



May 19, 2014

Dear Friends,

Here is the 58th 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. Thanks so much for your interest.

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Enjoy!

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Apple trees in Houston used to be so iffy. Not now! Meanwhile, neighborhoods are eyeing esplanades and visualizing beauty.

"If you aren't killing plants, you aren't really stretching yourself as a gardener."

-- J.C. Raulston, the late founder and director of North Carolina State University's J.C. Raulston Arboretum.

APPLES AND ESPLANADES - TALK ABOUT DIVERSITY IN GARDENING!

by Brenda Beust Smith

You know what I like best about gardening? It's like making stew. Everyone has his/her own recipe that seems to work - no matter what the experts say!

It's so depressing when someone says they're afraid of killing this or that plant. If it dies, so what? Get another one. It's a plant, for pete's sake!

I have this rule. If I do what the "experts" tell me to do with a particular plant, and it dies, or it has unacceptable/time-consuming problems, then obviously God didn't want that plant in my garden. Get rid of it. Time to try something else.

If you're laughing right now, you're my kind of gardener.

If you're looking like a deer caught in headlights, well maybe you need to loosen up about your garden.

The only rule you really need to follow is to use only advice specifically written for this area, not for the State of Texas and most certainly not from national sources. Check out our calendar below. Great advice is flowing strong this spring.

That's enough proselytizing for one column. Besides, we have two great guest experts to expound today.

One of our area's most renowned fruit tree experts, Dr. Ethan Natelson, is encouraging us to plant more apple trees. Step one for local gardeners: join the [Gulf Coast Fruit Study Group \(gcfsg.weebly.com\)](http://gcfsg.weebly.com). Membership ranges from some of the nation's most respected fruit, nut and berry experts to brand new, totally-novice growers who want to "get started right."

And the best part is that these enthusiasts have, over the decades, hybridized and brought to market incredible new worlds of varieties for us to grow here - including apples, among others. Best place to find them? [County AgriLife Extension Master Gardener sales.](#)

The most important thing: Get varieties best for this area. Below, Dr. Natelson will get you started with great

suggested varieties. Then, for great growing advice, hie yourself to the Thurs., May 29 Gulf Coast Fruit Study Group gathering, featuring Dr. Natelson on "A Forgotten Fruit - Southern Apples Revisited"(free, 6:30pm sign-in, 7-8:30 pm program, Harris County AgriLife Extension Service, 3033 Bear Creek Dr.
Details: gcfsq.weebly.com.

ESPLANADE EXCITEMENT PLANT FOR DRIVE-BY VIEWING

First, here are some tips for homeowners interested in landscaping their subdivision esplanades. A great example of what can be done can be viewed along Heights Blvd., where the Houston Heights Association's 29th Annual Heights Fun Run is Sat., June 7. http://houstonheights.org/html/fun_run.html.

Start by researching your city, county and/or neighborhood restrictions. This is a must and will save considerable time, money and energy in the long run. Almost all local municipalities and other entities welcome working with neighborhood clubs on beautification. But safety concerns have to be addressed first. And they will want assurances that once started, projects will be maintained.

Once that hill has been climbed, Dee McLancon of the Heights Garden Club has some suggestions on getting the most benefit for that expended time, money and energy. Heights G.C. takes care of the Heights Blvd. I-10 entrance sign beds and 20th Street Rose Garden.

Spotlighting Our Plant Organizations

Heights Garden Club



Esplanade landscaping can be fun, as Heath Webber discovers in one of the Heights Blvd. esplanade's oversized lawn chairs. At right, remember to "consider your audience."

TIPS ON LANDSCAPING AN ESPLANADE

by Dee Melancon

Heights Garden Club www.HeightsGardenClub.com

When asked about the planting of beds in esplanades or neighborhood entrances, Terry Gordon Smith, a landscaper and horticulturist advised:

- * Consider your "audience." Most will see this garden from cars at 30 miles per hour, maybe up to 100 feet away.
- * Select plants with some size and nice visual from a distance. Monochromatic themes present a larger combined visual from a distance. Yellow and red work well as themed colors.
- * Plan and execute a "team" approach. One or two individuals can spearhead, but ongoing maintenance, (weeding, watering) should be a team effort, scheduled and executed
- * Prepare beds to specifications of plants and bulbs that are to be used.
- .
- * An irrigation system is a must. Put on a timer. Individuals can adjust watering times based on the weather. Hand watering a large area is time consuming and less reliable.

"Currently, you can stroll Heights Boulevard and enjoy the "True North" exhibit, a temporary, outdoor art installation," said Chris Silkwood. "The goal of the "True North" sculpture project is an exhibition that represents of local works of contemporary art by highly recognized Texas artists along the Heights Blvd. esplanade for the enjoyment of our community and visitors. The first True North sculpture project will remain for a period of nine months, and participating artists include Carter Ernst, Dan Havel, Paul Kittelson, Lee Littlefield, Patrick Medrano, Steve Murphy, Dean Ruck, and Ed Wilson." -

- http://houstonheights.org/html/fun_run.html

AND NOW . . . APPLES!

Spotlighting Our Plant Organizations

Gulf Coast Fruit Study Group



One of this area's true treasures, Dr. Ethan Natelson, left, will speak on growing apples in the Greater Houston area at the Gulf Coast Fruit Study Committee gathering **Thursday, May 29**, at the Harris County Agri-Life Extension office, 3033 Bear Creek Dr., in Bear Creek Park. **6:30**sign-in, **7-8pm** program. Right, an added bonus to joining the Gulf Coast Fruit Study Group is the wide variety of locally-grown fruit tastings at many of the meetings.

A Forgotten Fruit - Southern Apples Revisited Ethan A. Natelson, M.D.

The apple is not native to North America and is thought to have originated in Kazakhstan, from where it was brought to Europe and to England and then to the United States.

Most quality apples have a high winter chill requirement. In Houston, this is about 450 hours, although this past winter was unusual and we had about 700 hours. Apple rootstocks, like pears, are easy to graft for beginners, but most commercial apple rootstocks will not tolerate our soil diseases.

However, the recent generation of Cornell-Geneva apple rootstocks, selected for specific disease resistance, should survive in Houston, and work within our low-chill parameters. I have one proven apple from Brazil, called **Malus 3**, which I have grown successfully on an early Cornell-Geneva experimental rootstock for 20 years.

Heidi Sheesley, at Treeseach Farms, is propagating Malus 3 as **Carnavale**. It is a heavy annual bearer of a large tart apple with a red blush and is self-fertile. **Mutsu (Crispin)** is a triploid apple, which fruits here, and this is a quality commercial apple. **Anna** with about a 250 chill hour requirement and **Dorsett Golden**, with about a 200 chill hour requirement, are widely in the trade.

A book on early heirloom apples grown in the South suggests Cauley, a seedling of the **White Spanish Reinette** apple introduced into Natchez in 1640, will work here.

I have perhaps the only surviving example of a limb sport of this tree named **Orange Cauley** somewhat smaller than its parent but with better external coloring and should be an ideal quality apple for us.

Three others are **Dixie Red Delight**, **Red Rebel**, and **Schell**, a medium sized yellow apple that has done well in Florida.

* * *

*Note: If you haven't seen your specialty plant group in our "Society Spotlight," it could be we do not have valid email address for you. To make sure your group is contacted, email us at lazygardener@sbcglobal.net

* * *

Please read, and consider signing, the petition to establish a Houston Botanical Garden:
<http://www.houstonbotanicgarden.org>

* * *

THE LAZY GARDENER'S GUIDE ON CD . . . also based on Brenda's Chronicle column - when to do what in Greater Houston area gardens. A pdf book. \$20. Make checks payable to Brenda B. Smith and mail to: Lazy Gardener's Guide on CD, 14011 Greenranch Dr., Houston, TX 77039-2013.

John's Corner

Soil Amendments #23 - Bio-Char



This week we are going to talk about another type of ash product that is showing real potential in gardening called Bio-Char (sometimes referred to as black carbon). The interest in Bio-Char started with the work of Wim Sombroek, PhD and his research on soils in South America that have stayed fertile for thousands of years that are named the "terra preta" soils or Amazonian Dark Earth.

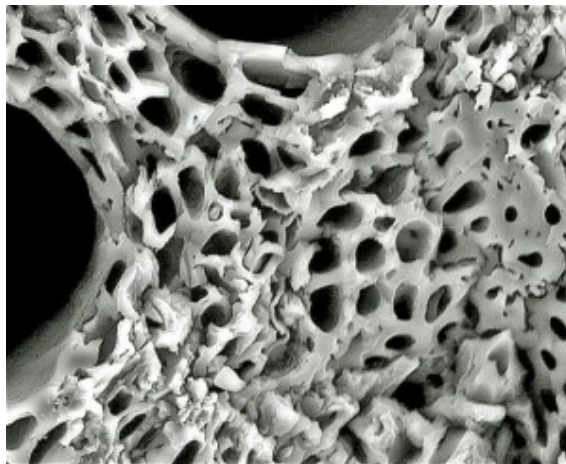
These patches of charcoal rich soils were created by native people living in the Amazon basin. Not only were these soils richer in nitrogen, phosphorous, zinc, magnesium and other nutrients as compared to typical tropical soils, they had up to 70 times the amount of carbon in the form of bio-char.

There is a lot of interest in bio-char as a means of sequestering carbon in the soil and to offset carbon dioxide rise in the atmosphere as well as reduce the effects of global warming. A study published in the Journal Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies for Global Change (2006) found that more carbon could be stored in the soil in the form of bio-char than is produced by the burning of fossil fuels each year. Additionally it would increase production in agriculture and horticulture and reduce chemical nutrient run-off that is polluting our rivers and lakes. Sombroek called these new soils amended with bio-char, "terra preta nova".

Bio-char is a charcoal like substance produced when organic matter is burned at a low temperature. There is a lot of research currently being done on bio-char but with two different goals. The first is to convert the bio-mass into synthetic fuels and biogas for energy production. These techniques use very high temperatures (over 500 degrees C) and very fast reaction times. Most of the biomass is converted into bio-fuels with little bio-char produced (around 10% of original biomass).

The second method is to produce bio-char for use in horticulture and agriculture. These techniques use lower temperatures (temperatures below 500 degrees C) and much longer reaction times and produce less syn-fuels and more char.

In both cases a special oven or kilns is used and the burning (pyrolysis) occurs with little or no oxygen present (30-40% of original biomass). The pyrolysis causes the carbon in the biomass to re-form into aromatic carbon rings that are extremely resistant to decay with lots of pore space and surface area (picture below). The pore spaces make good homes for microbes to live in and for water molecules to stick to, which give the char its ability to absorb and hold water till plants need it. They also allow many plant nutrients to attach to the char and prevent them from leaching out of the soil.



Bio-char has a tremendous surface area with only 0.03 ounces (one gram) having a surface area of over 1,000 square yards!



After reading numerous textbooks and studying hundreds of research papers and articles, I have observed one pattern in horticultural and agricultural applications; slow low temperature bio-char seems to almost always give a positive result while fast high temperature bio-char gives neutral and even negative results. The properties and value of bio-char varies greatly and is influenced by the material from which it is produced and its manufacture. Fast high temperature bio-char tend to be alkaline while low temperature low bio-char tends to be pH neutral.

Over time the absorption and cation exchange capacities of bio-char increases and pH becomes more neutral. Bio-char can hold 6 times its weight in water and can greatly increase a sandy soil's ability to hold and store water. Application rates depends on the specific soil type and the plants it is applied to. Best results occur in sandy drought prone soils (it does aid aeration in clay soils and reduces cracking and swelling but may reduce water infiltration).

Several studies have shown that bio-char greatly increases the growth and colonization of soils by mycorrhizal fungi that are so critical for a plant's absorption of nutrients, growth and resistance to disease. Other microbes growth is also increased where they absorb carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the air converting it into biomass that eventually turns into humus.

Research has shown that bio-char enriched soils reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by 60-80%. It also reduces nitrogen oxides emissions (NO₂) which contribute are 200X worse than CO₂ in its global warming effects. Note: One of the reasons artificial fertilizers have to be applied so often is that most of the nutrients leach out and pollute the air and our waterways.

Often applied with compost (source of beneficial microbes) and to reduce bio-char's dusty nature. It can be mixed into a slurry and applied topically or injected into the soil.

The archeological studies suggest the bio-char produced in the Amazon basin was a mix of bones and skin from animal, fish waste, fruits and vegetables scraps, branches and limbs, manure (both animal and human), hence was also a good nutrient source. For example bones are a good source of phosphorus (P) as well as calcium (Ca) and magnesium (Mg). Currently I am not aware of any bio-char sold commercially that uses these materials. As a result two different chars may look the same to the eye but have very different properties.

SUMMARY:

Bio-char is a very promising tool for gardeners to have a great beautiful garden. It does not replace a good compost, native mulch or organic fertilizer. However it is a very cost effective way to increase a soils fertility.

APPLICATION:

A good starting point is to apply one cubic foot of bio-char to 48 square feet of soil. Since it lasts a very long time, it is only applied one time (very cost effective).

Several studies suggest that bio-char works best if pre-treated first by soaking with water, composting it, or drenching with compost tea.

PROS:

- increases water retention
- increases nutrient retention (less leaching hence less fertilizer required)
- effects last a very long time
- reduces greenhouse gasses
- improves a soils physical properties
- improves a soils aggregation, porosity, tilth
- acts as a catalyst that enhances a plants ability to absorb nutrients and water
- habitat for beneficial microbes
- high cation exchange capacities (CEC)
- low in tars, resins and other compounds as compared to cooking charcoal
- easy to spread
- renewable resource
- carbon sink
- converts organic solid waste into a useful form
- bio-fuels may be a by-product
- reduces aluminum (Al) toxicity
- increases a soils microbial biomass
- increases biological fixation of nitrogen(N) from the air into the soil
- increases the humus content of soil
- increases some trees resistance to disease

CONS:

- quality, type, and value varies greatly
- tends to be very alkaline and may change the pH of the soil
- very dusty and dangerous to breath in powdered form
- rubs off on hands and clothes
- nutrient content is insignificant (most types currently available today)
- powdered forms blows in wind and can create a mess (avoid windy conditions)
- respiratory dust masks should be used when dry
- low quality biochar has tars and resins that inhibit plant growth
- limited availability
- price varies greatly
- very high temperature (1,000 degree C) has PAH (poly aromatic hydrocarbons) and dioxins which are human health toxins
- some bio-char has been shown to kill algae in waterways (this can be pro or con)

Resources:

Amazonian Dark Earths: Wim Sombroek's Vision, Multiple Editors, Springer, 2009, ISBN: 978-1-4020-

BIOCHAR: Environmental Management Science and Technology, J. Lehmann and S. Joseph, Earthscan, 2009, ISBN: 978-1-84407-658-1

The Biochar Solution- Carbon Farming and Climate Change, Albert Bates, New Society Publishers, 2010, ISBN: 978-0-86571-677-3

The Biochar Debate, James Bruges, Chelsea Publishing, 2009, ISBN: 978-1-60358-255-1

Journal of Environmental Quality, July-August 2012, Volume 41, #4 entire issue was devoted to research papers on Bio-char.

The International Biochar Initiative (IBI)

www.biochar-international.org

Note 1: If anyone wishes to try Bio-char, both Buchanan's Native Plants (611 E. 11th St., Houston) and Nature's Way Resources (101 Sherbrook Circle, Conroe/Woodlands) have brought in a few bags for gardeners to try and give us your feedback. This is a single species bio-char produced from dead pine trees killed by pine beetle infestations.

Note 2: Bartlett Tree company has been doing a lot of research on bio-chars and trees. Their organic division is currently using the same bio-char above in the Houston area. The regional manager is Gene Basher and The Woodlands/Conroe representative is Joseph Keefe and they can be reached at (713) 692-6371.

Note 3: Bio-char IS NOT cooking charcoal. Cooking charcoal is toxic to many plants due to the chemical treatment applied to make it burn better and more even.

WEEKLY EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS CALENDAR

(Events in Houston unless otherwise noted. No events picked up from other newsletters or media releases. Submit written in the format below, specifically earmarked for publication in the Lazy Gardener & Friends Newsletter.)

Mon., May 19: Harris County Master Gardeners Precinct 2's Open Garden, 8:30-11am, Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. 9:30am program. Free. Details:
<https://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/pubP2.aspx>

Wed., May 21: Birds in Our Area by Paul Fagala, Wild Birds Limited, 10am, Clear Lake Park Meeting Room, 5001 Nasa Parkway, Seabrook. Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 event. Free. Details:
<https://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/pubP2.aspx>

Wed., May 21: I'm Just Wild About Saffron by Irene Potoczniak, 7 pm, Metropolitan Multi Service Center, 1475 West Gray. South Texas Unit Herb Society of America event. Free. Details: herbsociety-stu.org

Thur., May 22: 1:30 pm, Soil- The Ultimate Water Reservoir, Tapping the Potential by John Ferguson. Lone Star Groundwater Conservation District Offices, 655 Conroe Park North Dr., Conroe. www.lonestargcd.org.

Sat., May 24: Enjoy a Night Blooming Garden, 10am, Enchanted Forest, 10611 FM 2759, Richmond. Details: 281-937-9449. Repeated: 2pm, Enchanted Gardens, 6420 FM 359, Richmond. Details: 281-341-1206. Details: <http://myenchanted.com/>

Sat., May 24: Butterfly & Hummingbird Gardens & Landscape Design Clinics, 10:15 a.m. Cornelius Nurseries, 1200 N. Dairy Ashford and 2233 S. Voss. Contact: www.corneliusnurseries/clinics

Sun., May 25: Beeyard Visit - Gardeners' Best Friend by John S. Berry, 1:30-3:30pm, Wabash Feed & Garden Store, 5701 Washington Ave. \$20. RSVP: 713-863-8322

Tues., May 27: Insects in Your Garden, 6:30pm, Recipe for Success, 4400 Yupon St. Harris County Master Gardener event. Free. Details: 281-627-681

Tues., May 27: Insects in Your Garden / Open Garden Day, 9-11:30am, AgriLife Extension Office, 3033 Bear Creek Dr. Harris County Master Gardener event. Free. Details: 281-627-6818

Sat., May 31: 10am - noon. City of Conroe Landscape Irrigation Symposium: Irrigating & Landscaping Organically with Water Conservation in Mind. Speakers: Mark Lowry, Mark Bowen, Jeffrey Walls Doug Goodwin & Leslie Keen. 401 Sgt. Holcomb Blvd., South, Conroe. register: waterconservation@cityofconroe.org.

Sun., June 1: Space City Hibiscus Society Sale, 1-4pm, East Harris Co. Activity Center 7340 Spencer Highway, Pasadena. Details: www.spacecityahs.org

Tues., June 3: The Fabulous Fragrant Frangipani (Plumeria) by Loretta Osteen, 6:30pm, Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park, 4102 Main St. (FM 519), La Marque. Pre-register: GALV3@wt.net or 281-534-3413

Sat., June 7: Landscaping for Wild Birds, 10:15 a.m. at both Cornelius Nursery locations, 1200 N. Dairy Ashford and 2233 S. Voss. Free. <http://www.corneliusnurseries/clinics>

Sun., June 8: Lone Star Hibiscus Society Sale, 1-4pm, Knights of Columbus Hall 702 Burney Rd. Sugar Land. Details: www.lonestarahs.org

Tues., June 10: Herbs - Garden to Table, 6:30pm, Clear Lake Park Meeting Room, 5001 Nasa Parkway, Seabrook. Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 event. Free. Details: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/pubP2.aspx>

Thurs., June 12: Garden Destinations Within Driving Distance by Debra Bagley, 7:30pm, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church Parish Hall, 1819 Heights Blvd. Houston Rose Society event. Free. www.houstonrose.org.

Sat., June 14: Groundcovers in the Landscape, 10:15 a.m. at both Cornelius Nursery locations, 1200 N. Dairy Ashford and 2233 S. Voss. Free. <http://www.corneliusnurseries/clinics>

Sat., June 21: Summer Lawncare, 10:15 a.m. at both Cornelius Nursery locations, 1200 N. Dairy Ashford and 2233 S. Voss. Free. <http://www.corneliusnurseries/clinics>

Sat., June 14: Bolivar Peninsula Plant Sale and Bazaar, 11am-4pm, free, Bay View United Methodist Church, 1441 Jane Long Highway (Hwy 87), Crystal Beach. Details: 409-684-2634

Mon., June 16: Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2's Open Garden Day

Tues., June 17: Herbs - Garden to Table, 6:30-8:30pm, Recipe for Success,

4400 Yupon St. Harris County Master Gardeners event. Free but space limited. Reservations: 281-855-5600
<http://www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyMasterGardeners>.

Wed., June 18: Fairy Gardens and Terrariums by Judy Jones of Enchanted Gardens, 10am, Clear Lake Park Meeting Room, 5001 Nasa Parkway, Seabrook. Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 event. Free. Details: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/pubP2.aspx>

Thurs., June 19: Wetland Plants for the Home Garden by Mary Carol Edwards, Wetland Biologist at Texas Coastal Watershed Program/Texas Sea Grant: 7:30-9 pm, Houston Arboretum, 4501 Woodway. Free. Native Plant Society of Texas/Houston chapter event. Details: www.npsot.org/houston.

Thurs., June 19: Herbs - Garden to Table, 6:30pm, Tracy Gee Community Center, 3599 Westcenter, Houston. Harris County Master Gardener event. Free. Details: 281-855-5600, <http://www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyMasterGardeners>.

Sat., June 21: 4th Annual Tomato & Vegetable Contest, Kingwood Garden Center, 1216 Stonehollow Drive, Kingwood. Details: 281-358-1805 or www.Kingwoodgardencenter.com

Sat., June 21: Herbs - Garden to Table, 10am, Maude Marks Library, 1815 Westgreen Blvd., Katy. Harris County Master Gardener event. Free. Details: 281-855-5600, <http://www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyMasterGardeners>.

Sat., June 21: National Pollinator Week Plant Identification
by Mike Warriner, 10am, Jesse H. Jones Park and Nature Center, 20634 Kenswick Dr., Humble

Mon., June 21: Plant Hunters Camp
for 4th-5th graders, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield. Details: 281-443-8731

Tues., June 24: Open Garden Day - Herbs, 9am, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension demonstration gardens, 3033 Bear Creek Dr. Harris County Master Gardener event. Free. Details: 281-855-5600, www.facebook.com/HarrisCountyMasterGardeners

Sat., June 28: Heat-Thriving and Colorful Plants, 10:15 a.m. at both Cornelius Nursery locations, 1200 N. Dairy Ashford and 2233 S. Voss. Free. www.corneliusnurseries/clinics

Sat., July 12: Texas Rose Rustlers Meeting, 10am-3pm, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free, open to public. Details: www.texasroserustlers.com or 281-443-8731.

Wed., July 16: Foods from the Americas by Sally Luna, 7 pm, Metropolitan Multi Service Center, 1475 West Gray. South Texas Unit Herb Society of America event. Free. Details: herbsociety-stu.org

Sat, July 26 : The Plumeria Society of America Show & Plant Sale, 9 to 3pm, Ft. Bend County Fairgrounds, 4310 1st Street, Rosenberg. Details: www.theplumeriasociety.org

WANT YOUR EVENT IN THE LG&F CALENDAR?
YOU HAVE TO SEND IT TO US!

EVENTS WILL NOT BE PICKED UP FROM
OTHER NEWSLETTERS OR GENERAL MEDIA RELEASES.

To ensure rapid publication, submit events in the exact STRAIGHT LINE format used above so they can be copied and pasted right in. Events NOT submitted in our format will take longer to get published as someone has to reformat and retype them.

Email to: lazygardener@sbcglobal.net

*Need speakers for your group? Or tips on getting more publicity for events?
Brenda's free booklets that might help: "[Lazy Gardener's Speakers List](#)"
of area horticultural/environmental experts, and "[Lazy Gardener's Publicity Booklet](#)"
(based on her 40+ years of her Houston Chronicle "Lazy Gardener" coverage of area events) Email specific requests
to: lazygardener@sbcglobal.net.
Please help us grow by informing all your membership of this weekly newsletter!*

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 a co-editor and occasional article contributor.

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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