



## IN THIS ISSUE

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January IOGA Meeting

Internet Warning

## 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

Happy Spring Solstice (or Spring Equinox) which was on Tuesday, March 20, 2018. This means that on that day there were nearly 12 hours of daylight and 12 hours of darkness. Or, as we call it, "the first day of Spring." Spring lasts until the June Solstice (21 June) or the first day of Summer. And while I'm on dates...central Indiana's freeze/frost days are: Normal last freeze date is 16 April and the last frost day is 19 April. Of course the freeze/frost dates are a 50% probability so pay attention and watch the weather predictions temps closely.



Doug Rohde

For those who didn't attend our January IOGA meeting, it was another good one with Kris Medic presenting a good lecture. I also ordered her book, *The New American Backyard* from Amazon. Not bad for \$4.00 either and if you are a Prime customer, free shipping.

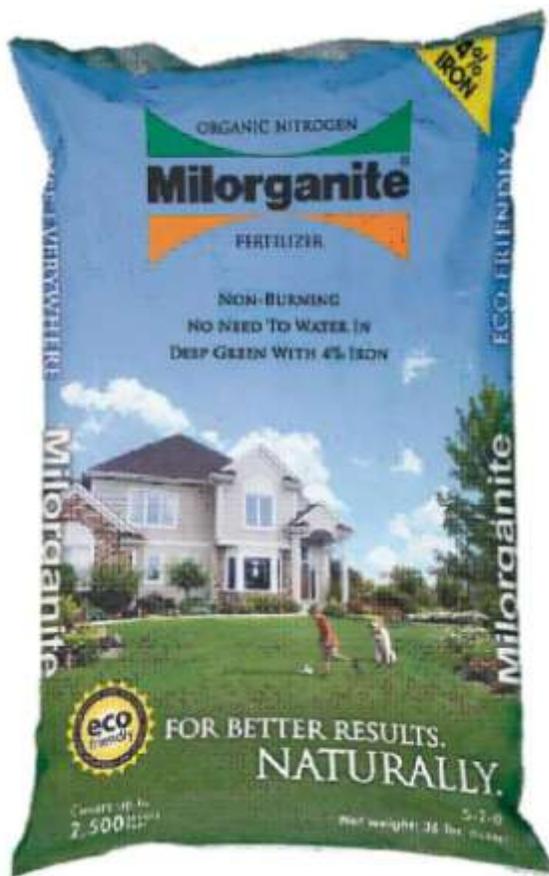
As usual we have had a cold/warm/rain/snow type of Spring. I've been trying to figure out when to start my tomatoes so that they aren't too large to put outside in my plastic greenhouse to harden up. Also a few rules to follow: 1) Try to add organic matter every time you dig/till and plant. Add it before you plant. How much you should add depends on what kind of soil you have such as old or just starting a new one. I always put on at least 2 inches from my compost bin due to the clay content of my Indiana soil. However after about 10 years of adding compost, the worst of the clay has been blended into making a far better soil. Don't forget to dig in the mulch and crop residue into the soil in the fall AND plant a cover crop like red clover, hairy vetch or winter rye to protect the soil over winter. Dig the cover crop into the soil a few weeks before planting in the Spring. 2) Don't work the soil when it's wet or when it's too dry as dry soil gets pulverized and the soil texture is destroyed and wet clay soil becomes concrete when it dries out. 3) Don't leave the soil bare too long as the hot sun will dry it out fast and your micro herd will die out without moisture. Bare soil erodes when it rains and that will invite weeds to grow. 4) Keep off! Don't walk on your soil any more than necessary. Half the volume of soil should be pore space occupied by air and water. Walking on it compresses it along with plant roots. A good reason to plant in raised beds. 5) Don't forget to plant for pollinators. Pollinator plants strategically planted in or close to your garden will provide forage for predatory or parasitic insects. Good ones are sweet alyssum, dill, radish, and yarrow.

Keep IOGA organic!

Doug

# Is Milorganite “Organic”?

## Is It Safe to Use It in Your Garden?



Recently I received a query from a member asking if Milorganite is an organic fertilizer and if it was safe to use it in her garden. She said that Lowe's had it in their organic section of fertilizers.

*Milorganite is a brand of biosolids fertilizer produced by treating sewage sludge by the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District. The term is a contraction of the term Milwaukee Organic Nitrogen. The sewer system of the District collects municipal sewage from the Milwaukee metropolitan area. The collected sewage is treated at the Jones Island sewage treatment plant in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. As a side product, sewage sludge is produced. This sewage sludge is heat-dried to remove pathogens. The resulting treated sewage sludge is then marketed under the name of Milorganite. The treated wastewater is discharged to Lake Michigan. Wikipedia*

(Note: “biosolids” is a euphemism for “treated sewage sludge”)

*Milorganite is heat-dried biosolids that contains 1) slow release organic nitrogen, 2) largely water-insoluble phosphorus bound with iron and aluminum, and 3) high organic matter. The product is tested daily for the presence of heavy metals and waterborne pathogens. It complies with the Environmental Protection Agency's*

*(EPA) "Exceptional Quality" criteria, which establishes the strictest concentration limits in the fertilizer industry for heavy metals, allowing Milorganite to be used on food crops. Milorganite is also tested for the presence of contaminants such as waste pharmaceuticals and other forms of drug pollution. Wikipedia*

### **Is Milorganite Organic?**

The use of the term organic is confusing. Milorganite (and all sewage sludge products) contain organic material (materials derived from living things). Much of the nitrogen, phosphorus and organic matter in the wastewater ends up in the sewage sludge, providing fertilizer value. However, the problem is that many of the contaminants and pathogens that enter the wastewater treatment plants from homes, businesses, and industry also end up in the sludge.

Milorganite is not “organic” in the sense that it cannot be used in organic farming certified by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Milorganite is not listed by the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) as a product suitable for certified organic production under the USDA's National Organic Program (NOP). Farms cannot be certified organic if they have used Milorganite or any other sewage sludge product on their land.

### **Is Milorganite Safe to Use?**

Short answer (my biased opinion): Milorganite is sewage sludge! Don't use it on your garden! I would also not use Milorganite on lawns where children play or your dog might eat this stuff.

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### **What are the risks?**

They don't test for everything. Industry uses more than 72,000 chemicals, but only a few are regulated. Pesticides, PCBs, dioxins, radioactive wastes, asbestos, heavy metals and petroleum compounds are among the pollutants found in sludge after municipal waste has been treated. Of these pollutants, the EPA has set standards regulating allowable concentrations for a handful of contaminants: the heavy metals arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, mercury, zinc, nickel, molybdenum and selenium. Contaminants from pharmaceuticals and personal care products and some steroids and hormones may also be present in biosolids.

Dogs and people (particularly children) can ingest Milorganite either purposefully or simply through hand-to-mouth contact with the soil to which it has been applied.

Some contaminants may be taken up into the plants. For contaminants like metals and some toxic organics that do not degrade, the amount available to the plants is proportional to the amount of material applied to the soil over time and the concentration in the material being applied. Even low levels of heavy metals will accumulate over years of successive application.

### **Milorganite**

Milorganite made its debut in 1926 with sales originally directed toward golf courses, turf farms and flower growers. Several years ago the packaging was labeled in large letters, "Organic," and you had to read the small print on the back to learn that it was processed sewage sludge. Since the advent of the National Organic Program Standards, the packaging on Milorganite has changed. The bags are now labeled "organic nitrogen fertilizer" (Organic Nitrogen means nitrogen compounds that result from biological action on the material in the sewage wastewater).

Consumers may be confused between the similarity of the words "Organic" and "Organic Nitrogen". Also, on the bags are the words "For Best Results. Naturally" and "Eco-Friendly"...There is a beautiful picture of a suburban house with a lush green lawn on which a boy and a dog are playing.

All said, there is enough confusion for the consumer to believe that the product is a purely natural and organic without contaminants. If you know where to look, however, you can see that the bag is clearly stamped, "nutrients derived from sewage sludge."

Bottom line. This product with all its monitoring and testing is better than untreated sewage sludge and better than the original 1926 Milorganite. But, with its known and unknown contaminants, *I would not touch this stuff with a 10 ft pole* (again, my biased opinion).

I could also say something about Milorganite's somewhat deceptive packaging, something to do with lipstick and a pig, but that would probably be too much.

The following comment from a contributor to a forum on Milorganite best sums up our feelings,

*"Yes, I will probably continue to use it on my lawn and perhaps some ornamentals, but food crops? No thanks. I have better, safer, homemade amendments for there. I don't NEED it there, so why risk it"*

*Caveat Emptor* (let the buyer beware).



### **Additional Reading:**

Home Garden Use of Milorganite, Cornell Waste Management Institute, Department of Crop and Soil Sciences Cornell University, Fact Sheet 2006

Sludge by Any Name Will Never Be "Organic", Maine Organic Farmer & Gardener, Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association, Fall 2003.

# January IOGA Meeting

The meeting on January 20, 2018 was held at Franklin Road branch of the Indianapolis Public Library. There were 22 members and 6 visitors in attendance.

After a pitch-in lunch, President Doug Rohde began the meeting at 12:00. We were to vote on officers for the coming year. The floor was opened for nominations or anyone willing to volunteer to serve as an officer. Since no one responded, and all current officers were willing to serve another term, a voice vote was taken and they were reelected for another two year term.

## Announcements

The 1st Annual Central Indiana Seed Swap will be held Saturday, January 27th, 2018 at the Hamilton County Fairgrounds. The seed swap is hosted by the Hamilton County Master Gardeners. IOGA member Darlene Miller has completed the Master Gardener classes. Doug talked about the Annual Conference of INPAWS (Indiana Native Plant and Wildflower Society) which was held in November and said IOGA members should think about joining INPAWS.

The INPAWS Native Plant Sale & Auction will be May 12th. The Hamilton County Master Gardener Annual Plant Sale will be May 19th. The Territorial Seed Company catalog has some nice pollinator houses available.

The date for the next IOGA meeting, which will include our annual plant & garden auction, has been changed to April 28th because our normal meeting date of April 21st is the same day as the Earth Day Festival in Indianapolis.

(IOGA will staff a booth at the Earth Day Festival in Indianapolis April 21. If anyone is interested in helping at the booth for a couple of hours, contact Doug, [drohde71@gmail.com](mailto:drohde71@gmail.com). Anyone visiting the festival be sure to stop by the booth to say “hi”.)

## Program

At 12:20 President Rohde introduced the speaker, Kris Medic, who serves as Agriculture & Natural Resources and Community Development Educator for Purdue Extension in Bartholomew County



Pitch-In Lunch Offerings

(Columbus, IN). Her talk was on “Organics Report from Maine and Vermont.” She made a study trip to Maine and Vermont in September 2016 visiting organic farms, food markets, incubators, restaurants and other learning opportunities.

Before beginning her presentation, she passed around books that might be of interest:

*Four-Season Harvest*, Elliot Coleman, Barbara Damrosch, & Kathy Bray, May, 2009.

*The Winter Harvest Handbook*, Elliot Coleman, April, 2009.

*Organic Farmers Business Handbook*, Richard

Continued from page 4

Wiswall (Cate Farm), October, 2009  
The One-Straw Revolution, Masanobu Fukuokam,  
June, 2009.

*Small Farmer*, Purdue Extension  
*A Beginning Farmer Workbook*, Purdue Extension,  
Tamara Benjamin, 2017

Kris Medic and her group visited organic farms, restaurants, local produce markets. Some of the places they visited included the following::

**Pete's Greens**, Craftsbury, VT -- Grows leafy greens all year. ([Farm Video](#))

**High Mowing Organic Seeds**, Wolcott, VT – Grows tomatoes under cover. Uses black plastic around plant roots to warm the soil and eliminate weeds. ([Greenhouse Watering](#)).

**Cate Farms**, East Montpelier, VT – Greenhouses are only open on Sundays in May. Rest of year they grow tomatoes and burdock root (wholesale). Philosophy: Have fun.

**Frith Farms**, Portland, ME – Uses a 55 gal. drum with attached 2x2 pegs as a dibble. Committed to no-till farming and to never using a tractor. Uses solar sterilization. Uses discarded plastic billboard signs as mulch. Has an apprenticeship program. ([Farm Profile](#) Agrarian Trust 2014)

**Crystal Springs Farm**, Brunswick, ME – CSA program. Self pick herbs and flowers. Grows wild Maine blueberries. Renting their land from a land trust. All electricity used on the farm is produced by their own solar array.

**Four Season Farm**, Harborside, ME – Owned by Eliot Coleman. “Plant positive rather than pest negative.” Seaweed reduced the amount of squash bugs. Produce to market Sept.-April, because everyone else sells in the summer. Large root cellar. Root crops harvested through winter. Hoop houses moved from section to section to let ground thaw to allow harvesting. Inventiveness with tools (wire cloche, soil blockers, weeders, flame throwers, chicksaw). Use local materials. ([Farm Video](#))

**Jasper Hill Farm**, Greensboro, VT -- Working dairy farm with an on-site creamery. Cheese

**Forever Farms** -- Partnership between land trusts and farmers to protect farmland. ([Video](#))

**Intervale Center**, Burlington, VT

**Gardeners Supply Company**, Burlington, VT -- Everything from seed starting supplies and garden



Speaker Kris Medic, Agriculture & Natural Resources & Community Development Educator for Purdue Extension in Bartholomew County (Columbus, IN)

furniture to flower supports and garden carts. ([Video](#))

City composting works, Burlington, VT.

**Cabot Creamery**, Cabot, VT – 1,000 Northeast dairy farm cooperative. Uses solar panels on a huge hay barn to dry the hay.

**Explore Hand Tools** – University of Maine, Orono, ME

**Maine Farmland Trust** -- Land trusts, Bristol, ME

**Johnny's Selected Seeds**, Waterville, ME

Upcoming Events – Purdue Ext. Bartholomew County (Columbus, IN)

Columbus Area Local Food Summit - February 13th. Topic is food equity.

Fruit Tree Pruning workshops – February 16 & 17. For information go to [extension.purdue.edu/Bartholomew](http://extension.purdue.edu/Bartholomew)

Kris is the author of the book, *The New American Backyard* published by Rodale.

*Judy Houser. Secretary*

# LETTERS:



## IOGA

Enclosed please find my dues to join the IOGA. I was most pleased to learn of the organization recently. As a lifelong organic gardener I have learned one important fact: You can never learn enough about organic gardening!

*Mike Quinn*

## Newsletter

1/5/18

As always, I enjoyed the read of the newsletter. Right off the bat I learned a couple of things about feeding birds in the winter from Doug's article on the front page. I have wondered why the birds in my feeder were "throwing" a lot of the seed out onto the ground. Now I know... Doug pointed out there is a lot of filler seed in there the birds don't want. I will switch totally to the black sunflower seed and put back up my Gold Finch feeder with thistle seed.

As always, too, I hope to attend a meeting or two in 2018. I must tell you, though, that the newsletter gives me the feeling of being connected to a group of folks that respect and love nature. Good feeling.

I do like the printed newsletter showing up in my mailbox, so please continue that for me.

Regards

*Kent Blacklidge*

## Letter from Beulah Cobb

*(Editors' Note: Beulah and Clarence Cobb are the only charter members of IOGA still members of IOGA. Beulah attended the first organizational meeting of IOGA in the early 1970s.)*

Dear Claudia and Ron,

I think I must be the last of the founders of IOGA. At least your names are the only ones I recognize. I am glad IOGA is continuing. I enclose a check for my membership, but will be unable to attend.

I still garden, but my friends and neighbors come to help. Gardening is still the greatest joy of my life.

I have subscription to Mother Earth News and my Ruth Stout book of gardening and mulching (The Ruth Stout No-Work Garden Book: Secrets of the Famous Year-Round Mulch Method) is falling apart. I also can recommend, Howard Garrett's Organic Manual. Howard writes for Mother Earth News.

Happy gardening, *Beulah Cobb*



# Internet Warning

by Paul Matzek

I'm sure our readers are aware of the dangers present on the internet, but I haven't seen any cautions about cruising the 'net while suffering from garden fever. At some point I visited the web site of a well known tree purveyor, saw an "Orchard in a Box" assortment that mostly suited my desires to flesh out our budding (get it?) orchard. We bought and planted several fruit and nut trees through early spring, and only planned on two more trees but, apparently, I ordered the "Orchard in a Box" too, for last week UPS dropped a box with six trees on my front porch. Now I have twice as many of several types as I had planned.



When telling someone I know, who is in the game only for himself, about all the trees we had planted, he said, "Awwww, you'll never see anything from those trees". To which I replied, "Ahhhh, but you plant trees for the future. As if to rub his nose in it, our perky little peach tree spewed forth blossoms on every bit of available real estate on its scrawny little twigs. I don't think, at this stage in his life, he'll ever "get it".

The two apple trees planted in early spring and one of the latest plus the almond tree also have a couple of blooms. Maybe we'll have a little fruit this first year. A promise to the future brings a promise from the present.

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

## Another Chicken (Duck) Tip

While vacationing in Michigan last summer the editors asked an organic farmer if she let her chickens run throughout her farm to eat the bugs. She said no, while chicken will eat the bugs they will also damage many of the plants. She then said, ducks on the other hand will eat the bugs and leave the plants alone. She lets her ducks run throughout her farm. Has anyone had experience with chickens (or ducks) eating bugs in your garden?

## New Book on Roundup's History

[Whitewash: The Story of a Weed Killer, Cancer, and the Corruption of Science](#) by Carey Gillman is a new book (2017) that examines the history of Roundup since it was first introduced in 1974. There are currently lawsuits pending for those with lymphoma, myeloma, and leukemia who have used Roundup in home or work. In 2015, the World Health International Agency for Research on Cancer found that glyphosphate based herbicides are probably carcinogens and Roundup is the most popular of those herbicides. Monsanto continues to insist that Roundup is safe.

## March Meditations

Spring, that laggard, always seems so late  
As planting awaits return of the sun.  
The winter and the warm are at stalemate  
But garden preparations are begun.

With broadfork, hoe, and rake, I love the toil.  
With compost turned in to nourish the earth  
Made easy by the moist, frost-softened soil,  
I patiently midwife the plot's rebirth.

The goodness seeps from dirt into my heart.  
Pausing on my knees in earthy perfume,  
As Nature does her due and I my part,  
I scarce know who nurtures which, or which,  
whom.

Paul Matzek

## Ask us...!

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## UPCOMING MEETINGS

### Mark your calendar

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

April 28, 2018  
(Plant Auction)  
July 21, 2018  
October 20, 2018  
January 19, 2019



## Important Dates:

**Earth Day Festival**.....21 April, 11:00 - 4:00 @ Military Park, Downtown Indy

**IOGA Meeting & Plant/Garden Sale**.....28 April, 10:30 - 3:00 @ Zionsville Library.

**INPAWS Plant Sale**...12 May 10:15 - 12:30 @ Park Tudor Gym, Indianapolis (Broad Ripple Area)

**Hamilton County Master Gardeners Plant Sale**

..... 19 May 8:00 - 3:00 (Get there early for the best deals) @ Noblesville,  
Hamilton County Fair Grounds.

With all of these great sales, don't forget the free stuff at Earth Day Festival downtown. IOGA will be there.

# Earth Day Indiana



*free outdoor festival*

**Saturday April 21 • 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

Fun, Exhibits, Food, Children's Activities,  
Live Music

## Military Park

601 W. New York St., Indianapolis

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

**Visit the IOGA Booth**

## Treasurer's Report

1st Quarter 2018

Opening Balance Jan. 1, 2018 5908.50

### Income

Membership Dues \$ 504.00

Donations \$ 30.00

**Total \$ 534.00**

### Expenses

Web Site Hosting \$ 199.56

Speaker Expense \$ 50.00

Insurance \$ 200.00

Z'GreenFest Exhibitor Fee \$ 20.00

Earth Day Exhibitor Fee \$ 56.00

**Total \$ 525.56**

**Closing Balance Mar. 31, 2018 \$ 5916.94**

*Respectfully submitted by Ron Clark, Treasurer*

## New IOGA Members

Lisa Hopman , Indianapolis, IN 46240

Mike Quinn , Fishers, IN 46038



## 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. April 28  
10:30 am

Annual Plant Auction at Zionsville Library  
250 North 5th Street, Zionsville, IN ([Map](#))

317-873-3149

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 10:30       | Arrive with Auction Items  |
| 11:00—11:45 | Great Pitch-in Lunch<br>(bring food to share plus table service) |
| 11:45—12:40 | Introductions, Q&A, and Business                                 |
| 12:45       | Auction Begins   |

Plants, books, and garden items will be available for auction. Your donations are appreciated. Please label plants. Proceeds will be used to fund future IOGA programs. Each year the IOGA plant auction is attended by recently converted organic gardeners who are looking for plants and ideas, as well as those who have more experience and have lots of plants, tips and techniques to share.

For the pitch-in lunch, bring a favorite dish filled with food ("home-made" and/or "organic" appreciated) to share and your plate, fork, and drink.

From I-465 take the Michigan Rd./421 exit #27. Then go north 2.3 miles and turn left on E Sycamore (W 116th St.) and go 1.1 miles. Turn right onto S 1st St. and go 0.2 miles, taking the 3rd left onto W Oak St. Go 0.2 miles and turn right onto S 5th St. Park on the 5th St. side of the library (lower level). Or,

From I-65 take the Zionsville exit #130. Go east 4.8 miles on W Oak St. through Zionsville and watch for 5th St. Turn left onto S 5th St. Park on the 5th St. side of the library (lower level).

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



Join us!  
IOGA Meeting  
Sat. April 28