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There is still time to get involved with the 2010 season of The Mobile Bay Oyster Gardening Program. Informational workshops are scheduled for Saturday April 17<sup>th</sup> (Orange Beach) and Saturday May 1<sup>st</sup> (Dauphin Island).

How does it work? Gardeners receive hatchery-reared juvenile oysters ('Spat') set on whole shell from the Auburn University Shellfish Laboratory. These oyster spat are placed in gardens at the beginning of the summer and are hung from a Gardener's pier in the middle of the water column. They are held this way to provide them ample water flow through the garden so the little oysters get the food they need, while being protected from predators such as blue crabs and oyster drills. Volunteers care for these oysters by hosing them off and removing any predators from the cages each week.

Periodically, personnel from The Mobile Bay Oyster Gardening Program (MBOGP) come around to check in on the oysters, and they are always a phone call or an e mail away if gardeners have questions. At the end of the summer, the oysters have grown considerably (usually 2-3 inches), and it is time for them to be relocated to various restoration/enhancement sites.

At this point, MBOGP personnel come back to the gardening sites and collect the oysters to take them to these sites. The idea being now that they are larger, they will have a

better chance of survival in the wild where they will continue to filter food and play their important role in our ecosystem.

Sound like something you want to be involved with? There are two main ways to get involved, being a Gardener or being an Adopter of a garden. Anyone can adopt a garden, but to be a Gardener, a few conditions need to be met, including access to water (a pier) and a location that is considered “open” to shellfish harvesting by the Alabama Department of Health Seafood Division. The workshops will provide all the details.

If you are interested in becoming involved with the program you should register for either workshop on Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup> or Saturday, May 1<sup>st</sup> at 10:00 AM. Presentations on the Oyster Gardening Program will be made, and any questions you may have will be answered. For more information, or to register for one of the workshops, contact me (251.438.5690) or go online to [www.mobilebayoystergarden.org](http://www.mobilebayoystergarden.org) . We look forward to seeing you there.

For additional questions or information, contact P.J. Waters, Auburn University Marine Extension and Research Center, 438-5690.