



Hoosier Organic Gardener

October, 2017

Indiana Organic Gardeners Association

IN THIS ISSUE

**Know Your
Predator:
The Wheel Bug**

**July IOGA
Meeting**

**Straw Bale
Gardening**

Potatoes

**Wheat in
Bloom**

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

I can't believe that it's already October. I've been getting very late but good tomatoes from my garden despite two rabbit attacks and having to replant most of them all over again. We had a very interesting July meeting at Darlene and Gary Miller's home in Sheridan. Straw bale gardening and honeybees! Judy Houser will add all the details later in the issue. And Darlene has provided a short article.

I recommend that you go through all of those old seed packages and throw out any that are over 4 or 5 years old. I always keep trying to eek out just one more season with leftover seeds and some of them that are over 3 years old, just don't seem to have any energy in them. I struggled and worked away in pots this Spring trying to coax some of the oldies to appear but to no avail. I even soaked some of them overnight.

In my quest for Rue I never did find a plant. Tony Branam responded to a note I sent him and stated that he grew his from seed so Rue seeds will be included on the January seed order and I think I found a good source.

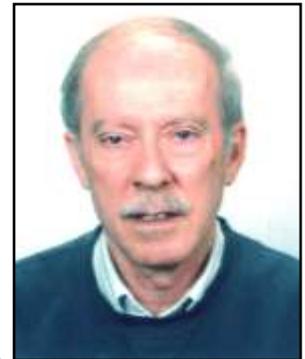
I also discovered that seed planting pots multiply like crazy, just like hangers in your closet. Ray's Trash recyclers don't like the plastic ones in the recycle bins either so another fall clean-out into the landfill.

It's tree planting and bulb planting time. I have an Elderberry and Sassafras in so far. The birds will beat me to the Elderberries but that's OK and I have the Sassafras for the butterflies. Follow the instructions carefully on the bulbs. I hacked away through small tree roots coming up in one of our flower beds just to get down to the 6 or 7 inch recommend depth for daffodils. At least the directions stated that they were deer-proof (hopefully my rabbit doesn't like daffodils either).

A short note on Powdery Mildew (PM): It's the most common plant disease around. It occurs on bee balm, phlox, lilacs and even dogwood trees. Every PM is a different strain. The older leaves show PM first and it cannot be washed or rubbed off. You can stop it from spreading though. Here's a good tonic for it. 4 tbsp of baking soda, 2 tbsp of Murphy's Oil Soap, 1 gal of water. Mix all of these ingredients together. Pour into a handheld sprayer, and apply liberally when you see the white spots on your plants....or even before! Before you apply the mixture, turn the hose on the plant full force and you can wash off some of the spores, then apply the solution.

See all of you 21 October, 2017, at the South Circle Farm. This looks like another great organic visit.

Keep IOGA organic! Doug



Doug Rohde

Know Your Predator

The Wheel Bug

The Wheel Bug (*Arilus cristatus*) is the largest of the assassin bug family in North America growing up to 1.5 inches in length as an adult. Wheel Bugs are named for the prominent gear-like, semi-circle ridge or "wheel" on their back. The head of the Wheel Bug is very narrow and their antennae are jointed. Adult wheel bugs are usually gray or brownish. The immature nymphs are red with black legs, and look rather spiderlike.

Wheel Bugs are voracious predators upon many insects. They pierce their prey with their beak and inject salivary fluids that dissolve the soft tissue of the prey which they then suck out. Because most of their prey are pests, the Wheel Bug is considered a beneficial insect. **They are also known for eating stink bugs.**

Warning! Although Wheel Bugs are not aggressive and will avoid contact, they will, if handled, inflict a painful bite (technically pierce). Their "bite" causes **excruciating** pain, many times worse than a bee or wasp sting. The puncture site may take weeks or months to heal. (One antidote: wet, chewed up Plantains.)

Wheel Bugs are good insects to have in your garden. They indicate that you have a healthy, pesticide-free ecosystem. **Just don't pick one up!**



Wikipedia — [By Dehaan](#)

Wheel Bug Adult



Wheel Bug Nymph



A Wheel Bug Sucks the Guts Out of a Japanese Beetle While his Comrades **Wait their Turn.** (Editors' Note: This photo was taken in our garden last summer.)

July IOGA Meeting

The meeting on July 15, 2017 was held at the home of Darlene and Gary Miller in Sheridan, IN. There were 19 members and 13 visitors in attendance.

As members arrived, they wandered around looking at the Miller's vegetable and flower gardens. We had another great organic pitch-in lunch on their deck at 11:00 am.

Starting a little after noon, Gary gave a demonstration of his [Top Bar Bee Hive](#). He inspects it every week. A smoker was lit to calm the bees before the hive was opened and inspected. Bees glue the hive together. He thinks this type of hive is more natural and healthier for the bees. The comb hangs from the bars. He doesn't use a foundation because foundations usually have pesticides in the wax that is used in manufacturing them. This type of hive also allows for proper bee spacing. Bees are vegetarians. The entire comb must be cut out to get the honey. Hives can be registered on [Driftwatch](#) so farmers can be more careful about pesticide drift when spraying their fields.

After this, chairs were moved into the shade and Darlene gave a presentation on straw bale gardening. She recommended the book [Straw Bale Gardens Complete](#) by Joel Karsten. She keeps rereading this book to make sure she is doing everything exactly right. The main thing to remember is to use straw and not hay. Straw is the portion of wheat or oats between the plant base and



Gary Miller Pulls One of Several Honey Combs from His Top Bar Bee Hive

the seed head and does not have the seeds that hay does. Hay is a grass. With straw bale gardening there are no diseases, no rotation, weeding or digging. It is more accessible, and you can start about two weeks earlier than usual. You should plan on using the same bale source each year because sizes vary. It is almost impossible to find organic straw.

Bales should be oriented north-south with baling twine around each bale - open holes up. She puts landscape cloth under the bales and on all the paths.

Continued on page 4



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

Continued from page 3

There should be four feet between the bales. They used 16 bales this year with trellises with a board across the top and 14 ga. wire between the end stakes. You can start early by putting clear plastic through the wires then over the plants and under the bales. It takes two weeks for the bales to start composting. Use a fertilizer with at least 20% nitrogen and not slow release every day and saturate the bales every day. Organic takes a lot more fertilizer (13 cups per bale). Toward the end of the composting process use a 10-10-10 fertilizer. Wait five days before planting. Add sterile potting soil and plant in that. Darlene makes seed tape for small seeds using toilet paper and a flour and water paste. Gardening gets easier toward the end of the season. You can't plant corn or perennials such as rhubarb and asparagus. Strawberries are OK if treated as an annual. After the season ends, the bales are pretty much gone and you can use them as compost or mulch.

During a question and answer session, questions were asked about saving geranium seeds, (very hard) and about growing cauliflower and garlic. Claudia asked for articles to the newsletter from members telling of their garden or a researched topic. Doug spoke about his unsuccessful hunt for Rue. Regarding cucumber beetles – Neem oil was suggested. but not recommended. For control of aphids, use a couple drops of insecticidal soap in a large spray bottle. You can purchase insecticidal soap concentrate or make your own with Castile soap (see <https://www.todayshomeowner.com/how-to-make-homemade-insecticidal-soap-for-plants/>)

Judy Houser
Secretary



Darlene and Gary Miller's Straw Bale Garden. Darlene (Center)
Talking to Claudia (In Hat). Lynne Hirshman (Foreground)

Straw Bale Gardening

by Darlene Miller

Get the book! It is worth it. [Straw Bale Gardens Complete](#) by Joel Karsten. Read it before you even start. The book has so many good instructions on “how to.”

This is about **STRAW** which is the stem of oats or wheat. Not HAY which has seeds in it. You will grow your plants in straw.

Advantages: No soil borne diseases, no digging, virtually no weeding. Bales can be placed over grass or gravel or cement or on your balcony, over the septic drain field. Bales are higher than the ground so less bending over. You can put them on pallets to raise them higher. (There are all kinds of possibilities explained and pictured in the book.) You need very few tools. You can start to plant earlier in the season and also later into the fall using poly covers, The bales last only one year since they decompose, but the result is marvelous compost for other gardens. You can start with as few as one bale.

Ground cloth and mulch between your bales eliminates mowing and also grass growing up into the bales.

Two weeks before planting the bales need to be “conditioned” which means you start composition in the bales with water and fertilizer. Watering daily and fertilizing every other day. The amounts of fertilizer are specified in the book.

Since I have 16 bales in blocks of 4, I use fence “T” posts to hold them together and also provide a trellis using 14 gage electric fence wire. Soaker hoses and water timers help keep the bales moist.

Using sterile potting soil and hand trowel I transplant my plants directly into the bales. For seeds I put down a 1 inch layer of the potting soil, place my seeds in that and cover seeds with the correct depth of potting soil.

Disadvantages: Finding organic straw is near impossible. Straw is most readily available in the late summer/early fall so you need to store the bales over the winter. Bales are heavy. Straw has no soil nutrients or micronutrients so you must continue to fertilize starting in July.

What you CANNOT plant in straw bales is corn , perennials such as rhubarb and asparagus. The one exception is strawberries; they LOVE straw bales, but then you have to treat them like annuals.

Bush zucchini & bush yellow squash will tip the bales over unless you stake the bales on the sides.

Conclusion: For me it is well worth the up-front work, time, effort and cost; and the cost gets less as you use many of the items year after year. Landscape cloth lasts for at least two years under mulch. Mulch just needs top dressing each year. Soaker hoses can last for years if taken up and stored away from UV light off season.

The productivity is awesome. I enjoy standing up to garden. All of the rest of the gardening chores are pretty much the same as regular gardening: planting, supporting, pruning, harvesting. (Did I mention no weeding?)

If you missed the presentation and would like to see my garden, give me a call (269-313-3017) to make sure I'm home.

Darlene Miller is an IOGA member living in Sheridan, Indiana

Potatoes

by Paul Matzek

Remember when, if you didn't plant your potatoes on St. Patty's day you were a slacker? My mother, the family garden manager, always got the potatoes planted in March. When the plants were well up and flourishing, the striped Colorado potato beetle would appear and begin devouring the leaves. Mom would then spray with whatever she had on hand; 2,4-D, Black Flag, Sevin, or dust with something she called "arsnickalead" (arsenate of lead). I'm surprised my siblings and I survived her efforts to provide for us. After we were grown, she subscribed to Organic Gardening and became a believer.



My first couple of years of serious gardening in Indiana, I got those spuds in the ground in March, like I had been taught. On cue, the potato beetle appeared and I tried to keep up hand picking them, with enough success to produce some tubers. Annie happened to read an article about planting later and having healthier plants, so we have tried it for two years. I think we planted mid April to first of May one year. And again, the beetle was non-existent. Maybe the plants are healthier; maybe we have more predators to keep pests in check due to organic growing methods.

Then, in mid August, the vines died down and we dug the potatoes. We're thinking, that next year we'll plant a smaller crop in mid April to eat through the summer, and a larger crop in June to harvest late September to store for winter.

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

Wheat in Bloom

Poem by Paul Matzek

It takes me by surprise each year
To see the wheat in bloom
Despite all the farmer's fear
It escapes the natural doom.

Planted in the fall's short days
Inquisitive sprouts arise
To search for lifeblood of sun's rays
While the green around them dies.

Then dormant through the winter's gust
It survives the winterkill
When the freeze and thaw heaves the crust
To tear its roots at will.



First in spring's tentative grope
To grow and green the fields
Wheat springs forth eternal hope
For early summer yields.

Though winter is past, and its sighs
And cloudy days of gloom
It always takes me by surprise
To see the wheat in bloom.

LETTERS:



Fungus on Tomatoes and Cucumbers?

We still have our two raised beds in our front yard and then garden with friends too. I have pictures of that one here to ask a question. It appears that there's some sort of fungus that is impacting many of the plants? We are speculating that perhaps it came with one of the three different brands of organic soil used to fill the raised beds. Any suggestions on how to treat!? Should we be removing plants and soil so as not to continue to contaminate? Thanks for your help!

Rebecca McGuckin



Powdery Mildew on Cucumber/Squash Plants?



Septoria Leaf Spot on Tomato Plants?

I believe what you have is Septoria Leaf Spot on your tomatoes and Powdery Mildew on your cucumber/squash plants. The damp, wet weather that we have been having promotes Septoria Leaf Spot and humid, hot weather Powdery Mildew. Your soil is probably alright. We usually get some Septoria Leaf Spot and Powdery Mildew every year no matter what we do. One problem with small gardens is that the plants tend to be close together and don't get good ventilation. However, our tomato plants are 4 feet apart in cages and they still get some Septoria Leaf Spot every year. The good news is that Septoria Leaf Spot does not kill your plants right away and you will usually still get tomatoes.

Septoria Leaf Spot

I have tried several things on tomato plants, but the only thing that I have found so far the definitely stops Septoria Leaf Spot from spreading is Bonide Copper Fungicide. The fungicide comes in both a powder and a liquid concentrate. The powder can also be mixed with water as a spray

Bonide Copper Fungicide is considered organic, but you should not use too much of it since it I believe it has some detrimental affects upon your soil. Since Septoria Leaf Spot starts at the bottom of the plant and

Continued on page 8

works its way up, I usually just start spraying only at the bottom of the plant and progress up as needed.

Powdery Mildew

For squash I start early in the season with [Serenade Garden Disease Control](#) and then when mildew is detected I spray the plants with [Neem Oil](#). Serenade is a bacteria that attacks the mildew. Neem Oil is a fungicide and an insecticide. It is an insecticide in the sense that the insect has to eat some of the plant with Neem Oil on it and then stops eating and dies. Predator insects are not affected. Neem Oil is available at Lowes and Meijer.

For best results it is best if you start early using Serenade and Neem Oil. Serenade and Neem Oil may not always work especially this late in the infection. I have never used Copper Fungicide on our squash but I notice on the label for Bonide Copper Fungicide that it can also be used for Powdery Mildew so you might wish to try some now on your squash. However, this will probably only stop the spread of the fungus and not help the affected leaves.

There are other organic things you can try for your squash such as [baking soda](#) but that again will only stop the spread of the fungus and not help the already affected leaves.

Ron

Does anyone else have successful remedies for Septoria Leaf Spot and/or Powdery Mildew?

Easy Chicken Coop Cleaning Tip

During my childhood, I had to clean out from under the chicken roost. Of course, I would put it off as long as possible, sometimes until the ammonia stench was nearly toxic. As an adult, I solved that problem in my new chicken digs by building the roost over a “conveyor belt” that I made from an old tarp. A hatch in the exterior wall pivots open down to form a chute, below which I park a wheelbarrow. Turning a piece of pipe (to which the conveyor belt is attached) pulls the belt toward the chute and around a roller, depositing the droppings into the wheelbarrow.

What was once a dreaded task now takes me about five minutes to do and emits little odor. I then put a thin layer of dead grass on top of the belt so the manure doesn't stick to it. This system works so well that now I look forward to cleaning the roost for compost material instead of dreading it.

Paul Matzek (This tip also appeared in the August/September 2017 issue of Mother Earth News)



Paul Matzek's Easy Chicken Coop Cleaning “Conveyer Belt” - Roost Half Empty

See Additional Photo on Next Page

Ask us...!

President – Doug Rohde
(317) 842-2423
drohde71@gmail.com

VP/Programs – Margaret
Smith
(317) 283-3146
margaret.smith803@gmail.com

Secretary – Judy Houser
(317) 243-6671
judithhouser@att.net

Treasurer – Ron Clark
(317) 769-6566
ronaldrayc@gmail.com

Editors – Claudia and Ron Clark
(317) 769-6566
ronaldrayc@gmail.com



Treasurer's Report

3rd Quarter 2017

Opening Balance July 1, 2017 \$6183.93

Income

Membership Dues \$ 24.00

Total \$ 24.00

Expenses

TURN Festival Exhibitor Fee \$ 46.00

Total \$ 419.14

Closing Balance Sept. 30, 2017 \$ 6161.93

Respectfully submitted by Ron Clark, Treasurer

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Mark your calendar

I O G A generally meets quarterly on the third Saturday of the month. Mark your calendar for upcoming meetings.

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



Paul Matzek's Easy Coop Cleaning
"Conveyer Belt" - Outlet Door

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.



I O G A
7282 E 550 S
Whitestown, IN 46075

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

IOGA
Meeting
Sat. Oct., 21
11:00 am

October Meeting at the South Circle Farm
2048 S. Meridian St.
Indianapolis, IN 46225 ([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— Farm Tour

Meeting: The October meeting will be a visit to the [South Circle Farm](#) which is an 1.5 acre urban farm located two miles south of the Indianapolis city center on South Meridian St. Amy Matthews founded the farm in 2011. The farm uses only organic practices. They use small-scale intensive gardening techniques such as broad fork tilling. They use row covers and clay sprays to avoid the pests. And in the spring and fall, they use non-heated low tunnels to extend their growing season. Bring a chair 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-65 south of central Indianapolis take the Raymond St. Exit 109 West. Go west on East Raymond St. 1.1 miles to South Meridian St. Turn right (north) on Meridian St and go 0.1 miles to your destination on the left (west) side of the 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.

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. Oct. 21