



June 20, 2014

Dear Friends,

Here is the 62nd 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.

We now have 2500 subscribers to this newsletter. We appreciate everyone's interest very, very much.

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Insert, a leaf of my crepe myrtle. Left, same bush a week later. Right, looks like it's going to be a spectacular year for cannas. Shirley Barr took this shot in Hedwig Village.

CREPES WITH MILDEW AND DISHPLATE HIBISCUS

by Brenda Beust Smith

Wilma's crepe myrtle leaves are covered with white stuff. So were mine. It's called powdery mildew. She wants to know what to do about it.

Personally, I don't do anything. It comes every year about this time. I notice it. And then, I guess, it goes away. That's what happened recently.

About a week or so ago, I noticed the nasty white stuff on a crepe in front of my house (insert picture above). We were in and out of town. The other day Husband remarked how beautiful that same crepe was. I went out to look and shot the picture at left, above. Same plant. The mildew was gone. The plant was full of flowers. I'd done nothing. Of course, it rained a lot. Maybe it all washed off?

But this happens ever year. My crepes are all at least 10 years old, some a lot older. They bloom like crazy so obviously powdery mildew isn't the end of the world.

The age of my crepes is a big part of the problem. Older varieties are far more susceptible. Newer varieties, those with specific names (not just "pink crepe" or "white crepe") are far more resistant. If this is something that really upsets you, get rid of that crepe. This problem is going to re-occur every year in this environment. Crepes are so inexpensive and so readily available, why moan and groan every year?

However! I do appreciate that some folks don't like nasty white stuff but don't want to get rid of the plant. So I asked my publisher John Ferguson of Nature's Way Resources if he had any organic or cultural remedies for Wilma. Among his words of wisdom:

- 1) Over watering will make it more susceptible to mildew
- 2) Artificial fertilizers force the plant to absorb nitrogen faster than it needs which produces weak growth that is more susceptible to mildew.
- 3) Do not use baking soda as it is sodium bicarbonate. Salts will weaken the tree and make it more susceptible.
- 4) Potassium bicarbonate works as well for control of mildew and leaves a few potassium atoms behind which is a plant nutrient.

John's 'Natchez' is over 30 years old and he has never noticed mildew in it.

TIP O' THE TROWEL TO . . .

* Mercer Botanic Gardens for coming up with a very appropriate name change. Mercer Botanic Gardens is now the new official title of what we've all known and loved as Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Garden. As Director Darrin Duling explained:

"Most botanic gardens have defined arboreta within their complex and this is how we will identify ourselves - we still will retain the names of our two Arboreta: the West Arboretum, which is all of the park west of Aldine Westfield Road, and the East Arboretum, which is everything below Storey Lake (and I do hope to be able to get the Primitive Loop Trail cleared of dangerous dead trees and reopened sometime within the next year!)"

Those of you who have been around as long as I have do fully appreciate what the folks at Mercer have accomplished. For those of you who are new, or who have never been to this extraordinary living library, well, go. See what you've been missing!

* LEAGUE CITY, whose rain barrel and water bill rebate program distributed 176 of the water catching barrels to citizens, according to the Galveston Daily News. Spurred on by the discovery that nearly half the city's water usage during peak months was going to irrigation, citizens were offered a \$25 rebate on their water bill if they agreed to install and use the \$65 barrels. Hope other areas cities will follow League City's lead!

* * * MARK YOUR CALENDAR!!

Sat., Oct. 11: 5TH Annual JANE LONG FESTIVAL, Fort Travis Seashore Park, Bolivar Peninsula, Tx.
Details: www.janelongfestival.org; lazygardener@sbcglobal.net; 713-208-6445.

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*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

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

John's Corner

Organic Fertilizers and Nutrients - 4



This week I want to talk about another very good organic fertilizer that I have used with great results. It is sold by the Arbor Gate Nursery in Tomball and called the "Arbor Gate Organic Blend 4-4-3 + Calcium" and made by NRG (Natural Resource Group) for the Arbor Gate.

Historically all bird manures have been used as a natural fertilizer with good results, and this includes poultry. However, with the modern factory farms and the unsanitary conditions, the farms feed the birds large amounts of antibiotics and arsenic to make them grow faster. As a result, the poultry manure used in most products today is contaminated with these toxic ingredients along with very high salt levels. Last week I gave you some examples of how plants can hyper accumulate heavy metals. Hence when we use modern poultry manure fertilizers on our gardens, we add arsenic to our soil. When we grow fruits or vegetables, they will absorb the arsenic, and then we get it when we eat them. Arsenic besides being poisonous is a known carcinogen. The

antibiotics lead to resistant bacteria and other superbugs that cause health problems. This is why I warn people about the dangers of these type of products.

The Arbor Gate blend is an exception to the normal poultry manure products and the only one I would recommend. First the Arbor Gate blend only uses manure from organically raised chickens hence there is no antibiotics or arsenic in them.

Secondly the type of chickens is "Layers" for egg production not "Broilers" for meat production. As a result the chickens are given different types of feed. For Layers they are fed extra nutrition to keep the birds healthy for a long productive egg laying life versus Broilers which are given feed that makes them just gain weight fast and where the bird health is not important.

For example, Layers are fed extra calcium (Ca) and magnesium (Mg) so that the eggs will have strong shells. Some of this extra Ca and Mg ends up in the manure. This extra calcium addresses a common problem in Gulf Coast soils called "Blossom End Rot" on tomatoes due to a lack of calcium. Also many of the beneficial fungi in the soil require calcium. Note: All bird manures have higher salt levels than other animals but manure from Layers have less than from Broilers.

The Arbor Gate goes further and adds; Humates, 11 species of Mycorrhizae fungi and Molasses for an additional carbon source. These additions make the product work better than the cheap low quality brands.

SUMMARY:

This is a good well rounded product, reasonable priced and available locally. It is a general purpose fertilizer that works on any well drained soil where one wants to grow plants from turf grass to flowers, fruits or vegetables.

PROS:

- contains extra calcium and magnesium needed for most soils
- naturally slow release
- contains carbon as an energy source for the microbes
- nitrogen is in a readily available form for plants and microbes
- increases microbial diversity
- recycles manure waste products from poultry farms
- has Mycorrhizal fungi for plant health

CONS:

- higher salt levels than some other types of organic fertilizers
- limited availability (Arbor Gate only)
- may have short lived odors when wet
- may attract animals

ALSO: THE ANSWER TO LAST WEEK'S QUESTION BELOW IS: **CARBON**.

QUESTION FROM LAST WEEK:

"Which nutrient or element does a plant require the most of?"

Hint - It is not water (H₂O).

Congrats to Jennifer Companik, Ruth Flournoy, Susan Parish and Becky Houston for getting the answer right and winning a bag of leaf mold compost.

Stay tuned for more garden trivia questions!

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.)

Sat., June 21: 10 am. "Soil Food Web, How Organic Gardening Works", by John Ferguson, Cypresswood Water Conservation Garden at WCID 132, 4107 Evening Trail, Spring, Texas, 77388

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

Sat., June 21: Tomato Contest judged by Bill Adams, Jeremy Kollaus, Chef Chris Crowder, Randy Lemmon. 11am, The Arbor Gate, 15635 FM 2920 Rd, Tomball. Free. 281-351-8851, www.arborgate.com

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>

Mon., June 23: Plant Hunters: A World of Exploration (4th-5th graders), 9am-noon, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. \$80. 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., June 28: Backyard Basics - "Aquaponics" by Fort Bend Master Gardeners and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, 8:30-11 am, Fort Bend County Extension Office at 1402 Band Rd., Rosenberg. \$15 (\$25 couples). Details:

brandy.rader@ag.tamu.edu, 281-342-3034, <http://fortbend.agrilife.org/>, www.fbmng.com

Thurs., July 3: "Judging Phalaenopsis with Remarks on Cultivation" by Olie Garrison, 7:30pm,
www.houstonorchidsociety.org

Sat., July 5: Grow Delicious Tomatoes for Fall, 10:15am, Cornelius Nursery, 1200 N. Dairy Ashford and 2233 S. Voss. Free. <http://www.corneliusnurseries/clinics>

Sat., July 5: Preserving Summer Harvest by Lisa & Jim Jenkins, 10am-4pm, Sunshine Farm, 5800 Jackson Rd., Montgomery. Free. Details: Sunshine Farm

Sat., July 12: Bird Friendly Backyard, 10:15am, Cornelius Nursery, 1200 Dairy Ashford and 2233 S. Voss. Free.
<http://www.corneliusnurseries/clinics>

Wed., July 16: 7:30pm. "Soil Food Web, How Organic Gardening Works", by John Ferguson
, Cross Creek Ranch Community Room, Fulshear.

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 19: 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. (Note date change from previously published)

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

Sat., July 26: Mercer Botanic Gardens' Summer Color Plant Sale and Conference, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Conference, 8am-3pm. \$65. 11am-Plant Sale opens to public. Conference registration: 281-443-8731.
Details: www.hcp4.net/mercer

Fri.-Sat., Aug.8-9: Houston Orchid Society 35th Annual Summer Workshop, St. John the Divine Episcopal Church, 2450 River Oaks Blvd. "Northern Caribbean Species and Hybrids" by Claude Hamilton; "Mysteries of Orchid Pollination" by Thomas Mirenda; "Orchid Growing in Texas" by Todd Miller. Fees and details:
houstonorchidsociety.org

Sat., Aug. 23: "Organic Gardening, Making your Yard Safe for Children and Pets", Woodlands Home and Garden show, John Ferguson, 11:30 am, Woodlands Marriott Hotel

Thurs., Oct. 2: Garden Club of Houston Bulb and Plant Mart Early Bird Shopping and Party, 4:30-7:30, St. John the Divine Episcopal Church, 2450 River Oaks Blvd. \$20. Details: www.gchouston.org/BulbPlantMart.aspx. (Note new site)

Fri., Oct. 3: Garden Club of Houston Bulb and Plant Mart, 9am-5pm; St. John the Divine Episcopal Church 2450 River Oaks Blvd. Free. Details: www.gchouston.org/BulbPlantMart.aspx. (Note new site)

Sat., Oct. 4: Garden Club of Houston Bulb and Plant Mart, 9am- 2pm, St. John the Divine Episcopal Church 2450 River Oaks Blvd. Free. www.gchouston.org/BulbPlantMart.aspx. (Note new site)

Thur., Oct. 9: "Soil Biology and Gardening", "Mulches and Compost", "Backyard and Small Scale Composting" by John Ferguson, Mercer Arboretum, 9am - 3 pm, Texas Gulf Coast Gardeners Class.

Tues., Nov. 18: "Ten Commandments of Lazy Gardening" by Brenda Beust Smith, 10am, Knights of Columbus Hall, 702 Burney Road, Sugar Land. Sugar Land Garden Club event. Details: sugarlandgardenclub.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.

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Pesticides and Children: Why Kids and Expectant Mothers Are Urged to Eat Organic

Many recent studies investigating pesticides and pregnancy and pesticides and children's health found that agricultural chemicals such as chlorpyrifos, 2,4-D and permethrins are linked to increased risk of brain damage, cancer and other serious conditions.

By [Barbara Pleasant](#)

June/July 2014

Kids are especially vulnerable to chemicals, and thus will benefit greatly from eating organically grown food.

Photo by Fotolia/Brian Jackson

Pesticides and other chemicals in food are a threat to people of all ages, but a batch of recent studies show that children and expectant mothers pay the highest price for pesticide exposure.

A [2012 study](#) from researchers at University of California, Davis and UCLA found that, based solely on what kids participating in the study ate, cancer benchmark levels "were exceeded by all children (100 percent) for arsenic, dieldrin, DDE and dioxins." The team's strongest advice for avoiding cancer, based on this finding? Children should eat primarily organic dairy products, fruits and vegetables to reduce pesticide intake.

Mainstream health professionals have been slow to advocate organic food consumption, but many have voiced concerns about the cumulative effect pesticides have on young brains and bodies. Many chemicals consumed daily by kids who eat conventional and processed foods are endocrine disruptors, which means the chemicals are capable of interfering with development. And though pesticides and children decidedly don't mix, kids are still exposed in many ways, and they're taking in huge doses. In a [2013 Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\) study](#), urine samples from 135 preschool children tested positive for three unwelcome chemicals: chlorpyrifos (99 percent of children), 2,4-D (92 percent) and permethrins (64 percent). Though not tested for in this study, neonicotinoids are another pervasive pesticide threatening children's health. So, what exactly are these chemicals?

Chlorpyrifos is an organophosphate insecticide used on grains, cotton, fruits, nuts, vegetable crops, lawns and ornamental plants. In a [2012 study](#) funded by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, pregnant women's exposure to chlorpyrifos was associated with brain damage in their children that resulted in reduced intelligence. Numerous studies have suggested a link between childhood exposure to organophosphate insecticides and [attention-deficit disorders](#).

2,4-D is one of the most widely used herbicides in the world, and its application rate is about to increase even more thanks to the deployment of new crops genetically engineered to be resistant to it. Water and residues on food are sources of this endocrine disruptor, and recent tests suggest some [2,4-D may be laced with dioxin](#), one of the most potent of all known carcinogens.

Permethrins are increasingly abundant, broad-spectrum insecticides for indoor and outdoor application. A [2013 Canadian study](#) found permethrins in 97 percent of urine samples from grade-school children. Another 2013 study [Another 2013 study](#), published in the journal Environmental Health Perspectives, found high

permethrin levels in New York City residents. More than any other pesticide group, [permethrins have been linked to autism](#). If a child is genetically predisposed to autism, exposure to permethrins can activate the disorder. The EPA classifies permethrins as "likely to be carcinogenic to humans," but permethrin insecticides are used on many food crops, and are the most common active ingredient in indoor/outdoor insect sprays (look for active ingredients ending in "rin"). Mosquito misting systems spray permethrins into the air several times a day, indoor foggers gas homes or buildings with permethrins, and any insecticide that claims to "kill on contact" usually includes a permethrin as an active ingredient. Chances of direct exposure rise in summer, when these insecticides are most commonly sprayed, but permethrins can persist in dust on surfaces, especially in enclosed spaces. Young children are apt to come into contact with toxic chemical dusts because they typically spend so much time close to the ground.

Neonicotinoids are potent pesticides notorious for killing bees, and residues do persist on fruits and vegetables. A 2012 Japanese study was the first to show that [neonicotinoids](#) affect brain development in mammals. The researchers warned that "detailed investigation of the neonicotinoids is needed to protect the health of human children."

The compendium of chemicals that may threaten children's health is much longer, and a [2013 Australian study](#) revealed that exposure of either the mother or father to certain pesticides during the year before a child's birth can even increase risk of brain cancer for the child. The American Academy of Pediatrics recently [called for more research](#) on links between pesticides and children's ailments - specifically birth defects, childhood cancers, behavior disorders and asthma. It also advocates feeding children organic food to lower pesticide exposure, asserting that young children whose brains are developing are uniquely vulnerable to chemicals. While eating organic food doesn't address other areas of exposure to cancer-causing pesticides, when it comes to kids, the benefits of an organically grown diet are especially vital. For information on which conventionally grown fruits and vegetables have the most pesticide residues, go to the Environmental Working Group's [Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce](#).

Contributing editor Barbara Pleasant gardens in southwest Virginia, where she grows vegetables, herbs, fruits, flowers and a few lucky chickens. Contact Barbara by visiting [her website](#) or finding her on Google+.

Read more: <http://www.motherearthnews.com/natural-health/pesticides-and-children-zmgz14jjzsto.aspx#ixzz34XA9Q9md>

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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.

Brenda recently ended her decades-long stint as Production Manager of the Garden Club of America's **BULLETIN** magazine. Although still an active horticulture lecturer and broad-based freelance writer, Brenda's main focus now is **THE LAZY GARDENER & 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.



COUPON: Buy three antique roses and get one free at Nature's Way Resources www.natureswayresources.com .

Offer Expires: 06/31/14