. Measure a qt. (or however much you want) and put in freezer bag. When ready to use, either put the frozen tomatoes right into spaghetti sauce, etc. or thaw first at room temp (if you're in a hurry) or overnight in the fridge.

Claudia

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Treasurer's Report

2nd Quarter 2017



Opening Balance April 1, 2017 \$6018.23

Income

Membership Dues	\$ 186.00
Donations	\$ 20.00
Plant & Garden Auction	\$ 371.00
AmazonSmile Foundation	\$ 7.84
Total	\$ 584.84

Expenses

Liability Insurance	\$ 200.00
Newsletter Printing	\$ 125.00
Newsletter Stamps & Misc.	\$ 93.65
Printing - Auction Brochure	\$.49
Total	\$ 419.14

Closing Balance June 30, 2017 \$ 6183.93

Respectfully submitted by Ron Clark, Treasurer

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Mark your calendar

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

July 15, 2017
October 21, 2017
January 20, 2018
April 21, 2018
(Plant Auction)



New IOGA Members

Tom Wafford, Dillsboro, IN 47018
Rita Kirkendall, Brookston, IN 47923



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, 15
11:00 am

Darlene & Gary Miller's Straw Bale Garden

20679 Roberts Dr.

Sheridan, IN 46069 ([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: Straw bale gardening is a type of container gardening without soil. The straw bales are the containers and the growing medium. Getting the straw bales conditioned is an essential part of the process. If you would like to learn more about straw bale gardening, come see what IOGA members Darlene and Gary are doing. This is their second year of straw bale gardening. They have had some exciting results. Limited parking — car pool. Also, bring some chairs just in case.

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-465 on the north side of Indianapolis take Exit 31 to US-31 North. Go north 12.6 miles on US-31 and take the Exit 136 ramp right to IN-38. At IN-38 turn left (northwest) towards Sheridan. Go 2.2 miles on US-38 and turn left (south) onto Horton Rd. Go 1.3 miles south on Horton Rd. and turn left (east) onto Roberts Dr. Go 0.1 miles to 20679 Roberts Dr. on the left. (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.

Join us and bring a friend!

Hoosier Organic Gardener
Claudia and Ron Clark, editors
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Join us!
IOGA Meeting
Sat. July 15