



December 14, 2013

Dear Friends,

Here is the 40th issue of our weekly gardening newsletter for Houston, the Gulf Coast and beyond. This a project of The Lazy Gardener, Brenda Beust Smith, John Ferguson and Mark Bowen (both John and Mark are with Nature's Way Resources). We also have a great supporting cast of contributing writers and technical specialists who will chime in and tweak away regularly. We would love to keep receiving your input on this newsletter . . . . comments . . . . suggestions . . . . questions. . . .Email your thoughts to: [lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com](mailto:lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com). Thanks so much for your interest.

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Enjoy!

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## **LAWNS - IT'S THE LAW NOW . . . POINSETTIA CELEBRATION (OR NOT) . . . A READER DISAGREES . . .**

**by BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

About poinsettias and the disagreement in a minute. First, this just came in . . .

Thanks to Chris LaChance, I get to give homeowners interested in conserving precious water resources a nice Christmas present.

Chris is WaterSmart Program Coordinator for TX A&M AgriLife Extension and TX Sea Grant.  
( <http://www.watersmart.cc/default.asp> ) Chris spearheads a constant campaign to educate homeowners on eco-friendly landscaping that conserves water, protects water quality and provides habitat for wildlife.

Now Chris is spreading word of the recently-passed [Texas Senate Bill 198](#) which, in part, prevents homeowners' associations from banning drought-resistant, or xeriscape, landscaping.  
( <http://legiscan.com/TX/text/SB198/2013> ) Xeriscaping, or low-water, landscaping encourages the replacement of water-intensive lawn grasses, like St. Augustine, with drought-resistant plants. According to one estimate, if all new residential developments were xeriscaped, by 2020 Texas would save 14 billion gallons of water annually.

This is, admittedly, a touchy subject. The appearance of one's front yard directly impacts the value of neighbors' property. Homeowners will still have to maintain the property, and some may need to submit a plan. But at least there will be no more automatic slamming doors.

This should be an incentive for HOAs, POAs, garden clubs and other groups to bring in experts, like Chris (who speaks for free) to educate homeowners on how to beautifully landscape using ecology-friendly plants, etc. This legislation shows how serious this problem has become.

Email Chris at [c-lachance@tamu.edu](mailto:c-lachance@tamu.edu)

Next month, Chris will join Urban Harvest as Director of Education on a full-time basis, a real loss to Extension but definitely UH's gain. We wish you the best of luck, Chris, and know you'll still be a huge presence in our gardening circles. In the meantime, Chris is the best source for great speakers on water-conserving front lawns.

Speaking of:

Congratulations to Urban Harvest, winner of the Texas Association for Partners in Education (TAPE) Partnership Program's Crystal Award for Service Learning. Houston ISD nominated Urban Harvest for this award as an integral and valued partners for the school district.

## **NOW, ABOUT POINSETTIAS . . .**

. . . so . . . how did you celebrate National Poinsettia Day?

It was Thursday, Dec. 12. Bet you missed it. Me too.

Poinsettia growers probably are sobbing all the way to the bank. After all, more than 65 million poinsettias were sold last year and probably even more will be this year.

Texas is the nation's second largest grower, behind California. Maybe that's because, given the right

conditions and a LOT of luck, poinsettias are year-round garden plants for us. Anyone remember the two-story poinsettia that once grew on the south side of a home on Bissonnet?

Pictured at right is the poinsettia hedge grown for over a decade now by Memorial gardener Ed Holland. His secret? Mulch well and prune back in spring (so the stalks don't become too spindly and brittle). His usual start blooming, he says, about two weeks before Thanksgiving and hold red until February. This year, for some reason, they are just now starting to show color.

But Ed's not worried. He's seen frost before on his poinsettias and they suffered no damage.

You'll get lots of nifty advice on artificially recreating the long night/short day poinsettia bloom trigger. In over 40 years of doing the Lazy Gardener for the Houston Chronicle, I never met anyone who actually felt this is worthwhile in our climate.

If poinsettias are going to bloom in yards here, they're going to bloom without the extra effort.



However, it probably would be best to postpone actually planting potted poinsettias in the yard until spring. The main challenge will be to keep them alive that long while inside your house.

Biggest threats? Central heating and overwatering. These are the main reasons leaves fall off prematurely. Poinsettias now will hold their colored leaves for months, maybe into even May or June if they really like you.

**WATERING:** Once a week set the plant, pot 'n' all, in a bowl of water. Let it soak completely. Then set the pot up on a rack so air flows underneath. Leave it there a couple of hours. Before putting it back into a decorative container or foil, set some rocks or something in the bottom so it's not sitting flush down. Then don't water again for a week.

**OVERHEATING:** If leaves start to drop, try setting the plant on the floor near a window at night. And keep it out of any heat draughts.

In spring, move it outside while still in the pot. Let it acclimate for a couple of weeks. Then plant it in an **EXTREMELY WELL DRAINED** area in full or partial sun. Pinch the stem tips back until, say, July, then quit and let it grow on its own, so it will trigger the color changes. It may take several years to see color. Be patient.

Poinsettias may die back in winter, but should be root hardy once established. Unless, of course, we have prolonged subfreezing temperatures that drop soil temperatures for an extended period. This normally doesn't happen. But, as Ed says, mulching well is your best protection.

Always water plants - all plants! - well if a freeze is forecast and it hasn't rained for a while. Hydrated roots will survive much colder temperatures than will dehydrated roots.

Aztec Indians used poinsettias as medicine to control fevers and as fabric as well. The American Medical Association's Handbook of Poisonous and Injurious Plants states poinsettias aren't poisonous in terms of being fatal, but eating the leaves may cause occasional vomiting. Poinsettia leaves are said to be very bitter.

But then most of the plants we traditionally have inside over the holidays should not be eaten. In fact, most indoor and typical outdoor landscape plants should not be eaten. Don't think your yard is "safe" just because you avoid the most publicized "poisonous" plants. It isn't.

## A READER DISAGREES . . .

In last week's column, reader Kris Bitner took issue with my [Nov. 29 column](#) recommendation to use cylinders as planters under trees where shade prevents grass from growing. Kris felt the weight of such containers, as well as large rocks used as borders, would threaten the life of the tree.

My feeling is that home gardeners are unlikely to put anything of such destructive weight under a tree over its roots, and that these relatively small cylinders (which are, by their very nature, completely open at the bottom) will not pose this kind of problem. And are, on the contrary, much preferable to digging in the ground level soil where they do run the risk of damaging tree roots. Ditto for rocks used as borders.

Since my recommendation was aided and abetted in part by Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens' longtime horticulturist Suzanne Chapman, I asked if she wanted to respond. Suzanne wrote back:

*"The flues from the photos are in my home garden and augment a flower bed that has been in place for years, and . . . yes they are near trees. I have three, open bottomed flues filled with soil and plants. The trees in my garden grew before I arrived in spite of driveways, brick trails and property walls that were already there. And still they thrive despite the drought and hurricanes of recent years.*

*The only flues we have at Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, are in Storey Lake where the Louisiana Iris collection lives and we can keep the various cultivars from mingling.*

*Whenever you get a room full of gardeners, you also get a room full of ideas on how to design, landscape, propagate, and plant. And a multitude of choices of which plants to grow and enjoy in our tiny corners of nature. Most of those ideas work for most of us most of the time. So, I'm keeping the flues near my trees. Thank you, Suzanne*

Also heard from Barry Ward of Trees for Houston:

*Your reader is correct but lacking context. One needs to consider the size of the tree in the ground, the size of the root zone, the condition of the existing soil, the size of the added container, etc. Every situation is a little different, and I can easily envision both you and the reader's methodologies being "correct." To make a long story short, putting a few containerized plants under shade trees will almost never kill or even harm a healthy tree planted in good soil, but one should be careful when messing about in the root zone as a general rule.*

**Next Week: BEFORE YOU LOAD YOUR SHOPPING CART DOWN WITH POINSETTIAS . . .** consider some other plants that will bring color inside during the cold days ahead. And that make great Christmas gifts for those who "have everything."

## JOHN'S CORNER

### Soil Amendments - Epsom Salt



If one searches the Web, they will find hundreds of claims about how Epsom Salt made their plants grow better. These range from curing blossom end rot on tomatoes (false- caused by a calcium deficiency) to helping seeds germinate (false - all seeds already have all they need to germinate). Some of the reports on company websites that mine and sell Epsom Salt make so many claims the one might think it would cure the common cold. So what is Epsom Salt, does it work, and should we use it?

Epsom salt takes its name from a bitter saline spring near Epsom in Surrey, England where it was first discovered. Epsom salt is a naturally occurring mineral called epsomite which is an inorganic salt of magnesium and sulfur with a few water molecules mixed in for good measure. The chemical formula is typically  $\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 7(\text{H}_2\text{O})$ .

Magnesium is used by plants in making chlorophyll, it is used in helping fruit set on trees, and sulfur is used to make amino acids and proteins hence they are required nutrients.

Epsom salt will not do a thing for plants growing in fertile soil correctly balanced with all nutrients which includes magnesium and sulfur. All the studies have shown that it does not work unless there is a nutrient deficiency. Applying Epsom salts to soils that do not need it can cause other minerals to be tied up and create other types of problems.

Always do a soil test (chemical analysis) before applying Epsom salt and only if it is needed. There are many good soil testing labs but our favorite is (explained in previous articles) is:  
Texas Plant and Soil Lab (specializes in organic production techniques)  
5115 W. Monte Christo (956) 383-0739  
Edinburg, TX 78539  
<http://www.texasplantandsoillab.com>

It is often stated that yellowing between the veins could be a sign of magnesium deficiency and one should apply Epsom salt. However, yellowing can also be caused by bacterial and viral diseases as well as too much water. If the leaves turn yellow all over the plant it may be a sign of a sulfur deficiency. Note: Many nutrient deficiency problems look so alike the only way to know for sure is by testing.

In some cases the soil test may indicate plenty of nutrients but the plant is not responding, then there is another problem. This could be a nutrient tie-up due to the soil being out of balance or to a lack of correct microbes in the soil to help the plant absorb the nutrients. Over watering can also cause yellowing especially if municipal water is used which is full of chlorine and chloramines. Also soils that are heavily leached by rainfall

or over watering may become deficient in these nutrients. A magnesium deficiency is more common in sandy soil or unavailable in highly acid soils. This is often seen in old weathered soils like we find in the Southeast states and in some areas along the Gulf coast.

If the soil test indicates the nutrients are present then some labs can test for nutrients in the foliage to confirm that the plant is not absorbing them.

Epson salt has been used in horticulture and agriculture for decades to correct nutrient problems. The advantages to using Epson salt to correct nutrient deficiencies of magnesium and sulfur is that it is highly soluble (fast acting), it is nearly neutral hence it does not change the pH (as compared to calcium minerals like limestone that contain magnesium), and it is inexpensive to use. It is considered an organic amendment since it is a natural mineral.

A typical application is 1/4 cup of Epson salt per 500 square feet and water in. One can also use a foliar application as Epson salts is highly soluble in water and is used by mixing 1 teaspoon of Epson salts per gallon of water and spray on the leaves. Note: Too much Epson salt can cause leaf scorch.

Epson salts is just another tool in a gardeners toolbox to have a beautiful garden when used correctly but it is not a cure-all as some would have you believe.

<http://www.texasplantandsoillab.com>

## CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEAS

A few years ago when my son was in college he was selling Cutco products part time to help raise some spending money. One Christmas he gave me a couple of garden trowels and I have used them almost every day since then.

They are the finest quality garden trowels I have ever used. They do not rust, are extremely strong and will take and hold a sharp edge for a long time. I sharpen mine by placing them in my vice and using a good mill file. I can pry rocks out of the ground with them, cut large roots, penetrate hard clay, etc. Based on the last 7 years of use they will last a lifetime versus the cheap tools normally found at garden centers. For the gardener in your family they will make a great gift!



More information can be found at:

<http://www.cutco.com/products/thumbnail.jsp?category=130>

## **FREE TREES ARE READY!**

**Trees For Houston currently has thousands of trees in 3-gallon containers ready for pick-up.**

Species available include wild plum, various oak species, sugarberry, cedar, maple persimmon, paw paw, sycamore, sweet gum, poplar buckeye, holly, cedar elm, red bud, mulberry, river birch. Email Casey ([casey@treesforhouston.org](mailto:casey@treesforhouston.org)) or Barry ([barry@treesforhouston.org](mailto:barry@treesforhouston.org)) to make arrangements for pick-up or delivery of your FREE trees.

## **WEEKLY EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS CALENDAR**

**Sat., Dec. 14: Brazoria County Master Gardeners are sponsoring the annual seminar on berries,**

**citrus, pomes, and stone fruits.** Topics include how-to's, selecting, planting, and harvesting Brazoria County-friendly fruit plants. Gil Livanec will be the speaker for the seminar and afterwards, participants can enjoy a tasting session of the varieties the BCMGA has grown. The seminar and tasting are free on Saturday, December 14, from 9:00 - 12:00 at the Brazoria County Environmental Education Station (BEES). 585 CR 443, Angleton, TX 77515. For more info call 979-864-1558 x 110 or online at [Brazoria.agrilife.org](http://Brazoria.agrilife.org).

**Dec. 15-17: Fruit Tree Planting Foundation (FTPF) three-day visit to Houston's East End to encourage school garden initiatives.**

\* Dec. 15: Dora B. Lantrip Elementary Environmental Magnet School, 100 Telephone Rd, noon-3 pm, to meet with community residents and partnering agencies to lay groundwork for primary planting event on Tuesday.

\* Dec. 16: Stephen F. Austin High School, 1700 Dumble St, 8:30-11:30am. FTFP's guided planting event to Austin High students: pre-planting site preparation, care/maintenance of fruit trees, a discussion of health benefits.

\* Dec. 17: FTFP returns to Lantrip Elementary, 100 Telephone Rd, for an official planting event. 9-11am: educational programs and activities with Lantrip students and teachers with community members and partners.

All events are open free to the public. For more information, contact FTFP's Rico Montenegro, 530-515-7657 or [ricosplants@hotmail.com](mailto:ricosplants@hotmail.com), or the U.S. Forest Services' Tamberly Conway, 337-304-5872 or [tkconway@fs.fed.us](mailto:tkconway@fs.fed.us)

**Dec., 19, 20, 21: 10am to 4pm. Sunshine Farm Open Farm Event.** Enjoy the festivities with warm beverages, sweet snacks and holiday gathering. Bring 2 or more nonperishable food items to donate to the Montgomery Food Bank and receive a 20% discount on your purchase in our gift shop. All donations will be presented on behalf of Sunshine Farm's generous patrons. Location: Jenkins Sunshine Farm LLC, 5800 Jackson Rd, Montgomery TX 77316. [www.goodcleanlivin.com](http://www.goodcleanlivin.com), 936-648-6145

**Sat., Jan. 4: Saturday with the Master Gardeners - Garden Talk Topic "Backyard Fruit Production,"**

Join the Fort Bend County Master Gardeners' in their 4 acres of demonstration gardens and talk to the MG volunteers who design and maintain them. It's a great way to learn about gardening and plants well-suited to Fort Bend County. Park in front of the Agriculture Center located at 1402 Band Road, Rosenberg, 77471. Take one of the sidewalks back to the area behind the building where you'll find the gardens and Master Gardeners at work.

Gardens will be open from 9:00-11:00 a.m. on January 4th. Attend an informal garden talk on Backyard Fruit Production in the Orchard which starts at 10:00 a.m. Call 281-341-7068 or visit [www.fbmga.com](http://www.fbmga.com) for more information.

**Sun., Jan. 5: Spring Vegetable Gardening.** WHAT: Learn what varieties to plant and when, soil prep, fertilization, seed planting, transplanting and trellising. This class will cover the types and varieties of vegetables that can be planted in early and late spring. Weather permitting, we will walk to the campus garden to do a few planting demonstrations. Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credit is available. WHEN: Sunday, January 5th, 2:30-5:00pm. WHERE: University of Houston. <http://urbanharvest.org/classes>

**Wed., Jan. 8: Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Garden's 40th Anniversary Celebration.** Starts at 11 a.m. Join The Mercer Society (TMS) and Commissioner R. Jack Cagle to celebrate Mercer's 40th birthday during an open house. This kickoff event will mark the beginning of festivities scheduled throughout 2014 to commemorate this special year in Mercer's history, and the statue of Thelma Mercer will be rededicated at its new location near the entrance of the park. For more information or to confirm your attendance, please call 281-443-8731.

**Mon., Jan. 13: HUG** ([www.HoustonUrbanGardeners.org](http://www.HoustonUrbanGardeners.org)) will meet Mon Jan 13, 6:30 PM at the Metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 W. Gray, Houston. Mary and Roger Demyen will talk about Kitchen Gardening. Free.

**Tue., Jan 14: Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 -Green Thumb Series** will present an educational program on Soils and Composting on Tuesday January 14, at 6:30 p.m. Free and open to the public. Clear Lake Park meeting room, (on the lakeside), 5001 Nasa Parkway, Seabrook Texas 77586. <http://hcmga.tamu.edu>,

[281 855 5600](tel:2818555600)

**Wed., Jan. 15: Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 - 3rd Wednesday Lecture**

**Series.** On Wednesday January 15, Heidi Sheesley of Treeseach Farms will present a program on the Fruit and Citrus Trees available at the Master Gardener sale on February 15 at Campbell Hall in Pasadena. Free and open to the public. Clear Lake Park meeting room, (on the lakeside), 5001 Nasa Parkway, Seabrook Texas 77586. <http://hcmga.tamu.edu> , 281-855-5600.

**Fri., Jan. 17: 12:00 p.m. - 4:30 pm. 2014 Water Management Seminar For Landowners + Property Managers + Land Planners**, presented by OHBA (Organic Horticulture Benefits Alliance). Learn How To Make Every Drop Count.

By attending you will receive beneficial information on how to:

- How to Save Water Use
- Reduce Operating Costs
- Protect Your Investment
- Reduce Liabilities
- Have Beautiful & Sustainable Landscapes

The world is changing, Houston is getting much bigger, and we are running short of water. What to do? Organic Landscape Management is the answer. Come join us for an exciting fast-pace afternoon where we learn 'How Easy', 'How Inexpensive' and 'How rational Water Efficient Landscape Management really is'. Location: The United Way Building, 50 Waugh Drive. Register today at [www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com).

**Sat., January 18: Urban Harvest's 14th Annual Fruit Tree Sale:**

WHAT: The largest single-day fruit tree sale in the country, offering over 100 varieties of fruit trees! The trees are grown locally, acclimated to the Gulf Coast region and grafted onto root stock adapted to our soil. WHEN: Saturday, January 18th. 9am to 1pm, or until we sell out. WHERE: Rice University, Greenbriar Parking Lot 5600 Greenbriar Drive, Houston, TX 77005. See our website for more information! <http://urbanharvest.org/classes>

**Get Ready for the Urban Harvest Fruit Tree Sale with these Fruit Tree Classes:**

Sat., Jan. 4: Fruit Tree Care, 10am-12pm

Fri., Jan. 10: How to Prune and Train Fruit Trees, 4pm-6pm

Sat., Jan. 11: Prepare for the Fruit Tree Sale Talk, 9:30am-12 pm

Tues., Jan. 14: Prepare for the Fruit Tree Sale Talk, 6:30pm-9pm

Fri., Jan. 24: Pruning Your Apples, Pears and Berries, 4pm-6pm

Fri., Jan. 31: Pruning Your Peaches, Nectarines and Plums, 4pm-6pm

Sat., Feb. 1: Grafting Fruit Trees, 9am-12pm

Fri., Feb. 7: Pruning Your Grapes, Muscadines, Jujubes, etc., 4pm-6pm

Fri., Feb. 21: Pruning Citrus, Pomegranates, Avocados, Figs & Tropicals, 4pm-6pm

Thur., Mar. 6: Avocado, Citrus and Sub-Tropical Fruits, 7pm-9pm

For more info: <http://urbanharvest.org/classes>

**Sat., Jan. 18, 2014: Master Gardener Fruit and Citrus Tree Sale Preview**

Join the Fort Bend Master Gardeners on Saturday, January 18, 2014 for a program to preview the trees and plants to be sold at their Annual Fruit and Citrus Tree Sale. It will include how to heel in your fruit trees, pruning and how to plant as well as an overview of plants at the sale. The program will be held at the Bud O'Shieles Community Center located at 1330 Band Road, Rosenberg, TX 77471. The doors open at 8:30 a.m. and the program will be from 9:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m.. For more information call 281-341-7068 or visit [www.fbmga.com](http://www.fbmga.com)

**Mon., Jan. 20: Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 will host Open Garden Day** on Monday, January 20 at their Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd., Houston, TX 77034. Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer your gardening questions. Hours are 8:30 am - 11:00 am with an educational program at 9:30 am. Free and open to the public. Children invited! <http://hcmga.tamu.edu> , 281-855-5600.

**Sat., Jan. 25: Master Gardener Fruit and Citrus Tree Sale.**

The Fort Bend Master Gardeners will hold their Annual Fruit and Citrus Tree Sale on Saturday, January 25, 2014, at the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds - Barn H, 4310 Highway 36S, Rosenberg, 77471. The sale will open at 9:00 a.m.

and will run until 1:00 p.m. or until sold out. For more information call 281-341-7068 or visit [www.fbmj.com](http://www.fbmj.com)

**Sat., Jan. 25: 8-9 a.m. Fruit and Nut Tree Sale Presentation & Sale** - At the Montgomery County A&M AgriLife Extension Office. A Pre-Sale Program highlighting the plants in this Sale will be held at 8 am Saturday, at the Extension Office. Our Montgomery County Horticultural Agent will present an informative program highlighting plants in the sale, plant selection, and planting information. **The Fruit & Nut Tree Sale** Runs from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. also on the 25th at the same location. <http://www.mcmga.com/test-public-calendar/>

**March 1-2: Spring Branch African Violet Club's 33rd Annual Show and Spring Sale** at Judson Robinson, Jr., Community Center, 2020 Hermann Park Drive. Mar. 1, 10am-4pm; Mar. 2, 10am-3pm. Violets of all types, including standards, miniatures and trailers, Gesneriads such as Episcias and Streps along with supplies. Club members on hand to answer questions. Details: Karla Ross, 281-748-8417; [kjwross@yahoo.com](mailto:kjwross@yahoo.com).

Submit calendar items to [lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com](mailto:lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com). Events must be submitted by the sponsoring organization. Please note: "garden calendar request" in the subject line. We list calendar items up to two months ahead of time.

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](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net).

## ABOUT US

### BRENDA BEUST SMITH

WE KNOW HER BEST AS THE LAZY GARDENER . . .

. . . but Brenda Beust Smith is also:

- \* a national award-winning writer & editor
- \* a nationally-published writer & photographer
- \* a national horticultural speaker
- \* a former Houston Chronicle reporter

When the Chronicle discontinued Brenda's 45-year-old "Lazy Gardener" print column a couple of years ago, it ranked as the longest-running, continuously-published local newspaper column in the Greater Houston area.

Brenda's gradual sideways step from Chronicle reporter into gardening writing led first to an 18-year series of when-to-do-what Lazy Gardener Calendars, then to her *Lazy Gardener's Guide* book and now to her *Lazy Gardener's Guide* on CD (which retails for \$20. However, \$5 of every sale is returned to the sponsoring group at her speaking engagements).

A Harris County Master Gardener, Brenda has served on the boards of many Greater Houston area horticulture organizations and has hosted local radio and TV shows, most notably a 10+-year Lazy Gardener run on HoustonPBS (Ch. 8) and her call-in "EcoGardening" show on KPFT-FM.

In addition to her position as Production Editor on the Garden Club of America's magazine and her freelance writing career, Brenda's latest venture is "THE LAZY GARDENER'S & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER" with John Ferguson and Mark Bowen of Nature's Way Resources.

A native of New Orleans and graduate of St. Agnes Academy and the University of Houston, Brenda lives in

Aldine and is married to the now retired Aldine High School Coach Bill Smith. They have one son, Blake.

Regarding this newsletter, Brenda is the lead writer, originator of it and the daily inspiration for it. We so appreciate the way she has made gardening such a fun way to celebrate life together for such a long time.

## **JOHN FERGUSON**

John is a native Houstonian and has over 27 years of business experience. He owns Nature's Way Resources, a composting company that specializes in high quality compost, mulch, and soil mixes. He holds a MS degree in Physics and Geology and is a licensed Soil Scientist in Texas.

John has won many awards in horticulture and environmental issues. He represents the composting industry on the Houston-Galveston Area Council for solid waste. His personal garden has been featured in several horticultural books and "Better Homes and Gardens" magazine. His business has been recognized in the Wall Street Journal for the quality and value of their products. He is a member of the Physics Honor Society and many other professional societies. John is the co-author of the book *Organic Management for the Professional*.

For this newsletter, John contributes articles regularly and is responsible for publishing it.

## **MARK BOWEN**

Mark is a native Houstonian, a horticulturist and organic specialist with a background in garden design, land restoration and organic project management. He is currently the general manager of Nature's Way Resources. Mark is also the co-author of the book *Habitat Gardening for Houston and Southeast Texas*, the author of the book *Naturalistic Landscaping for the Gulf Coast*, co-author of the *Bayou Planting Guide* and contributing landscape designer for the book *Landscaping Homes: Texas*.

With respect to this newsletter, Mark serves as the editor.

## **PABLO HERNANDEZ**

Pablo Hernandez is the special projects coordinator for Nature's Way Resources. His realm of responsibilities include: serving as a webmaster, IT support, technical problem solving/troubleshooting, metrics management, quality control, and he is a certified compost facility operator.

Pablo helps this newsletter happen from a technical support standpoint.



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



<http://wabashfeed.com/>



<http://microlifefertilizer.com/>



<http://natureswayresources.com/>



Save 20%: Redeem this coupon for a big discount on Nature's Way Resources "Super Seedling Mix" ( <http://natureswayresources.com/products.htm> ). Please note: this offer is for bagged or bulk material purchases by retail customers only at Nature's Way Resources, located at 101 Sherbrook Circle, Conroe TX.

Offer Expires: 12/22/13

