



# Hoosier Organic Gardener

April 2023

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

Well here we are again in April, meeting coming up on the 22nd, plant sale and our good social gathering. Last month, on the first day of Spring (22 March), I was thinking of the word AWOL, which in military terms means "absent without leave" and I decided to apply that term to this winter. Winter was AWOL. Not complaining however but hopefully the soil will receive some heavy Spring rains to moisten up the soil as we didn't really have too much snow or rain last year.

Last fall I piled up a lot of leaves from my Oak tree under it rather than bag them. I piled them up to about 8 or 9 inches then put poultry wire on top of the leaves to keep the leaves from blowing away. On top of the wire I placed several 2 x 4's to hold the wire in place. That seems to have worked out well and the leaves have soaked down leaving a good covering of them. Yesterday I removed the wire as Spring plants were beginning to grow through the leaves. I'm hoping that a lot of female bumblebees found that leaf bed the perfect place to overwinter as that's what they normally do.

If you remember Denise who gave the lecture on using plastic gallon milk bottles to plant seeds in and set out by the 22 of December, well, I did that and seedlings are poking their heads up in the gallon containers. Denise said that she had about 30/40 containers (whew!) but I'm content and happy with my 5 as this was my first experiment with that process.

Every year I sow winter rye in October or real early November in my garden beds. If you don't do that get in the habit of doing so. Winter rye continues to grow long roots down into your soil all winter and breaks up clay soil. The roots serve as conduits for ants and worms to move which aerates the soil underneath your bed. Early last month the winter rye was green and growing. You can cut it in May or dig it at the end of April. It makes spading up your soil a lot easier in the Spring. You shouldn't use a tiller on the soil if your veggie bed isn't so large as the spinning blades mess up the soil structure. A broad fork or spade works better than a tiller for smaller beds but for larger beds and/or heavy clay soil a tiller probably is the only answer. I planted fodder radishes one year to break up the clay hard pan that was under my first bed and that worked fairly well too....of course that was after I used a pick axe after I shoveled down two feet to the clay hard pan. Anyhow, I ended up with far better soil and the bed drained after a rain so it worked out well. Hopefully your beginning gardens were easier to dig.



Doug Rohde

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So, if you started your veggie seeds the first or second of March they will be looking good for the sale. Since we got an additional week of growing by having the meeting on the 22nd rather than our initial plan of the 15th, that should work out for those you bring to the sale. (I just read of someone who uses an old electric blanket to speed the growing process of her seeds which I thought was a good idea....if you have an old blanket like that. Looking forward to seeing all of you on the 22nd.

Keep IOGA organic!  
Doug



## GRASSHOPPERS

### Orthoptera: Acarididae

In excessive numbers, grasshoppers can be a gardener's nightmare, especially in rural areas. While high infestations can be difficult to eradicate, their numbers and damage can be greatly reduced with careful plant selection, the addition of predators, and the use of organic forms of insecticides.

Grasshoppers weaken plants by removing plant tissue, and they are especially damaging to lettuce, beans, corn, carrots, onions and cabbage family crops grown for fall harvest. Organic controls for grasshoppers include excluding them with row cover or screen barriers, controlled poultry predation, and inoculation of the soil with microorganisms that kill young grasshoppers.



Grasshoppers lay their eggs in the soil during fall, where they hatch the following spring. Once hatched, they begin feeding on grasses and broadleaf plants. Grasshoppers overwinter as clusters of eggs laid in undisturbed soil. Blister beetle larvae feed on these egg clusters. Grasshoppers in the Midwest are usually controlled naturally by a fungus, except in dry years.

Wherever you find grass, you will also find grasshoppers, and a few of the hundreds of grasshopper species found in North America can be major garden pests. Cool, rainy summers cause many grasshoppers to fall prey to disease, while hot, dry weather can lead to major grasshopper headaches.

Gardens that are well irrigated with an abundance of vegetation available are quite favorable to grasshoppers. Therefore, they will stick around as long as this food supply remains abundant. Grasshoppers would rather live in a tall stand of grass and weeds than in your garden, so you may want to let a hedge of tall grass grow up near your garden's edge in late summer. If you keep your garden weeded, grasshoppers will naturally gravitate toward the grassy patch.

One of the best ways to make the area less appealing to grasshoppers is by selecting plants that grasshoppers find distasteful which can help deter them from the garden and surrounding areas. Some of these plants include: Artemisia, Crepe Myrtle, Dianthus, Forsythia, Jasmine, Juniper, Lantana, Lilac, Moss rose, Sage, Salvia, and Verbena. Vegetable crops that are generally avoided by grasshoppers include: Peas, Squash and Tomatoes

Grasshoppers also hate the smell and taste of garlic. Make garlic water and spray on plants to repel the grasshoppers from your garden. Planting deterrent plants like calendula or cilantro around the edge of your garden can help keep them away. Professional gardeners use cilantro around the edge of their gardens. Calendula is pretty and edible.

Continued on Page 3

Other than the addition of less favorable plants in the landscape, you may want to introduce predators to the area whenever feasible. There are many types of good insects, such as robber flies, that feed on grasshoppers. Allowing these bugs into the garden can help eliminate grasshoppers in the garden. While young grasshoppers are feeding in sheltered areas, many are eaten by spiders, ground beetles, frogs and other predators. Wet weather favors the development of several strange grasshopper diseases caused by fungi or other microorganisms.

Insect eating birds are major grasshopper predators, especially in early summer when they must gather high-protein food for their young. Bluebirds, sparrows and larks love grasshoppers. Other critters that love grasshoppers are snakes, toads, ducks, guinea and chickens. Many bug-eating birds like to hunt by watching for movement from a perch, so studding your garden with trellises, posts and other upright structures can help birds feed more efficiently.

A naturally occurring fungus, *Nosema locustae*, weakens and kills grasshoppers when they eat it. Sold as Nolo Bait and Semaspore, this method can help you reduce grasshopper populations over time, making them much easier to manage. Earthworms and most beneficial insects are not harmed by *Nosema locustae*, but it is damaging to crickets and mantids (both are closely related to grasshoppers). Crickets are major consumers of weed seeds and mantids eat other bugs, so there is a bit of a trade-off here.

Another similar fungal microbe is *Beauveria bassiana*. This fungus grows naturally in soils and acts as a parasite to many types of insects. Both of these safely kill grasshoppers when they ingest the spores.

Gardening Know How: - Nikki Tilley, 8-12-21  
Mother Earth News – Barbara Pleasant 4-26-13  
Mother Earth News - Melodie Metje 2-3-15



## 15 Vegetable Seeds to Sow Outside Before the Last Spring Frost

### When is the Last Frost Date?

To find your average frost dates for your region, use the Old Farmer’s Almanac calculator and search by ZIP code. Frost dates are based on historical climate data that goes back more than 100 years. Although these records are quite good at predicting the future, there’s no guarantee that a frost won’t occur after the last frost in spring. There is about a 30% chance that frost could strike before or after the given frost dates. Even though cool season crops have a heightened tolerance to cold temperatures, they are not invulnerable to a deep freeze. Keep some garden cloches or floating row covers on hand in case a hard frost extends for several days in a row. It never hurts to be prepared.

Seeds that can be planted before the last frost are listed below.

6 Weeks Before		4 Weeks Before	2 Weeks Before
Onion Sets	Kale	Mustard	Carrots
Lettuce	Spinach	Beets	Peas
Kohlrabi	Arugula	Swiss Chart	Turnips
Parsnips		Broccoli	

*Rural Sprout*  
By: Author Lindsay Sheehan  
Posted on April 12, 2021



For complete information on how to plant the above seeds the complete article can be found at <https://www.ruralsprout.com/seeds-to-sow-before-last-frost/>

Submitted by Doug Rohde

# IOGA Meeting Minutes

## January 21, 2023

The meeting on January 21, 2023 was held at the Cool Creek Park Nature Center in Carmel, Indiana. There were 11 members present.

Following our usual pitch-in lunch and conversation, we watched a YouTube presentation from a conference at Penn State University's Center for Pollinator Research. The first presenter talked about how to attract pollinators to your landscape.

Before that was finished, the presentation was moved forward to Doug Tallamy's [presentation](#) at Pollinator Habitat 101: An introduction and refresher series sponsored the Ohio State University Bee Lab, October, 2022.

There are many videos of this same talk done at different locations. If you are interested in viewing the whole presentation, just do an internet search. You can also read his book *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard*.



### Highlights:

E.O. Wilson said in his book "Half Earth" that "To save life on earth we must hold half of the planet for nature." This is not possible. Half of the planet is in agriculture and half is occupied by people or buildings. There is no half to save for nature. What nature that is left is too small and isolated. Our pollinator's best hope is you.

Plants are either contributors (oaks), non-contributors (invasive species), or detractors (plants that take energy from the local food web). Plant choice matters. But there is room for compromise; your yard can have up to 30% non-natives without a decline in habitat. Go to [gardenforwildlife.com/pages/find-native-plants](https://gardenforwildlife.com/pages/find-native-plants) for plant suggestions for your area.

Tallamy's suggestions for creating a backyard habitat are: 1) shrink the lawn; 2) add keystone plants; 3) avoid light pollution by using yellow bulbs; and 4) for mosquitos use mosquito dunks in a bucket of water.

Judy Houser, Secretary



## Upcoming Meetings

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

April 22, 2023  
July 15, 2023  
October 21, 2023



# Why I Prefer Clay Garden Soil

Benjamin Vogt's thoughts on prairie gardening in Nebraska.  
With a healthy dose of landscape ethics, ecophilosophy,  
climate change and social justice.  
4/10/2018

We have been hammered with the idea there is only one "good" garden soil, and that if you want to have success then your landscape should feature something like a rich, crumbly loam akin to potting soil. Nothing could be further from the truth. Amending soil for the average homeowner isn't just out of the budget, it's out of their body's ability to work the soil or have the time to do so. And you know what? You don't need to change your soil 95% of the time; the only real reason to do so is if a soil test shows some severe contamination or you're trying to improve drainage around a basement wall. But even if there's contaminated soil, depending on what it might be, one might be able to use plants to help remediate it (indiangrass and sunflowers are good examples that clean soil, removing lead and even radiation).



Choosing the right plant for the right place is how one gardens successfully -- every time. Changing the site to fit what you want to grow is like trying to change your spouse to be the perfect mate... in the end, you'll have wasted a lot of time and energy while you'll eventually give up on the relationship altogether. So fall in love with clay soil.

Clay has the smallest particle size of soil ingredients, which include sand and silt. It has a very high water-holding ability, and is a fantastic nutrient holder, as well. A lot of our clay soils organize themselves in layers or fine sheets that are negatively charged; plant nutrients are positively charged, and so are attracted to the soil levels and "stick" like opposite ends of a magnet. This is why clay soil is often a very rich soil to work in, even though we'd assume that's not the case.

Now, let's say someone wants to put prairie plants in a garden bed because they know they are native to them, are purported to be less maintenance, and will support pollinators. They might know they have clay and figure it needs to be improved, so they come along and till in compost. What the tiller will do is destroy those wonderful layers of clay that hold nutrients while killing soil life. Sure, the new soil might appear better to us -- and it's certainly easier to dig -- but it's now no longer fit for lots of those prairie plants.

Take pale purple coneflower, *Echinacea pallida*, a mainstay in prairie garden design. Its deep taproot is designed to punch through clay soil, which also makes it pretty drought tolerant. When you put it in a loamy bed this coneflower grows too fast, gets too tall, flops over, and has a much shorter lifespan. Why? You gave it a far too rich soil and it went bonkers. It's not evolved for that kind of soil. And now you have more maintenance because you've got to replace the plant. Many prairie forbs like pale purple coneflower have evolved these strong taproots for a purpose, just as the more fibrous roots of grasses and sedges. Together, all these plants reach into clay soil and slowly amend it naturally, adding nutrients while opening up spaces for water and air to penetrate. In fact, up to 1/3 of prairie grass roots die each year, and as they decompose they enrich the soil. This is why farming is so successful in the upper Midwest and eastern Plains.



So love your clay. If it's too hard to dig into, try using smaller 3" pots or plugs instead of massive and pricey one gallon pots. Consider a mix of sowing grasses and forbs with some potted plants. I like to create designs with forbs then come in and sow a groundcover of grasses -- which speeds up planting, saves my back, and costs less (plus that means no wood mulch). You could also sow a cover crop of annual native grasses and forbs, even biennial forbs like *Rudbeckia hirta* (black-eyed susan) and *Ratibida columnifera* (mexican hat coneflower), to help prep the soil for a year or two. Otherwise, at planting time, a thin layer of 1/2" to 1" of compost doesn't hurt to add some organic matter if tests show the soil could use some.

Submitted by Doug Rohde

# EARTH DAY IS APRIL 22, 2023

The theme for Earth Day 2023 is **Invest In Our Planet.**

## EARTH DAY INDIANA FESTIVAL



June 3, 2023  
11:00 am -5:00 pm

Garfield Park  
2345 Pagoda Dr.  
Indianapolis, IN



## PLANT SALES

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

May 6th and 7th  
9:00-1:00



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.

Presale starts March 1st, minimum order 1 tray (18 plants) \$90.00

Hamilton County Master Gardener Association's 23rd Annual

# PLANT SALE

Saturday, May 21st  
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
- ✓ Daylilies
- ✓ 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!

New, Improved Checkout System: Cash, Credit Card or Check for Payment

We will follow CDC guidelines in effect at the time of the Sale.  
No dogs allowed the day of the sale.  
Hamilton County Master Gardener Association is a nonprofit organization.

 **PURDUE UNIVERSITY** |  **PURDUE EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM**

Purdue University is an equal opportunity/ equal access/affirmative action institution.

## Ask us...!

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## Treasurer's Report 1st Quarter 2023



Opening Balance January 1, 2023 \$5,624.23

<b>Income</b>	
Dues	146.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$146.00</b>

<b>Expenses</b>	
Newsletter	76.92
Quicken	44.81
Business Entity	22.00
Indiana Farmers Insurance	203.00
Domain Registration	188.22
WEB Plan	225.99
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$760.94</b>

Closing Balance March 31, 2023 \$5,009.29

*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 22

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

10:30	Arrive with Auction Items
11:00—11:45	Pitch-in Lunch
11:45—12:30	Introductions, Q&A, and Business
12:30	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.

If you arrive a bit early, you can take a hike through the woods, watch the birds from the observation room and explore the nature center's other critters or explore the meadow in front.

**Lunch:** Bring a favorite dish filled with food ("home-made" and/or "organic" appreciated) to share and your plate, fork, and drink.

**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. We will be meeting in the Greenhouse. For more specific directions click on "map" above.

**Everyone welcome!** Questions- call Margaret Smith at 317-698-0526.

Remember to car pool, if possible.

Join us and bring a friend!



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