



Growing oysters for a cleaner Bay

Fall 2024

Upcoming: Fall '24 Oyster Float Sale and OYS-101 Seminar (*Basics of Oyster Gardening*): October 12, 2024

~ Vic Spain, Brian Wood, MOGs

TOGA's annual fall float sale and educational event will be held on Saturday, October 12 at **Camp Kekoka**, 1083 Boys Camp Rd, Kilmarnock, VA 22482, **from 9 am to 12 noon**.

TOGA will provide educational materials and personal consultation with Master Oyster Gardeners (MOGs) who will work with both prospective and experienced oyster gardeners. In addition, Dr. Richard Siciliano, MOG, and College of Southern Maryland Professor Emeritus, will lead a class of **OYS-101: Basic Oyster Gardening** from 10am-11:30am. Register online for the course, free of charge:

<https://www.oystergardener.org/oyster-gardening-101>

On sale are Taylor Floats, Flip Floats, Tidal Tumblers, Rough Riders, and Bottom Cages, along with spat tubes, wire benders, and spat bags, along with hats, shirts, aprons, and other TOGA logo items; see TOGA's website for descriptions: <https://www.oystergardener.org/devices-and-designs/>

Orders must be placed by **October 1, 2024**. (See [page 15 for order form with prices](#)). TOGA accepts checks, cash, and Visa/Master Cards, with payment due at pickup. To comply with state tax law on float sales, we follow the *Occasional Sales* policy for nonprofits in Virginia. **If you cannot pick up your order on October 12, you must arrange to pay within seven days after the sale.**

Online Float Order Form: The order form now includes a survey on your spat requirements. How many and what kind of spat do you plan to purchase annually? This is a survey, not an order

or commitment, so please enter the information on the *Float Order Form*.

Spat for Sale: During the Fall '24 Float Sale, vendors will be selling triploid and diploid spat. Also, since demand for floats has been high, vendors will be selling 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 that TOGA does not sell.

The annual fall float sale is one of TOGA's primary fundraising activities, with all proceeds benefiting TOGA, 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 determined by TOGA's Board of Directors.

Place your orders on the [TOGA online order form](#) at <https://www.oystergardener.org/fall-float-sale>. You may order up to three wire floats plus two spat tubes total, including build-your-own purchases. Any surplus floats can be sold at the sale and will not count against the limits. Purchasing a TOGA float requires current membership. If you are unsure about your membership status, check the address label on the back of this mailed newsletter. Otherwise, inquire when you fill out the "Become a Member" form at <https://www.oystergardener.org/become-a-member/> or when you use the float order form, either online or on the mail-in form. You may also contact Vic Spain at vicspain@rocketmail.com

We urge you to use the online order form since a record of your order is created in our files, and a copy is automatically returned to you by email. Payment is due when you pick up your order. If you cannot be at the sales event, ask us to hold your float for you, and let us know when and where you will pick up your purchase. Otherwise, the float(s) you ordered may be sold. Therefore, please pick up

your pre-ordered floats by 11 a.m. Unclaimed and unreserved floats will be sold to walkup customers.

If you prefer to order by mail, rather than online, use the printed order form [on page 11 of this newsletter](#), or download an order form for “pre-built” or “build your own” floats from the TOGA website: <https://www.oystergardener.org/fall-float-sale>. Submit the completed form to the address on the form, or email a copy to: vicspain@rocketmail.com

Also available at the sale will be small or medium spat bags, crab pot line, float wire mesh, shell bag material, TOGA hats and T-shirts (no need to pre-order these items).

Build-Your-Own Float Day: Saturday, October 5, 2024, Camp Kekoka, 10am to 1pm: TOGA members who help build their own floats before the sale, and in return get a \$10 discount on items they build, may sign up on either the online or mail-in order forms. Contact Vic Spain for details: vicspain@rocketmail.com



Recap: TOGA Members and Supporters Appreciation Party: March 16th

~ Terry Lewis, MOG

The TOGA Appreciation Party held Saturday, March 16, at the Freeshade Community Center (Topping, VA) saw the most participation since the event was first held 11 years ago. All TOGA members and supporters were invited to what had previously been listed as our volunteer appreciation party. Since all TOGA members and supporters help place more oysters in the Bay waters, and help spread the word of the many benefits of oysters to the Bay ecology, the party was opened to all members, supporters, and their guests. This year an estimated 130 people enjoyed the delicious food and camaraderie.

Held a day before St. Patrick’s Day, the event featured plenty of green-clad attendees, and many took home prizes for answering trivia questions about the Emerald Isle. Sam Bohnstedt, representing supporting company Sea Glass Wines, won the prize for wearing the most green. Terry Lewis and Sam Bohnstedt co-hosted the Irish trivia quiz and kept the audience amused with

“hilarious” jokes amidst a chorus of groans from the audience.

This year’s event was the first time that winners of the TOGA Middle School Writing contest were present to read their winning essays. In previous years, contest winners were part of the Annual Membership Meeting in January. This year, they were the highlight of the party.

For the past 11 years, TOGA has supplied plenty of local oysters for the all-you-can eat extravaganza. Attendees brought a variety of side dishes to share, TOGA provided soft drinks, and [Seaglass Company](#) hosted a wine tasting. We were fortunate to again have Stacey on-site to prepare some of the best fried oysters on the east coast, and former chef Howard Delano prepared various oyster dishes.

This event is TOGA's way of expressing our appreciation to our many great members and supporters who make this such a successful organization. Another member and supporter party is planned for the spring 2025. The exact date and location are yet to be set, but watch for an announcement in the near future.



Youth Essay Contest Winners Highlight TOGA’s Membership and Supporters Appreciation Party

This year winners of the TOGA Youth Writing Contest were announced at the Members and Supporters Appreciation Party on March 16, and all six writers were present to read their winning essays.

Honorable Mention

- David Contreras – Home School 8th Grade, Henrico County
- Chloe Horsley – St. Claire Walker 7th Grade, Middlesex County

Third Place:

- Grace Keel – Thomas Hunter Middle School 8th Grade, Mathews County
- Ayla Martinez – Thomas Hunter Middle School 8th Grade, Mathews County

Second Place:

- Cole Christensen – Thomas Hunter Middle School 7th Grade, Mathews County

First Place (prize \$500)

- Drew Wajciechowski - Liberty Middle School 8th Grade, Ashland, VA



The winning essays are published on TOGA's website: <https://www.oystergardener.org/youth-writing-competition-winners>. The first place winner earned \$500, \$250 for second, two students tied for third and received \$100 each, and two students were recognized as honorable mention and took home gift cards donated by [Bubba's Shrimp Shack](#). The teacher of the first place student entry received \$200. Also all students were awarded TOGA apparel.

**First Place Winner:
Drew Wajciechowski, 8th Grader, Liberty
Middle School, Ashland, VA
Teacher- Mr. Farmer**

“A Good Day for the Oysters”



Let us just imagine this for a second: You are in a small icebox (although you don't know that yet) and you're with thousands of other oysters. Suddenly,

light pours into your view, and these massive things come and grab the small bag that you're inside of. You cannot see what's going on, but then something ELSE grabs the bag and you are hauled away into another cooler. You then feel the bumps of what the water and the current felt like, but you know you aren't in water. You are then put into ANOTHER big bag, and you feel the relief of being put back in the water on top of something floating on the water.

That is what an oyster must have felt like when my Papa and I bought some basic equipment that we would need to start growing my own oysters. In case you didn't follow, here is what happened from my perspective. We showed up at an oyster sale in Deltaville, looking for the equipment we would need for me to start growing my own oysters. My papa bought two bags with 500 oysters in each bag that we put in the cooler he brought. We then moved on to choosing the float (we didn't need ADPI bags because my papa had grown oysters before).

We bought the Tidal tumbler and spat tube to go inside of it. That was all we needed, so we put our newly bought oysters and equipment in the trunk and drove home. After that, we put about 700 of the oysters into a larger mesh bag called an ADPI bag and put the other 300 into my oyster float. That was on May 27th. Now, my oysters are about three times their original half-inch size.

You may be wondering, what is the point of all this? Why do oysters matter? I will tell you! Oysters are important because they are filter-feeders, which means that they filter the water to get the nutrients they need, but they also produce clean water! It's a win-win! However, some people didn't think about the environmental consequences, so they over dredged and didn't replace the oysters with new ones or leave some there to repopulate. As a result of over dredging, the Chesapeake Bay has been getting dirtier and dirtier since the mid-1800's.

Thankfully, laws have been set in place to prevent over dredging and the long road to recovery has started. And it starts with people like you and me! One reason I became a member of TOGA and started growing oysters is because I am aware of the environmental consequences caused by our ancestors. You may be wondering, “What am I going to do with only a few thousand oysters? After all, the Chesapeake Bay has over 18 trillion gallons of water. I know that an oyster filters out 50 gallons of water per day, but in the grand scheme of things,

that's tiny." Well, it all adds up. Fifty gallons of water per day times 2,000 oysters equals 100,000 gallons of water per day. Adding up the active members in TOGA (around five hundred per Google.com), that's at least fifty million gallons PER DAY! That's AT LEAST 18,250,000,000 gallons PER YEAR! Also, that's just people in TOGA, not including the native population of oysters and other people growing oysters. Just because our oysters completely clean the bay every 1,000 years does not mean that this number will always stay the same. As I said, we are on the road to recovery for the cleanliness of the Bay. That 1,000-year number is going down year by year as more oysters spawn and we don't over dredge. Everyone can help save the Bay!!

- Sources: TOGA (oystergardener.org) and google.com



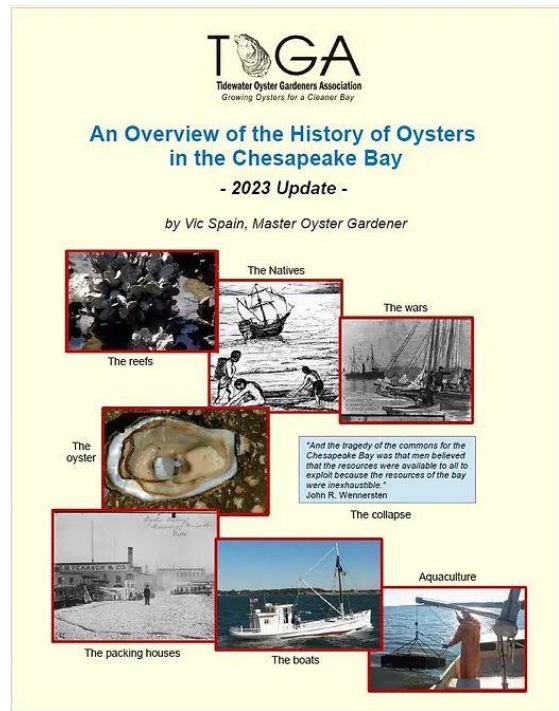
TOGA Oyster History Overview Document Updated

~ Vic Spain, MOG

In 2017, at the request of the Deltaville Maritime Museum, TOGA documented a timeline of many important events regarding oysters in the Chesapeake Bay. Starting with the modern Bay formation, the summary includes the usage by The First Americans, the arrival of Europeans, the early Colonial days, the gradual but steady impact of agriculture and European culture on the Bay health, the oyster golden years, the oyster wars, the decline in oyster stocks and industry, the beginning of oyster aquaculture and the tenuous recovery since the disastrous 1990s.

Since 2017, new information has become available on the Native use of oysters, the primary cause of the die-off of the 1990s, and hopeful news of the comeback of wild oysters along with the growth in oyster farming—this new information called for the 2023 update.

You may download a PDF of the document at <https://www.oystergardener.org/oysterhistory> by clicking on the image.



Please Support our Spat Vendors

~ Vic Spain, MOG

We know that oyster gardening would be almost impossible if it were not for our spat vendors. We have recently updated spat-vendor contact information at the [Spat Center](https://www.oystergardener.org/spat-center) page on TOGA's website, <https://www.oystergardener.org/spat-center>. Although all spat vendors are welcome at our float sales, some prefer to sell directly to customers who contact them, so you may purchase spat from these vendors when convenient to you and the vendor. TOGA wants oyster gardeners to have access to spat. Late summer and fall are ideal for getting new spat. In the spring, many vendors have larger spat left from the previous fall.

Also, on our [Spat-Center page](#), Virginia Institute of Marine Science provides guidance to professional oyster growers about **PLOIDY – DIPLOID OR TRIPLOID?** This advice is of interest to amateurs like us, as well. Diploids, good for restoration or consumption, spawn in late spring and summer, during which time their meat is not firm; therefore, they should not be consumed at those times (remember the old "Months-with-R" rule). Triploids do not spawn and can be harvested year-round in open waters, but get them cooled down quickly in summer.

Tidewater Oyster Gardeners
Association

Middle School Writing Competition

**Open to all
Virginia Middle School
Students (Grades 6-8)**



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
for more information.*

Great chance to have your writing published!



*Growing Oysters
for a Cleaner Bay*

Tidewater Oyster Gardeners and C&F Bank Middle School Writing Contest General Competition Guidelines

1. Open to all Virginia Middle School students, including | home schooled students.
2. Nonfiction only, with the theme **“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: www.oystergardener.org
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
Subject: Middle School Writing Competition Submission

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

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



**If you have questions please call 804-693-2687.
Good Luck!**



Recap: Spring '24 Float Sale at Deltaville Maritime Museum and Holly Point Market Event, May 25th

~Brian Ingram-MOG, Vic Spain-MOG, and Carlton McFaden, TOGA Vice President

TOGA held its spring '24 sale and educational event at the Deltaville Maritime Museum during the museum's Holly Point Market, Deltaville, on Saturday May 25 from 9am to 12pm.



The event was an enormous success due to the weather and the substantial number of oyster cages sold. The final number of cages sold was **188** pre-assembled cages, well exceeding our Spring 2023 number of **155**. The breakdown on types of floats sold were as follows: 37 Taylors, 30 Flip Floats, 6 Bottom Cages, 39 Tumblers, 24 Rough Riders, and 52 Spat Tubes. Thanks go to all the TOGA members who assisted with this sale and a special thank you to Bob Eadie who personally pre-constructed all our Spat Tubes.

Three of our local oyster seed vendors, Lynton Land, Judy Ambrose of Oyster Baby Monna, and Darryl Krolicki of Capt. Toms's Oyster Floats were present to sell spat, and their supplies quickly sold out. Master Oyster Gardener Richard Siciliano also taught another OYS-101 class to a standing room only group. Finally, the TOGA Store, managed by Terry Lewis, was a big hit thanks to a new TOGA logo added to the shirts, as well as many new apparel and color options.

This event continues to be one of TOGA's primary fundraising activities with all proceeds benefiting our TOGA 501 (C) 3 charity.



Featured: Profile of an Oyster Garden on the Little Wicomico River

~Richard Siciliano, MOG



Leigh and Valynn Westfall, of Reedville, Virginia, keep busy as beekeepers, but that's not the whole story. They're also Master Oyster Gardeners (MOGs) who tend to an O-Garden at their home on the Little Wicomico River. Leigh and Valynn, retired from the U.S. Marine Corps, started their garden in 2017, after purchasing a couple of Taylor floats from TOGA at one of our float sales in the Northern Neck. They studied oyster gardening, completed the Master Oyster Gardeners course through Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS), and they now maintain 10 Taylors in the water, with two more in dry dock. Leigh admits having lost two Tidal Tumblers when they floated down the creek during rough weather. Although the floats were returned by a thoughtful neighbor, they were minus the oysters. The neighbor said they were delicious. The Westfall's inventory of oysters consists of both *diploids* and *triploids*, and they make sure they mark their floats so they know which is which.

Asked how tending to an oyster garden compared with being a beekeeper, both Leigh and Valynn admitted oysters are easier, with bees requiring more frequent attention. When prompted to give a word of advice to new oyster gardeners, Leigh offered this: "Plan on a way to get oyster floats and cages out of the water and onto your dock." Since a fully-loaded Taylor float is quite heavy, some

mechanical assistance is needed. Leigh and Valynn use a davit fabricated by TOGA Board member and President Emeritus Brian Wood, but they are still searching for a better way to lift a heavy oyster float out of the creek so it can be cleaned.



Master Oyster Gardeners Valynn and Leigh Westfall, of Reedville, VA



Call for Nominations for the Annual Madison Boyd Award

~Carl Zulick, MOG

The Madison Boyd Award is named for former Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association (TOGA) member Madison Boyd of Mollusk, Virginia. Madison was a friend, waterman, and visionary leader who worked tirelessly on TOGA conservation and education efforts with the Boys and Girls Club at Camp Kekoka in Kilmarnock on the Northern Neck of VA until his death in 2020.

Madison actively volunteered in support of his community, especially with young people. Inaugurated in 2021, the award reflects

TOGA's mission and values. It may be given to an individual or group whose achievements, contributions, or service result in educating the public about oysters, oyster gardening, or improving the health of the Chesapeake Bay. The non-monetary award is presented by the TOGA president at TOGA's annual meeting in January. Any member of the public or a group is eligible to be nominated by November 15 of each year. Send nominations to CarlZ@togaboard.org.



Volunteer as a Regular TOGA Float Builder

~Vic Spain, MOG



The hard work of many TOGA volunteers resulted in more support for our TOGA/VIMS Fellowship Endowment and other important projects. Although a big accomplishment for us, it has put a strain on those who struggle to keep up with the unprecedented demand for oyster floats, cages, and spat tubes. With the help of volunteer TOGA float builders, we can continue to offer quality-built oyster floats, cages, and spat tubes at prices that can't be beat. Join us and help build oyster floats at Camp Kekoka, Kilmarnock, TOGA's float workshop headquarters, on Thursdays in September and October, 9am-noon. For more information, check the TOGA calendar below for exact dates ([page 17](#)), or contact Vic Spain: vicspain@rocketmail.com



TOGA Continues Its Support of the Hampton City School Oyster Restoration Project

~Betsy McAllister, HCS STEM Coordinator and TOGA Member

What is more enjoyable than getting students in the field on a beautiful spring day for learning about oysters? Having TOGA members and Master Oyster Gardeners Vic Spain and Brian Ingram on hand to lead the learning.

On April 15th and 16th, teachers from Cooper Elementary, Phenix PreK-8 School, Eaton Middle School, Armstrong School for the Arts, and Kilgore Gifted Center who all had been raising oysters with students over the course of the school year brought their 300 students to the headwaters of the Hampton River to see their oysters planted on a sanctuary reef. Thanks to wonderful partners, such as the Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association, students were able to rotate through a series of five educational stations to learn more about oysters. Spain and Ingram engaged students in learning more about oyster anatomy, the harvest history of oysters, the oyster life cycle, and differences between farmed and wild oysters. This was the first time seeing the inside of an oyster for many of the students.

In addition to visiting with TOGA, students took a mini hike where they learned more about the ecosystem surrounding the oyster reef from Claire Neubert, a TOGA member and co-owner of the eco-tourism company [Shored Up](#). The students wrote oyster wishes onto empty oyster shells and tossed them on the reef to increase substrate with the guidance of Shored Up co-owner Linda Hamm. They were also introduced to macro- and microorganisms of the Hampton River and Chesapeake Bay by students and staff from Hampton University and Norfolk State University, and played an active oyster filtration game with STEM Teacher Specialist Betsy McAllister. Students then watched and waved goodbye to their baby oysters, which had grown substantially under their care, as they were placed on the oyster reef.

With the support of TOGA and other community partners, 13 schools, 23 teachers, and approximately 745 students were positively impacted as part of the Hampton City Schools Oyster Restoration project; almost 12,500 oysters were added to the Hampton River. A testament to

the herculean efforts of TOGA, a trip chaperone stated, "What a wonderful event. The learning stations were incredible. This was a very well organized, fun, and engaging event, and such a great learning experience that these students will be able to share with others and hopefully ignite real stewardship for their environment." Phenix PreK-8 first grade teacher Marcia Lewis further shared, "This has been my best, most enjoyable field trip in the 25 years I have been teaching."

As if their many contributions were not enough, TOGA graciously donated a copy of *Awesome Chesapeake: A Kid's Guide to the Bay* to each elementary and middle school that raised oysters during the 2023-2024 academic year. The book is a citizen science guide that introduces readers to organisms of the Chesapeake Bay and empowers them to monitor the health of local waterways.



Students wrote personal messages onto oyster shells to throw on the Hampton City School oyster reef.



Oyster cages built or retrofitted for the August 9th Hampton City School Teacher Training. The event was postponed due to weather conditions caused by Tropical Storm Debby.



O-Gardeners: Do You Have Any Unused, Dormant, or in Need-of-Repair Floats or Cages?

~Carl Zulick, MOG

(reprinted from the [Fall 2023 TOGA Newsletter](#))

As you may know, TOGA's mission includes education as well as putting oysters in the water to improve the health of the bay. To those ends, we design, build, and sell devices that help oysters grow and prosper.

Those devices are built to get years of service; however, sometimes those cages and floats are no longer used. If you or a neighbor have taken your cages out of the water, please consider getting them back in and starting new spat. If they need repair, TOGA can help repair them.

If you are unable to restart your oyster garden, consider donating those unused or repairable floats and cages back to TOGA so we can get them back to filtering the Bay. Our master oyster gardeners work with schools, partner organizations, museums, parks, and people that would love to put them back in service. Contact Carl Zulick at

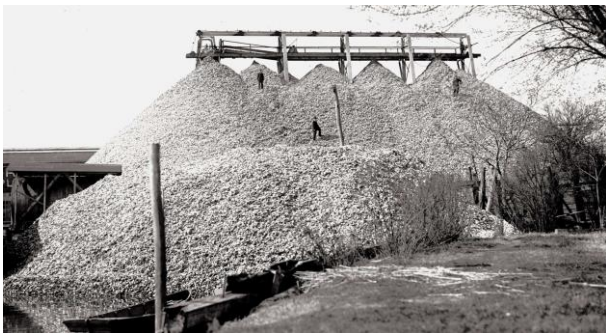
carlz@togaboard.org or text 703-424-6001 for arrangements or information.



Build Your Own Mini Spat Tube. It's Easy and Inexpensive

~Vic Spain, MOG

New oysters (spat) must be placed in a grow-out bag with mesh small enough to prevent these immature oysters from falling into the water and becoming a meal for predators, such as blue crabs. A rectangular shaped grow-out bag (a.k.a. "spat bag") is one option, but its shape prevents it from fitting inside a Tidal Tumbler or Rough Rider, and the custom-made Spat-Tube is one solution, but its price (\$35) might be problem. However, a Mini-Spat Tube, made from a minnow trap, may be an alternative that's just the right size and price. These devices are available at Bass Pro Shop in Hampton for \$12.99, plus tax, and military and first responders get a 10% discount. Minnow traps can also be purchased at Walmart, and online at Cabelas.com.



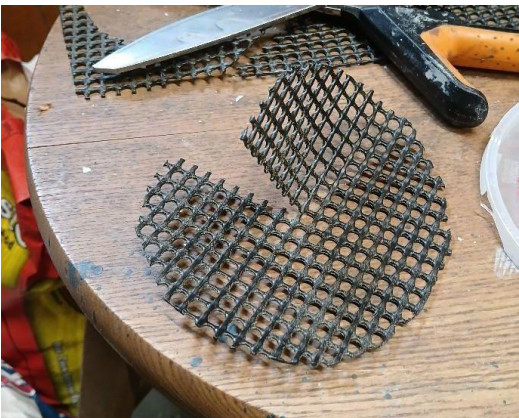
Too many oysters? Too many shells? What to do? Oyster Gardeners: If you have grown more oysters than you can consume, or you have run out of float space, consider donating your live oysters back to TOGA so they can repopulate our sanctuary reef in Camp Kekoka's Pittman's Cove. And while you're at it, 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. Or call for a TOGA volunteer to pick up your donation near where you live. For details, contact Richard Siciliano: rjsiciliano@yahoo.com or Carl Zulick: czulick@gmail.com



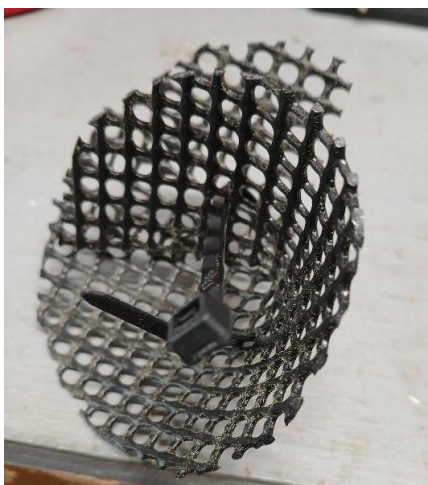
The basic materials for a mini spat tube: minnow traps with metal clip, scrap of small mesh spat bag, crab pot line (8 feet), scissors or diagonal cutters, 8 to 11-inch cable tie, pliers, and spat.



Step 1: start by cutting two circular pieces from a scrap of small mesh spat bag.



Step 2: Cut a straight line to the center of both circular pieces.



Step 3: Overlap the edges of the cut to create a cone.



Step 4: Press the mesh trap. Secure it in the metal cone with a medium cable tie.



Step 5: Before assembling the two halves of your modified minnow trap, insert the metal clip into one of the hinge brackets. Put your spat in one of the halves. You can start with 500 to 1000 3/8-inch to 1/2-inch spat.



Step 6: After loading the spat, use a medium cable tie (8-inch to 11-inch) to lock the upper and lower brackets on the opposite side from the hinge. Gently bend the hinge tongs (with pliers) until the two halves remain snug to each other.

To make sure all the spat are large enough to remain inside the cage mesh, shake the cage over a piece of plastic. If any fall through, they should be put in a mesh bag (like the bag they came in), and back in the cage. Vegetable bags are available online. After a few weeks, all of the spat should have grown large enough so you can dispose of the bag. If you purchase ¼-inch spat, put all of the spat in a mesh bag and grow them until they are about ½ inch, and then remove them from the bag.

Two mini spat tubes will fit in a Tidal Tumbler or a Rough Rider. You may also deploy the Mini Spat Tube independently using crab pot line tied to the metal clip and hang it to a cleat on your dock. When the spat grow to 1.5-inches, move them to the standard cages with 1-inch mesh.



Virginia Now Has an Online Oyster Garden Permit Application

~ Carl Zulick, MOG and Savannah Longest, VIMS

Getting a permit from the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) for oyster gardening is required for all oyster gardeners. Renewable every 5 years, it is simple, free, and benefits the oyster gardener, as well as the public. With a permit, your oyster garden is registered as an aquaculture site, which will appear on the VMRC map. A big safety benefit of a permit is that oyster gardeners will be opted-in to receive notification from Virginia when changes occur in any harvest restrictions or closures of their growing area. Permits enable better estimates of the quantity of cultured oysters in Virginia waters and what positive effect they may be having on water quality.

The permit is called a Virginia General Permit #3 (VGP3). Gardeners must adhere to the relevant VMRC procedures and regulations. For information, go to <https://mrc.virginia.gov/Shellfish/VGP3-Oyster-Gardening-Permit.pdf>. To apply online for an oyster garden permit, go to [VMRC Oyster Gardening Permit Application \(virginia.gov\)](https://mrc.virginia.gov/Shellfish/VGP3-Oyster-Gardening-Permit.pdf)

Virginia Marine Resources Commission VMRC Oyster Gardening Permit

Application for Oyster Gardening Permit, Virginia General Permit #3

Step 1 of 5

This application has five steps and should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. If you have any questions, please email Savannah.Longest@mrc.virginia.gov or call (757) 247-2262. Oyster Gardening Permits are free and valid for five years once approved. After entering the fields below, click the "Continue..." button to start your application.

<small>First Name*</small>	<small>Middle Initial</small>	<small>Last Name*</small>	<small>Suffix</small>
<input type="text" value="First Name"/>	<input type="text" value="Middle Initial"/>	<input type="text" value="Last Name"/>	<input type="text" value="Suffix"/>
<small>Email*</small>		<small>Email Confirmation*</small>	
<input type="text" value="Email"/>		<input type="text" value="Please re-enter your email address"/>	
Your email address is required to complete this application.			
Please re-type your email to ensure accuracy.			

Please Enter Your Mailing Address

<small>Street Address*</small>	<small>Apt or Suite #</small>
<input type="text" value="Mailing Street Address"/>	<input type="text" value="Mailing Apt or Suite #"/>

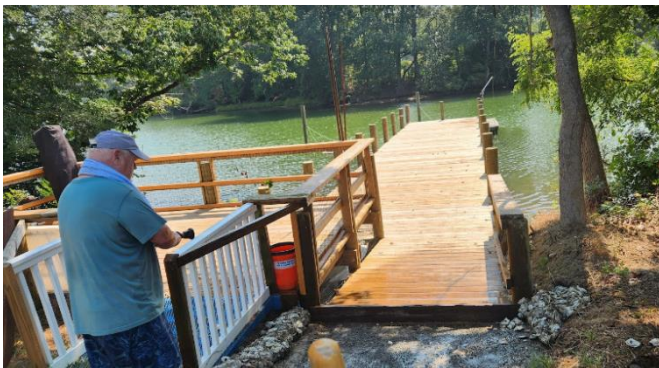
TOGA's Education Center at Camp Kekoka: the Madison Boyd Memorial Pier



The pier on Pitmans Cove, off Indian Creek, at Camp Kekoka, Kilmarnock, Virginia, under construction



Barbara Boyd, daughter of Madison Boyd, holding the plaque at the dedication of the new pier in his honor



The newly-completed pier at Camp Kekoka



Brian Wood, past president of TOGA, overlooking Pitmans Cove, a sanctuary oyster reef and oyster garden. Looking on are family members and friends of Madison Boyd who was honored at a ceremony dedicating the new pier to be used for teaching young students about Bay ecology and conservation.



On August 31, 2024, friends and family of Madison Boyd gathered in his honor at the dedication ceremony of the Madison Boyd Pier, used to educate Virginia students about the role oysters play in the health and preservation of the Chesapeake Bay. TOGA member Carl Zulick (center-dark blue shirt), was master of ceremonies and spoke about Boyd's legacy as a waterman and steward of the environment.

Are your Dues due?

If you received this newsletter in the mail, please check the year next to your name on the address label. If you are unsure of your dues status, check the address label on the back of this “mailed”



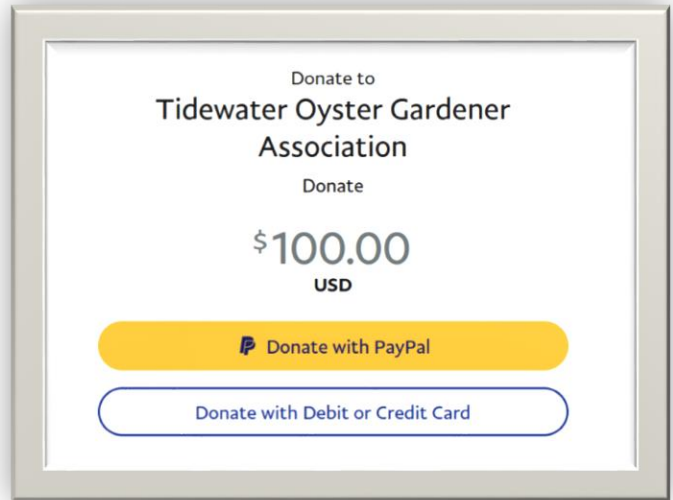
newsletter; you should see 2024, 2025, or 2026, to remain current. If you believe there is an error, contact Vic Spain at vicspain@rocketmail.com or 804-642-6764. The annual membership is \$25 (per family) for one calendar year (January through December), not 12 months from the date of your payment.

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.
- Benefit from the expertise of hundreds of others interested in growing oysters.
- Have the opportunity to enroll free-of-charge for the continuing education course OYS-101: *Basics of Oyster Gardening*.
- Purchase floats/cages at TOGA’s spring and fall float-sale events.
- Attend TOGA’s annual membership appreciation party.

To join TOGA, visit our website:

<https://www.oystergardener.org/become-a-member>, or use the form at the back of this newsletter to update your membership. You may also use the link or the form to update your information. It is important that your address and email address are correct as that is our primary way of communicating with members. Please share this membership form with a friend.



To donate online, go to TOGA’s website; click on “Donate to TOGA, thank you!”

Consider sending a tax-deductible donation to TOGA in support of our volunteers in providing valuable resources to ecology-minded oyster enthusiasts. This past year, TOGA supplied over 300 oyster cages, floats, and other oyster gardening gear at cost to our membership. In addition, TOGA’s volunteer Master Oyster Gardeners (MOGs) met with and conducted educational programs to hundreds of elementary, middle, and high school students throughout the Northern Neck, Middle Peninsula, and Tidewater region, from Kinsale to Hampton. MOGs have conducted personal consultations with dozens of beginning oyster gardeners, free of charge, including in-person site visits to answer their questions about oyster gardening. Additionally, in its effort to meet the needs of all oyster gardeners, from novice to expert, TOGA conducted 90-minute live classes for oyster gardeners entitled OYS-101: *Basics of Oyster Gardening* in the spring 2024, and these classes continue throughout the year, all sessions free-of-charge to current TOGA members.

TOGA is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization and all donations are tax deductible. All proceeds from TOGA’s float sales go towards the TOGA/VIMS Endowed Fellowship that supports graduate students researching shellfish and Chesapeake Bay ecological restoration at William & Mary’s

Published three times a year, TOGA's newsletter is mailed to all TOGA members. Full color copies of this issue and past newsletters are linked on the website:



<http://www.oystergardener.org/newsletters>.

The deadline for articles for the next newsletter (Winter edition 2024/2025) is **November 20, 2024**. Any TOGA member who wishes to submit an article for the newsletter may do so before the deadline. Articles will be printed as space allows. Send an email with your story ideas to Vic Spain at vicspain@rocketmail.com and Richard Siciliano, rjsiciliano@yahoo.com.



Featured Recipe:
Bertino's Orgasmic Oysters

~Richard Siciliano, MOG

One of the joys of volunteering for TOGA events is meeting people who tell of their passion for oysters, especially when they share a favorite oyster recipe. TOGA member Russ Bertino visited the TOGA exhibit tent last April at the Heathsville Farmers Market and couldn't wait to tell me about his favorite dish.



1. Shuck a dozen oysters and save the cupped shells for baking.
2. Place the oyster in a half shell or other oven-safe container.
3. Add 1 small pat of butter.
4. Add minced onion.
5. Add a piece of uncooked bacon.
6. Add a sprinkle of Old Bay seasoning.
7. Place on a baking pan and cook for about 15 minutes at 350 degrees.
8. When the liquor from the oyster starts to bubble, remove them from the oven and add 1/2 teaspoon of shredded cheddar or Parmesan cheese.
9. Return them to the oven until the cheese melts.
10. Remove and serve with toasted bread wedges to soak up the remaining juice on the half shell.
11. Enjoy!



Many TOGA projects, including our newsletters, are funded by the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund., aka the License Plate Fund.

TOGA Oyster Float Sale Order Form
Camp Kekoka, at 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 October 1, 2024**, at: <https://www.oystergardener.org/fall-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

Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Telephone: _____ Mailing Address: _____

This form **must be received by October 1, 2024**, 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 11am, or notify Vic Spain to arrange an alternative: vicspain@rocketmail.com

Qty	Cost each for TOGA members	Description	Qty	Cost each for TOGA members	Description
	\$145	Taylor Float with Top		\$90	Flip Float
	\$90	Bottom Cage		\$85	Tidal Tumbler
	\$75	Rough Rider		\$35	Spat Tube (small mesh)
	\$35	Spat Tube (med mesh)		\$55	Bender 42 inch
	\$60	Bender 50 inch			

Note: Purchasing TOGA-built floats is a membership benefit. If you have not done so, please join or update your dues for 2024. Not sure of your dues status? Check the address label on the back of this "mailed" newsletter (you should see 2024, 2025, or 2026, if your dues are up to date), or contact vicpain@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, **\$10 discount*** per float

For the discount, * come to Camp Kekoka, 1083 Boys Camp Rd, Kilmarnock VA on **October 5, 2024: 10 am-1pm.**

I would like _____ (quantity) Taylor Floats with Top at \$135 per float.*

I would like _____ (quantity) Flip Floats at \$80 per float.*

I would like _____ (quantity) Bottom Cages at \$80 per float.*

I would like _____ (quantity) Tidal Tumbler at \$75 per float.*

I would like _____ (quantity) Rough Rider at \$65 per cage.*

Estimate of Your Spat Needs. (Check all that apply. This is a survey, not a spat order).

- I plan to purchase spat at the upcoming float sale, on October 12, 2024.
- I plan to order spat at another time.
- I prefer triploid spat.
- I prefer diploid spat.
- I use both triploid and diploid spat.
- I have no current plan to purchase spat.
- How many spat do you expect to use per year?

TOGA Mail-in Membership Form

We prefer you join and pay online: <https://www.oystergardener.org/become-a-member>

If you join online, your payment will be processed via PayPal.

(A PayPal account is not required; a credit card may be used instead)

**Or, you may mail this completed form with a check payable to "TOGA" to:
P.O. Box 2463, Gloucester, VA 23061**

Date: _____ Please check one: New Member Renewal

Annual Dues (Check one): \$25 (1 yr.) \$50 (2 yrs.) \$75 (3 yrs.)

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, and Zip Code: _____

Telephone: _____ Email _____ (please print clearly)

Second email (optional) _____

Body of water where oysters will be grown (optional): _____

Growing site (street address) where oysters will be grown (optional): _____



Thanks to our Partners and Sponsors!



Republic National Distribution Company

SEAGLASS
WINE COMPANY



The Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund grants generated from the sale of a Friend of the Chesapeake License Plate.



Please support our sponsors

TOGA Upcoming 2024 Events

SEPTEMBER

12th, Thursday, 9:00 AM-12 noon, TOGA Volunteer Float Build Day for Fall Float Sale Fundraiser, Camp Kekoka, 1083 Boys Camp Rd, Kilmarnock, VA 22482, *Event Coordinator*: Vic Spain, vicspain@rocketmail.com. First-time volunteers, contact Vic before attending

19th, Thursday, 9:00AM-12 noon, TOGA Volunteer Float Build Day for Fall Float Sale Fundraiser, Camp Kekoka, 1083 Boys Camp Rd, Kilmarnock, VA 22482, *Event Coordinator*: Vic Spain, vicspain@rocketmail.com. First-time volunteers, contact Vic before attending

21st, Saturday, 9:00AM-12 noon, TOGA Information tent, Heathsville Farmers Market, *Event Coordinator*: Doug Schaefer, subiceguy@hotmail.com

28th, Saturday, 1:00 PM –4:00 PM: Northern Neck Land Conservancy Boots and Barbeque, 2024 King Copsico Farm, 6120 Mount Holly Road, Montross VA 22520, *Event Coordinators*: Sue Borra: sue.borra@gmail.com ; and Doug Schaefer: subiceguy@hotmail.com

28th, Saturday, 2:00 PM –5:30 PM: Kiwanis Peninsula Seafood Festival Hellenic Community Center, 60 Traverse Rd, Newport News, VA 23606, *Event Coordinator*: David Singletary, david.singletary@gmail.com

OCTOBER

3rd, Thursday, 9:00 AM –12:00 PM: TOGA Volunteer Float Build Day for Fall Float Sale Fundraiser, Camp Kekoka, 1083 Boys Camp Rd, Kilmarnock, VA 22482, *Event Coordinator*: Vic Spain, vicspain@rocketmail.com First-time volunteers, email Vic before attending this event

5th, Saturday, 10:00 AM –1:00 PM: TOGA Build Your Own (BYO) Float Day, Camp Kekoka, 1083 Boys Camp Rd, Kilmarnock, VA 22482, *Event Coordinators*: Vic Spain, vicspain@rocketmail.com; Brian Wood, awood45858@aol.com

8th, Tuesday, 5:00–7:00 PM: TOGA Board of Directors Meeting Virtual Google Meet, *Contact* Carl Zulick, czulick@verizon.net for access. (Board meetings are open to all TOGA members)

10th, Thursday, 9:00 AM –12:00 PM: TOGA Volunteer Float Build Day for Fall Float Sale Fundraiser, Camp Kekoka, 1083 Boys Camp Rd, Kilmarnock, VA 22482, *Event Coordinator*: Vic Spain, vicspain@rocketmail.com, First-time volunteers, email Vic before attending this event

12th, Saturday, 9:00 AM –1:00 PM: **TOGA Annual Fall Float Sale**, Camp Kekoka, 1083 Boys Camp Rd, Kilmarnock, VA 22482, *Event Coordinator*: Vic Spain, vicspain@rocketmail.com. Also featured this day, same location, is *OYS-101: The Basics of Oyster Gardening*, 90-minute seminar taught by Dr. Richard Siciliano, MOG, College of Southern Maryland, Professor Emeritus. 10:00-11:30 AM. Register online at <https://www.oystergardener.org/oyster-gardening-101>

19th, Saturday, 10:00 AM –4:00 PM: Taste of Middlesex –Seaglass Wine Tasting and TOGA Information Tent, Deltaville Maritime Museum, 287 Jackson Creek Rd, Deltaville, VA 23043, *Event Coordinator*: Carl Zulick, czulick@verizon.net

31st, Thursday, 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM, Urbanna Oyster Festival Education Day, City Marina, Urbanna, VA, *Event Coordinator*: Richard Siciliano, rjsiciliano@yahoo.com

NOVEMBER

9th, Saturday, 12:00 –4:00 PM: Fall Oyster Crawl at Good Luck Cellars, 1025 Good Luck Road, Kilmarnock, VA 22482, *Event Coordinator*: Doug Schaefer, subiceguy@hotmail.com

10th, Sunday, 12:00 –4:00 PM: Fall Oyster Crawl at Good Luck Cellars, 1025 Good Luck Road, Kilmarnock, VA 22482, *Event Coordinator*: Doug Schaefer, subiceguy@hotmail.com

12th, Tuesday, 10:00 AM –12:00 PM: TOGA Board of Directors Meeting, River Counties Community Foundation, 834 Rappahannock Dr, White Stone, VA 22578, *Event Coordinator*: Sue Borra, sue.borra@gmail.com, (Board meetings are open to all TOGA members).

DECEMBER

10th, Tuesday, 10:00 AM –12:00 PM: TOGA Board of Directors Meeting, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Davis Hall Room 101, 1370 Greate Rd, Gloucester Point, VA 23062. *Event Coordinator*: Sue Borra, sue.borra@gmail.com

TOGA at Work, Celebrations, Educational Events...



Stacy, oyster chef, at the TOGA Members and Supporters Appreciation Party: March 16th



Master Oyster Gardener Brian Ingram assists a student from Hampton City Schools in building a Rough Rider oyster cage.



Howard Delano, TOGA member and master chef, at the TOGA Members and Supporters Appreciation Party: March 16th



Photo (and oyster) by Kent Eanes, Master Oyster Gardener.



Photos by Kent Eanes, Master Oyster Gardener

PO Box 2463
Gloucester, VA 23061

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

Return Service Requested



Growing oysters for a cleaner Bay