

## Oyster Gardening 101

Congratulations on starting to garden the Chesapeake Bay's keystone species: The Eastern Oyster! As you grow these little seed into adult oysters, you will see firsthand how important these bivalves are to this estuary. As adults, these oysters can filter 1.3 gallons of water an hour, removing excess nutrients, and capturing suspended sediment. These seed will provide habitat for young fish, small crabs, and grass shrimp. From filtering water, to providing habitat, your oyster garden will do a whole lot of good for the body of water that they occupy.

### About our Oysters

The seed that you receive from Hoopers Island Oyster Co. is created in our hatchery and grow for approximately 3 months when they come to you. This means that we create this seed without removing anything from the natural environment. Our seed is created to be triploid, meaning they have 3 sets of chromosomes rather than 2. This makes them special because they will grow at an accelerated pace and can become adult oysters in about half the time of a wild oyster. These oysters are also bred with disease resistant genetics that strengthen them against disease causing pathogens in water like MSX and Dermo.



### What's in the package?

This package was thought out to include everything you will need to grow out 1,000 seed at your home.

- 1,000 oyster seed
- 1 small mesh Hexcyl pod with 3 baskets
- 1 large mesh Hexcyl pod with 3 baskets



## What's next?

### What is the best way to get my oysters home?

Keeping the seed cold, but not frozen, in a small cooler is the best way to transport them while you make the trip back home. Before heading over to pick up your seed, place some ice/ ice packs in a small cooler and bring something to separate the oyster seed from touching the ice directly. The brief drop in temperature will prevent them from opening while they are out of the water.

### What do I need to do to get my seed overboard?

Take your smaller mesh size hexcyl pod and secure it to your dock or anchor point. Open the door to one basket in the pod and place the seed in the basket. For the initial deployment, you only need to fill one of the baskets because the seed will not take up much space at its current size. Close the door to the basket and ensure that the closure is fully shut and secure. Place the pod in the water and watch your seed grow!

### When do I maintenance?

During the spring and summer months, it is important to keep an eye on your seed and make sure they are not growing out of their current space. When water temperatures are high, these triploid oysters will grow quickly. It is recommended to check on your oyster at least every two weeks to monitor growth and fouling on the hexcyl pod. When your first basket gets to be over halfway full, split the volume of the basket into the remaining empty baskets. While you are splitting the seed, remove any mortality you may find and try to place like size seed together. This will help minimize competition between the oysters and give them space to grow.

Once your seed has filled the first pod, use the second larger sized mesh pod to place the largest of your oysters. Be mindful that the oysters retain in the larger mesh without poking through. If you place oysters that are too small in the larger baskets, they can fall out or grow through the mesh.

### What do I do about fouling?

During the summer months, your hexcyl pods will become covered in several kinds of fouling organisms from barnacles, to sea squirts. When you find that the fouling has become excessive and is covering the mesh, its time to clean your gear. Remove your seed from the pod and pressure wash the hexcyl pod to clean.

You may also allow your gear to dry for a few hours in the early morning or evening to help with fouling in between cleanings. Flip your pod out of the water so that it is float side down and allow the baskets to dry out for a few hours. Do not forget to flip the baskets back into the water when you are done!

### Over Winter Care

Your oysters will go into a hibernation once the water temperature drops below 50 degrees, so they will not grow much past October. The biggest concerns during the winter months are ice and blow out tides that could freeze the oysters in the cold winter air. To protect your seed in the winter months, be mindful of the weather. When ice and freezing temperatures are expected, weigh your hexcyl pod down so that the seed is lower in the water column to protect the seed from freezing.