



June 27, 2014

Dear Friends,

Here is the 62nd issue of our weekly gardening newsletter for Houston, the Gulf Coast and beyond. This is 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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*Clarewood Houston Retirement Community gardeners, l to r, David and Gladys Laws, Margaret Sanders and Edna McDonald don't let passing time stop them from turning the spades.*

**"You don't stop gardening when you grow old,  
you grow old when you stop gardening"**

*-- George Bernard Shaw or Maurice Chevalier (depending on whom you google)*

by **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

My apologies to George and/or Maurice for paraphrasing this famous quote. They were talking about laughing. But it's just as true for gardening.

It's so easy to say "Oh, I'm getting too old to garden." Just don't utter such sentiments in front of Edna McDonald, Margaret Sanders or David and Gladys Laws.

These energetic "seniors" made me feel like a really-lazy gardener.

Or, maybe they're just energized by oxygen highs from the plants they're tending!

After all, plants expel H<sub>2</sub>O and - in "oxygen bars" around the world - folks pay good money for such stimulating inhales.

With the encouragement of, and a cooperative hand from, the staffers at Clarewood Senior Community, residents are encouraged to plant and maintain their own garden plots right on site. Clarewood built the slightly-raised gardens and provides water, but - as any gardener knows - that's only stage one in a successful harvest.

Seems sad, doesn't it, that turning "a certain age" in the future probably won't reflect youthful gardening chore know-how the way it does now?

Edna, nee Lynch, who grew up in Leona, TX, admits she "still has dirt under my fingernails" from her childhood on the family farm. Gladys' dad had a vegetable garden but this is her first real go at growing her own edibles. The Laws' plot, she says, is really the result of a recommendation by David's doctor. They started from seeds of the most flavorful tiny 'Husky Cherry Red' tomatoes and, Gladys said, carefully marked the rows so they wouldn't weed out the wrong plants!

Margaret's green thumb is obvious in her huge 'Super Fantastic Tomato' bushes. Edna has a gorgeous rosemary, uses her bountiful mint harvests to flavor both tea and coffee, and mixes roses and mums with her edibles.



***Raised beds help Clarewood gardeners, l to r, David and Gladys Lawys, Margaret Sanders and Edna McDonald pose behind a massive squash planting. Center, Margaret thought these gift plants, when tiny, were going to be cucumbers. Surprise! They're squash. At right, Edna's incredibly fragrant rosemary.***

As with most Houston-area vegetable gardens, their harvests often exceed personal consumption capabilities. So these gardeners are cheerfully sharing with friends their basil, chard, squash, bell peppers and, of course,

tomatoes. Tiny cherry tomatoes are popping up in everyone's garden plot, including another resident, Emily Shepherd's, the result of seeds probably dropped when the beds were first built as a Boy Scout project several years ago. Clarewood had to move the beds to their current site abutting the Clarewood's back fence line.

These wouldn't be real gardens without invading critters, of course. Squirrels and birds going after tomatoes are thwarted (most of the time) by early picking. Pink turns to red on windowsills. Margaret interplants with marigolds, an effective insect deterrent.

These energetic seniors aren't ready for "accessible gardening" - the popular term for making growing vegetables and flowers easier through adapted tools, well-raised beds, vertical wall planters and other non-traditional-gardening tricks.

These "make-it-more-convenient" adaptations are extremely popular now for those with various challenges, including bending, squatting, reaching or simply limited stamina.

Truth be told, accessible gardening techniques are GREAT for lazy gardeners.

Back to George and/or Maurice's observations . . . tune in next week for some (amazingly simple) accessible gardening tips every lazy gardener should consider.

I'll give you a hint. Forget everything you know about traditional labor-intensive garden designs.

\* \* \*

**SAD NOTICE:** Greater Houston area gardeners, and hibiscus lovers in particular, have lost a real treasure with the recent passing of Barry Schlueter. A longtime hybridizer and well-known American Hibiscus Society member, Barry made significant impacts on our gardens with his fabulous hybrids. Our sympathies to all his close friends in the AHS Lone Star chapter.

\* \* \*

Below, in our Spotlight on Plant Organizations, Anna Wygrys shares some tips on reducing our weed invasions. Ann is with the Galveston County Master Gardeners. Not familiar with Master Gardeners? Becoming a Master Gardener was the best thing I ever did.

Every one of the 10 counties in the Greater Houston area has a Master Gardener program. Learn more about yours at 1. [Brazoria County Master Gardeners](#), 2. [Chambers County Master Gardeners](#), 3. [Fort Bend County Master Gardeners](#), 4. [Galveston County Master Gardeners](#), 5. [Harris County Master Gardeners](#), 6. [Jefferson County Master Gardeners](#), 7. [Liberty County Master Gardeners](#), 8. [Montgomery County Master Gardeners](#), 9. [Waller County Master Gardeners](#), 10. [Washington County Master Gardeners](#)



## **NUT SEDGE (AKA NUTGRASS) PUBLIC ENEMY #1**

In her upcoming "Homeowner's Guide to Weed Control" Seminar, Anna Wygrys will point out that most of us *"know most of the weeds by their common names. 'Nutgrass' is not a grass, but a sedge. A cross section of the stem shows that the foliage grows in a whorl of 3 blades forming a triangle. This is a characteristic of sedges.*

*Grass blades grow randomly from a crown. Sedge roots are coarse, rhizomatous and use multiple reproduction methods. New plants form at intervals along a rhizome, creating large colonies. Purple nutsedge is worse than the yellow. No wonder they are the number 1 weed in the world.*

# Spotlighting . . . The Galveston County Master Gardeners!

*Lazy Gardener and Friends Newsletter*

## **I. W. M. - Integrated Weed Management**

By ANNA WYGRYS, Galveston County Master Gardeners

Integrated Weed Management? Never heard of it? Integrated Weed Management is an international educational program researched, designed, implemented, and sponsored by agricultural universities and horticulture agencies promoting weed prevention and control.

IWM promotes a combination of various weed management practices to reduce a pest plant population to a tolerable level while preserving the quality of existing habitat, water and other natural resources. These balanced methods start with good weed prevention practices.

1. Purchase good quality soil amendments. Do not purchase contaminated soil products from poorly maintained soil yards.
2. When purchasing plants from commercial sources inspect the root ball. If possible remove the soil before planting. The alternative is to remove one inch of the top soil and one-half inch around the sides and

bottom of the root ball. Many invasive weed seeds are notorious hitchhikers.

3. Plan ahead and prepare new beds a month to six weeks prior to planting. Dig and turn the soil to a depth of approximately six inches exposing buried seeds that will sprout when exposed to light and moisture. Remove the new weed sprouts and repeat three or four times.
4. Do not leave soil bare and open to the sun. Cover with newspaper, mulch or weed barrier to prevent germination of existing seeds or infestation from new sources. A cover crop helps to prevent weed invasions.
5. Remove weed seedlings as soon as recognizable. Many weed species can bloom and set seed when very young.
6. DO NOT ALLOW WEEDS TO MATURE AND BLOOM! Remember "one year of seeds equals seven years of weeds" because many weed seeds survive and are viable for years.
7. Mulching is a good weed prevention practice. A layer of seven to ten sheets of newspaper topped by three to four inches of course mulch will significantly reduce weed germination and growth. Reapply mulch when it composts and deteriorates to a depth of one inch.
8. Mow lawns regularly to prevent growth and reproduction of weed seeds. If there is a weed infestation, catch and dispose of the clippings.
9. DO NOT COMPOST WEEDS! Weed seeds are tough - that is why they are a problem.

The number one weed problem in the world is Nut Sedge. Yellow Nutsedge, *Cyperus esculentus*, reproduces by seed, spreading roots, and underground nuts. The roots host bacteria which depletes soil nitrogen.

Sat., July 19: A homeowner's Guide to Weed Control by Anna Wygrys, 9-11:30am, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office, 4102-B Main St. (FM 519), La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener event. Details: 281-534-3413.

\* \* \* MARK YOUR CALENDAR!!

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

\* \* \*

\*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](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net)

\* \* \*

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

## John's Corner



## Organic Fertilizers and Nutrients - 5

In visiting with customers this week, the subject of organic fertilizers came up. The question of "WHY?" came up many times. So I am going to list a few of the reasons WHY?

- Organic fertilizers contain trace minerals which are often critical to plant health and growth and missing in artificial fertilizers.
- Organic fertilizers do not leach out of the soils as compared to water soluble artificial chemical fertilizers.
- Organic fertilizers do not contain harmful salts that contaminate soil and create hardpan as is the case with artificial chemical fertilizers.
- Organic fertilizers last longer in the soil hence are cheaper in the long term (on turf grass only two applications of an organic fertilizer gives better results than 4 applications with an artificial fertilizer).
- Organic fertilizers do not burn the roots of plants.
- Organic fertilizers do not destroy beneficial microorganisms and earthworms.
- Organic fertilizers increase a plant's resistance to disease and insects! (Artificial fertilizers do the opposite which works out nicely for the manufacturers since they sell more insecticide, fungicides and other chemical poisons. Plants become addicted to the chemicals.)
- Many brands contain Mycorrhizal fungi for plant health
- Organic fertilizers are naturally slow release
- Organic fertilizers contains carbon as an energy source for the microbes
- Organic fertilizers increase microbial diversity
- Organic fertilizers recycles waste products from many industries
- Organic fertilizers build soils humus and improve the soil quality
- Organic fertilizers increase nutrients like Vitamin C content compared to synthetic nitrogen fertilizers (USDA).
- Organic fertilizers nourish AND improve the soil. Feeding your plants nothing but nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium (artificial fertilizers) is like feeding your children nothing but cookies. Plants need a balance of nutrients; macro, minor, and trace.

- Research at Cornell University has shown that corn fertilized with cow manure suffered less corn rootworm damage than control plots fertilized with the same amount of nutrients from synthetic chemical fertilizers.
- Similar research in Minnesota showed that Alfalfa fertilized with cow manure gave larger yields than control plots fertilized with synthetic chemical fertilizers. Synthetic fertilizers create weak growth that actually attracts pest insects (remember the example - lace bugs on azaleas).
- Organic fertilizers are easier to use as we are feeding the soil and let the soil feed the plants. When using artificial fertilizers we need many types (hibiscus, azalea, rose, palm tree, violet, lawn, citrus, houseplant, etc.).

SUMMARY: The advantages are so overwhelming, the real question is "WHY NOT".

QUESTION: For a coupon for a free bag of "Composted Native Mulch" to the first five respondents with the correct answer:

"Some of the algae that live on the surface of the soil have shown the ability to fix nitrogen from the air into the soil, IF there is a certain nutrient (element) present. What is that nutrient?"

Hint: It is used as a catalyst in the process.

## 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 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](http://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](mailto:brandy.rader@ag.tamu.edu), 281-342-3034, <http://fortbend.agrilife.org/>, [www.fbmjg.com](http://www.fbmjg.com)

**Thurs., July 3: "Judging Phalaenopsis with Remarks on Cultivation"** by Olie Garrison, 7:30pm, [www.houstonorchidsociety.org](http://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

**Wed., July 9: Secrets of Brewery Plants** by Southern Star Brewery, noon-2pm, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine Westfield, Humble. 8am-3pm. Free. Details: [www.hcp4.net/mercer](http://www.hcp4.net/mercer)

**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](http://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](http://www.texasroserustlers.com) or 281-443-8731. (Note date change from previously published)

**Sat., July 19: A homeowner's Guide to Weed Control** by Anna Wygrys, 9-11:30am, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office, 4102-B Main St. (FM 519), La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener event. Details: 281-534-3413.

**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](http://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](http://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 Miranda; "Orchid Growing in Texas" by Todd Miller. Fees and details:  
[houstonorchidsociety.org](http://houstonorchidsociety.org)

**Wed., Aug. 13: Orchid Growing 101** by Bruce Cameron, noon-2pm, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine Westfield, Humble. 8am-3pm. Free. Details: [www.hcp4.net/mercer](http://www.hcp4.net/mercer)

**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

**Sat.-Sun., Aug. 23-24: 12th Annual Fall Home & Garden Show**, 9am-7pm Sat., 10am-6pm Sun., The Woodlands Waterway Marriott, 1601 Lake Robbins Dr. Garden speakers Mark Bowen, John Ferguson, Randy Lemmon & Brenda Beust Smith. Details: [www.woodlandsshow.com](http://www.woodlandsshow.com)

**Sun., Aug. 24: "Q&A with the Lazy Gardener" by Brenda Beust Smith**, 11:30am on stage with cuttings give-away, noon-4pm in booth, Woodlands Home & Garden Show (see above).

**Sat., Sept. 27: Texas Rose Rustlers 2014 Fall Cutting Exchange**, 10am, [Brookwood Community](http://BrookwoodCommunity.com), Brookshire. To request cuttings of specific antique roses, email: [thetexasroserustlers@texasroserustlers.com](mailto:thetexasroserustlers@texasroserustlers.com). Details: [texasroserustlers.com](http://texasroserustlers.com)

**Sat., Sept. 27: Sugar Land Garden Club Fall Festival and Plant Sale**, 8:30am-1pm, Knights of Columbus Hall, 702 Burney Road, Sugar Land (new location). Details: [www.SugarLandGardenClub.org](http://www.SugarLandGardenClub.org); Diana Miller, 713-724-3113, [dmiller@realtor.com](mailto:dmiller@realtor.com)

**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](http://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](http://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](http://www.gchouston.org/BulbPlantMart.aspx). (Note new site)

**Sat.-Sun., Oct. 4-5: Spring Branch African Violet Club Annual Fall Sale**, 10am-4pm Sat., 10am-3pm Sun, Judson Robinson Jr. Community Center, 2020 Hermann Dr. Free. Details: Karla Ross, 281-748-8417, [kjwross@yahoo.com](mailto:kjwross@yahoo.com)

**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.

**Fri.-Sat., Oct. 10-11: The Southern Garden Symposium**, St. Francisville, LA.  
<http://www.southerngardensymposium.org/>

**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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net).  
Please help us grow by informing all your membership of this weekly newsletter!*



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

Offer Expires: 07/06/14