



SPRING

2011

## NEWSLETTER

**\*\*SPRING OYSTER FAIRS\*\***  
**MAY 7 & MAY 28, 2011**

### ***SPRING OYSTER FAIRS***

The TOGA-sponsored Fifteenth Annual Spring Oyster Fairs will be held for the ***Middle Peninsula on May 7<sup>th</sup>***, and for the ***Northern Neck on May 28<sup>th</sup>***.

Details are as follows:

**The Middle Peninsula Fair will be at Christchurch School**, 49 Seahorse Lane, Christchurch, VA 23031. The school is just east of Saluda off Route 33. The agenda includes:

8:30AM- Registration Begins, (Coffee and Danish)

8:30 to 10:30AM - Vendors of oyster gardening equipment, spat and supplies are invited to display their wares for sale. Spat availability, both diploid and triploid, is dependent upon winter mortality.

9:00 to 10:30AM - Tour of Christchurch School oyster "Spat-on-Shell" restoration facilities and program- There will be two identical tours, the first at 9AM and the second at 9:45AM. You may choose which tour to take. After a brief introduction, attendees will be transported to the dock by shuttle bus, courtesy of Christchurch School. - Will Smiley and students.

10:30 to 11:30AM- Educational talks for all attendees

1) How are oysters propagated? - a short DVD will be shown.  
2) Graduating from gardening to small-scale commercial production - Lynton Land 11:30AM- Getting Started. What are the best ways to grow oysters? Includes a discussion of the kinds of equipment being used to successfully grow oysters and "what works." (Experienced gardeners are welcome to leave, but are encouraged to share their experiences.) This session will end with a demonstration of how to build a flip float. See note below. - Vic Spain

**The Northern Neck Fair will be at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church** (435 East Church Street, Kilmarnock, VA 22482), the same place as the last few years. The Church is located on VA 200 at the north end of town on the west side of the road across from Bluff Point Road. Vendors will be available to sell oyster spat (both diploid and triploid) and equipment before and after the meeting, beginning at about 08:00AM. Spat availability is dependent upon winter mortality. The meeting itself will begin at 09:00AM. Coffee and Danish will be provided.

1) How are oysters propagated? - a short DVD will be shown.

- 2) The Northern Neck hatchery - A. J. Erskine
- 3) Graduating from gardening to small-scale commercial production - Lynton Land
- 4) For the new gardener: What are the best ways to grow oysters? (Experienced gardeners are welcome to leave, but are encouraged to share their experiences.) – Includes a discussion of the kinds of equipment being used to successfully grow oysters and "what works." This session will end with a demonstration of how to build a flip float. See note below. - Vic Spain

**Note- Flip Float Building Demonstration-**  
 For gardeners who would like to see a demonstration of how to build a flip float after the Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck events, please stay after the main presentations. A few of the demonstration flip floats will be available for the cost of materials, \$40. Please contact Vic Spain ([vicspain@rocketmail.com](mailto:vicspain@rocketmail.com)) if you want to help build and keep a flip float. If requests outnumber available supplies, appointments can be made to build more at a later time.

***NOTES FROM THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING***

A full house of eighty-some attended the Annual TOGA General Meeting on January 8<sup>th</sup> at the Gloucester Public Library. Thanks to the Library for use of their Community Room along with their projection equipment and kitchen facilities (at no charge to TOGA). The business part of the meeting included a summary of the past year's events, the Treasurer's report and election of the 2011 Executive Board listed below. Please come to our board meetings if you want to get to know them better.

- President.....Dave Turney
- Vice President.....Brian Wood
- Secretary.....Kathy Hoffmann
- Treasurer.....Steve Wann

- At Large Members.....Lynton Land  
 Ken Hammond  
 Rick Griffin  
 Amry Cox
- Past President.....Vic Spain
- President Emeritus.....Jackie Partin

Retiring Board members Bob Buckner, Nick Ferriter, and Chan Chandler (former President) were recognized for their outstanding work.

Following the business meeting, Dave Turney introduced Ken Smith who described the starting of the Oyster Company of Virginia venture (for more info see <http://www.oysterva.com/>).

Mike Oesterling, our retiring VIMS Advisor, gave us some encouraging comments before introducing the excellent educational speakers. Carl Hershner (VIMS) gave a timely summary of the current situation regarding the implementation of TMDL's, the EPA, "Bay Pollution Diet" and Bay-related politics. Jim Wesson (VMRC) discussed the pro's and con's of diploids (fertile) vs. triploids (sterile) oysters for use by oyster gardeners. We also viewed some interesting videos of Cownose Rays devouring oysters and a display by Dennis Gryder of his study of how to treat the mud-blister worm problem which affects many oyster-growing areas. As usual, the cheeses and hot beverages tasted good on a cold January day.



## ***WEBSITE CHANGES***

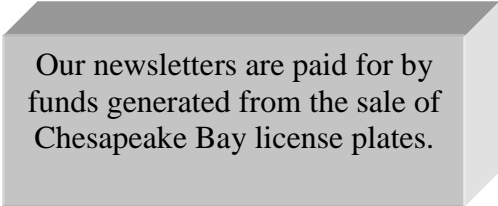
You may have noticed fewer main pages at [www.oystergardener.org](http://www.oystergardener.org) these days. This was intended to simplify use of the website. All of the categories are still there as links under the appropriate main pages. The Oyster Gardening/Resources page was updated and the About TOGA/Master Oyster Gardeners page is under review to make sure the contact information is up to date. Just recently, a site map has been added to help you find the right page or link. We've added the email addresses for the Executive Board right on the About TOGA/Executive Board page. Have at'em with your questions and comments. If you have suggestions about the website, please contact [Vic Spain](mailto:VicSpain@rocketmail.com) ([vicspain@rocketmail.com](mailto:vicspain@rocketmail.com)). Thanks to the College of William and Mary for providing us with free website capability.

## ***UPDATE ON POTOMAC RIVER FISHERIES COMMISSION POLICY ON OYSTER AQUACULTURE, AND COLONIAL BEACH GOALS***

On March 11, 2011, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission approved oyster gardening on or under piers in the Potomac River as regulated by Virginia (or Maryland) law. A group of citizens in Colonial Beach hopes to grow oysters at the town pier in order to "Provide an opportunity for the school children of our community, under school supervision, to manage oyster floats to study the environmental/scientific impacts on our waters and our town and to actively and positively engage in the community in which they live."

## ***A CHANGE IS COMING TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF OUR NEWSLETTERS***

Due to increasing costs, and to our desire to offer newsletters at outreach events, we will no longer be mailing them to non-current members who have not paid for two years. This will be effective with our Summer newsletter. In the past, we have mailed our newsletters to all current and past members, even if dues after the first year are not paid. This change will reduce mailings by about 350. These newsletters, which cost about \$1 each, will go to our outreach events. Past members can always read the newsletter on our website, and those who wish to continue receiving the newsletter are most welcome to renew their membership. Membership remains \$10 per year. Please contact Vic Spain, 804-642-6764, to update your membership, or email [Vic Spain](mailto:VicSpain@rocketmail.com) at [vicspain@rocketmail.com](mailto:vicspain@rocketmail.com).



Our newsletters are paid for by funds generated from the sale of Chesapeake Bay license plates.



***A TRIBUTE TO MIKE  
OESTERLING UPON HIS  
RETIREMENT***

When Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association was founded in 1997, our major goal was to expand interest in oyster gardening and to facilitate obtaining oyster seed and other supplies for gardeners. We quickly learned that people had all sorts of questions about oyster gardening, including problems with their gardens, that we did not know how to answer.

Since some of the founders of TOGA had undergone training as Master Gardeners, with the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, we had the idea of starting a similar course for Master Oyster Gardeners. A few people each year would be taught about oyster biology and diseases and predators, and would be able to help beginners be successful with their gardens. We made this proposal to administrators at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, a meeting was called of faculty and staff of VIMS with the founders, and the idea was found to be worthwhile pursuing. The first MOG course was in 1998, and the 8<sup>th</sup> one will be held in June this year. The whole project has been an outstanding success.

From the beginning, VIMS made Mike Oesterling liaison between TOGA and VIMS, and his first major job was to organize the MOG course, scheduling classes, classrooms, professors and staff for an intense three and one-half day course. Not only was there a major effort made on everyone's part to organize, advertise and put on the whole thing, but it was decided that each participant should come away with a manual of scientific papers and other information, which would

help solve gardeners' problems and increase knowledge about oyster gardening. This course was designed to help oyster gardeners, but it also was supposed to relieve some of the time-consuming telephone calls that VIMS staff constantly had to answer, and shift them to the Master Oyster Gardeners.

Mike was entirely responsible for doing all this work for the MOG classes, but also had to endure endless hours of TOGA Board meetings, which occur almost every month. During these meetings, he patiently listened, and most importantly, kept reminding us of what our goals were and when we might be heading in the wrong direction. He was a great source of knowledge about oysters, but also about VIMS and the community and local watermen and their concerns and other things that concerned us as an organization. He encouraged us in expanding our out-reach efforts and made sure that we had a place to hold events.

The TOGA Float-Building events have always been a major effort for this group. Mike arranged for us to use the parking area at the Hatchery for the workshops, and was always there to provide trashcans or tables or anything else that we had forgotten and needed urgently.

I cannot imagine the hours Mike has spent over these past fourteen years to help us in our efforts. Although Mike always says it is "just my job", the things he has done for us have been over and above any job requirements ever. I, personally, would like to say thank you, Mike, for everything, and especially for your friendship.

Jackie Partin  
One of the Founders of TOGA and  
"President Emeritus"

## *2011 TOGA OUTREACH SCHEDULE*

Some of the events require a number of people to staff the TOGA display in shifts, so volunteers are always welcome. Please contact Vic Spain at [vicspain@rocketmail.com](mailto:vicspain@rocketmail.com) or Dave Turney at [dn.turney@yahoo.com](mailto:dn.turney@yahoo.com) if you would like to add a new event or change/clarify the information. This schedule will be periodically updated and displayed on our website. (visit [www.oystergardener.org](http://www.oystergardener.org) for the latest list)

EVENT	DATE	LOCATION	TOGA COORDINATOR
1. Oyster Growth & Longevity	Feb 2	N.Umberland Element.	Brian Wood
2. Oyster Restoration Walk/Talk	Feb 5	York County New Qtr Pk	Steve Wann
3. Bay Education	Mar 29	Lancaster Elementary	Brian Wood
4. Menokin Nature Series	Apr 6	Menokin	Lynton Land
5. Gloucester-Mathew Grdn Tour	Apr 16	Gloucester (near Vic's)	Vic Spain
6. Middle Pen. Oyster Fair*	May 7	Christchurch School	Vic Spain
7. Eco-Expo	May 17	Beaverdam Park	Jim Renner
8. Earth/Arbor Day	May 26	Fort Monroe	Vic Spain
9. N. Neck Oyster Fair*	May 28	Kilmarnock	Lynton Land
10. Montessori	May tbd	Alexandria	David Turney
11. MOG Course*	Jun 11,18	Gloucester Pt (VIMS)	Sam Joplin, Mike O.
12. Rivafest	Jun 18	Tappahannock	Brian Wood
13. Gywnn's Island Festival	Jun 25	Mathews	Jim Renner
14. Mathew's Market Days	Sep 9-10	Mathews	Rolf Zierow
15. Canon Environmental Fair	Sep	Newport News	Ben Smith
16. Hampton Bay Days	Sep 9-11	Hampton	Julian Cox
17. Oyster Gardening Workshop	Sep 10	Reedville	Brian Wood
18. TOGA Float Workshop*	Sep	Gloucester Pt	Steve Wann
19. NN Land Conservancy (BBB)	Sep 18	Menokin	Nick Ferriter
20. Mathews Maritime Her. Day	Sep	Horn H. Marina	Rolf Zierow
21. National Estuaries Day	Sep	Williamsburg	tbd
22. West Point Crab Carnival	Oct 1	West Point	Bob Buckner
23. Urbanna Oyster Festival	Nov 3-5	Urbanna	Jim Renner
24. Garden Club of Virginia	Nov	William & Mary	Curt Bluefeld
25. Chesapeake Bay Days	Tbd	Mathews 6 <sup>th</sup> grade	Rolf Zierow
26. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Annual Oyster Tasting*	Nov 12	Gloucester	Jackie P/Amry C
27. TOGA Annual Meeting	Jan 2012	Tbd	David Turney
* TOGA-sponsored events			

## **2011 MASTER OYSTER GARDENER TRAINING COURSE**

The 2011 Tidewater Oyster Gardener Association's Master Oyster Gardener (MOG) Training Course will be held on consecutive Saturdays in June (11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>) at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS), Gloucester Point campus ([www.vims.edu](http://www.vims.edu)). Here is a quick look at the material which will be covered during the training course.

The first Saturday (June 11<sup>th</sup>) will begin with a hands-on session on oyster biology where students will dissect oysters, and become familiar with the life history of oysters. Next will be a session on the oyster diseases which impact efforts to raise oysters. Another hands-on session will focus on the various other "critters" that could be encountered in oyster gardening, including discussions on the predators, pests and associated plants or animals found in grow-out gear. The final sessions of the day will address the regulatory and human health issues of oyster gardening, both very important aspects of oyster gardening.

Saturday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, will begin with a discussion on the status of the natural oyster stocks in Virginia and efforts that are being taken to restore them. Following this session, a large portion of the day will be occupied with information being supplied by staff from the Aquaculture Genetics and Breeding Technology Center at VIMS. Presentations will include information on selective breeding, stock selection and seed selection. Hands-on exercises will take place in the Breeding Technology Center oyster hatchery and nursery areas. Discussions will include field nursery systems, hatchery operation and seed production. This portion has always been a highlight of the training

program. The educational day ends with experienced oyster gardeners discussing gear choices and day-to-day maintenance issues, as well as a general question and answer session for the newly trained MOG's. The final event of the training program is the "graduation ceremony" for the new Master Oyster Gardeners.

This course is subsidized by a grant, and all graduates are required to volunteer for a minimum of 50 hours of service to TOGA. Volunteer opportunities are numerous, and are a great way to reinforce what you have learned while helping to promote the growth of oyster aquaculture.

An application and additional information on this course can be found at the end of this article, and on our website, [www.oystergardener.org](http://www.oystergardener.org). For questions, please call Jackie Partin at 804-694-4407. For more information about the educational content of the sessions, please contact Mike Oesterling at [mike@vims.edu](mailto:mike@vims.edu).

### **MOG TRAINING COURSE: AN ADVANCED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM IN OYSTER AQUACULTURE**

### **PRESENTED BY TOGA & VIRGINIA INSTITUTE OF MARINE SCIENCE/SCHOOL OF MARINE SCIENCE, COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY**

Over the past several years oyster aquaculture for the homeowner, or oyster gardening, has gained tremendous popularity, both because of interest in restoring the Virginia oyster population and interest in helping to clean the waters of the Chesapeake Bay. TOGA was

formed in 1997 to promote oyster gardening and serve as an educational resource for oyster gardeners.

It quickly became apparent to us that “experts” were needed to help oyster gardeners evaluate conditions at their growing location, assist in identifying predators, and help locate needed materials and supplies.

The first MOG Course was held in 1998 and graduated nineteen enthusiastic Master Oyster Gardeners. Further courses were held in 1999, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2009. This course is made possible, in large part, by funding from the Virginia Sea Grant Program, and from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund. This financial support is given predicated on new MOG members actively giving back to the oyster aquaculture community. TOGA has many volunteer opportunities to fulfill your commitment. Example opportunities include participating in outreach events (see the TOGA 2011 Outreach Schedule in this newsletter and on our website), help with the Newsletters, website support, float building, research projects, special committees, and board membership.

As stated above, our eighth MOG class will be held on two consecutive Saturdays in June, the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup>. Students must attend both sessions. Both days, registration will be at 9:00AM with classes beginning at 9:30AM. Virginia Institute of Marine Science faculty and staff, Virginia Marine Resources Commission personnel and representatives of the Virginia Health Department will teach the classes.

Following completion of this course, there will be public announcements of names,

telephone numbers, e-mail addresses and communities of all graduates.

Admission to this program is limited to twenty people, and a strict selection process will be used. In order to qualify, oyster gardeners:

- must agree to attend all training classes of the course, some of which will involve physical labor in the hatchery and float building classes

- preferably should have been growing oysters for a minimum of one year

- must be willing to commit themselves to helping other oyster gardeners for not less than one year following the course. This may involve many telephone calls and may require visiting growing sites to help the gardener solve his problems

- must be willing for their name and telephone number to be available to the public

- must be willing to make public presentations on oyster gardening to local community organizations, or assist with workshops or other public events staffed by TOGA; they also may be asked to participate in TOGA sponsored research projects

- must have a VMRC permit for their oyster floats.

- gardeners should expect to volunteer for a minimum of 50 hours of service to TOGA.

A fee of \$130.00 for TOGA members or \$140 for non-TOGA members will be payable upon acceptance to the course. Course material, including a Master Oyster Gardener handbook, break refreshments and lunches, are covered by this fee.

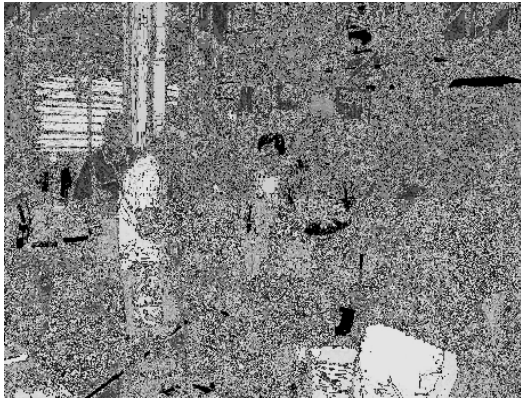
If you are interested in being considered for participation in this program, please complete and sign the enclosed Application Form and mail to Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association at the address below. Applications are also

available on our website. Please include any other personal information, which might be helpful to the committee in choosing participants. An effort will be made to choose applicants from as broad a geographical area as possible. Private oyster gardeners will be given preference over gardeners with a commercial interest. Some scholarships are available.

For questions or additional information, please contact Jackie Partin at 804 694-4407.

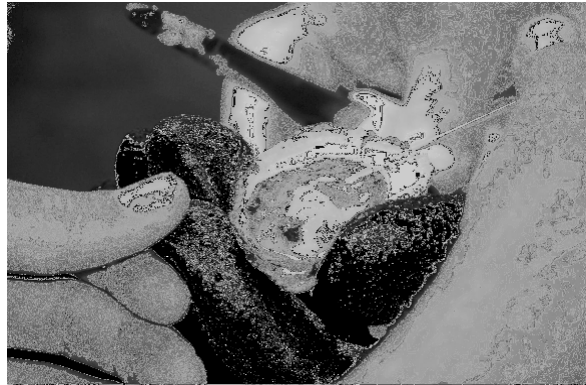
Members of TOGA may make early application, which must be received no later than May 1, 2011. After that date, any spaces available in the class will be made available to the General Public. Applications should be mailed to:

TOGA  
8218 Hell Neck Road  
Gloucester, VA 23061



*2004 MOG students receive instructions from the Aquaculture Genetics & Breeding Technology Center staff.*

*2004 MOG students participate in hands-on study.*





**APPLICATION**  
**MASTER OYSTER GARDENERS COURSE, 2011**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Are you growing oysters now? \_\_\_\_\_

If you are growing oysters now, where is your site? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you grow oysters \_\_\_\_\_ for home consumption?

\_\_\_\_\_ to donate for restoration efforts?

\_\_\_\_\_ to improve water quality?

(Check all that apply.)

What has been your most unusual experience growing oysters? \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide other information that will aid the committee in choosing applicants (i.e. public speaking experience, photography, biological sciences, computer expertise).

If I am accepted to this Program, I agree to all the requirements listed in the Program description.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature