



# Hoosier Organic Gardener

April 2024

Indiana Organic Gardeners Association

## IN THIS ISSUE

President's  
Message

January  
Meeting  
Minutes

Bumble Bee  
Conservation

Invasive  
Insects

Tomato

Dandelion

Huckleberries

Squash Vine  
Borer

### 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 garden season to everyone! It's almost spring and time to get some cool season seeds planted. So far I have Peas, Spinach and cabbage planted. I plan on transplanting onions next. We had a mild winter, and that really helped me get some extra prep work done for an early start. Of course I have big plans and high hopes for a great year.

And don't forget the plant sale at this spring meeting. I plan on bringing Cabbage plants, tomatoes, Sage, and a couple Rosemary plants for sure. I'm also starting Fig trees from cuttings that are doing well and I have several of those I can bring.

I'm a little busy getting my garden fence updated, the rabbits are hard to keep out. And then I'm big on fishing and trying to get ready for a week on the Texas coast next weekend. I'm loving the nice days we had lately and ready for more. Hope to see you at the next meeting. And have a great garden this year!

Steve



Steve Beers

## Earth Day is April 22, 2024

The global theme for Earth Day 2024 is **Planet vs Plastics**.

### EARTH DAY INDIANA FESTIVAL



June 1, 2024  
11:00 am -5:00 pm

Garfield Park  
2345 Pagoda Dr.  
Indianapolis, IN



Check [www.earthdayindiana.org](http://www.earthdayindiana.org) for times and schedule.

# IOGA Meeting Minutes

## January 20, 2024

The meeting convened with a pitch-in lunch enjoyed by all. There were 13 members and guests in attendance.

Steve Beers opened the meeting with a thank you to Doug Rohde for his many years of service. Steve also shared some ideas on seed saving and sharing. He shared that he has saved seeds for up to 7 years and they still had a good germination rate. He said that it depends on the seed and how it was stored. It helps to try germinating a few seeds to see how the germination rate is happening, but many will last at least an extra year or two. He brought some seeds that he has saved to share with the members and guests present.



Our program was provided by the recently retired director of the Limberlost State Historical Site. The site centers on the home of a prolific author, naturalist, nature photographer, and movie producer – Gene Stratton Porter. She was a tireless worker to try to restore the large area of wetlands in northeast Indiana called the Limberlost Swamp. It was a huge area of wetlands and swamp in northeast Indiana that was lost to the drainage and development by the gas and agriculture industry in Indiana. There is now a major effort to restore as much of the area as possible. There are currently 1800 acres of restored wetlands and swamp, part of the original acreage..

The area is known as the Limberlost Conservation Area Nature Preserves, and is made up of several large parcels. A group called the Friends of the Limberlost does the work of restoration of the area. The area and Gene Stratton-Porter's home is maintained under the auspices of the Indiana State Museum. Her home in Geneva, Indiana is the center of the site and basically the visitor center. The home itself is open part of the year for tours, and there is a naturalist available who can lead tours of the nature areas of the restored wetlands. Information can be obtained at [Limberlosths@indianamuseum.org](mailto:Limberlosths@indianamuseum.org).



Ann Leatherman, Secretary

# Bumble Bee Conservation

Bumble bees are an essential part of our wildlands, farms and urban areas yet many species are suffering very alarming population declines. It is critically important to protect these vital pollinators.

## Spring - Early Summer

The overwintered queen bumble bee emerges, begins searching for a nest site and forages for pollen and nectar. Once a nest site is established, she begins laying eggs. So include early-blooming plants and maintain a diversity of flowers in your landscape. To protect overwintering queens, avoid early raking or mowing; raking is best done in April or May. Keep patches of land unmowed and untilled to provide secure nesting sites; healthy ground-nesting mammal populations help create future bumble bee nesting sites. Because queens are still foraging and colonies are usually very small, avoid the use of pesticides. After the initial brood emerges, worker bees do the foraging. The queen now stays in the nest, where her sole duty is to lay eggs and rear the young.

## Summer - Fall

Include mid and late blooming plants such as goldenrod, milkweed, and aster in your landscape. Leave leaf litter, downed wood and uncut bunch grasses to serve as potential overwintering sites. As colonies are producing new queens at this time of year, once again avoid the use of pesticides. Do not use them at any time when bees are active or when plants are flowering. In late summer, the colony switches from producing worker bees to producing new queens and males. After mating, the males die and the newly mated queens begin searching for overwintering sites.

## Winter

Late fall and winter are the best times for mowing. Set the mower deck at the highest safe level to avoid disturbing overwintering queens. To protect overwintering queens, continue to leave large sections of untilled ground. Small, controlled burns are okay, but burn less than 1/3 of available land annually and leave unburned patches as a refuge for overwintering bees. If needed, this is the best time to use a targeted herbicide treatment for invasive species. The bumble bee colony dies in the late fall, leaving only the newly mated queens to overwinter, usually just below the soil surface or under leaves or grass. The mated queens are able to change their "blood" to an anti-freeze like consistency so they don't freeze during the long winter. The bumble bees are the workhorses of the pollinators. They fly early, stay later in the evening and even fly during light rain. Bumble bee houses need to be placed away from paths, pet traffic, somewhere in a more secluded part of the backyard or away from the general traffic of humans and mowers. The bumble bees are one of our main native pollinators responsible for many garden plants and flower pollination. Your tomatoes are almost always pollinated by bumble bees.

Doug Rohde

---

## Invasive Insects to Watch For

The USDA is asking Hoosiers to watch for egg masses of spotted lanternfly and spongy moth (formerly gypsy moth) and destroy them before the eggs hatch this spring. The egg masses can be found on tree bark, cars, and items stored outside.

These insects attack hundreds of native tree and plant species in the state. Spotted lanternfly destroy crops in fruit orchards and nurseries. Spongy moths feed on the foliage of many plant varieties, but prefer oak trees. Report sightings to Indiana's department of agriculture.

IndyStar 3/31/2024

# Tomato (*Lycopersion esculentum*)

Since tomatoes are a big seller at our April plant sale, here is some interesting information on them.

Tomatoes and all members of the Brassica (Cabbage) family repel each other and should be kept apart. Tomatoes also dislike potatoes and fennel. Tomatoes will protect asparagus against the asparagus beetle. Since they are tender plants, put tomatoes in during late spring after the crop of asparagus spears have been harvested. Tomatoes protect gooseberries against insects.

Tomatoes are compatible with chives, onions, parsley, marigold, nasturtium, and carrot, and for several years I planted some garlic between my tomato plants to protect them from red spider mites. Stinging nettle growing nearby (mine are about 35 feet away so I don't know if there's a difference) supposedly improves their keeping qualities.

Though not containing fungicidal elements, tomatoes will protect roses against black spot. The active principle of tomato leaves is solanine, a volatile alkaloid that at one time was used as an agricultural insecticide. To make a spray for roses, make a solution of tomato leaves in your blender, adding four or five pints of water and one tablespoon of cornstarch. Strain and spray on roses where it is not convenient to plant tomatoes as companion plants. Keep any unused spray refrigerated.

Root excretions of tomatoes have an inhibiting effect on young apricot trees and don't plant tomatoes near corn, since the tomato fruit worm is identical with the corn ear worm. Don't plant near potatoes either, since tomatoes render them more susceptible to potato blight.

Unlike most other vegetables, tomatoes prefer to grow in the same place year after year. This is all right unless you have a disease problem, in which case you will have to plant your tomatoes in a new area. Since they are heavy feeders, give them ample quantities of compost or decomposed manure. Mulch and water in dry weather of course, to maintain soil moisture and stave off wilt disease as well as blossom end rot. But never water tomatoes from the top. Water from below and water deeply.

If you smoke, be sure to wash your hands thoroughly before you work in the garden, for tomatoes are susceptible to diseases transmitted through tobacco.

Doug Rohde

## Upcoming Meetings

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

Mark your calendar for upcoming meetings.

April 20, 2024  
July 20, 2024  
October 19, 2024



## New IOGA Members

Zachary & Deanne Melin  
Hannah & Wes Messer  
Brian & Val Thome





## Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)

Dandelions are one of the most important early spring flowers to appear and vital to bees coming out of hibernation, especially Bumblebees which are declining throughout the USA and Europe.

Dandelions like a good, deep soil, as do clover and alfalfa. Soil around dandelions is attractive to earthworms, for this plant is a natural humus producer.

Dandelions on your lawn may frustrate, (as the lawn care industry and chemical industry have made them evil weeds that have to be eradicated to have that beautiful suburban green lawn), but actually they are not in competition with the grasses because their three-foot-deep roots take nutrients from a different level of the soil. They penetrate hard pan and bring up minerals, especially calcium, depositing them nearer the surface and thus restoring what the soil has lost by the rain. When dandelions die, their root channels act like an elevator shaft for earthworms, permitting them to penetrate deeper into the soil than they might otherwise.

Dandelions exhale ethylene gas, which limits both the height and growth of neighboring plants (although probably not too noticeable). Dandelions don't last too long before disappearing into the grass but are so vital to Bumblebees and other early hatching valuable native bees. They are often the main food that's easily available.

Doug Rohde

**Indy Urban Acres**  
7900 Shearer Rd  
Indianapolis, IN

May 11th and 12th  
8:00-1:00



Organic vegetables, herbs, native plants and flowers.

100% of all sales support the work of Indy Urban Acres. Indy Urban Acres, a project of The Parks Alliance of Indianapolis, is a collection of organic farms used to empower and educate people by providing equitable access to free, high quality produce.

Hamilton County Master Gardeners Association 25th Annual

# PLANT SALE

**Saturday, May 18th**  
8:00 am - 3:00 pm

Hamilton County 4-H Fairgrounds  
2003 Pleasant Street, Noblesville, IN 46060

Shop from our large selection of plants, including:

- ✓ Native Plants
- ✓ Hostas
- ✓ Perennials
- ✓ Vegetables
- ✓ Water Plants
- ✓ some Shrubs and Small Trees

BRING YOUR OWN WAGON!

Bearded Iris dug to order from our own beds!

Free Gardening information and expert planting advice!

Cash, Credit Card or Check for Payment

No dogs allowed the day of the sale.

Hamilton County Master Gardeners Association is a nonprofit organization.

 PURDUE UNIVERSITY  PURDUE EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM



## Huckleberries

My son, Dustin, in whom I am well pleased, showed me up gardening last year. He has terraced an area in his smallish yard and started growing vegetables. Last fall he gave me a jar of huckleberry jam from berries he had grown. It was delicious. I was quite unfamiliar with them.

I found that huckleberries come in two types, a perennial shrub, and garden huckleberries, which are annuals. The shrub type is in the heath family, closely related to blueberries and cranberries. The annual type, or garden huckleberry is in the nightshade family, and can be grown much like tomatoes. The advantage here is you get berries the first summer instead of having to wait several years for a shrub to mature.

So obviously, now, I have to try huckleberries too. Research says that picked at maturity, they don't have a lot of flavor. But, like elderberries, cooked with some sugar and a little lemon juice the flavor blooms.

I planted huckleberry seeds in the basement under grow lights and they're lookin' good. The germination rate was high and all but one of the seedlings survived transplanting to bigger containers.

I'm looking forward to huckleberry jelly and trying the gorgeous royal violet juice for natural fabric dyeing.

Paul Matzek



---

## Squash Vine Borer

*Melitta cucurbitae*

**Identification:** Larva is white, fat, legless and up to 1" long. Adult is a red, wasplike moth with clear wings.

**Damage:** Larva tunnels in the stems of squash, pumpkin and other vine crops. Attacked plants wilt and die in mid to late season.

**Management:** Plant a second crop of summer squash in early July. Avoid planting zucchini, blue Hubbard, acorn, delicata and other very susceptible varieties. Butternut squash is highly resistant to attack. Bank soil along vines to encourage rooting to replace those of the borer-damaged main stem. Hand-remove reddish-brown eggs laid on the stem just above and below the soil line. Hand pick off adults as they sit on host plants and green beans early in the morning.

Illinois Natural History Survey  
The Bad Guys—Garden Pests

## Ask us...!

President – Steve Beers  
(317) 361-6783  
[sbeers46160@gmail.com](mailto:sbeers46160@gmail.com)



VP/Programs – Tamara Shockley  
(317) 437-3767  
[tamarashockley@att.net](mailto:tamarashockley@att.net)

Secretary – Ann Leatherman  
(317) 253-9490  
[plantmom45@aol.com](mailto:plantmom45@aol.com)

Treasurer – Larry Bills  
(765) 963-2947  
[lbillsioga@gmail.com](mailto:lbillsioga@gmail.com)

Editor – Judy Houser  
(317) 243-6671  
[ioga.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:ioga.newsletter@gmail.com)

## Treasurer's Report 1st Quarter 2024

Opening Balance January 1, 2024 \$4,888.44

### Income

Dues	231.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>231.00</b>

### Expenses

Newsletter	82.38
Liability Insurance	203.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$285.38</b>

Closing Balance March 31, 2024 \$4,834.06

*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.

IOGA  
Meeting  
Sat. April 20  
11:00

**Cool Creek Park Nature Center**  
**2000 E. 151st St., Carmel, IN ([Map](#))**  
**317-774-2500**

10:30—11:00	Arrive and arrange plants
11:00—12:00	Pitch-in Lunch
12:00—12:30	Introductions, Q&A, and Business
12:45	Plant Auction

**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.

**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.

We need to be sure to clean up the space and put the tables away before we leave.

**Directions:** From north I-465 in Indianapolis take Exit 31 north onto US-31 N / N. Meridian St.. Take Exit 129A to E. 151st Street. At the traffic circle take the 2nd exit (north). Go past the playground to the Nature Center where we will be meeting. The room is to your right. For more specific directions click on "map" above.

Everyone welcome. Questions call Tamara Shockley at 317-437-3767. Join us and bring a friend!



Hoosier Organic Gardener  
Judith Houser editor  
4654 Tempe Ct.  
Indianapolis, IN 46241