



# Growing oysters for a cleaner Bay

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

## Spring 2025

### Recap: TOGA's Annual Meeting Attracts Oyster Enthusiasts to VIMS

~Sue Borra, TOGA president, MOG; Carl Zulick, TOGA president-elect, MOG; Karen Hudson, VIMS; and Richard Siciliano, MOG

Shortly after noontime, on Saturday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, oyster gardeners and bivalve enthusiasts from Virginia's Northern Neck, Middle Peninsula, and Gloucester-Hampton-Newport began arriving on the campus of Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS), Gloucester Point, Virginia for TOGA's annual membership meeting. The gathering of nearly 100 mingled with scientists and master oyster gardeners, heard about Virginia aquaculture, learned about TOGA's accomplishments, boasted about their favorite subject (oysters), and stayed to enjoy an array of oyster dishes at the potluck reception that followed the meeting.

Sue Borra, TOGA's president, welcomed everyone as she presided over the business meeting. After Brian Ingram gave the Treasurer's Report, Sue highlighted TOGA's major accomplishments for the past year: 1.) providing members with oyster gardening resources (e.g., floats, cages, and spat), and 2.) presenting a variety of oyster gardening educational opportunities throughout the Tidewater


area; e.g., Oyster garden classes, exhibits, demonstration gardens, community market outreach events, and the first major revision of the *Virginia Oyster Gardening Guide* in 12 years. See the original edition of the oyster guide written by Mark W. Luckenbach and Jake Taylor (1997), entitled *Oyster Gardening in Virginia: An Overview of Techniques*.


Following the [election of TOGA officers](#), Carl Zulick, newly-elected as TOGA president, presented TOGA's Goals and Plans for 2025, and then

**2025 TOGA Madison Boyd Honorary Award**

Recognizing significant contributions to oyster aquaculture, biology, gardening, advocacy, education, youth development, or service; or towards improving the health of the Chesapeake Bay, its tributaries, and its communities.

**Past Recipients:**  
Jackie Partin  
Vic Spain  
Brian Wood






announced the recipients of the Madison Boyd Honorary Award to TOGA members [Bob Eadie](#), [Kent Eanes](#), and [Ken Hammond](#).



Sue Borra then thanked the members of the TOGA Board of Directors who were leaving after their years of dedicated service while on the Board: [Carlton McFaden](#), [Stephanie Antonijuan](#), [Kent Eanes](#), [Russell Mait](#), and [Galen Salgado](#), and [Sue Borra](#). Finally, Sue Borra and Carl Zulick gave a special recognition to Richard Siciliano for his work [developing the OYS-101: Basic Oyster Gardening](#) course and for teaching it throughout the Tidewater region for the past two years.

Next on the agenda, Savannah Longest, of Virginia's Division of Shellfish Management in the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC), explained the permit process for non-commercial



### 2024 Accomplishments

Oyster Gardening Resources	Adult Oyster Gardening Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Built and sold 350 oyster floats and accessories</li> <li>Work with vendors to provide access to Oyster Spat for TOGA members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducted 5 Oyster 101 Classes reaching 128 oyster gardeners</li> <li>Built and maintained 10+ Oyster Education Exhibits and Oyster Demonstration Gardens in locations such as:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reedville Fisherman's Museum, Deltaville Maritime Museum, Kinsale Museum, Westmoreland and York State Parks, Yorktown, Urbanna, Williams Wharf</li> </ul> </li> <li>Conducted over 30 Oyster Gardener Outreach events               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At farmers markets, oyster festivals, community events, and more</li> </ul> </li> <li>Revised the Virginia Oyster Gardener Guide</li> </ul>

oyster gardening in Virginia and the streamlined online permit application ([VA General Permit #3-Oyster Gardening](#)). Every Virginia oyster gardener is required to obtain this free permit. (Go to [TOGA's Annual Meeting Attracts... continued on page 10](#))

**Upcoming: TOGA Members and Supporters: Set Your Sights for the Membership Appreciation Party at Camp Kekoka, Kilmarnock: March 22<sup>nd</sup>**

~Terry Lewis, MOG

The annual TOGA Appreciation Party, set for March 22, 1:00-4:00 p.m., will be held for the first time at Camp Kekoka, 1083 Boys Camp Road, Kilmarnock, Virginia. TOGA members, supporters, and oyster enthusiasts are invited to join in celebration of friendship, entertainment, and delicious food, including oysters on the half shell, roasted, fried, stewed, and it's all free.

The winners of TOGA's Middle School Writing contest will be announced, and they will read aloud their winning essays to the party goers. TOGA will supply local oysters, and in return, we ask you to bring the fixings for your favorite oyster dish to share; stoves and ovens are available to finish the job. If you have no favorite oyster dish, not to worry. Bring a side dish, salad, or dessert to share. We will provide soft drinks, but if you prefer an adult beverage, feel free to bring your own. A free wine tasting, compliments of SeaGlass Wines and TOGA member Sam Bohnstedt, is included.

Oyster chef *extraordinaire* Stacey will prepare fried oysters ("the best on the east coast") and promises to make gluten-free fried oysters, on request. In honor of St. Patrick's Day, which precedes the party by just a few days, Terry urges all to wear green and prepare to win prizes at *Terry's Trivia Test*.



The TOGA store will be selling men's and ladies' short and long sleeve shirts, hats, caps, visors, aprons, and oyster knives, each with the TOGA logo affixed. All profits go to funding TOGA projects.



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**Upcoming: Spring '25 Oyster Float & Spat Sale, and OYS-101: Basics of Oyster Gardening Seminar**

~ Vic Spain, Brian Wood, MOGs

Mark your calendars for Saturday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, at Camp Kekoka, 1083 Boys Camp Rd, Kilmarnock, Virginia. That's the date and location for TOGA's annual spring oyster float sales event. During the sale, running from 9 am to 12 noon, you can purchase all the materials needed for an oyster garden, and our Master Oyster Gardeners (MOGs) will be on hand to advise you, whether you are just starting out or have some experience with oyster gardening. In addition, Richard Siciliano, MOG, will lead a class of **OYS-101: Basic Oyster Gardening** from 9:00-10:30 a.m. Register online for this free class: [www.oystergardener.org/oyster-gardening-101](http://www.oystergardener.org/oyster-gardening-101) Unsure of the best oyster gear to buy for your O-garden? An OYS-101 class scheduled before the May 1<sup>st</sup> order deadline will help you decide.

**Place your orders online by May 1<sup>st</sup>**, for Taylor Floats, Flip Floats, Tidal Tumblers, Rough Riders, and Bottom Cages, along with spat tubes, wire benders, and spat bags. Go to TOGA's website for a description of each device: [www.oystergardener.org/devices-and-designs](http://www.oystergardener.org/devices-and-designs) and note the addition of the Eagle Scout Grow-out Kits. (*See details page 11*). Also available at the sale are small and medium spat bags, crab pot line, float wire mesh, shell bag material, TOGA-logo hats and T-shirts, with no pre-ordering needed.

Purchasing a TOGA float requires current membership. Order up to three wire floats, plus two spat tubes, including build-your-own purchases. Unsure about your membership status? Check the address label on the back of this mailed newsletter. Or, contact Vic Spain: [vicspain@rocketmail.com](mailto:vicspain@rocketmail.com)



Payment is due when you pick up your pre-ordered floats, by noon. If you cannot be at the sales event, ask us to hold your float and let us know when and where you can pick up your purchase. Otherwise, unclaimed and unreserved floats will be sold to walkup customers.

**NOTE: Orders must be placed by May 1, 2025.**

TOGA accepts checks, cash, and Visa/Master Cards, with payment due at pickup. (To avoid charging state taxes on our floats, we follow the *Occasional Sales* policy for nonprofits in Virginia. If you cannot pick up your order on May 1, arrange to pay within 7 days after the sale.)

During the Spring '25 Float Sale, vendors will sell triploid and diploid spat (as available.) Since demand for floats has been high, vendors will sell their own floats and equipment, along with spat. TOGA members and others who missed the order deadline can shop for different style floats, tools, and supplies not sold by TOGA.

The Annual Float Sale is one of TOGA's primary fundraising activities as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. All proceeds beyond material costs go to the [TOGA/Virginia Institute of Marine Science \(VIMS\) Student Fellowship Endowment](#), and to other projects that foster oyster gardening and the health of the Bay.

If you prefer to order by mail, use the [Float Order Form](#) printed on page 13 of this newsletter, or [download an order form](#) for "pre-built" or "build your own" floats from the TOGA website: <https://www.oystergardener.org/spring-float-sale>.

**Build-Your-Own Float Day:** Saturday, May 10<sup>th</sup> Camp Kekoka, 9 a.m. to noon: This year, TOGA members who volunteer for TOGA activities (including float building), earn a \$25 discount on up to three floats they build. Use the [online or mail-in order forms](#) to order BYO floats. Contact TOGA to volunteer: [www.oystergardener.org/contact-us](http://www.oystergardener.org/contact-us)

If you're volunteering for pre-sale float building, contact Jim Dall at [jimd@togaboard.org](mailto:jimd@togaboard.org)

Mail the completed form to the address indicated, or email a copy (preferred) to: [vicspain@rocketmail.com](mailto:vicspain@rocketmail.com)

## **OYS-101: Basics of Oyster Gardening-- a Free Educational Opportunity for All Oyster Enthusiasts**

~Richard Siciliano, MOG

This 90-minute class, taught by an oyster gardener with 20+ years of experience growing oysters for fun (not for profit), is geared for the beginning oyster gardener who owns waterfront property in Virginia's Northern Neck, Middle Peninsula, or Hamptons, and who wants to grow oysters for personal enjoyment. Following a step-by-step process, the class shows how a Virginia waterfront homeowner can grow oysters and become a successful oyster gardener:

1. Analyzing and Evaluating Your Site
2. Choosing an Oyster Containment System
3. Gathering Seed Oysters (spat), Tools, and Supplies
4. Setting-up, Maintaining, and Harvesting
5. Applying for a Virginia Oyster Garden Permit
6. Seeking Help through Resources

This year, classes are taught monthly through November 2025. To register for this free class, go to the TOGA website and type **oyster gardening 101** in the search box. For a partial list of classes scheduled, go to page 13 of this newsletter: [UPCOMING TOGA 2025 EVENTS](#).



*Doug Schaefer (above right) works with Ken Hammond, both Master Oyster Gardeners, to make a PVC donut for a Taylor Float at a Build-Your-Own Oyster Float Day at Camp Kekoka (Kilmarnock). The next "BYO Oyster Float Day" at Camp Kekoka is May 10, 2025.*

## Are your Dues due for 2025?

If you received this newsletter in the mail, please check the year next to your name on the address label. If it is 2024 or earlier, then 2025 dues are due for your membership to remain current. Questions? Contact Vic Spain at [vicspain@rocketmail.com](mailto:vicspain@rocketmail.com) or 804-642-6764.



(photo by Kent Eanes, MOG). Abundant wild oysters on the bank of Mill Creek, Heathsville

**Too many oysters? Too many shells? What to do?** O-Gardeners: If you've grown more oysters than you can consume, or you've run out of float space, consider donating your live oysters back to TOGA so they can help restore our sanctuary reef in Pitman Cove at Camp Kekoka. And while you're at it, turn in any spent shells you may have accumulated. Drop off those excessive bivalves (and shells) at one of TOGA's float sales or education outreach events. For details, contact Richard Siciliano: [rjsiciliano@yahoo.com](mailto:rjsiciliano@yahoo.com) or Carl Zulick: [czulick@gmail.com](mailto:czulick@gmail.com)

TOGA annual membership dues are \$25 (per family) for one calendar year (January through December), not 12 months from the date of your payment.

### TOGA Member Benefits:

- Receive newsletters with the latest oyster gardening information
- Participate in educational events sponsored by TOGA.
- Learn about innovations in oyster gardening techniques
- Learn from the expertise of hundreds of others interested in growing oysters
- Enroll free-of-charge for the class *OYS-101: Basics of Oyster Gardening*

**To become a member, visit the TOGA website:** <https://www.oystergardener.org/become-a-member>, or use the form on page 15 of this newsletter to update your membership information or renew. Make sure your address and email address are correct. It is our primary way of contacting you.





## Now Open to Virginia High School Students

Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association  
and Chesapeake Bay Trust

# High School Writing Competition

Open to all  
Virginia High School Students




Photo courtesy of Gulf Coast Media



**Essay Theme:  
"Consider the Oyster"**

**Prizes: \$500, \$250, \$100**  
\$200 Prize to the  
School of the First Place Entry

**Contest Deadline: December 15**

Go to [www.oystergardener.org](http://www.oystergardener.org)  
for more information.

Great chance to have your writing published!!



*Tidewater Oyster Gardeners  
and Chesapeake Bay Trust  
High School Writing Contest  
General Competition Guidelines*

1. Open to all Virginia High School students, including home schooled students.
2. The theme of the competition is **"Consider the Oyster."** Writers will create their own title for the article—other than using the words of the theme listed above. Student's name, grade/school, and home town must be printed in three lines at the top right hand corner on each page of the entry.
3. Length: a firm 500-750 words which must be typed, double-spaced.
4. Electronic submissions are encouraged; send as a Microsoft Word or plain text attachment to the competition coordinator listed below.
5. Send essays with the completed submission form found on the Tidewater Oyster Gardeners website:  
**<http://www.oystergardener.org/youth-writing-competition>**
6. By submitting the article to the competition, permission is granted by the parent(s) and student for TOGA to post or publish the article in publications or web sites as deemed appropriate by the TOGA Competition Judges, with compensation being limited to writer credit to the student author in order to reward and recognize writing excellence, and to promote the competition throughout the year.
7. Submissions not meeting the competition guidelines and criteria will be disqualified.
8. **Submission deadline: December 15.**
9. Send the submission form and essay via email (preferred) to: **[lewistmn@msn.com](mailto:lewistmn@msn.com)**  
Subject: High School Writing Competition Submission

Or print form, complete, and send with article as specified via postal mail to:

Terry Lewis  
High School Writing Competition  
11339 Water View Place  
Gloucester, VA 23061

**If you have  
questions, please  
call 804-693-2687.**

**Good Luck!**



*This competition is funded by Chesapeake Bay Trust ([cbtrust.org](http://cbtrust.org))*

## Remembering Howard Delano

May 22, 1935 – February 15, 2025

~ Vic Spain, MOG

On February 15, 2025, TOGA lost a dear friend and avid supporter. Howard was a regular at many of our float sales, educational events and at our annual Members Appreciation parties. He was also an engineer and inventor who provided us with equipment designs and ideas. Many of you may remember the delicious oyster dishes he served at our Members Appreciation Parties. You can find some of his recipes on TOGA's website:

<https://www.oystergardener.org/howard-s-recipes>.

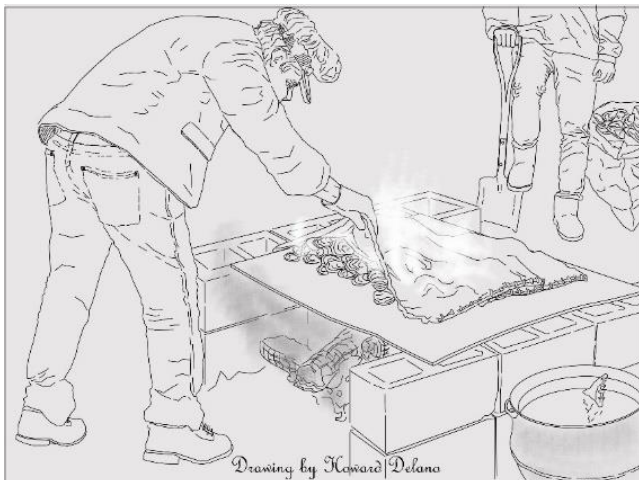
One of Howard's recipes is particularly poignant. It is reprinted from the Fall (September) 2023 *TOGA Newsletter*.

We will miss our friend Howard.

### **Feature: Recipe for a Fond Memory**

~ Howard Delano, TOGA member

As a small boy, I enjoyed oysters every winter. I remember oyster stews on weekends that cheered the cold gray days of winter. When I was a teenager, my mother would open the stairway door and shout "your oysters are getting cold." I would hurriedly jump from my warm bed and rush downstairs to find that they hadn't even made it to the sauce-pan yet. I knew enough then not to protest the cook.



*Drawing by Howard Delano*

I would remember when I stood as a small child, barely taller than the table, as I watched my father shuck oysters on the back porch. When he opened a shell and a perfect beauty of an oyster was discovered, he would say "Boy, this oyster is too

pretty to put in the bowl with those other oysters." I would open wide and enjoy the delight of another fresh raw oyster. That was 80-some years ago, and I cherish that childhood memory.

I never got many chances to attend enough oyster roasts as a boy, but they are still in my memory. The oyster roasts in the 1930s and 1940s were outdoor events, and the men did the cooking. The weather was often not the best, and you needed strong young men, shelter for tables, and a location suited to have a fire. Brawn, and not the talents of a chef, is better suited here.

Two low walls about 16 inches high would have to be built from flat sandstone or cinder blocks and located about three feet or a little more apart to contain the fire. A heavy gauge steel plate, approximately 36 inches by 48 inches, would have to be made ready to pull onto the walls over the hot coals.

On the day of the oyster roast, a fire would be made between the knee walls using available split hardwood logs. When a good bed of coals was produced, two young men would pull the steel "boiler-plate" up and onto the knee walls and over the hot coals. As the plate was heating, a pot of cold water was situated near the fire to soak a couple of burlap bags.

When the plate was hot enough to make a drop of water dance, half of the oysters from the bushel of oysters were dumped from its burlap bag onto the steel plate. It is much better here to use a shovel to thin the oysters to a single layer to allow for uniform cooking. One or two water-soaked burlap bags would then be layered on top of the oysters, being sure that all of the oysters are covered.

After eight minutes, using a rubber-gloved hand, I would peek under the burlap blanket to see if one or two of the oysters had opened. A customary cry of "are they ready yet?" to which an answer of "almost" is the most frequently heard. When one or more oysters open, quickly remove the burlap and shovel the oysters into two one-peck buckets and hurry to the waiting crowd at the tables. Repeat as necessary. The re-cycling of dripping water onto a hot plate to steam and re-condense on the wet burlap to be dripped again to hot plate to re-steam makes this method one that has endured over 100 years. Repeat as necessary. The re-cycling of



dripping water onto a hot plate to steam and re-condense on the wet burlap to be dripped again to hot plate to re-steam makes this method one that has endured over 100 years.



**About the Author:** Howard Delano was a TOGA member from the start. A retired engineer, Howard designed oyster gardening devices (e.g., The Delano Rig) and shared with TOGA both the designs and the devices themselves from the organization’s beginnings. Howard is shown here in the kitchen of the Free Shade Community Center at the “Volunteer Appreciation Party” in March 2023. Howard cooked “some really nice oyster dishes,” according to Vic Spain; he was “one of the nicest people you could ever meet.”



## TOGA Needs Volunteers

~Laurie B. Slone

Do you love gardening oysters and want to help TOGA make a difference? Are you willing and able to help us ...

- ... with *OYS-101: Basics of Oyster Gardening?* Classes are scheduled this spring and summer in the Tidewater region. Can you help us set up, greet attendees, and be a part of our teaching team? MOGs, will you help? We will train you.
- ...with the Spring Float and Spat Sale on Saturday, May 17th in Kilmarnock at Camp Kekoka? Greeting people, moving floats, tracking float sales, setting up and taking down, selling TOGA merchandise, answering questions, giving advice, and more?
- Contact TOGA if interested in joining the fun. [www.oystergardener.org/contact-us](http://www.oystergardener.org/contact-us)



(left) TOGA volunteers bending wire mesh to make a Tidal Tumbler at one of last year’s “Build-Your-Own Oyster Float Days” at Camp Kekoka (Kilmarnock). The next “Float Building Day” at Camp Kekoka is set for May 10, 2025. Those interested in helping out the float-building team may contact Vic Spain: [vicspain@rocketmail.com](mailto:vicspain@rocketmail.com)

Photo by Richard Siciliano



## Oyster Gardener Profile

Kent Eanes

I have zero doubt, if you ask ten different oyster gardeners for a list of their techniques, you're going to get ten different lists. Yes, the basics will be the same, oysters > containment device > in minimum 8ppt salinity water, but the peripheral items will be different. I say this because I don't want anyone to think that my list is "the" list that you need to follow or else. There is no "or else." To quote a gardening peer, "there is no wrong way to grow oysters" (within reason).

### Garden Location

Mill Creek, Northumberland VA

### Years Gardening

Fifteen

### First Device

Taylor

### Current Devices

4 Taylors 1 Tidal Tumbler

### Oyster Types Grown

Diploids & Triploids

### Spat Vendors

OysterMama 804-725-8557

Capt Tom's 804-580-5021

### Reason for Gardening

Food, environment, pleasure

### Shell Discard

Mill Creek (June)

### Master Oyster Gardener

Since 2017

### Mentors

Jackie Partin

Vic Spain

### Advice to New Gardeners

Start slow. I've seen new enthusiastic gardeners go crazy and buy 5 devices and 4000 spat to start their garden. There's nothing wrong with easing into an oyster garden.

### Questions:

Kent@kenteanes.com

**1** Even just half filled with oysters, Taylor floats can get very heavy, so we've opted for this schedule 80 aluminum davit. Money well spent! They can be found on Ebay with brackets. At the Ebay search type in "Premium 2 Piece Crab Shrimp Lobster Pot Puller Davit Kit". There are many different crank types at Northern Tools. We did switch out the cable for a stainless steel one after a few seasons.



**2** Having a single hanging point makes cleaning cages and floats an easy task. We just position ourselves in one spot and spin the device around. We use a good stiff scraper to clean the floats. We do this once a year, including the use of a power washer on the float and cage but not the oysters. To clean the oysters we use a good stiff brush but only do so when harvesting/eating (and doing a little showing off).

**3** Two stainless steel cables are permanently connected to our Taylor floats. The cable loops are long enough to ease to each side to be able to open the cage lid. The cables are woven through the bottom of the cage. Copper crimps are used to make the loops. Willing to email more detailed photos.

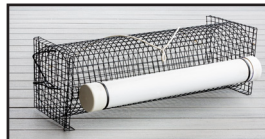
**4** Not only is a floating dock the best way to access the water with kayaks and paddle-boards, but floating docks are also ideal for maintaining oyster cages and harvesting oysters. If we're just going to harvest, we won't use the davit. Instead, we untie the cage from the dock and, with a boat hook, drag/float the cage down to the floating dock.

**5** We attach stainless steel pet tags to our cages for contact information in the event a cage breaks free. These don't get as fouled as other methods and if they do get fouled they wipe clean with ease.

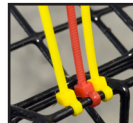


**6** All manner of critters call oyster cages home, from mud crabs to minnows. If you're working on your dock, these critters end up in-between the boards and are nearly impossible to free. The use of a tarp eliminates this issue.

**7** I use our tidal tumbler (with spat tube) as the "nursery". New spat start in this device and remain there for a few months during the growing season, until they are large enough to transfer to a Taylor (no spat bag), large enough not to fall through the cage or have the oyster hinge get stuck in the cage.



**8** Small color zip-ties attached to a cage help us track results stored on my phone. For example, yellow-red-yellow: 3/4 inch spat, May 2020 Vendor: Oyster Mama Type: Triploid 1 year size 3.5inch If we transfer a batch of oysters to a different device, we will transfer the zip ties. This is a total oyster-geek item.



**9** We've heard too many stories of lost cages from storms so we don't mess around with line diameter. We use lines in the 1/2 - 5/8 inch range.

**10** We buy spat in the 1/2 - 3/4 inch size range and have even bought over-wintered 1 inch spat. First, larger spat has a reduced mortality rate. Second, larger spat does not require the extra fine mesh spat bags which are more prone to fouling in the growing months with algae, so more maintenance is required to keep the fine mesh clean. Fouled spat bags = less water flow. Less water flow = less food for the oysters. Less food for the oysters = reduced growth. We return our discarded shells back to the creek early June. And we will also release live oysters back to the creek as well. Last year, I returned about 75 gallons of live oysters back to the creek.

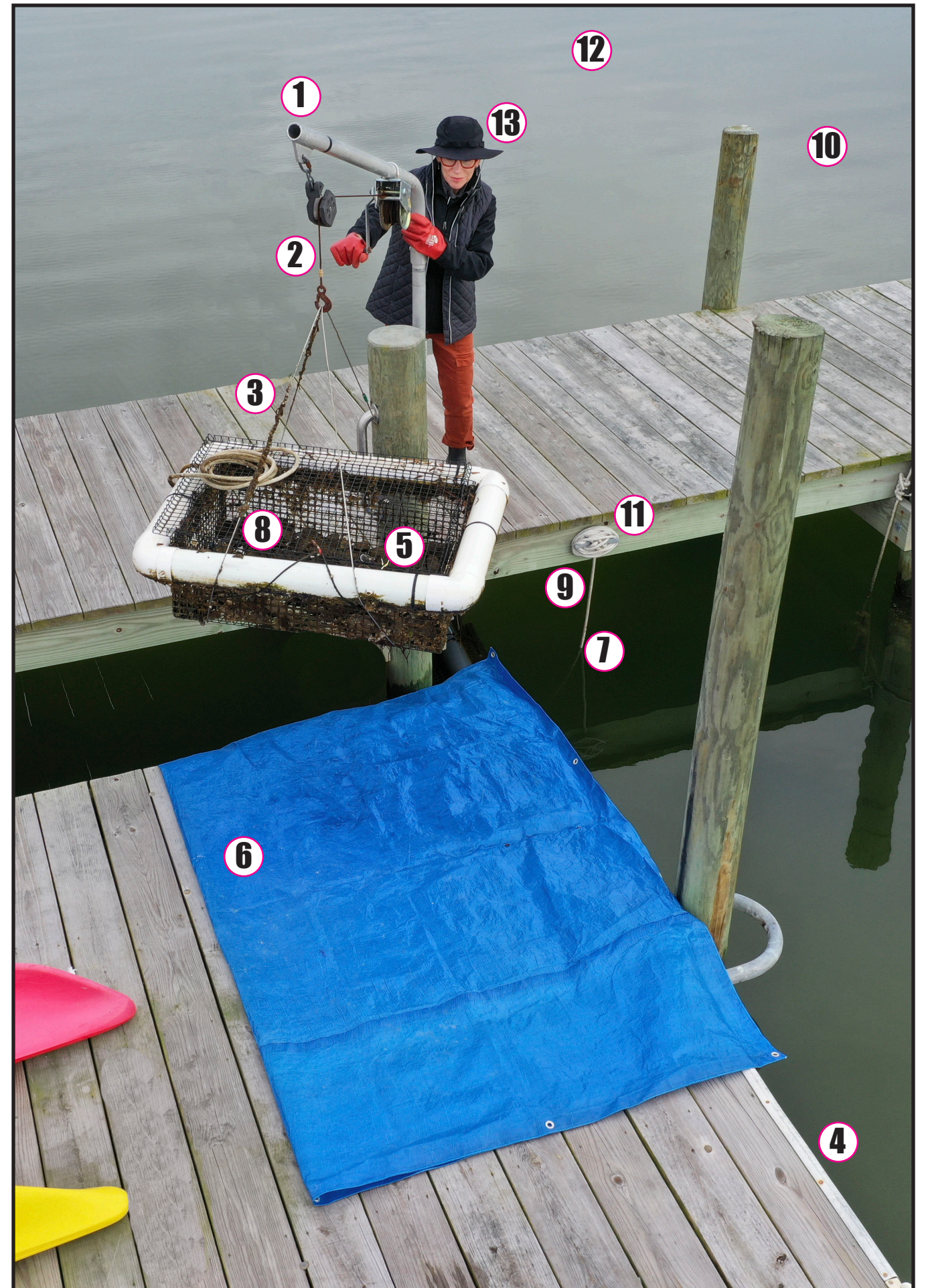


**11** Salinity levels in Mill Creek are very good for oyster growth. Normally in the 18-20 ppt range (parts per thousand)

**12** We use large cleats to attach our devices to the dock. They also make it easy to adjust line lengths for tide changes, storms etc.



**13** Getting your significant other to embrace the oyster garden...priceless!





## TOGA Annual Membership Meeting (continued from page 1.)



**Purpose of the Master Oyster Gardeners (MOG):** To provide a steady stream of highly-trained volunteers who could lead TOGA's outreach mission. The first course was held in 1998 and graduated 19 enthusiastic MOGs. A dozen or so classes have been held in subsequent years, each with roughly 15 to 20 students in each. Shown above is the MOG class held in 2013.

Karen Hudson, VIMS liaison to TOGA, spoke of long-anticipated plans for the Master Oyster Gardener course slated to begin in the spring of 2025. The content of the new online Master Oyster Gardener's course will consist of oyster gardening fundamentals, oyster biology and life history, oyster diseases, understanding the various "critters" that live in and around oyster gardens, and the regulatory and human health issues surrounding oyster gardening. The planned MOG course will include the following components:

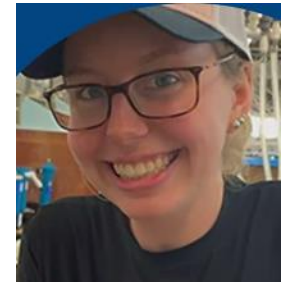
- VIMS: the Science of Shellfish Aquaculture – Oyster Gardening
- TOGA: Methods and Management
- VIMS: Hands-on Learning at the Acuff Center for Aquaculture
- Volunteer experiences

The format of the new MOG course will be hybrid, consisting of web-based asynchronous modules, which MOG students may complete online 24/7, along with some face-to-face scheduled "hands-on" learning activities at the Acuff Center and volunteer experiences at other physical locations.

Following Karen Hudson's presentation, TOGA members heard from Crystal Booker, VIMS's Assistant Director of Donor Relations, Stewardship and Alumni Engagement, who introduced two TOGA/VIMS Fellowship Endowment recipients. Income from TOGA's endowment is used for graduate student fellowship support for students enrolled in William & Mary's Batten School of Coastal and Marine Sciences and Virginia Institute

of Marine Science (VIMS). The fellowship supports students engaged in researching oysters, other shellfish, and Chesapeake Bay ecological restoration.

Madison Griffin (*above left*), a Master's Degree student at VIMS, spoke first about her research into the "The Resiliency of Oyster Reefs Using Statistics and Data Science Methods."



Caela Gisinan, also a Master's Degree student at VIMS, then presented her research on "Addressing Labor Demand and Production Efficiency in Shellfish Aquaculture."

The TOGA annual meeting concluded with a panel discussion consisting of those who contributed to the publication of the third edition of the *Virginia Oyster Gardening Guide: 2025*. The panelists were Sue Borra, TOGA's past president; Carl Zulick, TOGA's newly-elected president; Savannah Longest, Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC); Adam Wood, Virginia Department of Health (VDH); and Karen Hudson, Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS). The first issue discussed was why the *Virginia Oyster Gardening Guide* was in need of an update. The answer was clear, if not obvious:



- Many significant changes have occurred in shellfish aquaculture since the last edition was published in 2013.
- New information and scientific data have come to light about the Bay and its shellfish, particularly oysters.
- Great enhancements and innovation to oyster gardening have taken place, in gear and practice.
- And, perhaps most important: the 2013 edition is out of print.
- Publication is due in the spring 2025, and the Guide will be available in print and electronic editions

The scouts built “Eagle Scout Grow-out Kits,” consisting of either a Tidal Tumbler or a Rough Rider, also includes a mini spat tube, which can hold initially up to 1000 spat. As with all spat containers, the spat is to be moved to other cages as they grow. Tidal Tumblers or Rough Riders can continue to be used and each can hold up to 150 adult oysters.

The Grow-Out Kits are on sale at the [Spring 2025 Float Sale, May 17](#) at Camp Kekoka. Quantities may be limited. TOGA is happy to be working with the Scouts of Troop 200.

**Presenting the NEW Virginia Oyster Gardening Guide**

*The Latest Information for Oyster Enthusiasts*  
Whether you are an experienced or beginning oyster gardener, this session will provide the most up-to-date facts you need to know!

Moderator:  
Sue Borra, TOGA

Overview of the New Guide:  
Carl Zulick, TOGA

Presentation and Discussion with collaborators:  
Savannah Longest, Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC)  
Adam Wood, Virginia Department of Health (VDH)  
Karen Hudson, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, (VIMS)  
Carl Zulick, TOGA



Tidal Tumbler. A Rough Rider is the same cage without the float

**Feature Project: The Eagle Scout Grow-out Kit**  
~Vic Spain, MOG



Mini Spat Tube, 17 inches long, fit inside a Tidal Tumbler or Rough Rider cage

Nathaniel Dunster, an Eagle Scout candidate and member of Troop 200 Yorktown, Virginia, has volunteered to work with his fellow scouts and build oyster cages for TOGA as a community service project. The work by the scouts is a generous donation of their time and effort. This is an important step for Nathaniel to become an Eagle Scout.



Scout Troop 200, Yorktown, Virginia assisted Nathaniel with his project



## TOGA Board of Directors Slate of Nominees



**Officers**  
 President: .....Carl Zulick, MOG  
 Vice President: .....Terry Lewis, MOG  
 Secretary: .....Jim Dall  
 Treasurer: .....Brian Ingram, MOG  
 Past President: .....Sue Borra, MOG

Deltaville  
 Gloucester  
 Gloucester Point  
 Cobbs Creek  
 Kinsale

**Directors at Large**  
 Lou Castagnola, MOG  
 Ken Hammond, MOG  
 Richard Siciliano, MOG  
 David Singletary  
 Laurie Slone  
 Mike Sanders, President Emeritus, MOG  
 Doug Schaefer, President Emeritus, MOG  
 Vic Spain, President Emeritus, MOG  
 Brian Wood, President Emeritus, MOG  
 VIMS Advisor, Karen Hudson (Non-Elected)

Gloucester  
 Reedville  
 Heathsville  
 Newport News  
 Hayes  
 Lottsburg  
 Heathsville  
 White Marsh  
 Reedville




## Thanks to Out-going Board Members

Sue Borra, President (remains on Board)  
 Carlton McFaden, Vice President  
 Stephanie Antonijuan, At-Large Member  
 Kent Eanes, At-Large Member  
 Russell Mait, At-Large Member  
 Galen Salgado, At-Large Member



### The 4th Annual Madison Boyd Award

Presented to Volunteer

## Bob Eadie

Recognizing his passion for Production:

- ▶ Device Fabricator
- ▶ Device Design Improvement
- ▶ Donor
- ▶ Dedication to TOGA work
- ▶ A Top Volunteer




### The 4th Annual Madison Boyd Award

Presented to Volunteer

## Kent Eanes

A Passion for Innovation:

- ▶ Device Fabricator
- ▶ Professional Photographer
- ▶ Adult and Youth Educator
- ▶ Project Planner
- ▶ A Top Volunteer and Advocate
- ▶ Inventor



### The 4th Annual Madison Boyd Award

Presented to TOGA Board Member

## Ken Hammond

In Recognition of Significant Contributions:

- ▶ 20 Year Board Member
- ▶ Device Fabricator
- ▶ Reef Builder
- ▶ Youth Educator
- ▶ Project Manager
- ▶ Donor





## Richard Siciliano Recognized for Developing Basic Oyster Gardening Class

~Carl Zulick, TOGA President, MOG

At the TOGA Annual Meeting, President-elect Carl Zulick presented Richard Siciliano with a beautiful set of Toadfish oyster shucking knives to acknowledge the success of Richard's OYS-101 Basic Oyster Gardening classes over the last two years, reaching well over 300 aspiring oyster gardeners and resulting in thousands of oysters being introduced into the Chesapeake Bay.

A retired college professor emeritus, Dr. Siciliano designed and teaches this informative class that is informative, interactive, and fun, including in his lecture a crowd favorite *Oyster Jeopardy* unit. Carl stated that the development and delivery of the class has perhaps been the greatest achievement of TOGA in the organization's recent past, attracting new members, putting oysters in the water, and improving the health of the Bay.





## TOGA Oyster Float Sale Order Form

**Camp Kekoka, 1083 Boys Camp Rd, Kilmarnock, VA 22482, from 9 am to 12 noon, October 12, 2024**

This mail-in form is an alternative to online ordering; however, we prefer that you order floats online **by May 1, 2025**, at: <https://www.oystergardener.org/spring-float-sale>. Mail this form to TOGA, P.O. Box 2463, Gloucester, VA 23061. Or, email a scanned copy to Vic Spain: [vicspain@rocketmail.com](mailto:vicspain@rocketmail.com)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

This form **must be received by May 1, 2025**, so we have sufficient materials available. Limit your order to 3 wire-mesh cages (including Build-Your-Own) and up to 2 spat tubes. **Pre-Built Floats and Devices** are described online: <https://www.oystergardener.org/devices-and-designs/>

Payment for floats and devices is due when you pick up your floats. Checks or cash are preferred, but Visa and MasterCard will be accepted. Pick up your floats by 12 noon, or notify Vic Spain to arrange an alternative: [vicspain@rocketmail.com](mailto:vicspain@rocketmail.com)

Qty.	Cost each for TOGA members	Description		Qty.	Cost each for TOGA members	Description
	\$150	Taylor Float with Top			\$100	Flip Float
	\$100	Bottom Cage			\$90	Tidal Tumbler
	\$80	Rough Rider				
	\$35	Spat Tube (small mesh)			\$55	Bender 42 inch
	\$35	Spat Tube (medium mesh)			\$60	Bender 50 inch
	\$100	*Eagle Scout Rough Rider, includes mini spat tube			\$110	Eagle Scout Tidal Tumbler Kit, includes mini spat tube

**Note: Purchasing TOGA-built floats is a membership benefit.** Join TOGA or update your dues for 2025. Not sure of your dues status? Check the address label on the back of this "mailed" newsletter. You should see 2025, 2026, or 2027, if your dues are up to date, or contact [vicspain@rocketmail.com](mailto:vicspain@rocketmail.com). To join or update, see <https://www.oystergardener.org/become-a-member>

### Build-Your-Own Floats at a TOGA Float Build Workday 3 Float Limit, **\$25 discount\*** per float

For the discount, \* come to Camp Kekoka, 1083 Boys Camp Rd, Kilmarnock VA on **May 10, 2025: 9 am - noon.**

I would like \_\_\_\_\_ (quantity) Taylor Floats with Top at \$125 per float.

I would like \_\_\_\_\_ (quantity) Flip Floats at \$75 per float.

I would like \_\_\_\_\_ (quantity) Bottom Cages at \$75 per float.

I would like \_\_\_\_\_ (quantity) Tidal Tumbler at \$65 per float.

I would like \_\_\_\_\_ (quantity) Rough Rider at \$55 per cage.



## Upcoming TOGA Events in 2025

**TOGA Volunteer Float Build Days** to prepare for the Spring '25 Float Sale, at Camp Kekoka. Coordinator: Jim Dall, [jimd@togaboard.org](mailto:jimd@togaboard.org) First-time volunteers, email Jim before attending on any following Thursdays, 9:00 AM – 12:00 noon: March 27, April 3, April 10, April 17, April 24, May 1, May 15

**March 31**, Monday, 5:00 – 6:30 PM: OYS-101 Basics of Oyster Gardening (*free*), Central Rappahannock Regional Library - Newport Branch, 22 Coles Point Rd, Hague VA 22469. [Register online](https://www.oystergardener.org/copy-of-oyster-gardening-101) at: <https://www.oystergardener.org/copy-of-oyster-gardening-101> Coordinator: Richard Siciliano, [rjsiciliano@yahoo.com](mailto:rjsiciliano@yahoo.com)

**April 8**, Tuesday, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM: TOGA Board of Directors Meeting, Virtual Google Meet, Contact Carl Zulick, [czulick@verizon.net](mailto:czulick@verizon.net) for access

**April 12**, Saturday, 10:00 – 11:30 AM: OYS-101: Basics of Oyster Gardening (*free*). Northumberland Public Library, 7204 Northumberland Hwy, Heathsville VA 22473 [Register online](#), Coordinator: Richard Siciliano, [rjsiciliano@yahoo.com](mailto:rjsiciliano@yahoo.com)

**April 19**, Saturday, 09:00 AM–1:00 PM: Heathsville Farmers Market, Northumberland Court House, 73 Monument Pl, Heathsville, VA 22473 Event Coordinator: Doug Schaefer, [subiceguy@hotmail.com](mailto:subiceguy@hotmail.com)

**April 26**, Saturday, 10:00 – 11:30 AM: OYS-101: Basics of Oyster Gardening (*free*), Camp Kekoka, 1083 Boys Camp Rd, Kilmarnock, VA 22482 (Community Meeting Room), [Register online](#), Coordinator: Richard Siciliano, [rjsiciliano@yahoo.com](mailto:rjsiciliano@yahoo.com) (Last class before the float ordering deadline of May 1st)

**April 28, 29, 30**, Monday-Wednesday, Times TBD: Hampton City Schools Oyster Planting, 1 Club Run Blvd., Hampton, VA. Coordinator: Vic Spain, [vicspain@rocketmail.com](mailto:vicspain@rocketmail.com) Betsy McAllister, [bmcallister@hampton.k12.va.us](mailto:bmcallister@hampton.k12.va.us)

**May 1** Thursday, Deadline to order floats for the 5/17 Spring Float and Spat Sale and 5/10 BYO Float Workshop (see below)

**May 10**, Saturday, 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM: BYO (Build Your Own) Float Workshop, Camp Kekoka, 1083 Boys Camp Rd, Kilmarnock, VA 22482. Coordinator: Jim Dall, [jimd@togaboard.org](mailto:jimd@togaboard.org)

**May 13**, Tuesday, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM: TOGA Board of Directors Meeting, River Counties Community Foundation, 834 Rappahannock Dr, White Stone, VA 22578 Contact Carl Zulick, [czulick@verizon.net](mailto:czulick@verizon.net) for access

**May 14**, Wednesday, 6:00 – 7:30 PM: OYS-101: Basics of Oyster Gardening (*free*), [Williams Wharf Landing](#), 1039 Williams Wharf Road, Mathews, VA [Register online](#), Coordinator: Richard Siciliano, [rjsiciliano@yahoo.com](mailto:rjsiciliano@yahoo.com)

**May 17**, Saturday, 09:30 – 11:00 AM: OYS-101: Basics of Oyster Gardening (*free*) before the sale, Camp Kekoka, 1083 Boys Camp Rd, Kilmarnock, VA 22482 (Blue meeting hall) [Register online](#), Coordinator: Richard Siciliano, [rjsiciliano@yahoo.com](mailto:rjsiciliano@yahoo.com)

**May 17**, Saturday, 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM: [TOGA Spring Float and Spat Sale](#), Camp Kekoka, 1083 Boys Camp Rd, Kilmarnock, VA 22482 Coordinator: Brian Wood, [awood45858@aol.com](mailto:awood45858@aol.com)

**May 31**, Saturday, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM: OYS-101: Basics of Oyster Gardening (*free*), NatureFest – College of Southern Maryland, 8730 Mitchell Road, La Plata, MD. [Register online](#). Coordinator: Richard Siciliano, [rjsiciliano@yahoo.com](mailto:rjsiciliano@yahoo.com)

Find more OYS-101 classes scheduled this summer and fall, and to [Register online](#), search **events** at [www.oystergardener.org](http://www.oystergardener.org)





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Restoring nature.



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now over 600 Strong!**

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## TOGA Membership Form

P.O. Box 2463, Gloucester, VA 23061

Join online: <https://www.oystergardener.org/become-a-member>

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Please check one:  New Member  Renewal Annual Dues: \$25

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, and Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Body of water where oysters will be grown: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check here if you use this form only to update your information (and not to pay dues)

**The Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association (TOGA)** is a non-profit organization established in 1997 to promote the environmental health of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, through oyster cultivation and by other means, and as a way of enjoying Virginia oysters. Because they are filter feeders, oysters remove bacteria and sediments from the water, making the local environment cleaner habitats for marine life, and the improved water quality encourages seagrass growth, which creates better habitats for fish. Our main goal is to educate interested citizens of all ages in oyster aquaculture methods. Join TOGA today. Learn how you can grow oysters and help the Chesapeake Bay.



Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association  
PO Box 2463  
Gloucester, VA 23061

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