



*Growing oysters for a cleaner Bay.....[www.oystergardener.org](http://www.oystergardener.org)*

**FALL**

**NEWSLETTER**

**2012**

### **ANNUAL OYSTER FLOAT-BUILDING WORKSHOP**

On September 22nd, from 10AM to 2PM, TOGA will be holding its annual Oyster Float Building Workshop at the Aquaculture Center, VIMS, at Gloucester Point. For those who wish to get started raising their own oysters, this will be the best opportunity this year to get the information, materials, supplies and baby oysters (spat/seed) to start their oyster gardening. No experience is necessary! Get hands-on experience building different types of oyster floats with Master Oyster Gardener (MOG) supervision. MOGs will be on hand to educate and give advice on techniques, materials, and locations. For those already raising their own, this is a great opportunity to get more oyster spat or materials and to learn about the latest ideas in raising oysters to clean the Chesapeake Bay / tributary rivers and for scrumptious eating.

Multiple oyster spat vendors will be on hand to deliver seed. Diploid and triploid aquaculture oyster seed will be available, as well as native diploids (from wild stock, often used for restoration). Natives may not have the disease resistance found in aquaculture oysters. Please bring small coolers to store the seed while you enjoy the rest of the event.

Peter Perina of Eastfields Farms will have his supplies and equipment available for sale. We will also have information and tickets for the upcoming TOGA 3rd Annual Oyster Tasting Event on November 10th. TOGA will also have applications for the Virginia Chesapeake Bay License Plates.

Our registration form for this event is enclosed at the end of this newsletter. TOGA would like to receive the registration forms **by September 14, 2012**, to insure that enough materials are on hand for float building. Additional registration forms can be downloaded from our website [www.oystergardener.org](http://www.oystergardener.org). Information about oyster float types and raising oysters can also be found on our website. For details, please contact Charles Yarbrough at [Caspery@verizon.net](mailto:Caspery@verizon.net) or Barbara Shelton at [barb.shelton@gmail.com](mailto:barb.shelton@gmail.com).

Hands-on float building takes some time, so arriving at this event during the mid-day may reduce your wait times. You can participate in other activities (education tent, shop with vendors, etc.) while you are waiting.

***YOU MAY ALSO ORDER PRE-MADE FLOATS AND EQUIPMENT!***

In addition to the traditional workshop, TOGA will be offering sales of pre-built items including floats,

bottom cages, lightweight flipfloat lifts, hanging cages, etc. If your floats have been damaged from years of use, we will have a float repair station to help repair your floats. For photos and descriptions of the items available, go to [www.oystergardener.org/Annual Events](http://www.oystergardener.org/Annual%20Events) and download the Sales Brochure and Order Form. All proceeds from the new float/equipment sales will go to the Partin/Oesterling TOGA/VIMS Student Endowment.

The Order Form for the sales items (last page or website) must be received **by September 8, 2012**, for us to have sufficient time to custom build your items.

### **TOGA OYSTER FAIR AND RFM ANTIQUE BOAT SHOW**

On Saturday, September 8th, 2012, TOGA is pairing up with the Reedville Fisherman's Museum on a dual event, TOGA Oyster Fair & Antique Boat Show. The Oyster Fair will start at 9AM at the Bethany United Methodist Church meeting hall on Main Street beside the Museum, with speakers to lecture on various oyster topics in and around the Chesapeake Bay.

Speakers will include Jim Wesson from VMRC for continuing updates on the progress and challenges of the oyster stock rebuilding in the Chesapeake Bay and Vic Spain (past President of TOGA) on "Devices and Designs, a demonstration of oyster grow out and harvest equipment, including new style cages, flip floats, wire benders and cage lifting systems". If you have made some unique device or have a designs to aid in oyster gardening, please come and share it with us. There will be Master Oyster Gardeners present to assist new oyster gardeners with information and techniques on how to get started.

Diploid and Triploid oyster seed will be available on a first-come,first-serve basis. So be early! Bring small coolers to store the seed while you enjoy the rest of the event. Alternatively, you can arrange to obtain the seed at a later date in case the vendors run out.

Vendors for oyster products, including oyster cages, oyster floats, oyster seed and other miscellaneous supplies are welcome. Please contact Brian Wood at [awood45858@aol.com](mailto:awood45858@aol.com) for details. The Antique Boat Show will include various vessels from antique yachts to small runabouts. Vendors of nautical items and food and food will be on hand. Something for everyone! This should prove to be a wonderful all day affair for all. Let's all hope the weather cooperates!

*Brian Wood TOGA VP*

### **THIRD ANNUAL VIRGINIA HALF-SHELL OYSTER TASTING**

Saturday, November 10 is the date for this popular local oyster tasting event. As before, it will be held in the parking lot outside Kelsick Specialty Market, 6632 Main Street, in Gloucester. The vendors include Rappahannock River Oysters, Chapel Creek Oysters, Chessie Seafood/York River Oysters, Mobjack Bay Seafood, Winter Harbor Oysters, and Deltaville Oyster Company. The oysters are all grown in waters surrounding the Middle Peninsula.

Last year, more than 200 people came to taste and appreciate differences in flavors of oysters grown in local waters. Each ticket holder gets four oysters from each of the six vendors. Additional oysters may be purchased to eat on site or to take home. For non-half-shell eaters, other foods will be offered for sale. Also, specially chosen wines and beers complementary to oysters will be for sale.

Tasting oysters is a fun way to test your taste buds and people who used to be “slurpers” are finding that just a couple of chews may enhance the experience of eating raw oysters. Also, people who thought they could never eat a raw oyster, once they try one, become aficionados.

A bonus for the day is the presence of Deborah Pratt, a National Champion Oyster Shucker many times over. She will demonstrate her prize winning shucking style and help you be a better oyster shucker, too.

Something new this year: People who volunteer to shuck oysters at this event are invited to a special training course for oyster shuckers on September 15. Please contact Jackie Partin at 804 694-4407, or [hellneck@earthlink.net](mailto:hellneck@earthlink.net), if you are interested in doing this.

Tickets for the Oyster Tasting may be purchased at Kelsick Specialty Market in Gloucester, or by going online to the TOGA web site [www.oystergardener.org](http://www.oystergardener.org) and purchasing tickets via PayPal. There will be a limited number of tickets available. Last year was sold out, so don't delay.

*Jackie Partin*

### **TOGA's GROWTH AND LONGEVITY STUDY**

All four strains of oysters being used in TOGA's Four Strain Growth and Longevity Study are growing, some remarkably, with less than 10 percent mortality. Several of the low salinity sites had higher than average mortality, which we assume to be due to heavy rains early in the growing season.

Growth in some sites has been spectacular. The G&L Study oysters were spawned in spring of 2011 and deployed in the late Summer and early Fall. From the March 2012 reports, two sites, one in Poquoson and another on the Coan River, had several strains reach an average of 3 inches. What is remarkable is that these oysters reached market size in a little over a year! Several Master Oyster Gardeners visited these sites, (one high salinity, the other low salinity), to observe what they both had in common. Better than normal tidal flow is what we suspect. We tentatively conclude that more food supply due to high tidal flow is the reason for the rapid growth rates. We plan to visit sites having high and low growth rates this fall and measure current velocity.

Data from this July, our fourth reporting period, are trickling in and the remarkable increases in size continue. Twelve sites so far out of 41 reporting have reported 3 or more than 3 inches average length for one or more strains. There are also reports of 4, 5 and 6 inch oysters.

We have posted the Growth Trend line charts for each river on the TOGA web site <http://www.oystergardener.org>. Four colors identify the four strains of oysters. Two strains are Triploid (sterile), DEBYs and LAs (low salinity) and two strains are Diploid, DEBYs and LAs (low salinity). They will remain unidentified until the conclusion of the study to remove the possibility of biased reporting. So far, one of the diploid strains is growing the least, but the other three strains are neck-and-neck.

More information on our two studies, Four Strain Study and Triploid versus Triploid Study, is posted on TOGA's Growth and Longevity Study in the Spring Newsletter on our web site.

The smaller study comparing Triploid DEBYs with Triploid LAs has four sites out of ten with very

high growth rates. So far, there are no obvious differences in growth rate or mortality between the two strains.

*Brian Wood and Lynton Land*



**Sammie Joplin's Oyster G&L Study site in Hampton in March. This is the first confirmed site that at least one oyster strain has averaged over 3 inches. Three inch oysters in seven months! With July's measurements his oysters are still leading the pack at an overall average of all strains at 3.2 inches.**

### **A LITTLE HISTORY- THE BUYBOAT**

*What is it we love about Chesapeake Bay Buyboats? The following submitted by Katie Wood, age 12-* Oyster tongs on the small boats worked the oyster beds. They sold to buyboats that anchored nearby,



looking for the best cash price for their oysters. The oystermen then could return to harvesting oysters. The buy boats transported and sold the oysters at market or to oyster processing houses.

Buyboats once were very plentiful on the Chesapeake Bay, their job was to follow the skipjacks around and buy their oysters and carry them to the shucking houses. Buyboats bought seed from tongs and distributed seed oysters to private and public oyster grounds up and down the Chesapeake. At one time, there were over a thousand Chesapeake Bay Buyboats working in the fishery and transport industries of the Chesapeake Bay. Today, less than 40 of these beautiful vessels remain.

**Chesapeake Bay Buyboats from the early 20th century.**

**Sources-**

<http://www.marinersmuseum.org/sites/micro/cbhf/captions/wat009-09.html>

[http://www.theivaw.com/buyboats\\_on\\_the\\_bay.php](http://www.theivaw.com/buyboats_on_the_bay.php)

<http://www.oysterbuyboats.com/atwork.html>

## **MASTER OYSTER GARDENER REFRESHER COURSE CONDUCTED JUNE 12, 2012**

Thanks go to Karen Hudson (VIMS Liaison), the instructors, and participants for an excellent educational event. A keystone part of our educational tools is the pool of Master Oyster Gardeners (MOGs) that we graduate. TOGA and VIMS conduct a Master Oyster Gardener Course every other year and a Master Oyster Gardener Refresher Course in the alternate year. The latter event is designed to complement MOG training with the latest research and techniques applicable to oysters and Bay ecology. This is an opportunity for Master Oyster Gardeners and TOGA members alike to stay committed to education. This year we conducted the MOG Refresher Course at VIMS in Gloucester Point on June 12. We had 32 attendees. Presentations included the following:

Dr. Bob Croonenberghs - Bioaccumulation in oysters, and Shellfish Sanitation Dye Studies  
Dr. Kim Reece - Harmful algal blooms and algae of potential concern in the Chesapeake Bay  
Julie Henderson - Vibrios: public health concerns and post-harvest handling practices and commercial certification requirements  
Ben Stagg - VMRC permitting for gardeners  
Dave Turney - MOG roundtable: sharing experiences and thoughts on the future direction for TOGA

Read more at [http://www.vims.edu/newsandevents/topstories/toga\\_mog\\_partnership.php](http://www.vims.edu/newsandevents/topstories/toga_mog_partnership.php)

## **UPDATE ON TOGA FELLOWSHIP ENDOWMENT**

For those who may not frequent the TOGA website, we have some GREAT news: Our initial funding milestone has been reached. Due to nearly 90 donors and some hard work and good timing by Ken Hammond, our Fundraising Chairman, the TOGA Endowment reached \$51,500 in late April (2012). Having reached the minimum required funding of \$50,000, plus a \$1,000 additional contribution by an anonymous donor for expendable uses, we will start supporting a VIMS graduate student this year. A special thanks to Ken, who raised \$8,500 in less than a month. While we want the endowment to continue to grow, for now let's revel in having reached this milestone. Again, the TOGA board thanks the many who have supported this effort. The graduate student will be selected soon, and we will introduce him/her in our Winter Newsletter.

## **WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN READING?**

**Shucked, Life on a New England Oyster Farm, by Erin Byers Murray.**

This book is written by a professional writer who went to work on a Maine oyster farm for a year, then wrote a book about it. Oyster farming, I think, is difficult anywhere, but it seems especially so in Maine, where you may have to harvest oysters in the dead of winter, when all the oysters are in bags on the bottom of a body of water covered in ice or from frozen mudflats. Her descriptions will make you shiver, and your hands will hurt in sympathy.

The author learned to do everything, from putting spat into upwellers to harvesting oysters from a mudflat or from bottom baskets from a boat and driving oyster boats to get back to shore to use a

bathroom! She also had the outstanding experience of meeting famous restaurant chefs and eating their marvelous food. (Some recipes are shared, too.) I enjoyed the book a lot.

*Jackie Partin*

**Chesapeake Bay Buyboats, by Larry S. Chowning**

This is to follow up on Katie's history article above. Like steam locomotives and WWII airplanes, there's just something special about these old vessels, like the rumble of those diesel engines. A picture of my uncle's "Rema H." (I used to fish from it) from the 1950s is shown. And you can read about TOGA's own Dudley Biddlecomb and the building of the "Dudley" when he was a little boy. Unfortunately, most buyboats were sold out of the Bay after the collapse of traditional oystering. Lots of local history in the book, a keepsake.

*Vic Spain*

**OUTREACH SCHEDULE FOR REMAINDER OF 2012**

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Coordinator</u>
Mathews Market Days	Sep 7-8	Mathews	tbd
Hampton Bay Days	Sep 7-9	Hampton	Julian Cox
Oyster Fair*	Sep 8	Reedville	Brian Wood
TOGA Float Workshop*	Sep 22	Gloucester	Yarbrough/Shelton
NN Land Conservancy	Sep 29	Lancaster	Nick Ferriter
Stratford Hall Trade Fair	Sep 22-23	Stratford	Mike Todd
West Point Crab Carnival	Oct 6	West Point	Bob Buckner
Urbanna Oyster Festival	Nov 1-3	Urbanna	Mike Sanders
Chesapeake Bay Day	Nov 9	Thomas Hunter Middle School, Mathews	Dave Turney
Oyster Tasting (3rd annual)*	Nov 10	Gloucester	Jackie Partin
TOGA Annual Meeting*	Jan 12	VIMS	Dave Turney

\* *Major TOGA Event*

***Please visit [www.oystergardener.org](http://www.oystergardener.org) for the latest on oyster gardening.***



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

# Oyster Float Workshop Registration

To be held at:

The hatchery at VIMS at Gloucester Point  
10AM to 2PM, Saturday, September 22, 2012

**This Registration Form MUST BE RECEIVED BY SEPTEMBER 14, 2012,  
for us to have sufficient materials available for you to build your float(s)!**

I plan to build \_\_\_\_\_ (number) Taylor {"traditional"} floats at \$80 per float.

I plan to build \_\_\_\_\_ (number) Large "Flip Floats" at \$50 per float.

*Float building instructors will assist you with building your floats.*

*Master Oyster Gardeners will be available to answer your questions about raising oysters.*

*TOGA Caps and T-Shirts will also be available for purchase at the Workshop.*

*Tickets for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Oyster Tasting Event will be for sale.*

*Applications for Virginia Chesapeake Bay License Plates will be available.*

*You will be able to purchase Oyster Seed/Spat from vendors at the Workshop.*

*You will be able to purchase various accessory products from vendors at the Workshop.*

**Payment for floats and membership (if necessary) must accompany this form.**

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

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

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

Please see our website [www.oystergardener.org](http://www.oystergardener.org) for information about the various types of floats.  
For more information, contact Charles Yarbrough at [Casper@verizon.net](mailto:Casper@verizon.net) or (757) 814-3186 OR  
Barbara Shelton at [barb.shelton@gmail.com](mailto:barb.shelton@gmail.com) or (804) 385-6830.

\*\*\*\*\*

**YOU MUST BE A MEMBER OF TOGA TO BUY OYSTER SEED,  
TOGA FLOATS OR TO BUILD A FLOAT AT THIS WORKSHOP.**

\*\*\*\*\*

TOGA Membership Renewal or New Membership Application: \$10.00

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

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

Body of Water Where Oysters Are Grown: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Renewal? Yes No



**Pre-Built Float/Equipment Order Form**

Please place your order and payment **NLT September 8** for pick up **September 22** at the VIMS Hatchery, 10am until 1pm. For photos and descriptions of the items available, go to [www.oystergardener.org/Annual Events](http://www.oystergardener.org/Annual%20Events) and download the Sales Brochure and Order Form. Repairs do not require pre-order.

Name \_\_\_\_\_, Phone \_\_\_\_\_, Email \_\_\_\_\_

Taylor Float,	\$90 ,	Qty _____,	\$Amount _____
Taylor Float w Top,	\$105,	Qty _____,	\$Amount _____
Large Flipfloat,	\$60,	Qty _____,	\$Amount _____
Small Flipfloat,	\$55,	Qty _____,	\$Amount _____
Large Bottom Cage,	\$45,	Qty _____,	\$Amount _____
Small Bottom Cage,	\$40,	Qty _____,	\$Amount _____
Downunder,	\$45,	Qty _____,	\$Amount _____
Flipfloat Lifter,	\$60,	Qty _____,	\$Amount _____
Bender, 42",	\$45,	Qty _____,	\$Amount _____
Bender, 50",	\$50,	Qty _____,	\$Amount _____
Delano Rig w Bag	\$20,	Qty _____,	\$Amount _____
			\$Total _____

Please mail order/payment to TOGA, c/o Vic Spain, PO Box 2463, Gloucester VA, 23061  
 Questions?- Contact Vic Spain, [vicspain@rocketmail.com](mailto:vicspain@rocketmail.com), 804 642-6764

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

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

**Return Service Requested**