



Growing oysters for a cleaner Bay.....www.oystergardener.org

WINTER

NEWSLETTER

2012

***ANNUAL MEETING, January 12, 2013
To include oyster gardening equipment sales***

The TOGA Annual Meeting will be held Saturday, January 12, 2013, at McHugh Auditorium in Watermen's Hall on the VIMS Gloucester Point Campus, from 2:00 to 4:30 pm for the main meeting. For those purchasing TOGA-made oyster equipment, pick up will start at 1:00 pm. The agenda is as follows:

Sales of TOGA-made oyster gardening equipment: This will take place from 1:00 to 1:45 pm. For tax reasons, we sell this equipment only at three events per year. Details of the equipment and order forms are provided in this newsletter.

Business portion: Treasurer's report and planned 2013 budget, elections for the 2013 Executive Board, a summary of 2012 highlights and awards.

Educational program: Our keynote speaker is Dr. Roger Mann, Professor of Marine Science at VIMS. His presentation, titled "So how many oysters are there on Virginia's public reefs?," describes the ongoing stock assessment of oysters on Baylor Ground in the Virginia section of the Chesapeake Bay, the status of the shell resource on the underlying reefs, and the challenges ahead in managing oysters as a sustainable resource.

The second presentation is by Ph.D. student Wendi Quidort, who was recently selected as the initial recipient of the TOGA Fellowship at VIMS. Ms. Quidort is developing genetic techniques to detect and monitor adenoviruses in Chesapeake Bay waters and shellfish. Adenoviruses, associated with wastewater effluent, can cause respiratory and gastrointestinal illnesses in humans.

Refreshments and good conversation: WE NEED YOUR HELP. We will have the usual vegetable and fruit trays, cheese and crackers, cookies and drinks. In addition, we would like to add oyster stew and/or bisque made by TOGA members. In previous years, members have been very helpful in providing most of our snacks. Please consider bringing a dish. Nina Turney is organizing this, so please call her at 804-462-3131 (home) or 540-220-2838 (cell), and let her know what you would be able to bring.

PROPOSED 2013 EXECUTIVE BOARD

The current Executive Board has unanimously nominated the following officers for 2013. TOGA members will be able to make additional nominations prior to the election at the Annual Meeting.

President.....Brian Wood Vice President.....Mike Sanders
Secretary.....Charles Yarbrough Treasurer.....Steve Wann
At-Large Members.....Vic Spain, Lynton Land, Ken Hammond, Natalie Kelly

Following board members are not elected

Past President.....Dave Turney President Emerita.....Jackie Partin
VIMS Advisor.....Karen Hudson

RETIRING BOARD MEMBERS

Thank you to two of our at-large members, Amry Cox and Rick Griffin. Both have served two years. Besides the time participating in all that happens at our board meetings, coordinating and helping with multiple outreach events, and writing articles for the newsletters, each has made significant contributions. For example, Amry was a key player in the success of our 2nd annual Oyster Tasting Event, and worked hard to reestablish our inventory and sales of TOGA apparel. Rick helped with fundraising and completed a comprehensive study on how to improve TOGA advertising and marketing of our educational services and TOGA-sponsored events. (David Turney)

Membership dues and contact information - a reminder

Dues remain \$10 per year, per family, and are payable annually in the month of January. To renew, please send a check made out to "TOGA" to TOGA, P.O. Box 2463, Gloucester, VA 23061. Because some of you have changed contact information, please update or confirm your information with the form below. Some of you have already paid dues for 2013 and beyond. If you are not sure, you may check your dues status by emailing or phoning Vic Spain at vicspain@rocketmail.com or 804-642-6764. If you are attending our Annual Meeting in January, you can check your dues status and contact information on file, and make changes as needed. If you overpay, we will credit you for years ahead.

.....cut here.....

TOGA Membership Renewal (or New Member) Application: \$10.00/family

Name: _____ Email: _____

Telephone: _____ Mailing Address: _____

Body of Water Where Oysters Are Grown: _____

Membership Renewal? Yes No

Please make checks payable to TOGA and mail to: TOGA, PO Box 2463, Gloucester, VA 23061

OYSTER FLOAT-BUILDING WORKSHOP

Beautiful weather was enjoyed by all who attended this year's September 22nd Float Workshop at VIMS. As in the past, TOGA offered the standard Taylor Float and the Flip Float, but for the first time a "Float Repair" station was available for refurbishment of floats. Participants also had an opportunity to purchase Caps and T-Shirts with the TOGA logo. Chesapeake Bay License Plates applications and information about the TOGA Fellowship Endowment were also available. Several MOGs enjoyed chatting with participants about raising oysters and related topics.

The workshop resulted in 35 floats being built and over 55,000 fertile and 40,000 sterile oyster spat/seed being distributed by four vendors. TOGA now has 10 designed Pre-Built Floats and Devices, plus a wire top for the Taylor Floats. The Pre-Built Floats and Devices were also for sale in conjunction with the workshop and 37 floats and devices were sold. Thus, TOGA will have a good variety of floats and devices for future Oyster Float Building Workshops. We are looking forward to seeing you at the September 21, 2013 workshop. (Barb Shelton, MOG and Charles Yarbrough, MOG)

REEDVILLE FALL OYSTER FAIR 2012

It was great to see everyone at our Reedville Fall Oyster Fair 2012. There were over 40 participants in attendance with five Master Oyster Gardeners to assist new potential oyster gardeners on "how to get started" in oyster gardening. Eight new members signed up and lots of membership applications were picked up by attendees.

We were very fortunate to have Dr. Jim Wesson (VMRC) as our keynote speaker. Dr. Wesson's lecture: "Virginia Oyster Management and Industry Today", was quite informative and exciting, showing that oyster aquaculture, in its short time on the Chesapeake Bay, outpaced wild caught oysters for last year's harvest. This has brought much needed jobs and revenue to the oyster industry. Dr. Wesson's lecture slides can be seen at our website : <http://www.oystergardener.org>.

Our Oyster Fair also included two displays; one was Vic Spain's "Devices and Designs" showing off TOGA built cages, benders and lifting devices to fit all gardeners. Also Vic presented a new design of cages called "The Downunder"; and it was a hit.

Our second display was " Wild Oyster Strikes" in the Great Wicomico by Phillip Shahan, (member Dudley Biddlecomb 's nephew) with bottom cages that were set out this spring to test and recruit wild strike. The display demonstrated incredible strike set with some shells having up to 20 spat attached. Dudley is a third generation Waterman and stated that the bio-slime that is usually present hampering wild strike has been nonexistent the last couple of years resulting in immense wild strikes like he hasn't witnessed in 30 years. Great news!

We also had three vendors selling diploid (fertile) and triploid (sterile) oyster seed, with total combined sales of over 130 thousand of their locally grown seed to gardeners. Two cage and supply vendors were present with some innovatively-designed cages and great deals to be had.

Thanks to all that helped and attended making this a fun and very successful event. We hope to see you next year in Reedville for the 2013 Fall Reedville Oyster Fair! (Brian Wood)

So, You Think You Can Shuck an Oyster?



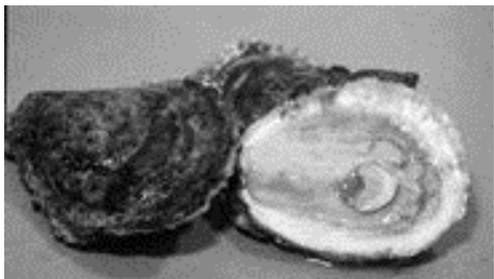
So, you think you can shuck an oyster? Well, think again. On Saturday, September 15, about seventeen of us that had some previous experience shucking oysters and were agreeable volunteer shuckers for the 3rd annual Oyster Tasting event were invited to attend a very special class. Our instructors were none other than Deborah Pratt and sister, Clementine Macon – two champion oyster shuckers. The class started off with a few opening words from Deborah - “I’m not here to change the way you shuck oysters. I’m here to teach you the right way to shuck oysters, my way”. A rumbling of

laughter spread through the crowd and with our egos checked at the door, we were off and learning.



Deborah and Clementine started by outlining the proper equipment which consists of gloves, a wooden block or towel to hold the oyster and the proper knife. The knife proved to be key because it’s not just about technique. We learned that the knife blade must be short, thin and sharp. Most commercially available shucking knives need to be modified and thanks to our host, Dave Turney, we had plenty of tools available to do just that.

Next it was technique time. No hinge shucking for this group –it’s all about going in at the opposite side, called the lip or bill of the oyster. Cultured oyster shells are thinner so it’s better to go into the lip to avoid breaking the shell. You can watch Deborah demonstrate the proper technique on the You Tube video at the following



web link-

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lv6rwUYghS8>. A properly shucked oyster is separated from the adductor muscle on both the top and bottom (so it can slide down easily) and has no stabs, cuts or tears to the meat. Improper technique leaves an inedible looking mess. Keep in mind; you are aiming for the

adductor muscle every time. This is the only point of separation from the shell. The muscle is always in the same position so once you get a feel for the location, you are good to go.

What a great day of learning and practice! I’m afraid none of us has what it takes to challenge the champions but we had a fun time learning their tricks. Vic Spain’s only regret was the lack of hot sauce application training but I’m confident with enough practice, he’ll figure it out. (Karen Hudson)

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTED

Given our increasing scope of activities to help citizens enjoy the many benefits of oyster gardening and our growth in membership (nearly 100 new members this year alone) the board launched the Strategic Planning process at their February meeting. The purpose is to establish a process for the

continuous incremental improvement of our operations.

The process began by reviewing the rich history of accomplishments since the year TOGA was founded in 1997 in partnership with VIMS, and brainstorming to get members thinking about how we can do better going forward educating people about oyster aquaculture and of getting more oysters in the Bay. Many thoughtful ideas and initiatives were proposed during the next several months.

We then categorized these ideas and initiatives into major functional areas of Administration, Education, and Membership, stating them as objectives to be accomplished. The next step was to prioritize objectives to be accomplished that led to the current Strategic Plan adopted by the board during their August meeting. This included a Master List of Objectives for future consideration, and an Archived list to document the many ideas considered.

Volunteers already leading / participating in the implementation of each objective in the current plan are identified in copy at the TOGA website along with the Master list of Objectives. We encourage all members to review these objectives to see if you can help accomplish them. The more members that participate in the setting and accomplishing objectives the more successful TOGA will be.

To facilitate member participation in the process of submitting ideas, a formal Opportunity for Improvement (OFI) proposal is being prepared to help members to share their ideas. In the meantime members of the management team can be called or emailed directly. The names and contact information are provided at the website and in newsletters. Members can attend any board meeting to submit their OFI. The member assigned to help with your OFI will make every effort to follow through to your satisfaction.

Continuous improvement is important to TOGA's future growth and success. We hope you will participate in the strategic planning process. (Julian Cox)

THIRD ANNUAL VIRGINIA HALF-SHELL OYSTER TASTING

This year's Oyster Tasting was another unqualified success. We were immensely lucky to have great weather for a third year!

Hurricane Sandy, followed by a Nor'easter and the subsequent closing of oyster grounds in the Hampton Roads area, caused much consternation and many anxious phone calls and e-mails, but the Middle Peninsula waters were not affected. I believe that these events also accounted for the smaller ticket sales as well. But it looks like approximately 169 tickets were sold, with each oyster vendor supplying about six hundred or so oysters, so it was definitely a success.



As was true last year, Kelsick Market did an outstanding job with the general set-up in the Puller Center, and the food they provided for sale was outstanding. The wine and beer concession was quite successful, bringing in a good bit of money for TOGA.

Deborah Pratt and Clementine Macon, who came with

representatives of the Virginia Marine Products Board, not only gave great demonstrations, but also gave individual instruction to a number of people, including my 10 year old grandson. I think we will have another good oyster shucker in our family, to follow in the footsteps of his father, aunt and grandfather.

To our great benefit, Deborah and Clem, both professional world class shuckers, also pitched in and helped at vendor booths when we were short some volunteer shuckers.

I deeply appreciate the help of Jeff Odell, who organized volunteers for the event, and Ken Hammond, who brought materials and built tables across the newly-paved parking lot.

In addition, there were many volunteers, including the ladies who sold wine and beer for hours, and more who staffed the ticket table. My thanks to everybody who helped with this event. (Jackie Partin)

TOGA GROWTH AND LONGEVITY STUDY

We are still collecting data for November's reporting period. All I can say is ***WOW!*** We started this study in late August 2011 with four different strains of oysters (two Diploids and two Triploids) along with 41 volunteers. We planned for a three year study, assuming that the oysters would grow to a market size of 3 inches by fall of 2013.

Twelve months later in August, Tommy Jones, one of our G&L study volunteers who resides on the lower Rappahannock River, has reported some strains as big as 4.3 inches average size. This fall volunteers have alerted us that the cages are now too small, some were cracking and lines were failing, sending the cages to the bottom due to the rapid growth and weight of the oysters. Luckily no harm was done, the cages were retrieved and broken cages are to be replaced to finish out the study.

The Aussie cages we used for the four animal study were supposed to hold 125 market size oysters. We thought 150 startup animals would have plenty of room for three years growth, assuming some mortality. But to our surprise, the oysters in most cases out-grew their cages in 12 months, making it necessary to reduce the numbers of oysters to 75 per cage. I'm sure the lucky volunteers will be enjoying the oysters left over from the reduction for a Thanksgiving feast!

November's data are also impressive. Most reports document that the oysters average over 3 1/2 inches, with lots of 4", 5", 6" and even 6 1/2" oysters mixed in! There has been phenomenal growth this summer, and a great deal of spat set at some sites. There are line charts on our website (<http://www.oystergardener.org>) charting the overall growth rates, along with growth rates for each river. See "An update (Aug. 2012) of the TOGA Growth and Longevity Study" on the home page.

Soon all of November's data should be in and the line charts updated. This should be fun to see. Also in the near future we will post pictures of some of the unusual fast growth sites and their results.

The results of the triploid-vs-triploid study are also dribbling in. Most confirm very rapid growth this summer, little mortality, and no clear-cut differences between LoLa and DeBy strains.

Thanks again for all the hard work and patience to our Growth and Longevity Study volunteers.

.....
Please visit www.oystergardener.org for the latest on oyster gardening.

Oyster Gardening Equipment Sales to Benefit TOGA/VIMS Fellowship Endowment

TOGA will sell these hand-made devices at up to three events per year. The next event will be at the Jan 12, 2013 Annual Meeting. Proceeds go to the TOGA/VIMS endowment. All labor and transport are donated by volunteers. Recent changes- Wire mesh lids are available for Taylor Floats. The flipfloats and bottom cages will be 23 in. wide (previously 24 in.) so that the seams can be overlapped for strength and durability. Additional floatation is available for flipfloats. The small flipfloats and bottom cages have been canceled due to lack of interest. Benders have been improved with heavier-duty hinges. Commercial grade fabrication tools have been purchased to ensure a quality product.



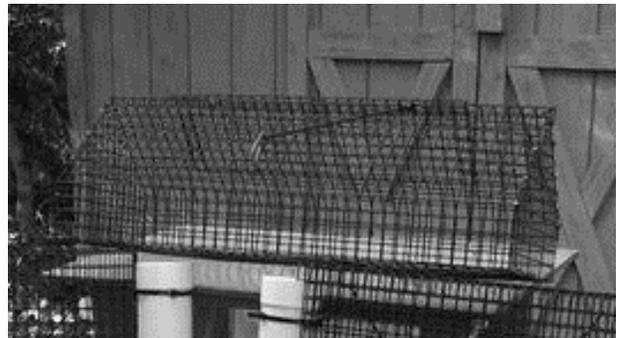
Taylor float- 3ft. by 2 ft. by 1 ft. Holds up to 400 market-size oysters. Use with standard ADPI bags. **\$90. Option-** with wire mesh lid- **\$105**



Flipfloat- 39in. by 23in. by 6in. Holds up to 300 market-size oysters. Use with standard ADPI bags. **\$60. Option-** with additional floatation devices on ends- **\$70.**



Bottom cage- 39in. by 23in. by 6in. Holds up to 300 market-size oysters. Use only with firm bottom. **\$45. Note-** larger than shown in photo above.



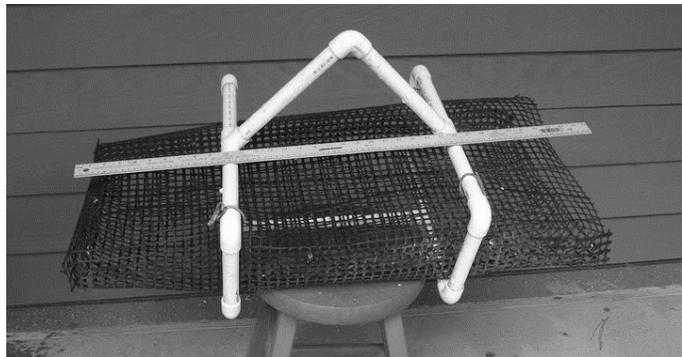
Downunder- 36in. by 14in. by 11in. Holds up to 150 market-size oysters. Hangs on line beneath dock. Use 1/2 standard ADPI bags. **\$40**



Light weight flipfloat lifter- Works great with flipfloats, bottom cages and downunders. Not recommended for Taylor floats. **\$60**



Bender- Handy for making your own floats and cages. Options- 42in. (**\$45**) or 50in. (**\$50**)



Delano Rig- Hangs below your dock. Holds up to 100 adult oysters. Comes with standard 1/2 in. mesh ADPI bag. **\$20**

Synthetic crabpot line- **\$.06 per foot** (preorder not required)

-----Cut here-----

Order Form- To ensure availability, please place your order NLT December 20, 2012 for pick up Jan. 12, 2013 at VIMS Watermans Hall, 1pm to 1:45pm. Annual Meeting starts at 2pm. Please pay at pick up.

Name _____, Phone _____, Email _____
 Item _____, Qty _____, \$Amount _____ (see description above)
 Item _____, Qty _____, \$Amount _____
 Item _____, Qty _____, \$Amount _____
 Total \$ _____ (due at pick up)

Please mail order to TOGA, c/o Vic Spain, PO Box 2463, Gloucester, VA 23061. You may also order by email to vicspain@rocketmail.com
 Question?- Contact Vic Spain, vicspain@rocketmail.com or 804 642-6764

MATCHING FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR TOGA ENDOWMENT

In 2011, with contributions from over 100 members and other citizens and organizations, the TOGA Fellowship Endowment was established with the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) Foundation. The purpose is to support graduate student(s) enrolled in the School of Marine Science of the College of William and Mary who are researching oysters, shellfish, or more broadly the ecological restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. The current funding of our Endowment stands at approximately \$55,000. Our first graduate student was selected this year, and she is PhD candidate Wendi Quidort, who will be providing a presentation on her thesis at our Annual Meeting on January 12, 2013. See the first article of this newsletter for details.

An anonymous donor has offered to match up to \$5,000 for contributions to the Endowment through April 15, 2013. The TOGA executive board agreed to make every reasonable effort to raise these funds through fundraising activities and direct contributions to the Endowment. If you wish to donate, you may do so online from our website at www.oystergardener.org by clicking on "TOGA/VIMS ENDOWMENT" on the left of the Home page. If you prefer to send a check, please make it out to "VIMS Foundation", noting "TOGA Endowment (3506)" in the memo section, and mail to: VIMS Foundation, c/o The College of William and Mary, P.O. Box 1693, Williamsburg, VA 23187. (Ken Hammond)



Our newsletter was paid for by funds generated from the sale of Chesapeake Bay license plates. These funds also help pay for the Spring Fairs and the MOG course.
See <http://dmv.virginia.gov/exec/vehicle/splates/info.asp?idnm=CB>

TOGA
Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association
PO Box 2463
Gloucester, VA 23061

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage **PAID**
Yorktown, VA
Permit # 33

Return Service Requested