



November 14, 2014

Dear Friends,

Here is the 83rd 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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*The Native Plant Society's big Plant and Seed Swap will help more gardeners try great garden-friendly natives like, left to right, scarlett buckeye, Gaillardia pulchella (Indian blanket, fire wheel, blanket flower) and Gaillardia aestivalis (lance-leaved gaillardia).*

## BURR . . . NATIVE GOODIES . . . PLANT SWAPS . . . CITRUS CELEBRATION

### BY BRENDA BEUST SMITH

**Wow - this early freeze came as a real shocker. Normally our first "average" freeze is the first week of December. If your hardy plants were really well mulched - as they all should be - then they'll probably bounce right back. If not, well . . . it's not too late.**

**All those leaves neighbors are setting out for the garbage pickup? They're free and they make great mulch. If you have plenty of leaves/pine needles in your own yard, simply rake them into the garden. They'll keep the soil warm and moist, protecting roots for the rest of the winter.**

\* \* \*

**Plant swaps have become quite the thing these days as folks search for more super-**

hardy, low-care plants. What better place to look than at plants thriving in your neighbors' yards?

Plant swaps are a win-win event. Some folks get to clean out their gardens of "too-happy" plants. Others find great new varieties to try. And it's all free!

The key to success: plan ahead. Like, right now for a spring swap.

Some swaps are open to all plants, bulbs, seeds, etc. Others are getting even more specific. A great example: the Native Plant Society of Texas/Houston's Thurs., Nov. 20, Native Seed & Plant Swap (7:30-9pm at the Houston Arboretum & Nature Center, 4501 Woodway. Free. Details: [www.npsot.org/houston](http://www.npsot.org/houston))

NPSOT's rules are simple: bring only plants and seeds of good landscape natives. If you don't have any, not a problem. Go anyway. NPSOT/Houston members have more than enough to fill the tables.

Coming from these folks, available plants will be not only desirable, landscape-friendly choices (not all natives are!), but will attract butterflies, hummers and other birds as well.

Pictured above and below are a few of the "shared" plants available at the Native Plant Society Swap, including:

\* **Gaillardia** - in the Asteraceae Family, a great plant for home and school gardens. The two local species don't get too tall and bloom throughout warm seasons with colorful flowers that attract pollinators and butterflies. *Gaillardia pulchella* (also known as Indian blanket, firewheel and blanket flower) is a short-lived perennial that can be used as an annual. *Gaillardia aestivalis*, lance-leaved gaillardia, is a perennial plant.

\* **Rusty Blackhaw Viburnum** - a beautiful viburnum native to Houston. Large white clusters of spring flowers, fruit for birds and a bright red fall color.

\* **Spiderwort** - delightful spring blooming native wildflower. Two varieties are commonly found in Houston, Ohio Spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohioensis*) and Prairie Spiderwort, (*Tradescantia occidentalis*).

\* **Scarlet Buckeye** - small tree, easily grown from seed

November is a great month to start seeds. Now that we've had this freeze, might want to start them first in pots or starter kits available at nurseries. For those already in the ground, NPSOT's Linda Knowles recommends covering the seedlings with newspaper, cardboard or the freeze-protection sheets available at nurseries.

Take all coverings off as soon as temperatures rise. In this area, it can get quite hot under coverings during the day. For this reason, plastic is not a good idea.



**More garden-friendly natives available at the Native Plant Society's Plant & Seed Swap will be, left to right, rusty blackhaw viburnum, Ohio Spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohioensis*) and Prairie Spiderwort, (*Tradescantia occidentalis*).**

It's so easy to create unnecessary busy-work and frustration with plant swaps. If you don't already have a dragoman to help you get started, take note . . .

## **PLANT SWAP ORGANIZER TIPS**

\* **plan for advance notice.** While it's better to take actual cuttings the day of the sale, sometimes it's more convenient to prune earlier and start cuttings in soil, using paper cups or other small containers. Be sure to poke drainage holes in bottom.

*(Never started cuttings? Next week some great youngsters will tell you how!)*

\* **Start small - clubs, neighborhoods, communities, churches and schools are great focal groups.** This will give you a feel for what folks will bring, how they will bring

plants, and what they will expect.

\* **Don't advertise outside your group/neighborhood until you have hosted one small swap. You'll learn a lot!**

\* **Make rules a priority. For example, folks with plants to share come from 9-11 a.m. From 11 a.m.-1 p.m., those with no plants to swap can come and pick up un-swapped plants.**

\* **Ask for "reservations" the first year so you'll know how many to expect. But bring a few extra tables for those who show up at the last minute with great swap plants (you may want some of these!)**

\* **Get to the site at least an hour early to make sure all goes as planned.**

\* **As a guideline for future swaps, keep a journal of what did/didn't work or unexpected problems that arose.**

### **SWAPPERS SHOULD BE TOLD TO:**

**A. Bring all plants potted or cleanly bagged and clearly labeled with:**

- 1. Name of plant (if known). Botanical plus common best.**
- 2. Site (sun, shade, part-sun, well-drained, poorly drained)**
- 3. Bloom period & color (if applicable)**
- 4. Height, does it spread? Clump?**

**B. Provide their own bags for taking plants home**

**C. Bring have their own set-ups (table, cloth, drinks, snacks, etc.)**

**And ... perhaps most important...**

**D. Expect to help clean up and take their unswapped plants home!**

Houston has a number of plant swap groups/websites, etc. Check these out and, please, if you know of any others, let us know. We also welcome plant swap notices for our calendar below.

\* <http://plantmeet.com/>

\* <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/Houston-Plant-Exchange/info>

\* <http://www.freewebs.com/gcplantswap/index.htm>

If you want to see how truly sophisticated plant swaps can become, check out this website for the huge San Antonio Festival of Flowers

Swap: [www.safestivalofflowers.com/plant.html](http://www.safestivalofflowers.com/plant.html)

\* \* \*

If swapping citrus know-how is more to your liking, Galveston County is focusing big time on this fruit on Thursday, Dec. 4. Home gardeners are invited to enter fruits in the big free Texas Upper Gulf Coast Citrus Show at Galveston County AgriLife Extension in Carbide Park, 4102 Main in La Marque. Entries will be displayed 7:30-7pm, with winners announced at 7. The same night A&M AgriLife's Monte L. Nesbitt will speak on "Citrus Greening." Free, but reservations needed. Details on both events: 81-534-3413, [galv3@wt.net](mailto:galv3@wt.net), or [www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston](http://www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston).

## **JOHN'S CORNER**

### **Organic Fertilizers and Nutrients - 17**

### **Iron Phosphate**



Most of our readers know both iron (Fe) and phosphorous (P) are required for plant growth and health. So this begs the question, where do they come from?

Natural sources include the mineral apatite, fossilized bones, and bird droppings (guano). It is often found in excess from the outflows of sewage treatment plants.

Phosphorus is usually found in nature combined with oxygen (O) into the form we call Phosphate ( $\text{PO}_4^{3-}$ ). Phosphate is used in many molecules that are essential for life such as ATP (adenosine triphosphate), which is used for the storage of energy as well as DNA and RNA molecules. It is found in all plants and animals from algae to humans.

A lack of phosphorous can be a limiting agent in the growth of plants. Too little and growth may be slow or stunted and too much then excessive growth. Phosphorous deficiency induces reddening to purple stems and leaves, poor flowering and fruiting. The too much is often the cause of massive algae blooms in our waterways or leads to leaf chlorosis. Too much phosphorous in the soil prevents roots from absorbing iron and manganese (Mn). It also reduces or prevents the growth of mycorrhizal fungi that is so critical for healthy plants.

So what does this have to do with Iron Phosphate? The most common source of iron phosphate ( $\text{FePO}_4$ ) is from products to control snails and slugs in our gardens like Sluggo<sup>R</sup>. These products work well and are inexpensive but they can build up in the soil with frequent repeated use. Iron phosphate slowly dissolves in water hence it is normally relatively benign in the environment. The problem occurs with the additives such as EDTA, a chemical to make the iron and phosphorous more absorbable by life forms. There are numerous reports that this combination can kill earthworms and our dogs that like to lick it.

#### SUMMARY:

Iron phosphate is not a good choice to provide iron or phosphorous to our gardens. If it comes from a bait for slugs and snails we need to use sparingly as it can build up in the soil and cause problems if it contains additives often listed as inert ingredients. May cause excessive amounts of phosphorous in the soil creating nutrient imbalances and tie-up problems. If we only use it occasionally to help control our slugs and snails then it should not be a issue. High organic matter content of our soils with healthy microbial populations minimizes the risks and problems.

#### PROS:

- inexpensive
- readily available
- controls slugs and snails

#### CONS:

- not water soluble
- may contain additives
- too much causes soil and plant health problems
- may be toxic to pets
- may be toxic to earthworms
- may cause nutrient tie-up problems

**WEEKLY GARDENING EVENTS &  
ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## CALENDAR

***Gardening events only. Events listed are in Houston unless otherwise noted. Events must be written in the format used below, specifically earmarked for publication in the "Lazy Gardener & Friends Newsletter." Email to [lazygardener@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net)***

**Sat., Nov. 15: Edible Wild Plants**, 9am-1pm, Houston Arboretum & Nature Center, 4501 Woodway Drive. \$65. Details: [www.houstonarboretum.org](http://www.houstonarboretum.org)

**Sat, Nov 15: Urban Harvest's Fruit Tree Care**. 9-11:30am. \$36. UH Central Campus, 4800 Calhoun, Oberholtzer Hall. Details: 713-880-5540 or [www.urbanharvest.org](http://www.urbanharvest.org)

**Sun., Nov. 16: Living Witnesses: Historic Trees of Texas by Ralph Yznaga**, noon, Moody Mansion, 2618 Broadway St, Galveston. Moody Mansion Galveston Island Tree Conservancy Arbor Day Celebration Brunch. Tickets: [galvestonislandtreeconservancy.org/sponsor-arbor-day-2014/](http://galvestonislandtreeconservancy.org/sponsor-arbor-day-2014/)

**Sun., Nov, 16: Starting Seeds Indoors by Biddy Swiney**, 1:30-3:30pm, Wabash Feed & Garden Store, 5701 Washington Ave. Free. Details: [wabashfeed.com](http://wabashfeed.com); 713-863-8322

**Mon., Nov. 17: Building Healthy Soils Saves Money Now by John Ferguson**. 2-3 p.m., Montgomery County Master Gardeners, 9020 Airport Road, Conroe TX <http://www.mcmga.com/>

**Mon., Nov. 17, Open Garden Day, with Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2**. 8:30-11am, Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. 9:30am: Educational Programs/ MG Q&A. Open garden/plant sale every Monday May-Oct. Free. Details: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu>

**Tues., Nov. 18: Cool Season Color and Edibles by T. Polk**, 10am, Knights of Columbus Hall, 702 Burney Road, Sugar Land. Sugar Land Garden Club event. Details: [sugarlandgardenclub.org](http://sugarlandgardenclub.org)

**Wed., Nov., 19: Flora of Costa Rica by Dick and Phyllis McEuen**, 7:30pm, Multi Service Center, 1475 West Gray. Free. Houston Cactus & Succulent Society event. Details: <http://hcsstex.org/>

**Thurs., Nov. 20: Native Seed & Plant Swap and Social**, 7:30-9 pm, Houston Arboretum, 4501 Woodway. Free. Native Plant Society of Texas/Houston Chapter event. Details: [www.npsot.org/houston](http://www.npsot.org/houston)

**Thurs, Nov 20: Starting a Community or School Garden, Class 2**. 6:30 - 9:00pm. 6:30-9pm. \$36. Urban Harvest, 2311 Canal St # 124. Details: 713-880-5540 or [www.urbanharvest.org](http://www.urbanharvest.org)

**Sat, Nov 22: Urban Harvest's Winter Vegetable Gardening**. 9-11am. \$45. UH Central Campus, 4800 Calhoun, McElhinney Hall, Room 106. Details: [713-880-5540](http://713-880-5540) or [www.urbanharvest.org](http://www.urbanharvest.org)

**Sat-Sun., Nov. 22-23: Heritage Gardeners in Friendswood 48th Annual Christmas Home Tour**, 1-5pm. \$10 pre-tour; \$15 tour day. One starting point: Marie Workman Garden Center, 112 West Spreading Oaks. Details: [heritagegardener.org](http://heritagegardener.org) or 713-534-7662.

**Sat-Sun, Nov. 22-23: Peckerwood Garden Open Weekend**, 20559 FM 359 Road, Hempstead. Guided tours 10am & 1pm. (No children under 12). \$10. Plant sale 10am-3pm. Free. Details: [peckerwoodgarden.org](http://peckerwoodgarden.org)

**Tues., Nov. 25: Harris County Master Gardeners Open Garden Day**, 9-11:30am; **Protecting Plants in Winter**: 10am adult workshop, children's activities. Free. AgriLife Extension Office, 3033 Bear Creek Dr. Details: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu>

**Sun., Nov 30: Landscaping with Texas Native Trees, Shrubs & Vines**, 2pm-5pm, Houston Arboretum & Nature Center, 4501 Woodway Drive. \$45. Details: [www.houstonarboretum.org](http://www.houstonarboretum.org).

**Tues., Dec. 2: Harris County Vegetable Trials and Texas SuperStars Update by Skip Richter**, noon, County Extension Office auditorium, 3033 Bear Creek Dr. Free. Harris County Master Gardener event. Details: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/pubP2.aspx>

**Thurs., Dec. 4: All About Citrus by Dr. Ethan Natelson**, 6:30pm sign-in, 7pm program, Harris County AgriLife Extension Service Auditorium, 3033 Bear Creek Drive. Free. Gulf Coast Fruit Study Group event. Details: Yvonne Gibbs at [ambra1@att.net](mailto:ambra1@att.net) or [www.gcfsg.weebly.com](http://www.gcfsg.weebly.com)

**Thurs., Dec. 4: Texas Upper Gulf Coast Citrus Show**, 6:30-7pm; **Citrus Greening by Monte L. Nesbitt**, 7:15-8pm, Galveston County AgriLife Extension in Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. Free. Reservations required for "Citrus Greening"; home citrus growers entry details: [galv3@wt.net](mailto:galv3@wt.net), [www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston](http://www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston).

**Sat., Dec. 6: Deck the Halls Workshop**, 9am-noon, SFA Pineywoods Native Plant Center, 2900 Raguet, Nacogdoches. \$30. Reservations: [sfagardens@sfasu.edu](mailto:sfagardens@sfasu.edu) or 936-468-1832.

**Sat., Dec. 6: Growing Tomatoes From Seed by Ira Gervais**, 9-11am; **Herbs in the Garden by Cindy Croft**, 1-3pm, Galveston County AgriLife Extension in Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. Free. Details: [galv3@wt.net](mailto:galv3@wt.net), [www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston](http://www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston).

**Wed., Dec. 10: What is a Galveston County Master Gardener?...it takes a village! by Dr. William Johnson**, 1:30-3pm, Galveston County AgriLife Extension in Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. Free. Email reservation to [galv@wt.net](mailto:galv@wt.net). Details: [www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston](http://www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston).

**Thurs., Dec. 11: Galveston County AgriLife Extension Open House with Dr. William Johnson**, 11am-3pm, Galveston County

AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque; Ph 281-534-3413.

**Sat.-Sun., Dec 13-14: Winter Native Plant Sale**, 9am-4pm, Houston Arboretum & Nature Center, 4501 Woodway Drive. Details: [www.houstonarboretum.org](http://www.houstonarboretum.org)

**Mon., Dec. 15: Open Garden Day with Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2**, 8:30-11am, Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. Q&A. Free. Details: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu>

**Sat., Dec. 20: Edible Wild Plants**, 9am-1pm, Houston Arboretum & Nature Center, 4501 Woodway Drive, Houston. \$65. Details: [www.houstonarboretum.org](http://www.houstonarboretum.org)

**Sat., Jan. 31, 2015: Fruit Tree Sale by Harris County Master Gardeners**. 9am-1pm, County Extension Office, 3033 Bear Creek Dr. Details: [hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/pubSales.aspx](http://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/pubSales.aspx)

**Mon., April 21 2015: What's Blooming in the Lazy Gardener's Garden by Brenda Beust Smith**, 10am, Walden on Lake Houston Club House. Lake Houston Ladies Club event. Non-member reservations required: Carol Dandeneau. #832-671-4475

### **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.**

Events submitted in the exact format used above will receive priority in inclusion in the calendar. Events **NOT** submitted in our format 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!*

## THIS NEWSLETTER IS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS



## 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, certified permaculturist 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 article contributor.

### MARY BOWEN

Mary is a realtor with Coldwell Banker and an avid volunteer with the Montgomery County Animal Shelter.

With respect to the newsletter, Mary came up with the idea for the Garden Tails column and co-writes it. Mary is the newest addition to our group of contributors. We will expand her bio as we go.

### **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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[www.natureswayresources.com](http://www.natureswayresources.com) . (Offer good for retail purchases at Nature's Way Resources (101 Sherbrook Circle, Conroe TX).

**Offer Expires: 11/30/14**