



Dear Friends,

Here is the first issue of our weekly newsletter. This a project of The Lazy Gardener, Brenda Smith and John Ferguson and Mark Bowen of Nature's Way Resources. We also have a great cast of contributors writers who will chime in regularly. We would love your input on this newsletter . . . comments . . . suggestions . . . questions . . Email your thoughts to: lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com. Thanks so much for your interest.

Please .

Enjoy!

Spring Is Here!

By Brenda Beust Smith

Spring is here! Well, we hope spring is here. Nature's thrown us some curves in years past.

The urge to grab up all those beautiful flowers filling the nurseries right now is almost overwhelming.

We're talking here the flowers so associated with English Gardens or "Borders" as they're sometimes called:



Such as . . . anemone, calendula, cornflower, daffodil, dahlia, delphinium, dianthus, larkspur, pansy, petunia, phlox, poppy, ranunculus, shasta (and other daisies), snapdragon, stocks, sweet alyssum, verbena, wallflowers.

Nothing wrong with these. Wonderful plants. Just so long as you don't expect these British Border Babes to last all summer long and into fall.

They're perfect for brightening up the yard now while some shrubs are either still dormant or just beginning go green out.

How, folks frequently ask, do I know the dormant ones will come back? All hardy ones should. We didn't have much of a winter.

But that's where these BBBs can really be useful. If your shrubs aren't showing greenery by now, go ahead and cut them back to about 1 foot off the ground. If they do come back, it will probably be from the roots anyway.

Plant these BBBs around the bare stalks. If, by the time these poop out in May, or earlier if the temperatures rise too high in April, your late-returning dormant shrubs still aren't out, then give up.

Dig up the stump and plant something a LOT hardier.

In the meantime, check our calendar for upcoming gardening events. And please email information on your own group's events to lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com. Be sure to put a contact website or email.

What to do in the Garden this Month.

By Brenda Beust Smith
The Lazy Gardener

This month, you really should . . .

- Put tomatoes in the ground early this month.
- Mow the lawn when it needs it, then feed.
- Watch out for bluebonnets. They look like clover. Don't mow them down.
- Fertilize everything. Water first, feed, then water again.
- Gradually move hibiscus and other container plants into more light.
- Remove flowers on newly-purchased plants so they will set stronger root systems.
- Unwrap banana trunks and keep well watered. Want bananas? Remove baby plants.
- Plant Louisiana phlox around late-appearing shrubs like hamelia, lantana, dishplate hibiscus, etc. This perennial groundcover is green in winter, blooms in spring and goes dormant (almost disappears) in summer.
- Give hibiscus a slight haircut, then feed with hibiscus food to encourage lush growth.
- Attend area programs to learn about new-to-us hardy, low-maintenance flowers.



If the spirit moves . . .

- Continue pinching perennial tips to make them bushier. Stop when they produce buds.
- Dig up, thin out and transplant perennials so crowded they no longer bloom properly.
- Feed azaleas, spirea, climbing roses and other shrubby spring bloomers after they bloom.
- Remove spent flowers on spring bloomers to promote more bloom production.
- Work 1/2 cup of Epsom salts around roses, hibiscus and other bloomers for more flowers.
- Remove fading daffodil blooms so they won't go to seed. Leave fading foliage on.
- Feed plumerias with fish emulsion and superphosphate.
- Plant bell peppers, cucumbers, green beans, pumpkins, squash, tomatoes and watermelon - but cover if a late freeze is forecast. Start eggplants in pots.
- Put bluebonnet plants in raised, containers and/or hanging baskets. (Sow seed in fall.)

- In the water garden, remove leaves and muck from pond bottom if not done last fall. Remove toad eggs if you see them.

If you're really feeling energetic . . .

- Landscape with a wide variety of plants, instead of large masses of all the same kind. Masses of the same variety attract insects and disease.
- Donate excess plants to school, nursing home or community garden.
- Check grocery stores for white-flowering oxalis (clover) around St. Patrick's Day. It should be perennial in shady areas. Goes dormant in summer; reappears in winter.
- Plant antique roses, four o'clocks, gingers, jasmines and mock oranges for fragrance.
- Prune poinsettias; keep spent blooms picked off mums. Mums bloom spring and fall.
- Make a note of beautiful spring bulbs (tulips, hyacinths, daffodils, ranunculus, anemones, etc.) now in bloom. Fall is the time to purchase and plant most of them.
- Remove tulip bulbs after the flowers fade. Discard; they won't bloom again.
- Watch tree trunks for webworm eggs in limb crotches on susceptible trees. Remove!
- Try crushed egg shells, coarse sand in ring around plant stem to discourage snails.
- Give all the plants a manure tea treat: Mix in washtub: 1/2 rotted (or bagged) manure and 1/2 water (preferably rainwater). Let it sit overnight. Drain off water and pour over plants. This tea is high in nitrogen, so don't use more than once a month on blooming plants.

Great Don't-Do tips for really Lazy Gardeners

- Don't prune off freeze-damaged limbs or remove what looks like freeze-killed plants just yet. Wait until April. They may come back out.
- Don't prune crape myrtles unless they are causing damage, have grown out of bounds or have dead limbs. (See page 6.)
- Don't cut foliage off bulbs that naturalize after they finish blooming. They use the fading foliage to set next year's blooms.
- Don't plant caladiums yet. It's still too cold.
- Don't put out any tender tropicals, like plumerias. We may have a late freeze.

Weekly Events Calendar:

Wednesday, March 13, 12-1 pm. Healthy Soil, Healthy Plants by Mark Bowen. The Arbor Gate, 15635 FM 2920 Rd., Tomball, TX. (281) 351-8851. <http://www.arborgate.com>

Friday, March 15, 6:30-9 pm. An Organic Evening with Howard Garrett and John Ferguson. Booksigning, Programs on Organic Gardening. Wabash Feed, 5701 Washington, Houston, TX. (713) 863-8322. <http://wabashfeed.com/>

Saturday, March 15, 9-11:30 am. Organic Gardening Programs by Howard Garrett and John Ferguson, Q&A and Booksigning. Kingwood Garden Center, 1216 Stone Hollow Dr., Kingwood, TX. (281) 358-1805. <http://kingwoodgardencenter.com/events/>

Saturday, March 16, 2-4:30 pm. Organic Gardening Programs by Howard Garrett and John Ferguson, Q&A and Booksigning. The Arbor Gate, 15635 FM 2920 Rd., Tomball, TX. (281) 351-8851. <http://arborgate.com/classes.php>

Saturday-Sunday, March 16-17, 1 pm Saturday & 2 pm Sunday, "10 Commandments of Lazy Gardening," Aliana Home & Garden Show, Richmond, TX. www.alianahouston.com



Sunday, March 17, 1-5 pm. "Secret Survival Tips For Summer Garden Containers." Shades of Texas Nursery & Landscaping, 2618 Genoa Red Bluff, Houston, TX. (281) 991-8733. www.facebook.com/shadesoftexastrees

The Biggest Con Game in the Lawn and Garden World.

By Mike Serant

'Weed and Feed Fertilizers' Now that makes sense, I can get rid of my weeds and have beautiful turfgrass at the same time. Very exciting right? Except it is a fraud that is dangerous to your plants, your pets, your kids and yourself.

Weed and Feed Fertilizers aren't really fertilizers at all. They are toxic chemical poisons that use junk food fertilizers as a carrier. This dangerous myth is constantly promoted by the Chemical Fertilizer/Pesticide industry because they make an enormous amount of money from their unscrupulous practices. This truly is the goose that lays the golden egg for them. In the Chemical world remember the companies care not for your well-being just how much money they can get you to spend.

Scotts Bonus S is the best example. They spend \$400 million annually in advertising their product. And their advertising works as Scotts Bonus S is the number one sold 'fertilizer' in America (Remember is not really a fertilizer but a chemical poison put on fertilizer granulars). During the spring you will hear and see their commercials constantly on the radio and TV. Two springs ago there was this ridiculous Scott's radio commercial that stated that 'I needed to apply Scotts Bonus S because clover was growing to deliberately disrespect me'. How sad. Like clover even knew or cared that I was alive. Besides clover is a pretty little legume that provides Nitrogen to the grass. In the old turfgrass care books, our ancestor's sowed clover on purpose for that very same reason.

These chemical 'Weed and Feed' poisons are directly linked to causing cancer in dogs, cats, kids and adults. And they are harmful to the very plants they are supposed to protect. Pretty crazy. The bags will say 'Do not apply around trees and shrubs'. Does anybody think that their tree and shrub roots don't grow in the turfgrass areas? And read the back of the bags. There you find will an EPA pesticide tag plus instructions on how to clean your spreader in a containment box and take the waste water to a toxic waste disposal site. Like anybody is going to really do this. So after we apply these 'Weeds and Feeds' we have now poisoned our entire lawn where our kids and pets play and track these poison into our homes.

Read more at: <http://www.natureswayresources.com/DocsPdfs/WeedAndFeed.pdf>



Great Mulches For Spring

By John Ferguson

MULCH CORNER

Spring has sprung and tis the season that most of us mulch our flowerbeds and trees. Questions I often hear are:

Which type of mulch is best?

What kind of mulch should I use?

I heard that cedar is good mulch, is it?

Is it okay to use leaves and pine straw as my mulch?

Can I use compost as mulch?



Or perhaps the negative:

I bought this black mulch and everything became stunted or died - what happened?

I bought this black mulch and if a few weeks it had turned grey, what's wrong?

I bought this red mulch and my plants turned yellow - what happened?

I saw this bag of rubber mulch that is supposed to last forever, does it really work?

Or the interesting:

I read that if I change my mulch to ____ then I can increase the sweetness of my tomatoes by 20%, is this true?

I heard that this type mulch ____ helps suppress fire ants?

What type of mulch turns gumbo clay into beautiful loamy soil?

In this column we are going to answer your questions on mulch. To get started, mulch is just like any other product, some are very good and some are very bad. In general just like everything else in life.

To be a successful gardener in Texas one must mulch (and everywhere else also). Mulch comes from the German "molsch," meaning "soft," and refers to any loose, generally soft material that is laid down on top of the soil to protect a plant's roots or spread lightly over the plant itself. Mulch is not a soil amendment; it is a covering or surface layer used to protect the topsoil. Nature does not allow bare ground hence neither should we. Mulching is considered to be the most important step in any gardening program. All natural or organic mulches will improve the soil but like all things, they vary in quality and effectiveness. Good mulch lets air (oxygen) and water enter the soil and allows carbon dioxide to escape. Good mulch will readily decompose releasing the stored nutrients and will provide microorganisms, earthworms and beneficial insects a good home and food source.

Read more at: <http://www.natureswayresources.com/DocsPdfs/mulchcorner.pdf>

Feel free to contact us with any questions regarding the newsletter. We can be reached at lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Lazy Gardener & Friends


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JOIN OUR MAILING LIST!



Save 20%: March is Mulch Madness Month at Nature's Way Resources. Redeem this coupon for a big discount on our Fresh Double Ground Mulch! Please note: this offer is for retail customers only.

Offer Expires: 4/1/13

