



January 12, 2014

Dear Friends,

Here is the 43rd 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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## THINK 'MAJESTIC' IN THE GARDEN!

by **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

When I am an old woman I shall wear purple With a red hat . . . I  
shall . . . pick flowers in other people's gardens  
And learn to spit ...  
But maybe I ought to practice a little now?  
So people who know me are not too shocked and surprised  
When suddenly I am old, and start to wear purple.

- - Jenny Joseph



The Color-Powers-That-Be have declared 2014 the year for "Radiant Orchid."

But [Pantone](#) has spoken and apparently that matters year for "Radiant Orchid." Looks like lavender to me.

Radiant Orchid, according to Pantone, symbolizes growth, renewal, prosperity, creativity, originality, great joy, confidence, love, health . . . whew!

For gardeners, lavender is considered a "cool" color that can make you feel calm and comfortable, especially on a blasting hot day. (Remember those?)

Much more interesting is that purple was one of the first colors used by prehistoric wall-artists. Know why it's the color of royalty? Around 1500 BC or so, they discovered a rich deep purple could be obtained from the gland of a tiny snail. It took thousands of snails to dye one garment, hence "Imperial Purple" was reserved for kings (and priests). Who else would tell you these things?

Radiant Orchid looks to me like halfway between purple (more red) and violet (more blue). But colors change in the blink of an eye as the sun, clouds, shadows, and other plants change around them. So close is fine.

So . . . what flowers are available in this appointed color? Or close to it? I quizzed some of our better nurseries and plant sale folks and they recommended:

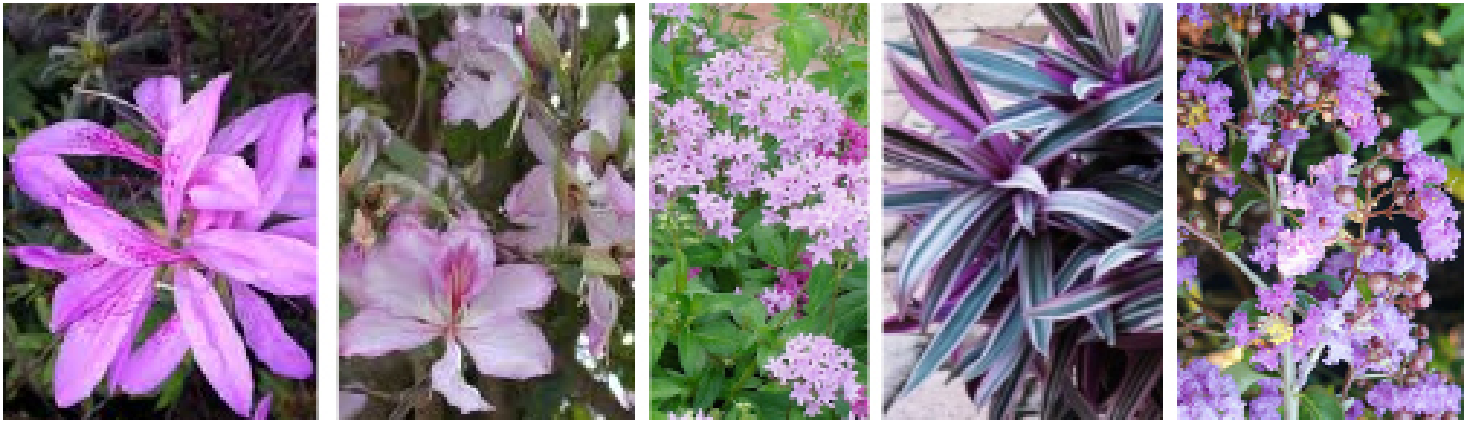


\* THE [ARBOR GATE](#)'s Beverly Welch: (l to r above), Bordeaux petunia (botanical name: *Supertunia*® Bordeaux Petunia hybrid 'Lanbor') and 'Purple Robe' nierembergia.

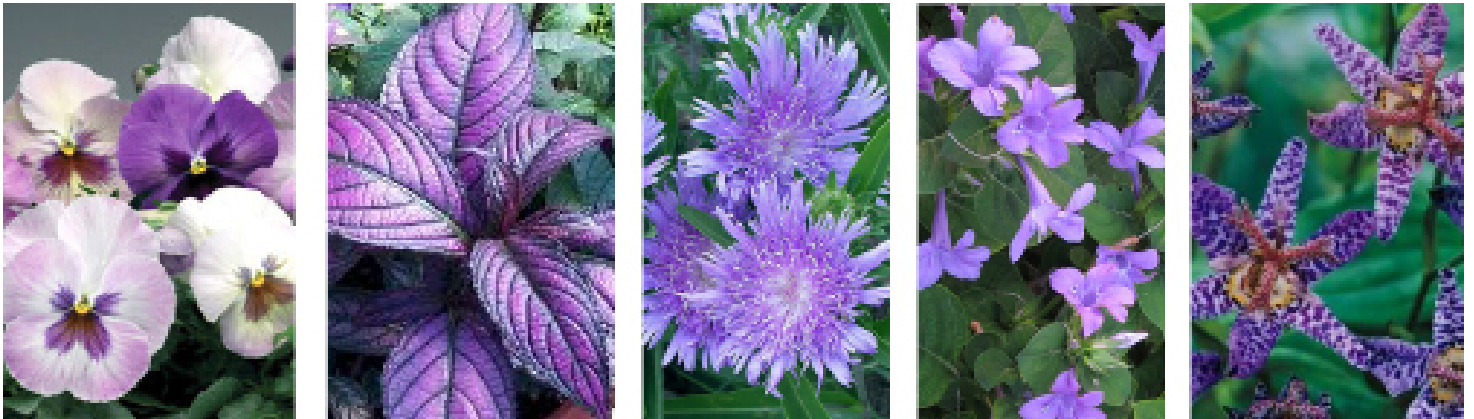


\* [BAYOU CITY HEIRLOOM BULBS](#)'s Patty Allen:  
(l to r above) purple firespike, Magenta Byzantine  
very excited about another terrestrial orchid, similar  
gladiola and 'Wendy's Wish' salvia. Patty's also  
to Bletilla, called Philippine Orchid (*Spathoglottis plicata*).  
Patty says this ground orchid "blooms for weeks on end  
and grows to about 18-20" and blooms over an extended  
time - upwards of 2 months.





\* [RCW NURSERIE'S](#) Mary Cummings: (l to r above) *Koromo shikibu* (a deciduous azalea), purple orchid tree (*Bauhinia*), lavender penta, 'RhoeoTricolor 'jew', 'Muscogee' crape myrtle.



Also from Mary at RCW: (l to r above) 'Delta Medley' pansy, Persian Shield, stokesia, toad lily, Philippine violets





[Clown Alley Orchids](#)' Sharon Stubbings (l to r above): Fritz Nicholas 'Spring Dancer'. This is a large corsage type Cattleya. Great for growing in Houston. They like our temperature and humidity outdoors. They can be out down to almost freezing - but not out the last cold spell!



\* [Cornelius Nursery](#)'s Steve Moore: (l to r above) SunPatiens 'Vigorous Lavender' (these impatiens like sun); 'Xtreme Lilac' impatiens and 'Cora Lavender' periwinkle.

(To learn more about any of these plants, contact the nursery or "google" the name.)

Of course, you don't have to stop with "radiant orchid" flowers. Many vegetables and fruits will also bring this "in" color to your landscape. And these can all be planted right now.



Even with our recent cold, winter vegetables, like broccoli, left above, are thriving here. Lettuces, greens kales and cabbages should be planted now and many come in purples. Or you can go the REALLY fancy route with ornamental kale, right above, and cabbages.

Quite a few fruit tree sales are going on this month. At their big upcoming fruit sale (Jan. 25), the Harris County Master Gardeners point out you can add "Radiant Purple" (or close to it) to your yard with plums, grapes, mulberries, and blackberries.

They'll also have peaches, apples, oranges, pears, avocados, apricots, blueberries, clementines, figs, grapes, grapefruits, kumquats, lemons, limes, mandarins, nectarines, olives, persimmons, pomegranates, satsumas, tangelos, and tangerines. Preview 8am; sale 9am-1pm at Agrilife Extension, 3033 Bear Creek Dr.

Details: <http://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/pubSales.aspx> Check our calendar below for all the other great fruit tree sales this month around the Greater Houston area.

(NOTE: I'm happy to query and all area nurseries when I do these wrap-ups. If you didn't get an email on this one, probably don't have your email. Send it to me with your website address at [lazygardener@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net). I list responses in the order received.)

**Check out 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](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net). Events will not be picked up from other publications.**

## John's Corner

## Soil Amendments - Pumice



Over the years I have noticed that many of my gardening books and magazines have recommended pumice as an ingredient in potting mixes. So what is pumice and how and why is it used?

Pumice is a volcanic glass produced when lava (super heated molten rock) under high pressure with lots of dissolved gasses in the lava is erupted from a volcano. When erupted into the air at normal air pressure the dissolved gasses expand creating bubbles in the molten rock (think of what happens when one opens a bottle of soda pop or champagne). The rock quickly cools and hardens hence mineral crystals do not have time to form. We call this type of rock a volcanic glass. It is primarily composed of silicate minerals of aluminum, sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium and iron.

Pumice is typically light in color ranging from grey to browns and even white, blue or black. Due to the air bubbles many types of pumice are lighter than water and will float. Porosity of some types of pumice can reach 90%!

Pumice is found all over the world in large quantities and is a very common type of rock. Pumice is mined, crushed and then screened into various sizes depending on the desired usage.

The Romans used a type of pumice mixed with lime to form a plaster-like concrete they used to build with that has lasted for centuries. It is found in many products: lightweight concrete, insulation and low density cinder blocks. It is also used in water filtration products, chemical absorbents, pumice stones in beauty shops, toothpaste, soaps and hand cleaners (such as Lava), horse stalls and in horticulture.

Plant roots require oxygen hence the high porosity of pumice allows carbon dioxide produced by the roots to escape, and air (oxygen) to enter the soil. Plants also require the soil to hold water, but excess water needs to drain off. As a result, pumice is often used in soil mixes for growing orchids, cactus and succulents that have high aeration and drainage requirements. It is also used in growing many tropical plants (think of the lush tropical paradise of Hawaii where most of the soils are high in pumice and lava rock).

Another usage is as a mulch around some plants as slugs and snails do not like its rough texture and will not cross it to nibble on your plants. In arid areas it is often used as a mulch instead of other rocks or gravels due to its great insulating properties (keeps the soil and root zone much cooler).

In potting soils it is typically blended in between 10 and 50% by volume depending on the plant species and other components of the soil mix.



It is also used as an packaging media for storing bulbs and tubers. A University of Illinois study found that many of the properties of pumice to be similar to perlite in horticulture. In some areas of the country it is used in soil media for green roofs due to its light weight.

**PROS:**

- will not break down (rot or decompose)
- does not compact
- gives beneficial microbes a place to live (bacteria, fungus, protozoa, nematodes, etc.)
- has no offensive odors
- aerates the soil or potting mix
- provides excellent drainage
- loosens the density of heavy clay soils
- neutral in pH so it does not change the acidity or alkalinity of soil
- free of pathogens
- reduces crusting , cracking and swelling of soils

**CONS:**

- for the Gulf coast it must be shipped a long way
- higher cost than other soil media with similar properties
- dries out quicker than other soil amendments
- has a low buffer capacity to prevent pH changes





# WEEKLY EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS CALENDAR

**Sun., Jan. 12: Bareroot Fruit Trees & Care. Lecture by Dianne Norman.** 1:30-3:30 p.m.

at Wabash Antiques & Feed Store. Dianne will discuss best varieties, how to care, prune and plant fruit trees and other bareroot plants. She will also talk about chill hours and how it affects fruit trees. Some trees will need special care. Information sheets will be provided to help with instructions. Instructor: Dianne Norman owns her own Wholesale Nursery, is a Texas Master Gardener and had one of the first Organic Subscription Farms in the Coastal area. <http://wabashfeed.com>

**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.

**Thur., Jan. 16: "Rethinking the Rose Garden in a Sustainable Way" by Peter Kukielski**, Curator, Peggy Rockefeller Rose Garden, New York Botanical Garden. 24th Annual Sadie Gwin Blackburn Environmental Seminar. 9:30am coffee, 10am program, Museum of Fine Arts' Brown Auditorium, 1001 Bissonnet, free, no reservations needed. River Oaks Garden Club event. [www.mfah.org](http://www.mfah.org)

**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.fbmg.com](http://www.fbmg.com)

**Sat., Jan. 18: Fruit and Nut Tree Gardening, Grafting Techniques and Q&A Session by John**

**Panzarella**, free, 10am at Kingwood Garden Center, 1216 Stonehollow Drive (behind Stein Mart) in Kingwood, TX. [KingwoodGardenCenter.com](http://KingwoodGardenCenter.com). Panzarella, a retired chemical engineer and prolific gardener who has been growing fruit trees in Lake Jackson for 42 years, has over 190 citrus varieties in his backyard, including two named after him!

**Sun., Jan. 19, 2014: Introduction to Stone Fruit. Lecture by Dianne Norman. 1:30-3:30 p.m.**

at Wabash Antiques & Feed Store. Admission is free. You will be surprised to find out the fruit trees that will produce in our area. Learn how to organically care for your stone fruit trees. Dianne will go over planting, fertilizing, pruning, spraying and watering. Instructor: Dianne Norman owns her own Wholesale Nursery, is a Texas Master Gardener and had one of the first Organic Subscription Farms in the Coastal area. <http://wabashfeed.com> or [dianne@wabashfeed.com](mailto:dianne@wabashfeed.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/>

**Sat., Jan. 25: Arbor Day Celebration and Native Tree/Shrub Sale**, Arbor Day activities: 10am-2pm. Tree/Shrub Sale: 9am-5pm, Houston Arboretum, 4501 Woodway, Houston, 713-681-8433; [www.houstonarboretum.org](http://www.houstonarboretum.org). Free acorns, children's activities. Free. Check website for plant lists. [www.houstonarboretum.org](http://www.houstonarboretum.org).

**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

**Sat., Feb. 15. Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 will hold its annual Fruit and Citrus Tree Sale** at 7600 Red Bluff Td. in Pasadena, TX 77507. Heidi Sheesley of Treeseach Farms will give a Plant Overview at 8:00 am. Sale hours are 9:00 am to 1:00 PM. <http://hcmga.tamu.edu>

**Sun., Feb. 16: Rainwater Harvesting Workshop by Joe Blanton**, Houston Arboretum, 4501 Woodway, Houston. Two-session workshops, each session repeated during day. Fees and registration: 713-681-8433; [www.houstonarboretum.org](http://www.houstonarboretum.org)

**Mon., Feb. 17: Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 will host Open Garden Day** at their Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd., Houston, TX 77034. At 9:30 am, Guy Lazarus will present a program on Growing Tomatoes and Peppers in our area. Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer your gardening questions. Hours are 8:30 am - 11:00 am.. Free and Open to the public. Children invited! <http://hcmga.tamu.edu>

**Wed., Feb. 19. Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 - 3rd Wednesday Lecture Series.** On Wednesday February 19, Robt. "Skip" Richter, Harris County AgriLife Extension Agent, will present a program on Landscape Pruning - Plants and Trees. Free and open to the public. Clear Lake Park meeting room, (on the lakeside), 5001 Nasa Parkway, Seabrook Texas 77586. <http://hcmga.tamu.edu>

**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.



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**Offer Expires: 01/19/14**