



COASTAL NEWS

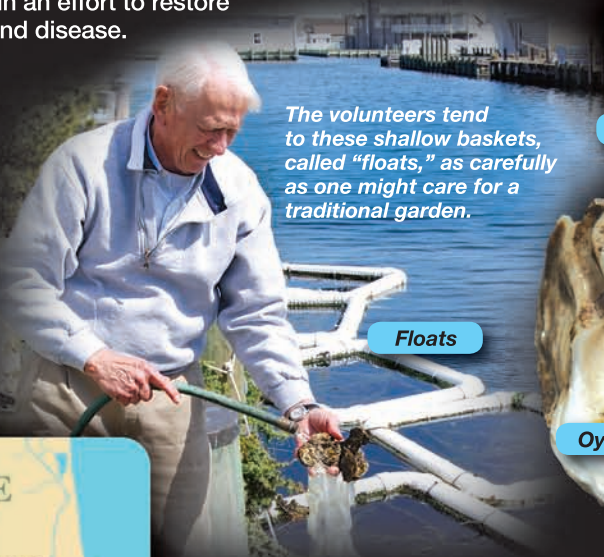
This information is provided by Delaware Sea Grant in cooperation with the Cape Gazette.

Delaware's Oysters Get a Helping Hand

Citizen volunteers take up oyster gardening in an effort to restore native populations affected by habitat loss and disease.

What is Oyster Gardening?

Unlike its name implies, oyster gardening doesn't involve planting the odd-shaped bivalves in the ground. Instead, small, hatchery-produced oysters — called "seed" or "spat" — are raised by citizen volunteers in small floating nurseries attached to docks surrounding Delaware's three coastal or "Inland" Bays: Rehoboth, Indian River, and Little Assawoman.



The volunteers tend to these shallow baskets, called "floats," as carefully as one might care for a traditional garden.

Old oyster shells

Floats

Oyster spat



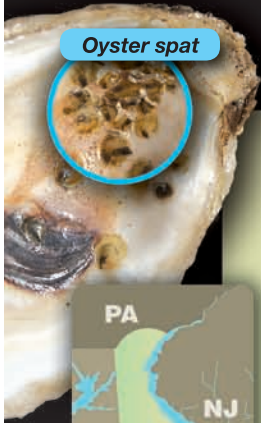
One adult oyster can filter up to 50 gallons of water a day!

Floats also create habitats that attract small bottom-dwelling organisms like grass shrimp and worms that in turn support populations of crabs, larger fish, and other important species. Recent studies have found that at least 49 species of invertebrates and young fish call the floats "home."

The small quarter-inch spat, which are attached to old oyster shells, are kept protected and clean in the floats by volunteers. Once young oysters reach the right size, they are moved to different locations throughout the Inland Bays, where they filter bay water, grow, and mature. Some evidence of natural oyster reproduction has been found in the vicinity of some of these sites.

The Delaware Center for the Inland Bays Oyster Gardening Program is a joint effort between the Delaware Center for the Inland Bays, the Delaware Sea Grant College Program, Delaware State University, and many wonderful citizen volunteers.

For more information, visit:
www.deseagrant.org/OGfactsheet.pdf



Oyster spat



www.deseagrant.org