



Growing oysters for a cleaner Bay

www.oystergardener.org

Winter 2025-26

The Annual TOGA Membership Meeting at VIMS, Watermen's Hall: Saturday, February 21, 2026: 12:45 - 5:00 pm

*~ Carl Zulick, TOGA President and Karen Hudson,
Shellfish Aquaculture Extension Specialist, Marine
Advisory Program, Science Advisor; VIMS Liaison to
TOGA*

We hope to see you at the **TOGA Annual Meeting**, Saturday, February 21, 2026, at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) Gloucester Point Campus, Watermen's Hall Auditorium. Register at: www.oystergardener.org/annual-meeting

In addition to your voting on the slate of nominees for the TOGA Board, progress reports and awards will be presented. Officials from our partner agencies will be on hand to provide guidance on permits and water condemnations. Always a favorite, TOGA Graduate Fellowship awardees will brief us on their current research projects. The featured presentation will be delivered by Dr. Jim Wesson, retired Head of Conservation and Replenishment of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) who remains involved in the annual oyster stock assessment survey, a VMRC and VIMS collaborative program which has been ongoing since the early 1990's. He has been a TOGA member since the organization's founding and brings a wealth of experience, having witnessed significant changes in the field over the years, which he will share with us.

A quick meet and greet for current Master Oyster Gardener trainees starts at 12:45 p.m., and a session of [Oysters-101: Basic Oyster Gardening](#) goes from 10:00 to 11:45 a.m.

The TOGA Annual Meeting is a great time to interact with your fellow oyster enthusiasts from the Tidewater area.

Please bring a potluck dish to share during our popular social hour reception and enjoy some delicious recipes from other oyster lovers.

The annual meeting is much more than business. We encourage everyone to participate in-person to enjoy the aquarium and renew relationships with fellow members, but a virtual option will be available. You may pay your membership dues at the meeting, or you can pay online at www.oystergardener.org/become-a-member. We welcome and encourage non-members in the community to attend to learn more about TOGA, ([Annual Meeting continued – page 4](#))

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Upcoming: TOGA Members and Supporters: Membership Appreciation Party at Camp Kekoka, Kilmarnock: March 21st

TOGA members and supporters are invited to the 13th annual TOGA Appreciation Party at Camp Kekoka, 1083 Boys Camp Rd, Kilmarnock, VA 22482 on **Saturday, March 21, 2026, from 1 to 4 p.m.** Since the event follows St. Patrick's Day, come dressed in green and be prepared to answer trivia questions on the "Luck of the Irish" on Terry's Quiz Show. This year features a raffle with prizes donated by local businesses. TOGA will supply plentiful local oysters for your enjoyment. All we ask is that you bring your favorite oyster dish, dessert, or side dish for others to share. There are stoves and ovens at the facility. Chef Stacey will be on-site again to prepare fried oysters ("best on the east coast"), including gluten-free fried oysters. TOGA will provide soft drinks, and you may bring your own adult beverages.

Winners of the TOGA High School Writing Contest will read their winning essays, a highlight of the Appreciation Party. This year, floats and other items will be on sale. Pre-orders are not required.

Register by March 15th so supplies can be acquired: www.oystergardener.org/appreciation-party Questions? Contact Terry Lewis at lewistmn@msn.com or call at 804-693-2687.

One more thing. There is no cost to TOGA members and families within the household. The Board of Directors wishes to express our appreciation to our many great members and supporters who make TOGA such a success. We look forward to seeing you there for a great time and to help celebrate St. Patrick's Day.



Upcoming: Spring '26 Oyster Float & Spat Sale, and OYS-101: Basics of Oyster Gardening Seminar

Mark your calendar for Saturday, May 23rd, at the [Deltaville Maritime Museum and Nature Park](#), 287 Jackson Creek Road, Deltaville. That's the date and

location for TOGA's annual spring oyster float sales event. From 9 am to 12 noon, you can purchase all the materials needed for an oyster garden. In addition, Master Oyster Gardeners (MOGs) will be on hand to help you, whether you're just starting out or have some questions about your oyster garden. 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 Unsure of the best oyster gear to get for your O-garden? An OYS-101 class scheduled before the May 1st order deadline will help you decide.

Place your orders online by May 1st, 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. 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



Payment is due when you pick up 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.

During the Spring '26 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 in 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>. Mail the completed form to the address indicated, or email a copy (preferred) to: vicspain@rocketmail.com

Build-Your-Own Float Day: Saturday, May 9th Camp Kekoka, 9 a.m. to noon: This year, TOGA members who volunteer for TOGA activities (including float building), may 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

If you're volunteering for pre-sale float building, contact Jim Dall at jimd@togaboard.org

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

~Richard Siciliano, MOG

This 90-minute class, taught by a seasoned oyster gardener, is intended for beginning oyster gardeners with waterfront property in Virginia's Northern Neck, Middle Peninsula, or Hamptons, and who want to grow oysters for personal enjoyment. Following a step-by-step process, the class shows how to raise oysters successfully:

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 2026. To register for this free class, go to the TOGA website and search for ***oyster gardening 101***.



Are your Dues due for 2026?



www.oystergardener.org/become-a-member

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

If you received this newsletter in the mail, please check the year next to your name on the address label. If it's 2025 or earlier, then update your membership status online so it's current. Questions? Contact Vic Spain at vicspain@rocketmail.com or 804-642-6764.

TOGA members get these benefits:

- Receive by mail printed 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*
- Purchase equipment at TOGA float sales
- Get free admission to the Member Appreciation Party and Oyster Potluck Dinner for your household

- Meet great friends
- Help improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries

To become a TOGA member, visit our website: 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.

...**Annual Meeting** (Continued from p. 1)

12:45- 1:00 p.m. **2025 Master Oyster Gardener (MOG) class, Meet & Greet Session**, with Karen Hudson, Carl Zulick, and Vic Spain.

1:15 p.m. **General Session Welcome:** Waterman's Hall Auditorium. Carl Zulick, TOGA President, and Karen Hudson, VIMS Liaison

1:20 – 2:15 p.m. **TOGA Business Meeting**

- Treasurer's Report: Brian Ingram, Treasurer
- 2025 TOGA Highlights: Carl Zulick, President
- Election of Officers: Jim Dall, Secretary
- Madison Boyd Award 2025: Carl Zulick, President

TOGA Board of Directors 2026

Officers		locale	phone	Email address
President	Carl Zulick, MOG	Deltaville		carlz@togaboard.org
Vice President:	Terry Lewis, President Emeritus, MOG	Gloucester	804.815.8899	
Secretary	Jim Dall	Gloucester Point		jdall@togaboard.org
Treasurer	Doug Schaefer, President Emeritus, MOG	Heathsville		subiceguy@gmail.com
Past President	Sue Borra, MOG	Kinsale		sueb@togaboard.org
Directors at Large	Lou Castagnola, MOG	Gloucester		
	Ken Hammond, MOG	Reedville		
	Robb Riddle*	Mathews		
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	David Singletary	Newport News		dsingletary@togaboard.org
	Laurie Slone	Hayes		lslone@togaboard.org
	Mike Sanders, President Emeritus, MOG	Lottsburg		
	Vic Spain, President Emeritus, MOG	White Marsh		vicspain@rocketmail.com
	Brian Wood, President Emeritus, MOG	Reedville		brianw@togaboard.org
2025 Board Member Departing	Brian Ingram, MOG	Cobbs Creek		

MOG: Master Oyster Gardener

*New candidate

TOGA Annual Meeting Schedule of Activities, Saturday, February 21, 2026 12:45 to 5 PM

10:00- 11:30 a.m.: **Special Optional Session: OYS-101: Basics of Oyster Gardening.** Learn about oyster gardening, for free. TOGA membership is suggested, not required.

Register in advance: www.oystergardener.org/oyster-gardening-101. All attendees of OYS-101 are encouraged to attend the TOGA annual meeting. (*more, p 3*).

12:45 –1:15 p.m. **Check-in for the TOGA Annual Meeting.** Meet with representatives from the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, the Virginia Department of Health, experienced Master Oyster Gardeners, and oyster enthusiasts.

- *Thanks to Our Volunteers:* Dr. Laurie Slone
- Vice President's Report: Terry Lewis, Vice President. *High School Writing Contest, TOGA Store, and Member Appreciation Party*
- TOGA Goals for 2026: Carl Zulick, President

2:15 - 2:30 p.m. **Update from Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS),** and the Master Oyster Gardener Program for 2025. Karen Hudson, Science Advisor and VIMS Liaison to TOGA, VIMS

2:30 - 3:00 p.m. **TOGA Fellowship Endowment at VIMS and Award Recipient Presentations.** Crystal Booker, Director of Development, VIMS

- Elena T. Hoang, *Creating three-dimensional models of different artificial oyster reefs, comparing structure to*

track restoration success, and examining how oyster spat grows on them.

- Ashley Rose, *Research on ribbed mussel restoration in living shoreline marshes.*

3:00– 4:00 p.m. **Education Sessions**

- The [2025 Virginia Oyster Gardening Guide](#): Carl Zulick, TOGA President
- Oyster Gardening 101 ([OYS-101: Basics of Oyster Gardening](#)) - Dr. Richard Siciliano
- Keynote Presentation: ***The Current State of Oysters and Issues in the Chesapeake Bay***. Dr. Jim Wesson, Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC)

4:00 - 5:00 p.m. **Social Hour with Oyster Enthusiast Friends**

- Potluck Buffet. Please bring an oyster dish or favorite appetizer to share. Terry and MaryAnn Lewis

Pre-register for the TOGA 2026 Annual Meeting:

www.oystergardener.org/annual-meeting/

If you plan to attend virtually, we will send a link to your email address on your registration form.

Introducing: Robert L. Riddle, candidate for membership on TOGA's Board of Directors. Robb is the semi-retired founder of Riddle Associates, Inc., a full-service commercial and industrial real estate brokerage. A resident of Mathews, Virginia, he has practiced commercial real estate for 41 years and is a member of the Mathews County Planning Commission and treasurer of the Mathews Land Conservatory.



Formerly, Robb was the past-chair of the Economic Development Authority, City of Chesapeake, Virginia, and a board member of several associations: Chesapeake Rotary Club; Old Point National Bank; Old Point Financial Corporation; Virginia Air & Space Center;

Chesapeake Care Free Clinic; Chesapeake North YMCA; Norfolk Mental Health, Hospitality Center; and the Shore Drive Advisory Board, City of Virginia Beach. His interests include baseball, racquetball, collecting interesting automobiles, and oysters.



Eagle Scout Candidate Marius Franklin and His Scouting Project

~Richard Siciliano, MOG

Late last summer, July 2025, I received an email from Martin Franklin, a TOGA member whose son, Marius, was working towards becoming an Eagle Scout. A Junior in Langley (VA) High School, Marius was searching for a project in his pursuit of that award. The Tidewater Oyster Gardening Association had worked before with prospective Eagle Scouts (see *"Feature Project: The Eagle Scout Grow-Out kit, p. 11, the TOGA Newsletter, March 2025*), in conjunction with its volunteer-run float-building program. Floats and cages built by volunteers from TOGA's membership comprise the invaluable workforce that produces most of the oyster gardening devices offered to its members at cost.



When I asked him why he wanted to focus on constructing oyster floats for his project, Marius explained: *"Another dude (i.e., "Scout") in my Troop did a project making oyster cubes for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation."* Later in August, Marius, his dad and mom, Heidi, came to Camp Kekoka to tour the TOGA workplace, and the plan started to take shape in earnest. TOGA would supply the materials, and our float builders would train Marius to build the Tidal Tumbler (our most popular oyster containment device) so that he could, in turn, train his fellow Scout volunteers to build the Tidal Tumblers, in Vienna, Virginia.

When the floats were built, Marius would deliver the finished floats to Camp Kekoka for TOGA's Spring '26 Float Sale, to be held at the Deltaville Maritime Museum, May 23, 2026. Marius' float-building project to help him attain Eagle Scout was thus given the green light to start.



Supervised by Jim Dall, TOGA's coordinator of float building, Marius puts the final touches and attaches cord to his first Tidal Tumbler.

I asked who helped him on his project, and Marius stated: "I had a lot of help -- 35 friends from my troop signed on to help, along with a couple of dogs. I first had to get my plan approved. I asked four people to write reference letters, I wrote a report for the Boy Scout Council outlining my plan in detail, and then I met with officials from Scouting America who questioned me in detail. I also took the Basic Oyster Gardening class (OYS-101) last September in Kilmarnock to learn what oyster gardening was all about. That class helped me learn about the different oyster floats and cages that TOGA builds, as well as how oysters develop from spat to adult."

The final build took place on December 13, 2025, in Vienna, Virginia, with Marius in charge of his fellow scouts and adult volunteers. The Tidal Tumblers (a total of 45 completed) were delivered on December to Camp Kekoka, Kilmarnock. A special thanks goes to TOGA members Jim Dall, Vic Spain, Bob Eadie, and David Singleterry, who helped Marius with his project plans. And of course, a very special thanks goes to Marius from his TOGA friends. When he gets word about earning his Eagle Scout Award, we'll let everyone know.



Voila! Job Completed (well, almost). Next step, train his volunteer Scouts



Volunteers Needed to Help Build Oyster Floats and Cages

~Jim Dall, TOGA Float Build Committee Chairman

To prepare for the 2026 **Spring Float Sale**, **TOGA needs volunteers** to meet on Thursdays from 9 am to 12 noon at Camp Kekoka to build floats starting April 1st - May 21, 2026.

We rely on volunteers to build floats, help others at the build your own (BYO) float build day, and setup and support the sale event on May 23rd. This affords our members opportunities for fellowship with other oyster gardeners. The camaraderie of this group of volunteers is exceptional, and we eagerly welcome new volunteers. Organizing and helping on these float-build days is satisfying and what I enjoy the most. Others enjoy the camaraderie and accomplishment they feel from seeing the end products we create. If you have not already volunteered for a float build, you may be surprised at the backgrounds and diversity of knowledge our volunteers and board members bring; there is a role for everyone. You will learn how to use the tools we have and the techniques our volunteers with engineering, design, and manufacturing efficiency backgrounds have taught us. At the sale, we need all the help we can get with event organization, sales, record keeping, and communications.

Being a Float Building Volunteer:

The work is not hard, but for those unfamiliar with our building activities, here's what we do.

- Cutting blanks (sheets) from rolls of vinyl-coated galvanized metal wire mesh with both manual and pneumatic wire cutters
- Forming the wire blanks using wire benders
- Attaching edges of the formed float/cage wire blanks together with hog rings using both manual and pneumatic hog ring pliers.
- Building floats out of PVC pipe using chop saws to cut the pipe, and PVC primer and glue to bond the pipe section to elbow fittings
- Attaching the floats to the cages with plastic cable ties

Being a Build-Your-Own Float Day Volunteer:

This activity is typically an extension of the skills and knowledge acquired from participating in the float building. We assist members build the floats they ordered. It is extremely satisfying and

- Volunteers and veterans work together in teams to complete the task and move the cage to the next team.

rewarding helping someone build their own oyster float from start to finish.

Being a Spring Float Sale Volunteer:

The Spring Float Sale is a busy morning event. Our volunteers do the following tasks:

- Stage float inventory by purchaser name
- Retrieve floats and other materials at the sale
- Assist with the sale of TOGA merchandise
- Assist new TOGA members with the selection of floats and spat devices
- Provide oyster farming information to new and prospective oyster gardeners

<i>Volunteer Opportunity Dates 2026</i>		
Float build days: 9 am - 12 noon		
April 2	April 30	B.Y.O. Sale: May 16
April 9	May 7	Float Sale: May 23
April 16	May 14	
April 23	May 21	

Master Oyster Gardener (MOG) Online and In-Person Course

Late last year, VIMS and TOGA partnered to develop and test a new Master Oyster Gardener Curriculum. It seeks to move most of the training online to be taken at a trainee's individual pace. The course continues to develop, and modules will be added as they are built. Trainees use state-of-the-art online tools to access short videos. Four in-person sessions are planned to include:

- MOG Trainees Meet and Greet: Trainees and Instructors meet for quick introductions from 12:45 to 1 p.m. before the TOGA Annual Meeting at VIMS, Watermen's Hall, 1370 Greate Rd, Gloucester Point, VA
- Hands-On Session: Oyster History, TOGA Cages, Tools, Materials, and Construction techniques from 11 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Camp Kekoka, 1083 Boys Camp Road, Kilmarnock, before the TOGA Member Appreciation Party
- Lecture/workshop Oyster Gardening in the Chesapeake on Sunday April 19th 2:00 - 4:30 p.m. at the Deltaville Maritime Museum
- Tour of the VIMS lab and oyster hatchery - Time and Date to be determined

If you are a MOG trainee, please put these dates on your calendar and plan to attend.

Recap: TOGA Teams Up with Seaglass Wines at Taste of Middlesex and Wintergreen Resort Oyster Festival

~Carl Zulick, MOG

On October 28, 2025, TOGA joined partner Seaglass Wines to promote growing your own oysters at booths at the Deltaville Maritime Museum and Wintergreen Resort in Nellysford, VA. Hundreds of guests took advantage of free wine tastings, sampling six different red and white varieties from Seaglass, TOGA's largest corporate sponsor.

Carlton McFaden, Carl and Pat Zulick, Bill Liebher, and Sam and Theresa Bohnstedt worked at the events, answering questions, demonstrating devices, and signing up new members.



TOGA and Seaglass volunteers did their best to keep guests warm on a cold day at Wintergreen.



The new TOGA mobile display panels printed at FASTSIGNS in Newport News easily withstood the wind.

Recap: TOGA at Oyster Festival Education Day, Urbanna, VA, November 6, 2025

~Richard Siciliano, MOG



(L-R) Debra Pratt, TOGA member and champion oyster shucker, demonstrates the art of opening an oyster to children from St. Claire Walker School, in Middlesex County. Volunteer Mike Ballato lends a hand in shucking while Ms. Pratt coaches. Debra poses with Cara Moss, candidate for the 2025 Urbanna Oyster Festival Queen. The TOGA volunteer team of Doug Shaefer, Jim Dall, Camille Grabb, and Richard Siciliano taught an estimated 150 students about oyster ecology.

Recap: Celebrating a Successful Fall '25 Float and Spat Sale at Camp Kekoka

~Brian Ingram, MOG

TOGA's Fall '25 Float Sale was held on October 18, 2025, at the APYC/YMCA Camp Kekoka in Kilmarnock where we build our floats, thanks to the support of the Alexandria Police Youth Camp (APYC). Held in conjunction with the Oyster 101 Basic Oyster Gardening class led by Master Gardener Richard Siciliano, the event was a success by all accounts. TOGA delivered 174 oyster float devices, including 31 Taylor floats, 21 Flip floats, 9 Bottom cages, 39 Tidal Tumbler floats, 17 Rough Rider cages, and 56 spat float/minnow tubes, designed to fit inside a Tidal Tumbler or Rough Rider as spat grows larger.

Our "build your own" (BYO) float date of October 10, 2025, was also well attended, resulting in new and veteran TOGA members building 14 floats.

Special thanks to all float-building volunteers who assisted and to Bob Eadie who built all the spat tubes. Thanks also to local oyster seed vendor Darryl Krolicki -- www.oyster.gardening.com -- who provided Diploid and "Triploid oyster seed.

TOGA's annual float sales continue to be one of our main fundraising activities with all proceeds benefiting TOGA as a 501(C)3 non-profit organization and our partners, including the VIMS Foundation for the TOGA Graduate Student Fellowship program.



TOGA volunteer Bob Dunkle paints primer on a PVC pipe for a Taylor float at a Float Build Thursday in preparation for the Fall '25 Float and Spat Sale at Camp Kekoka



*Float Builders at Work
Photos by Richard Siciliano*



Heartfelt Thanks to our Wonderful 2025 Volunteers!

Your help puts more oysters in the Bay to clean local waters!

Steve Angell	Peggy Dall	Barb Keeler	Debra Pratt
Tom (Ira) Austin	Bob Dunkle	Craig Keeler	Pat Rabb
Mike Ballato	Bob Eadie	Caitlin Ledford	Neenan Rogers
Karen Bracken-Penley	Kent Eanes	Bill Liebher	David Serway
Tom Carter	Roger Gallup	Mary Ann Lewis	Bob Stifel
Victoria Chapman	Amy Geisel	Carlton McFaden	Dan Strum
Asa Cohen	Guy Geisel	Arty Mink	Richard Ulrey
Harold Conklin	Camille Grabb	Dan and Will Negron	Leigh Westfall
Peggy Conklin	Eric Hentges	Ken Paugh	Miles Wong
Todd Crew	Mark Hogan	Julie Paugh	Ann Wood



TO: TOGA members:
SUBJ: TOGA Fellowship Students Announce Research Plans
DATE: January 12, 2025

I'm excited to share the names and research focuses for the TOGA Fellowship recipients this academic year 2026.

- Elena T. Hoang
 - She is using new technology to create three-dimensional models of artificial oyster reefs and comparing metrics of their structural complexity to track restoration success. She is also using the 3D scanning to examine more intimately how oyster spat grows on these different reef structures over time.
- Ashley Rose
 - Her research focus is ribbed mussel restoration in living shoreline marshes.

I requested that they also write their articles for the Spring '26 edition of the *TOGA Newsletter*. Thanks so much for your continued support of our students. I'll see you all next month.

Crystal Booker
Director of Development
William & Mary's Batten School of Coastal & Marine Sciences & VIMS



*Prototype of the **New Taylor Float***

New TOGA Store Completes Successful First Year

~Terry Lewis, MOG

Although TOGA had sold caps and shirts with our distinctive logo in the past, in 2025, oyster enthusiasts were introduced to an expanded selection of apparel and other items for purchase at the TOGA Store.

By the end of its first year, **The TOGA Store** generated \$7,500 in sales, with all profits going back to TOGA to be used for its educational goals and other outreach goals.

TOGA benefits financially, but more importantly, hundreds of oyster enthusiasts are now wearing the TOGA logo. Our members often say they've been stopped by strangers and asked about the TOGA cap or shirt they're wearing. What a great way to help spread the word about TOGA, and a different kind of conversation starter.



Ware Academy's Student Oyster Growing Project

~Natalie Fleet, Middle School Science Teacher



Ware Academy's 8th grade class is growing oysters in the North River in Gloucester (VA) with the support of TOGA's educational outreach director, Vic Spain. Ware Academy's middle school science teacher, Natalie Fleet, cold called TOGA last summer seeking support and direction to initiate an oyster growing project. Ms. Fleet is using oyster growing to provide a hands-on learning experience supporting curriculum objectives related to water quality in the Chesapeake Bay. TOGA and Mr. Vic (as referred to by Ware students) have provided training, teaching materials, oyster spat, and oyster floats to make this classroom project possible.



Ware Academy students test water quality and salinity

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 or Carl Zulick: czulick@gmail.com



Oyster cages and floats produced by TOGA are designed and built for various site-specific applications, capacity, and ease of handling. Cages are sold at TOGA's Spring Float & Spat Sale on May 23, 2026, at the Deltaville Maritime Museum and Nature Park, in Deltaville, VA. Pre-orders for the Spring '26 may be made until May 1st, 2026, and can be completed online: <http://www.oystergardener.org/spring-float-sale/> The Fall Float & Spat Sale is scheduled for October 17, 2026, at Camp Kekoa, Kilmarnock, VA.

NOTE: Prices for floats and cages have been *reduced* since the last float sale. In 2025, a generous \$5,000 grant from the River Counties Community Foundation in White Stone, Virginia propelled our research into new designs and materials to improve TOGA devices, materials, tools, and construction techniques used to build them. We made several improvements that reduced costs and will be passing savings along to our members through reduced prices.

(New) Tidal Tumbler

- **Dimensions:** 36-inches long wire tube, measuring 12 inches in diameter. The new 5-liter float is made of light-weight but durable molded high-density polyethylene (HDPE) plastic that is more leak resistant than the older PVC design
- **Capacity:** Up to 150 market-size oysters
- **Hangs from pier, tumbling oysters naturally with the tide**
- **All-wire cage = lower maintenance, increased durability, reduced fouling**
- **TOGA member price: \$75**



About the TOGA Newsletter

Published three times a year: Winter, Spring, and Fall, the *Newsletter* **deadlines** for articles or photos are November 20, March 1, and August 20, respectively. Mailed to all current TOGA members in black and white, the *TOGA Newsletter* is also available to download electronically in full color at oystergardener.org

Email your articles or photos to Richard Siciliano, editor: richs@togaboard.org, or Vic Spain: vicspain@rocketmail.com



TOGA Oyster Float Sale Order Form

Deltaville Maritime Museum, 287 Jackson Creek Rd, Deltaville, from 9 am to 12 noon, May 23, 2026

This form is an alternative to online ordering; however, it's quicker and more accurate if you place your order online **by May 1, 2026**, at: www.oystergardener.org/spring-float-sale. Otherwise, mail a copy of this form to TOGA, P.O. Box 2463, Gloucester, VA 23061. Or, email a scanned copy to Vic Spain: vicspain@rocketmail.com

Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Telephone: _____ Mailing Address: _____

If mailed, this form **must be received by May 1, 2026**, 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: www.oystergardener.org/devices-and-designs/

Payment for floats and devices is due when floats are picked up. We prefer checks or cash, but Visa and MasterCard will be accepted. Pick up your floats by 12 noon, or notify Vic Spain: vicspain@rocketmail.com

Qty.	Cost each for TOGA members	Description		Qty.	Cost each for TOGA members	Description
	\$145	(Old) Taylor Float with Top			\$80	Flip Float
	\$115	(New) Taylor Float with Top			\$65	Rough Rider
	\$85	Bottom Cage			\$75	Tidal Tumbler
	\$35	Spat Tube (small mesh)			\$60	Bender 42 inch
	\$35	Spat Tube (medium mesh)				

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

Build-Your-Own Floats at a TOGA Float Build Workday

3 Float Limit, **\$25 discount*** per float or cage. (Spat tubes are not eligible for BYO discount).

For the discount,* come to Camp Kekoka, 1083 Boys Camp Rd, Kilmarnock VA on **May 9, 2026: 9 am - noon.**

I would like _____ (quantity) (Old) Taylor Floats with Top at \$120 per float

I would like _____ (quantity) (New) Taylor Floats with Top at \$90 per float.

I would like _____ (quantity) Flip Floats at \$55 per float.

I would like _____ (quantity) Bottom Cages at \$60 per float.

I would like _____ (quantity) Tidal Tumbler at \$50 per float.

I would like _____ (quantity) Rough Rider at \$40 per cage.

Upcoming TOGA Events in 2026

FEBRUARY 2026

10th Tuesday, 10:00 a.m. - 12 noon: TOGA Board of Directors meeting, River Counties Community Foundation, 834 Rappahannock Drive, White Stone. Contact Carl Zulick carlz@togaboard.org

21st Saturday, 10:00-11:30 am: **Basic Oyster Gardening 101 class** (prior to the Annual Meeting). Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Waterman's Hall, 1370 Greate Rd, Gloucester Point. **REGISTER** in advance. Contact: Richard Siciliano richs@togaboard.org

21st Saturday, 12:45-1:00 p.m. **Meet and Greet: Master Oyster Gardener (MOG) class**. MOG registrants will meet with Karen Hudson, Carl Zulick, and Vic Spain before TOGA's Annual Meeting at VIMS: *see below*.

21st Saturday, 1:00-5:00 p.m. **TOGA Annual Meeting (followed by a social hour)**. Check-in: 12:45-1:15p.m. Agency representatives are available for consultations and questions on free permits, condemnations, and more. Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Waterman's Hall, 1370 Greate Rd, Gloucester Point, VA. Emcee: Carl Zulick carlz@togaboard.org **REGISTER** Please bring a dish to share for the potluck social after the meeting.

MARCH 2026

10th Tuesday, 10am-noon: (In person). TOGA Board of Directors Meeting. Deltaville Maritime Museum, 287 Jackson Creek Rd, Deltaville. Contact Carl Zulick carlz@togaboard.org for online access

21st Saturday, 10:30 a.m. – 12 noon: **Basic Oyster Gardening 101 class** (before the TOGA Appreciation Party) **REGISTER**, Contact: Richard Siciliano, richs@togaboard.org Location: Kilmarnock

21st Saturday, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.: **TOGA Membership Appreciation Party**, Camp Kekoka, 1083 Boys Camp Road, Kilmarnock, VA. Main meeting hall. Please bring a dish to share. BYOB. RSVP to: Terry Lewis, lewistmn@msn.com

30th Monday, 5:00-6:30 p.m.: **Basic Oyster Gardening 101 class**, Central Rappahannock Regional Library-Newton Branch, 22 Coles Point Rd. Hague, VA. **REGISTER**, Contact: Richard Siciliano, richs@togaboard.org

APRIL 2026

Every Thursday, 9:00 a.m. – 12 noon: TOGA Volunteer Float Build Days in advance of the Spring '26 **Float Sale**. Join us to help build oyster floats and cages at Camp Kekoka, 1083 Boys Camp Road, Kilmarnock. Contact: Jim Dall jimd@togaboard.org First-time volunteers, email Jim before attending this event.

14th Tuesday, 10:00 a.m. – 12 noon: TOGA Board of Directors Meeting, Virtual Google meeting. For access, contact Carl Zulick, carlz@togaboard.org

19th Sunday, 2:00–4:30 p.m.: **TOGA Presents Oysters and the Chesapeake Bay**. Deltaville Maritime Museum, 287 Jackson Creek Rd, Deltaville, Contact: Carl Zulick carlz@togaboard.org

MAY 23, 2026 Spring Float, Cage, and Spat Sale: Deltaville Maritime Museum and Nature Park, 287 Jackson Creek Road, Deltaville, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon. A free-of-charge **Basic Oyster Gardening 101 class** will be held in the conference room of the Maritime Museum, from 10:00-11:30 a.m. Seating is limited. **REGISTER**



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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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