



January 19, 2014

Dear Friends,

Here is the 44th 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.

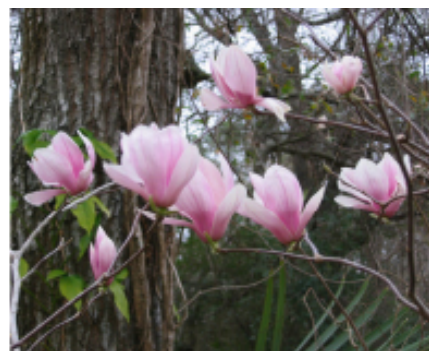
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## **WINTER PLANT PROTECTION - NOT FOR LAZY GARDENERS! . . WINTER HUMMINGBIRD TREATS**

**By BRENDA BEUST SMITH**



Esperanza (*Tecoma stans*). Rangoon creeper vine and pink magnolia are three of many great landscape choices that don't need winter protection.

"Stay cold."

So said a character in a Martha Grimes book\* (can't remember which one). She was bidding farewell as much to the nearby fruit trees as to the intrepid Inspector Richard Jury. It was winter. Warming temperatures might trick the trees into setting buds too soon. Better they should "stay cold."

\* \* \*

A friend, reading [last week's "Purple" column](#), wondered why I was writing about spring flowers when most gardeners were concerned about protecting plants against temperatures predicted in the low 20s?

Because, I said, they probably wouldn't appreciate my thoughts on the subject:

- \* No plants in my yard are protected in winter.
- \* If a plant can't survive our winters without protection, I don't want it.
- \* Winter dormancy is good for the kind of flowering plants I want to grow - plants that can tolerate all our weather can throw at them.
- \* Protecting these plants in winter is not good for them. It prevents them from developing strong root systems.
- \* Artificial protection makes them weaker; they don't have a chance to "harden." You go away, another hard freeze happens and plants that might easily have survived will die because they haven't been allowed to "get ready" for winter.
- \* Watering is good. Always water well if a freeze is forecast. Dehydrated roots will suffer freeze damage far more quickly than well-hydrated ones.
- \* Frozen soil is the real danger. But chances of our soil freezing are very low. It can happen if we have temperatures in the 20s for an extended period. But an overnight hard freeze? Or a two-day freeze?

Naw.

\* Most winter-hardy shrubby plants are supposed to die back. By now their stalks should be black or brown. That's winter. Problem is, of course, we're so intransigent about black stalks in our yards. So we prune everything back.

Bad idea.

Shrubby flowering plants respond to losing live branches by growing new ones. The last thing you want to do now is trigger tender new growth that will be extremely susceptible to freeze damage because it hasn't had time to harden off.

What about cutting off just dead wood? If it's driving you crazy, go ahead. Those are your plants. You can do anything you want with them.

However, to reduce the risk of hitting live wood, you could leave a little black section on the tips of each limb. Or not. No one can predict what our winters will be like.

Among the never-protected decades-old treasures in this yard are althaea, amaryllis, American beautyberry, antique and own-root roses, aspidistra, black-eyed Susan vine, Brazilian red cloak, cannas, Carolina jessamine, lanceleaf coneflower, coral vine, crepe myrtles and crinums.

Also, daylilies, esperanza, fig tree, firespikes, four o'clocks, golden cestrum, 'Moi' and other hibiscus, indigofera, lycoris, pink tulip magnolia, Mexican heather, Mexican orchid tree, finger-leaf philodendron, plumbago, porterweed, Rangoon creeper, hardy salvias, shrimp plants, giant white spider lilies.

Also, swamp sunflower, turk's cap, vitex, yesterday-today-and-tomorrow, and probably a bunch overlooked because they've gone to sleep now.

If you want to protect treasured plants, have at it. Just don't feel like this is something you HAVE to do in order to have hardy flowers.

A better idea: spend this time appreciating the incredible beauty of winter. Focus more on the sculptural beauty of barks that are so visible now. Look up and treasure the sight of all the bird and squirrel nests that are hidden from view most of the year.

Speaking of the beauty of winter barks, do notice the beautiful crepe myrtle bark adorning yards now. Crepes normally never need pruning unless they're growing out of bounds. If they're okay, leave them alone. If they are spreading too far sideways, prune from the sides.

Just never commit "crepe murder." Never "top" crepes by pruning across the top of the tree crown.



"Crepe murder" creates "fists" (left) from which dozens of new weak limbs (center) will sprout. These weak limbs are far more susceptible to problems, like the mildew that so many gardeners complain of in summer.

You can see evidence of "crepe murder" all over town now that the trees are dormant. Fuss at the owners - especially if they're retailers who hire others to commit such travesties.

Let upward growing branches reach for the sky (right above), as they are genetically programmed to do. Then they'll be as beautiful in winter as they are in summer.



Winter treasures: crepe myrtle barks- when properly pruned.



The one winter-bloomer everyone should have in this area is the narcissus. It can take sun or shade. Flowers appear during the coldest of weather and smell wonderful when cut and brought inside. Wish I had a picture of ours blooming in the snow. Boxed paperwhites-ready-to-force are often on sale now. Enjoy them indoors, then plant them outside. Or, look for better quality bulbs at better nurseries and in plant catalogs. Plant anytime of year. They'll all multiply, last forever and require zero care.

*\*(PS. Anyone know which Martha Grimes book had that quote in it? It's driving me crazy that I can't remember or find it.)*



Cape honeysuckle, left. Center: pansy. I've never seen a hummer on a pansy, but this butterfly awed me. Right, Beverly Logan's shot of her winter-bubble-wrapped hummingbird feeder.

## WINTER BLOOMERS FOR HUMMINGBIRDS

Are you seeing any hummers now on winter blooming plants? Hummer aficionado Beverly Logan is compiling a list to recommend for those who would like to help the various hummingbird species that regularly winter over in the Greater Houston area.

This is her hummingbird feeder (above right) wrapped with bubble-wrap to keep it from freezing during our recent severe temperature dips. Among the plants attracting her winter hummers are cape honeysuckle and pansies. (Add cape honeysuckle to my list of longtime-winter-survivors above. Mine's still real green too.)

I'd never have suspected pansies for hummers! Beverly reports Houston Chronicle nature columnist Gary Clark has three Rufous hummers wintering this year in his yard. If you see hummers on any of your winter-alive plants or flowers, please do report in at [lazygardener@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net).

Are you in charge of your group's publicity?

The PUBLICITY CHAIRMAN of any group is second in importance only to the President when it comes to the success of public events. After 50+ years of being on the receiving end of publicity notices, Brenda is happy to send out her booklet of free advice to anyone who requests it by emailing [lazygardener@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net). Ask for: "TIPS ON GETTING MEDIA PUBLICITY FOR YOUR EVENTS" by Brenda Beust Smith.

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 - Bentonite



Recently I was talking to a customer about how to create a natural seal for their pond and the subject of Bentonite clay came up. Since it is a natural organic material and is widely used in many applications including gardening, let's take a look at Bentonite clay.

Bentonite usually forms from the weathering of volcanic ash, most often in the presence of water. Geologically it is a aluminum phyllosilicate material, a type of clay mineral mainly composed of montmorillonite. Montmorillonite clays have a 2:1 lattice structure that can absorb large amounts of water. Bentonite clay is found all over the world in large quantities, it is easy to mine and process hence is relatively inexpensive.

There are several types of Bentonite subdivided into Calcium Bentonite, Sodium Bentonite, Potassium Bentonite, etc. each with different properties. Sodium Bentonite can hold 15-20 times its weight in water and is used for sealing ponds. Bentonite when exposed to water swells enormously hence it is used to seal ponds and even geosynthetic liners. If damaged when used as a liner it tends to be self-healing and very easy to repair. Note: When used as a pond sealer it works best if covered by a layer of sand or soil to help protect it. Sodium Bentonite is also widely used in cat litter. Additionally many of the soils along the Gulf Coast are high in salt (sodium), and as a result we do want to add any amendment that contains sodium (poultry manure, cow manure, biosolids, etc.).

Calcium Bentonite can only hold 1-5 times its weight in water and is used in gardening as it is more stable. Calcium Bentonite stores and releases water much easier than other types of clays. Bentonite clay has hundreds to thousands of times more surface area than sand particles hence it improves nutrient holding capacity of soils and helps provide a better home for soil microorganisms.

It is widely used to improve poor soils in gardening in particular sandy soils. Small amounts of Bentonite have been shown to increase growth rates and yields of many plants in sandy soils. It only works in conjunction with other organic soil amendments (compost, manures, native mulches, etc.).

Apply Bentonite to sandy soils at the rate of 2-10 pounds per square yard and till into the soil BEFORE planting to an 8 inch depth (the root zone of most plants). The only time we till any more is to mix amendments together in preparing our beds as tilling kills many of the beneficial microbes that prevent soil diseases. Note: Do not use on clay or other heavy soils.

If there is an existing bed you mix a couple pounds of Calcium Bentonite into a 5 gallon bucket full of water.

Stir until the clay is dissolved ( a paint mixer on an electric drill works great), then gently pour onto your soil. The earthworms and other soil life forms will work it into the soil. You may have to repeat a few times over a couple months to get the required amount into the soil.

It is also used to cover tree wounds as it prevents infection and insects from attacking the injury. Just take some Calcium Bentonite and make a paste and dap it onto the wound.

Another use is to dissolve small amounts of Bentonite into water and dip the roots of transplants or bare root shrubs and trees into it before planting. It helps plants survive the transplant shock and establish quicker.

Many gardeners have found that dissolving small amounts of Bentonite in water and then spraying on the foliage of their plants protects against insect, disease and sunburn damage. If you do this always mix in a tablespoon of liquid kitchen dish soap per two gallons of water to act as a surfactant.

#### PROS:

- improves the wettability of soils
- improves soils water holding ability
- increases the CEC (cation exchange capacity) of soils
- prevents leaching of many nutrients
- makes nutrients from fertilizers or other sources more available to plants
- supplies small amounts of calcium, magnesium and potassium
- improves soil structure of sandy soils
- gives beneficial microbes a place to live (bacteria, fungus, protozoa, nematodes, etc.)
- increased yield of many plant crops
- has no offensive odors
- sealant on tree wounds from damage of pruning
- good sealant for many applications

#### CONS:

- slippery when wet
- as in all silica rich dusts it may be a breathing hazard (wear a mask)
- for the Gulf coast it must be shipped a moderate distance
- sometime hard to find Calcium Bentonite
- doesn't work well on clay rich soils

Some other uses of Bentonite clay are:

- line the base of landfills
- main ingredient in Fuller's Earth (a cleaning agent)
- drilling mud
- bonding agent to make sand casts for steel and iron industries
- used in making ceramic glazes
- rocket nozzles
- end plugs in fireworks
- absorbents (from kitty litter to wine making, oil and greases, odor control, etc.)
- laxatives and other pharmaceuticals
- remove toxins from animals and humans
- wound dressings
- desiccants (works better than silica gels)
- animal feed

# WEEKLY EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS CALENDAR

## **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.

**Wed., Jan. 22: Problems and Pests of Cactus, Agaves and Yuccas** presented by Liliana R. Cracraft, Houston Cactus and Succulents Society member. Time: 7:30 pm Location: Metropolitan Multi-Services Center, 1475 West Gray. Houston, TX 77019. <http://www.hcsstex.org/>  
Free

**Thur. Jan. 23: Creating Your Personal Garden Sanctuary.** 8 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens. This hands-on class, taught by Darnell Schreiber, will guide participants in designing the perfect serene space for any home landscape and includes a tour of Mercer's gardens. Bring garden photos and a pair of scissors. Seating is limited, so please call 281-443-8731 to make reservations.

## **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 <http://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/>, 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).

**Sat., Jan 25 : Why, When and How to Prune Your Trees"** free clinics, 10:15am at both Cornelius Nursery locations, 1200 N. Dairy Ashford and 2233 S.Voss. <http://www.calloways.com/clinics>. Learn when and how to prune different varieties of trees

**Sun., Jan. 26: Cypress Creek Daylily Club presents "New Crainer Introductions".** Everett Crainer, hybridizer from Brazoria, Texas, speaking and showing his new hybrid daylilies. 2:00-4:00 p.m., Mercer Arboretum and Botanical Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield Road, Humble , TX 77338. Free and open to the public. For information, 281-351-8827. [mary@springcreekdaylily.com](mailto:mary@springcreekdaylily.com).

**Jan. 27 - Mar. 3: Texas Gulf Coast Gardener Program at Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens.** Tier 3. Mondays. Attend this six-week course led by Mercer's Education Director Scott Meadows, and other talented experts, who will present lessons and workshops focused on landscape design, the use of hardscapes and water features, and sustainable design practices. Please call 281-443-8731 to sign up.

**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

**Jan. 30: 6:30 p.m. The Mercer Society & Houston Museum of Natural Science present a DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES: *Celebrating 40 Years of Growth at Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens*** at 5555 Hermann Park Drive, Houston, TX 77030.

First Series Lecture: Plant Conservation in a Rapidly Changing World by Dr. Peter Raven  
President Emeritus, Missouri Botanical Garden (St. Louis, Missouri). <http://www.hcp4.net/mercer/>

**Sat., Feb 1. Saturday with the Master Gardeners - Garden Talk Topic "Rose Pruning Workshop"**  
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. Gardens will be open from 9:00-11:00 a.m. on February 1st. Attend an informal Rose Pruning Workshop in the Rose Garden which starts at 9:00 a.m. Call 281-341-7068 or visit <http://www.fbmng.com/>.

**Sat., Feb. 1: "Edibles: Fruits and Berries in the Garden,"** free clinic, 10:15am at both Cornelius Nursery locations, 1200 N. Dairy Ashford and 2233 S. Voss. <http://www.calloways.com/clinics>

**Tue., Feb.4: Mike Shoup gives our monthly "Hamburger Tuesday" lecture on Feb. 4 at noon speaking on "Empress of the Garden - Old Garden Roses - The Ultimate Plant."** Shoup earned a master's degree in horticulture from Texas A&M. He founded the Antique Rose Emporium in 1984 and is a past president of the Heritage Rose Foundation. He is the author of two books: *Roses in the Southern Garden* and *Landscaping with Antique Roses*, as well as co-author with Liz Druitt of the book *Empress of the Garden*, released in October. The talk is open to the public and all visitors are welcome to enjoy a hamburger lunch at 11:30 a.m. for a \$5 donation. <http://harris-tx.tamu.edu/hort>

**Thur., Feb. 6: "29th Annual Fort Bend County Vegetable Conference." 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.** Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service of Brazoria, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Wharton, and Waller Counties will host the 29th Annual Fort Bend County Vegetable Conference in Building "B&C" of the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds, 4310 Hwy. 36 South in Rosenberg, Texas. The conference presentations will include: Building Soils from the Ground Up, Improve Yields and Quality with Season Extenders, Crop Rotation Strategies, Niche Varieties from Garden to Fork, Pesticide Laws and

Regulations Update, Grow it and sell it!, and Integrated Pest Management - Biological Control Methods. 281-342-3034 or <http://fortbend.agrilife.org>.

**Thur., Feb 6: Houston Orchid Society's monthly meeting. Speaker will be Brenda Oviaat to talk about Angraecoids.** The meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. and is held at the First Christian Church 1601 Sunset Blvd Houston 77005. Email Debbie Peterson fgdebbie@gmail for any questions.

**Feb. 11 - Feb. 18: The 2014 Green Thumb Gardening Series of free lectures continues with talks on Spring Vegetable Gardening.** The talk will be presented 6:30-8:30 p.m. Feb. 11 at the Meeting Room at Clear Lake Park, 5001 NASA Parkway in Seabrook; 10 a.m.-noon Feb. 15 at Maude Smith Marks Library, 1815 Westgreen Blvd. in Katy; 6:30-8:30 p.m. Feb. 18 at Recipe for Success, 4400 Yupon St. in Houston, and 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Trini Mendenhall Sosa Community Center, 1414 Wirt Road in Houston. <http://harris-tx.tamu.edu/hort>

**Wed., Feb. 12: Lunch Bunch at Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens: Pre-Hispanic Uses of Cacti and Succulents Among Indigenous People.** noon to 2 p.m. Liliana Rodriguez Cracraft, of the Houston Cacti and Succulent Society, will present the fascinating history of how the first people of the Americas utilized cacti and succulents before the arrival of Europeans to this continent. Please call 281-443-8731 for reservations.

**Wed., Feb. 12: The Garden Club of Houston Presents The 2014 Nancy Stallworth Thomas Horticulture Lecture: William Cullina,** Executive Director of The Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens. Well known author and authority on North American Native Plants.

### **Sugar, Sex and Poison: Shocking Plant Secrets Caught on Camera**

Coffee 9:30 A. M. and Lecture 10:00 A. M.  
St. Martin's Episcopal Church  
717 Sage Road, Houston TX.  
Free Admission and Open to the Public  
<http://www.gchouston.org/>

**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/Public/>

**Sat., Feb. 15: Master Gardener Preview of Vegetable-Herb Sale.** Join the Fort Bend Master Gardeners for a program to preview the plants to be sold at their Annual Vegetable-Herb 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.. 281-341-7068 or visit [www.fbmga.com](http://www.fbmga.com).

**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: Master Gardener Jean Fefer will provide a preview talk about varieties of plants being offered at the annual Tomato & Pepper Sale.** The talk will be at 7 p.m. in the Extension Office auditorium, 3033 Bear Creek Dr. <http://harris-tx.tamu.edu/hort>

**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>

**Sat., Feb. 22, : Master Gardener Vegetable-Herb Sale.** The Fort Bend Master Gardeners will hold their Annual Vegetable-Herb Sale on Saturday, February 22, 2014, in front of the greenhouse behind the Agriculture Center located at 1402 Band Road, Rosenberg, TX 77471. The sale will open at 9:00 a.m. and will run until 12:00 p.m. or until sold

out. For more information call 281-341-7068 or visit [www.fbmj.com](http://www.fbmj.com).

**Tue., Feb. 25: Open Garden Day in the Demonstration Gardens at the Bear Creek Extension office.** A hands-on talk on Spring Vegetable Gardens will take place at 10 a.m. in the raised vegetable garden bed area for adults with activities for children also planned. Visitors will also be able to tour the gardens before and after the demonstration. Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer horticulture questions. <http://harris-tx.tamu.edu/hort>

**Mar. 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, Show 1-5pm; sale 9am-5pm. Mar. 2, show and sale 10am-4pm. 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)

**Mar. 2: Designing Your Dream Backyard Wildlife Habitat by Joe Blanton**, 3-5pm, \$65, Houston Arboretum, 4501 Woodway, Houston. Reservations: 713-681-8433; [www.houstonarboretum.org](http://www.houstonarboretum.org)

**Mar. 5: Lunch Bunch: March Mart Preview. noon - 2 p.m at Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens.** Get ready for the plant sale and make your wish list during a PowerPoint presentation of some of the choice plants that will be offered later in the month at March Mart. Please call 281-443-8731 for reservations.

**Mar. 6: "Will My Orchid Ever Bloom Again?" by Bruce Cameron**, Orchid Obsession owner, 10 am, MUD Building #81, 805 Hidden Canyon Drive, Katy, TX Nottingham Country Club Garden Club program. Free. Details: 281-579-7017, 281-578-5558 or [www.nottinghamgardenclub.org](http://www.nottinghamgardenclub.org)

**Mar. 7-9: AZALEA TRAIL. Houston, Texas**

- \* The 79th annual Azalea Trail is sponsored by River Oaks Garden Club, a non-profit organization, founded in 1927 and a member of The Garden Club of America
- \* DATES: Friday, March 7, Saturday, March 8, Sunday, March 9, 2013
- \* HOURS: 11:00 am - 5:00 pm
- \* WHERE: The River Oaks neighborhood and Tanglewood area, Houston, Texas
- \* WHAT: Tour 4 homes and gardens, River Oaks Garden Club Forum of Civics, Bayou Bend Gardens and Rienzi
- \* INFORMATION: [www.riveroaksgardenclub.org](http://www.riveroaksgardenclub.org) or 713.523.2483

**Mar. 8: March Mart Preview. 10 a.m. - noon at Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens.** Get ready for the plant sale and make your wish list during a PowerPoint presentation of some of the choice plants that will be offered later in the month at March Mart. Please call 281-443-8731 for reservations.

**Mar. 9: Landscaping with Texas Native Plants by Joe Blanton**, 2-5pm, \$65, Houston Arboretum, 4501 Woodway, Houston. Reservations: 713-681-8433; [www.houstonarboretum.org](http://www.houstonarboretum.org)

**Mar. 13: March Mart - The Mercer Society (TMS) Members Only Sale.** 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. Become a member of The Mercer Society (TMS) to enjoy this premiere event in advance of the public plant sale. VIP shoppers may participate from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.; other levels of TMS membership may shop from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Please call 281-443-8731 for details.

**March 14, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. and March 15, 8 a.m. - 3 p.m. MARCH MART at Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens.** One of the Texas Gulf Coast area's largest and most anticipated horticultural events, the sale attracts amateurs and experts alike. March Mart features a huge selection, more than 2,000 varieties, of quality plants rarely found at local retail nurseries. Plan to attend this sale that offers a diverse array of hard-to-find and hard-to-resist plants. Many of these plants are grown by Mercer's volunteers, who will be on-hand to help with selection and offer advice on the cultivation and care of plants offered at the event. Proceeds from the sale benefit the gardens and programs at Mercer. Please call 281-443-8731 for details.

**Mar. 15-16: Spring Native Plant Sale**, 9am-5pm, Houston Arboretum, 4501 Woodway, Houston, 713-681-8433; [www.houstonarboretum.org](http://www.houstonarboretum.org).

**Mar. 22-23: Peckerwood Gardens 2014 Open Week**, 20571 FM 359, Peckerwood, TX (near Hempstead). \$10, no reservations required. Plant sale noon-5pm, guided tours at 1pm and 3pm. 979-826-3232 or <http://peckerwoodgarden.org/events> or 979-826-3232

**Mar. 29: Nottingham Country Garden Club Plant Sale**, 9am-1pm, Villagio Center, Westheimer Parkway at Peek, Katy, TX. Free admission. Details: 281-579-7017, 281-578-5558 or [www.nottinghamgardenclub.org](http://www.nottinghamgardenclub.org)

**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: 01/26/14**