



January 5, 2014

Dear Friends,

Here is the 42nd 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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**CHEMICAL FREE ROSES? and GRANTS FOR SCHOOL GARDENS**

**by BRENDA BEUST SMITH**



**At left, above, Houston's now-gone Rose Garden in Hermann Park. At right, the Peggy Rockefeller Rose Garden at the New York Botanical Garden where many of the 600+ different varieties reflect former curator Peter E. Kukielski's emphasis on moving away from chemical-dependent varieties.**

## CHEMICAL-FREE (GRAFTED) ROSE GROWING?

There was a time, here in Houston, when it was just a given fact: if you're going to grow prize grafted roses, expect to use a lot of chemicals. That is changing, albeit slowly, and in town to discuss the latest news on Jan. 11 will be Peter E. Kukielski, former curator of the Peggy Rockefeller Rose Garden at the New York Botanical Garden.

Gorgeous classic roses have been automatically associated with high chemical use everywhere, but even more so here with our high humidity, floods, droughts, high temperatures and plethora of insects and disease. The tide is turning here thanks to the popularity of super-tough "antique" roses, 100+-year-old varieties found growing totally on their own, blooming like crazy, in graveyards and abandoned farmyards and the yards of older homes.

What's the difference? Antiques grow on their own roots, which makes them hardier than "grafted" roses. One variety bred for spectacular bloom color/size/shape is grafted onto a stronger rose rootstock. This "marriage" does work. But, in reality, grafted roses often require heavy chemical treatments to remain as hardy and bloom-producing in the garden as they are in the carefully-tended grower's environment. Catalogs don't usually warn customers that this may be the case.

Did you know Houston's Rose Society is the largest rose society in the nation?

HRS members do an incredible job of informing gardeners of the hardiest own-root and grafted roses to grow here, along with promoting culture practices to eliminate the use chemical treatments - if local gardeners would just take the time to attend HRS events or log onto its website: [www.houstonrose.org](http://www.houstonrose.org).

On Jan. 16, Peter E. Kukielski, former curator of the Peggy Rockefeller Garden will detail the remarkable advances being made in chemical-free rose growing at the 2014 Sadie Gwin Blackburn Environmental Seminar in the Museum of Fine Arts' Brown Auditorium, 1001 Bissonnet. Coffee-9:30am, lecture-10am. Free, but limited space; reservation required. Tickets: <http://www.mfah.org/>; phone: 713-639-7771; in person: MFAH Admissions desk. The event is sponsored by the River Oaks Garden Club.

If you love growing roses, this is a not-to-miss opportunity.

\* \* \*

SPEAKING OF ROSES . . .

The beautiful, historic Houston All-American Rose Garden in Hermann Park, long treasured by the Houston Rose Society, is no more. Closed for the creation of the proposed new 8-acre "[McGovern Centennial Gardens](#)," which will include a Rose Garden.

At this point, it doesn't appear that the nation's largest rose society, our Houston Rose Society, will play any part in planning Houston's new Rose Garden.

Seems strange to me.

\* \* \*



Crespo Elementary students in this East End school garden.



Dora B. Lantrip Elementary Environmental Magnet School gardeners and fruit tree growers!

## THEY'RE EVERYWHERE - GRANTS FOR SCHOOL GARDENS

Aren't those the greatest pictures? Be proud!

On hundreds of elementary, middle and high school campuses across the Greater Houston area, school gardens are now growing strong - even through winter - with natives as well as vegetables.

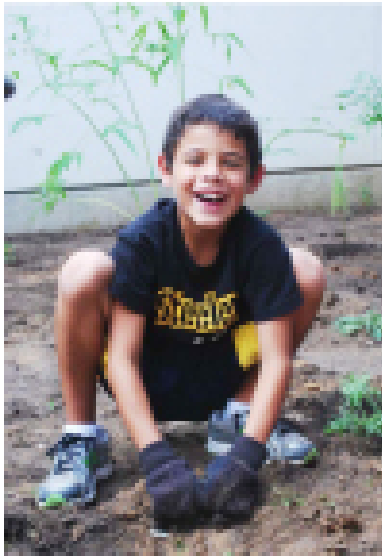
Most are the result of a single teacher's, or energetic parent's dream, an idea that found support among the school's faculty and administrators. Those gardens that continue to flourish even if the teacher/parent leaves usually have strong support from volunteering parents.

But even those gardens that last only as long as that single teacher is present are usually utilized by a wide variety of creative classrooms for a wide variety of subjects from math and English to science and history.

At the recent Houston Botanic Garden fundraising luncheon, I had the privilege of sitting next to Sylvia Gonzales who works at Crespo Elementary, located close to the proposed East End site of the Houston Botanic Garden. Sylvia was overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the benefit to children from having a botanic garden so close by and not just for those at her school. One estimate identifies over 12,000 students in East End public schools alone who will be significantly impacted by the botanic garden's outreach programs.



Crespo has a school garden, above, funded by the [American Heart Association's Teaching Gardens program](#). With the approval of her principal, Sylvia successfully applied for the grant and now curriculums for all grade levels utilize the garden, which has the support of many parent volunteers. They have to report back to the AHA. One big challenge was making sure the courtyard soil was free from dangerous components, which they did through the HISD Risk Management office. The grant covered setting up the project. But on their Wish List for 2014 are funds to purchase more soil, seedlings and organic fertilizers.



At nearby Dora B. Lantrip Elementary Environmental Magnet School (above), a partnership between the school and Lantrip Blooms, a parent group, obtained a \$20,000 Lowe's Keep America Beautiful Community Improvement Grant for its school garden. This extensive project calls for raised beds, butterfly gardens, fruit orchards and interactive learning stations for various curriculums, with implementation all done by volunteers.

An additional grant from the [Fruit Tree Planting Foundation](http://ftpf.org/) enabled Lantrip students and volunteers to plant 30 fruit trees in their orchard. In December, the foundation made special presentations at Lantrip and Stephen F. Austin High School Magnet School for Teaching Professions.

Principal Magdalena Strickland points out that the plantings and Lantrip's entire garden program (above) fits right in with its "Brighter Bites" curriculum that teaches children to eat more fruits and vegetables.

Both Sylvia and Lantrip's Judith Cruz were happy to share their grant sources:

- \* Fruit Tree Planting Foundation (<http://ftpf.org/>)
- \* Lowe's Toolbox for Education ([www.lowes.com/socialresponsibility](http://www.lowes.com/socialresponsibility))

I did a quick Google search of "school garden grants" and was overwhelmed by the number of available resources.

If you have any school garden grant resources to recommend, please share.

Let's start 2014 off on a positive note. The domino effect of these school gardens can be almost too overwhelming to contemplate.

If you know of other garden funding resources schools can contact, please email me at [lazygardener@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net). I'll be glad to share through this column.

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**Check our Calendar of Garden Events below. Don't see your group's activity listed? That's because no one sent it to us! Make sure your events are listed by emailing them**



to lazygardener@sbcglobal.net. Events will not be picked up from other publications.

## John's Corner

### Soil Amendments - Zeolite



A few years ago when a colleague of mine known as the "Dirt Doctor" and I were writing the book *Organic Management for the Professional*, a discussion on the merits of Zeolites came up. I then decided to learn a lot more, so that summer my wife and I drove to New Mexico and visited several of the Zeolite mines up in the mountains (a great way to beat the heat of a late July summer in Houston).

Zeolites are secondary minerals known as alumino-silicates that are formed from igneous rocks that had been exposed to steam or hot water which caused many of the minerals like feldspar to change. Basically Zeolites are made up of interlocking tetrahedron structures of  $\text{SiO}_4$  and  $\text{AlO}_4$  minerals with open pores.

This unique porous structure allows Zeolites to be used in many applications, with the largest usage in making detergents. Zeolite has the ability to absorb water even under dry conditions, or absorb huge amounts of gas and or minerals and keep them readily available for plants.

It is often used as cat litter as it absorbs odors and as an ingredient in animal feed. When used as an soil amendment it increases the CEC (cation exchange capacity) of soilless media. Over 48 types of Zeolites have been found in the USA all with similar properties.

The name Zeolite comes from the Greek "Zeo" (meaning to boil) and "Lithos" (meaning stone). In gardening the unique structure allows Zeolites to:

- absorb and release water molecules (strong capillary action) and holds water up to 26% by volume
- hold and release plant nutrients since it has a high cation exchange capacity (CEC)
- improves porosity (aeration)
- support microbial activity
- buffer pH
- reduce clay clumping
- absorb odors
- absorb ammonium ( $\text{NH}_4^+$ ), hence used in composting when using fresh manures as it keeps nitrogen from escaping into the air or leaching
- since a natural mineral it is 100% organic
- readily available and relatively inexpensive as it is found all over the world in large quantities
- typically applied at the rate of 30-100 pounds per 1,000 square feet

It is also used in the following products:

- detergents
- animal feed
- golf course greens and tees
- potting soils
- cat litter (several brands are 100% Zeolite, so read the label)
- used in soil wetting agents
- air and water purification
- spill absorbents
- absorbs heavy metals hence used to detoxify
- crude oil cracking
- pharmaceuticals and cosmetics
- water softeners
- filter media in aquariums

## 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) or Barry (barry@treesforhouston.org) to make arrangements for pick-up or delivery of your FREE trees.

## WEEKLY EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS CALENDAR

**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 Demeny 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

**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-paced 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/fruit-tree-sale>

**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 Gardeners Fruit Tree Sale Features Dwarf Apples, New Plums, Goji Berries**



Harris County Master Gardeners will hold their annual Fruit Tree Sale and Symposia Jan. 25, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., at the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Office, 3033 Bear Creek Dr. The event is preceded by a free overview of the trees being sold at 8 a.m. in the auditorium. For information about this or other upcoming Master Gardener events and programs, visit our Website at [hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu), give us a call at 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.fbmga.com](http://www.fbmga.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/>

**Tue., Jan. 28. Open Garden Days Re-Launched at Bear Creek Master Gardener Demonstration Gardens**

Garden enthusiasts are invited to visit the Demonstration Gardens surrounding the Harris County Texas Agrilife Extension Office, 3033 Bear Creek Dr., Houston, 9-11:30 a.m., the fourth Tuesday of each month beginning Jan. 28. Visitors will learn what grows best in Harris County by attending the Open Garden Day with mini-workshops for adults, educational activities for kids and garden tours with Harris County Master Gardeners available to answer questions about horticulture and landscaping. Workshops and activities will start at 10a.m. and cover topics related to the Green Thumb Gardening Series of lectures, held throughout the county. The January topic is Soil and Composting. The demonstration gardens include an area showcasing numerous ways to turn yard waste and food scraps into black gold for your garden beds. (281) 855-5600

**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.

 **The Arbor Gate**

<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 "Container 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: 01/11/13**