



Dear Friends,

Here is the third issue of our weekly gardening newsletter for Houston, the Gulf Coast and beyond. This a project of The Lazy Gardener, Brenda Beust 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 to keep receiving your input on this newsletter . . . comments . . . suggestions . . . questions . . Email your thoughts to: lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com. Thanks so much for your interest.

Please .

Enjoy!

GOTTA CHANGE OUR ATTITUDES!

BY BRENDA BEUST SMITH



Plumerias planted in the ground? It's happening all over Houston.

Global change is having a major impact on our gardens. When I look around now at the plants we're growing outside in our gardens, and think back over the decades that I wrote the Lazy Gardener column for the Houston Chronicle, the mind absolutely boggles!

Look at this bougainvillea arch over this home on Plymouth St. in North Houston.



I remember my incredible jealousy over the huge bougainvillea that covered the old Moody Cotton Compress and Warehouse on Broadway in Galveston. No way back in the 70s and 80s could we grow anything like this so far north in Houston. Now, especially in inner Houston neighborhoods, huge bougainville shrubs dot many yards.

I know gardeners who have plumerias and bromeliads planted in their gardens and don't cover them all winter. Nor do they bring in their orchids. One can't, of course, do this with all plumerias, bromeliads and orchids, probably not even with most. But plants do "toughen." The more cold they survive, the more they can survive as their root systems grow stronger and stronger.



This plumeria has thrived for years in a corner of Jim Kadlecek's West Houston yard.



This was mine. It lived outside hanging in a tree for about 5 years. It never bloomed again. But then I totally ignored it. Finally the drought got it. (Once I put a plant out, it's between that plant and God. If it can't survive without help, then it doesn't belong in my yard. But the plant lived and I thought that was worth mentioning!)

It's a risk. If we have a prolonged cold spell, they may be lost. But all grow so well here, and have such an incredibly long growing season, they are easily replaced.

How do you know which ones will and which won't? That's the question. Experienced bromeliad/orchid/plumeria growers don't like to even suggest this for fear we'll have a really tough winter.

But one way to find some is to attend their sales and talk with the members. See if they have for sale any that they know are tougher than usual. If not, pick up a couple of the most common, least expensive plants and give it a try. Click on the club link for details.

* April 20-21 - [Houston Orchid Society](#) "Orchids on the Bayou" Spring Show and

Sale.

* April 26-28 - [Bromeliad Society/Houston](#) Show and Sale

* June 8 - [Plumeria Society of America](#) Show and Sale

The point is, we can grow FAR more tropicals year-round than ever before. We need to be looking not at northern flower catalogs, but at plants coming up from the south, from Mexico and South America, or from similar climates across the globe. So often plants that do well from the midsection of the country northward require cold that we can't provide. That's why they don't do well.

One of our best tropicals sales is coming up April 19-20. [Jerry Seymore's "Jerry's Jungle Gardens"](#) is a pure 5-acre delight in North Houston that I've written about often. Click here to read one recent tribute: ["Treasure Trove of Tropicals."](#)

Among the many plants I've gotten from Jerry (usually his pitch is, "Even YOU can grow this one!") is the Brazilian Red Cloak pictured here.



It's a shade lover, tops out about 6-7 foot and these one-foot tall flower custers last for months. Jerry's is well worth a visit when he sells off his excess plants, as he will be doing April 19-20. Be sure to take your own wagon.

Many plants found in the houseplant sections of chain stores are root-hardy here. They may die back in winter, but they'll come back out in the spring. And every winter they survive means they'll be able to withstand an even colder winter the next go-round.

It's fun to try!

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DID YOU KNOW . . .

* A group called the [Cultural Landscape Foundation](#) is looking for "significant landscapes that are little-known or at risk of being significantly altered or even demolished." TCLF is the only not-for-profit (501c3) foundation in America dedicated to increasing the public's awareness and understanding of the importance and

irreplaceable legacy of its cultural landscapes. Click on [Landslide®](#) for details. Landslide both highlights and monitors at-risk landscapes nationwide. Houston could use a wider profile for landscapes worth saving.

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STOP BY AND SAY HI!

* Friday, April 19: "I LOVE Oleanders!" by Brenda Beust Smith at the big Oleander Luncheon in the Moody Gardens Hotel, kickoff event for the 2013 Oleander Festival, April 20-21 at Moody Gardens Visitor Center. Luncheon reservation (and festival) details at www.oleander.org

Weekly Events Calendar:

Mar.28-April 7: Primavera, spring garden show at The Galleria.
www.galleriahouston.com.

April 6 & 7, Peckerwood Garden Foundation Open Days. Nursery open from 12-5:00 pm. Guided garden tours at 1:00 & 3:00 pm \$10.00 per person.
www.peckerwoodgarden.org. 979-826-3232. 20571 FM 359, Hempstead, TX 77445

April 8: Houston Urban Gardeners (HUG) will meet at the Houston Garden Center, 1500 Hermann Park Dr. in Hermann Park Houston, 6:30 PM. The topic will be: "Which Store is Good for Which Gardening Supplies." A panel of local garden center representatives will explain the strengths and features of their store. Where can you find bulk seed? Chickens? Beehives? Seasonal transplants? Good mulch? Come and find out! Free. Snacks provided. Read more at www.houstonurbangardeners.org. Phone 713-528-1104.

April 13- Memorial Northwest Ladybugs Garden Club Annual Garage and Plant Sale: 8:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. at 17814 Shadow Valley Drive, Spring, TX 77379. Please assist the Ladybugs Garden Club, a non-profit organization and help raise funds for many deserving community projects.

April 19 - Oleander Festival Kick-off luncheon, Silent Auction, Door Prizes; 11:00 am, Viewfinders Terrace, Moody Gardens Hotel. April 20-21 - Festival featuring Plant Societies, Tropical Plant Vendors and Children Activities; 10 am - 4 pm each day.

April 27-28 - BROMELIAD SHOW AND SALE The Bromeliad Society/Houston, Inc. will hold their annual plant show "Bromeliads: Spectacular Beauties" and sale on April

26, 27, and 28 at Mercer Arboretum and Botanic Gardens (22306 Aldine-Westfield Road). Bromeliad growers will be on hand during sale hours to answer questions. SHOW HOURS: Saturday, April 27, 2-4 p.m. Sunday, April 28, 11 am - 3 p.m. SALE HOURS Friday, April 26, Noon - 4 p.m. Saturday, April 27, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Sunday, April 28, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. Free Admission Website www.bromeliadsocietyhouston.org. Charlien Rose (713)-686-9969

April 28: American Hibiscus Society/Lone Star Chapter Show and Sale, 1-4 p.m.

June 9: American Hibiscus Society/Lone Star Chapter Show and Sale, 1-4 p.m., Bellaire Community Center 7008 S. Rice, Bellaire, TX

Submit calendar items to lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com. Events must be submitted by the sponsoring organization. Please note: "garden calendar request" in the subject line.

Need speakers for your group? Brenda's "Lazy Gardener's Speakers List" of area horticultural/environmental experts is available free for the asking. Email your request to: lazygardener@sbcglobal.net.

Butterfly Enthusiasts of Southeast Texas proudly presents:

The 12th annual Conroe Butterfly Count

By David Henderson

When: Saturday, 30 March 2013

Rendezvous: 9:30am Randalls Flagship at
9420 College Park Dr. in The Woodlands

Sites we'll be visiting:
Montgomery Trace Wilderness
Montgomery County Extension Service

Gardens
YMCA Camp Owen
W.G. Jones State Forest
Carl Barton Jr. Park
Plus - several roadsides and private properties

NEW for 2013 - Nature's Way Resources,
Forest Hills Subdivision, and McDade Park
area

Cost: \$3.00 per person 12 or over.

What to bring: camera, binoculars, picnic lunch,
wading boots, dress in layers, field guide, plenty
of liquids

Countdown Dinner: held at Alfonso's, 1208
South Frazier Street, in Conroe. Everyone
should arrive there by 5:00pm.



Banded Hairstreak

What to expect: A great diversity of forest species, including Eastern Tailed-Blue, Red-spotted Purple, Question Mark, Little Wood and Gemmed Satyrs, Red-banded Hairstreaks, and many , many more. We will be counting all individuals of each species, including eggs, caterpillars , and chrysalis, so expect a great learning experience!

Contact: David Henderson email: dandewild@consolidated.net; cell: 281-827-3729
What is Butterfly Enthusiasts of Southeast Texas?

We are BEST, the local chapter of the North American Butterfly Association (NABA), an international, non-profit organization. Like NABA chapters all across the continent, we work to increase public enjoyment and conservation of butterflies, by focusing on the joys of non-consumptive, recreational butterflying including; listing, gardening, rearing, conservation and photography.

- Our meetings are open to all ages and backgrounds.
- We conduct monthly field trips both near and far during the flight season.
- We sponsor numerous butterfly counts scattered throughout Southeast Texas.
- We promote butterfly conservation at area schools, within other local organizations, and at local festivals.
- We have a lot of FUN!!! Come join us!! No previous knowledge or experience with butterflies is necessary!

For more go to
<http://www.naba.org/chapters/nababest/>

TOXIC MULCH SYNDROME

PART 1

BY JOHN FERGUSON

In the last issue Brenda shared her experience using CHEAP mulch after hurricane Ike a few years ago when many of her plants then died. There are several possibilities why this may have happened:



1) During the cleanup following Ike I visited several of the FEMA sites where debris was being ground up into mulch by the contractors. In Texas an authorized recycling company for mulch is not allowed to accept any form of treated wood or painted wood. However, at the FEMA sites I witnessed contractors grinding up old rail road ties (creosote treated wood that is carcinogenic), fence posts and rails that were CCA treated wood (copper, chromium and arsenic) along with painted wood from old houses (lead) along with the brush and tree material into mulch.

2) During a tropical storm like hurricane Ike, weak or damaged trees are the first to be blown down. Some common diseases of these weakened trees are Verticillium wilt which is caused by a soil-borne fungus resulting in the decline or death of many shrubs and trees. Rhizoctonia solani is another plant pathogen that is actually stimulated by fresh mulches as it feeds off the cellulose in the wood. If diseased trees are ground up and used for mulch, it is possible that these diseases can spread to mulched plants.

3) A very common problem that often occurs in cheap mulch is called the "Toxic Mulch Syndrome" or "Sour Mulch." This most often occurs with bark mulches (pine, hardwood, etc.) and mulch from storm clean-up but can happen with almost any organic mulch. It occurs when a fine grained (small particle size) mulch is stacked over 6 feet high and remains wet for long periods of time without aeration. The material compresses and starts fermenting (anaerobic decay instead of beneficial aerobic decay) and produces chemicals (methanol, acetic acid, ammonia, hydrogen sulfide and others) that can kill annuals and damage many woody perennials. Note: It only takes 1 ppm (part per million) of alcohol (like methanol) to kill a plant root!

After the hurricane these FEMA produced mulches were stacked 40-50 feet high in huge piles and several TV news stories talked about the stench they caused due to the anaerobic conditions as they sat there for weeks until they were sold off to unsuspecting consumers.

These chemicals have a strong sour acid odor versus a pleasant musky smell of fresh cut wood or compost. Good mulch will smell like freshly cut wood or have a rich earthy smell if it has been composted.

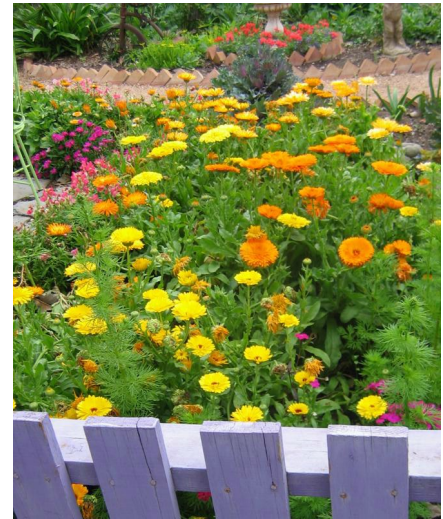
In the next issue we will discuss how to recognize these bad toxic mulches and some tips to avoid them.

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.

The monthly gardening activities information above was excerpted from "The LAZY GARDENER'S GUIDE." See below to find out how to get the complete guide:

"THE LAZY GARDENER'S GUIDE ON CD" - Specifically for Houston Area gardens - WHAT TO DO EACH MONTH - when to fertilize, prune, plant what where, best plants for sun, shade, butterflies, hummingbirds, etc. Based on Brenda's quirky 40+ year

Houston Chronicle Lazy Gardener column. PDF format, print out only the month you need. \$20 total, checks payable to Brenda B. Smith. Mail to: Lazy Gardener's Guide on CD, 14011 Greenranch Dr., Houston, TX 77039-2103.

DEAR READERS,

We had several requests to re-run the appeal below from the Fifth Ward Farmer Street Garden with a mailing address for donations. Their mailing address is: Fifth Ward Farmer Street Garden, attention Mr. James Phillips, 4302 Rawley Houston, TX 77020.

The original article:

FIFTH WARD FARMER STREET GARDEN NEEDS SOME HELP TO KEEP GROWING FOR THE COMMUNITY

Please see the following letter from the Fifth Ward Farmer Street Garden's gardeners:

We, the members of the Greater Fifth Ward Farmer Street Garden, would like to make a plea to the larger community for help in restoring our community garden. On Saturday, February 9, 2013, we discovered that person(s) unknown broke through the garden gate and burglarized our locked tool shed of our donated equipment we had accumulated over the last several years. The equipment included a riding lawn mower, an electric saw, push mowers, weed eaters, wheel barrows, an assortment of shovels, rakes, hoes, machetes and other gardening tools. Over \$2500 worth of donated equipment was stolen.

The members have given generously over the past six years of its existence to the seniors, disabled and low income families of the Fifth Ward Community and surrounding



communities. We participate in pantry programs at the Julia C. Hester House, Peavey Center, Finnigan Park and other organizations in the Fifth Ward community with donations of fruits and vegetables grown in our community garden. We hope and want to continue to do so in the future, but we will need assistance in replacing the stolen items.

We thank you in advance for your support in restoring our garden supplies so that we may continue our charitable work in the community with little interruption. Although we are a small group with big plans and big hearts, we hope we can fulfill the need in the community for anyone needing food for a wholesale, happier community. You may contact us by visiting the garden at 4110 Farmer St, Houston TX 77020 on Saturdays between 8 am - noon or by calling James Phillips at (832) 607-4044 or Ernestine Lloyd at (713) 672-9314.

Sincerely yours,

James Phillips
Head Gardener

GOT GARDENING QUESTIONS?



GARDENING Q&A

Be sure to check out our new gardening blog at www.lazygardenerandfriends.com to get more of your gardening questions answered and to interact with other gardeners.



<http://natureswayresources.com/>



<http://wabashfeed.com/>



<http://www.arborgate.com/>

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

