



December 6, 2014

Dear Friends,

Here is the 85th 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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## LET THE BUTTERFLIES GO . . . REMEMBER THE HUMMERS WHO STAY . . . AND WATCH OUT FOR MEALY BUGS

BY BRENDA BEUST SMITH



*Gardeners' butterflyweed awareness (or lack thereof) is impacting monarchs. Left, Tropical butterflyweed (red/yellow/orange *Asclepias curassavica*) is a good planting for monarchs. But only if we treat it as an annual we replant every spring. Center and right, reseeding natives - orange butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) and swamp (or pink) milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*).*

If there's a leitmotif in this week's column of questions triggered by readers' queries, it's that - to misquote Chiffon Margarine's ol' commercial:

***"It's not nice to mess with Mother Nature."***

First, more on monarchs . . .

We've covered this before, but the questions keep coming. For example, reader Thalbert McGinness wrote she is willing to rid her yard of tropical butterflyweed if it will help eradicate Oe.

It is frustrating. The more experts learn about Oe, the dreaded Monarch threat, the more advice to us gardeners seems to be changing.

Generally speaking, experts use the term "milkweed" to refer to native *Asclepias* varieties, and "butterflyweed"

to refer to the non-native *Asclepias* varieties.

\* **TROPICAL BUTTERFLYWEED (*Asclepias curassavica*)** is our most common garden planting now. Experts now want us to call the familiar red-yellow-orange butterflyweed "tropical butterflyweed" or "Mexican butterflyweed." This monarch nectar/host plant is not a Texas native. It just reseeds so quickly here, it is starting to naturalize.

Tropical butterflyweed usually does not winter-over naturally, but it may prove root-hardy in our normal winters . . . and that's the problem. Protecting it so it will winter-over, even the roots, contributes to the proliferation of Oe.

\* Of the 30+ **TEXAS NATIVE MILKWEEDS, *Asclepias tuberosa*** is one the most attractive, with its orange/yellow flowers (no red) and somewhat hairy leaves. Another one growing in popularity is **Swamp Milkweed or Pink Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)**, with its pretty pink flowers. Others tend to have white, or greenish white flowers, yet are equally as attractive to monarchs. These native milkweeds die back in winter and return from their large, tuberous roots.

Are experts saying not to plant the red/yellow/orange tropical butterflyweed? The verdict is mixed - but Chip Taylor, head of **Monarch Watch** (see below for address), believes these iconic butterflies have a much bigger problem - huge loss of habitat in the corn belt.

Is there anything we can use to treat tropical butterflyweed to kill the Oe parasite?

Unfortunately, no - short of drastically cutting back your plants between each generation of monarchs that feed on it. Native milkweeds die back in the fall so do not harbor the Oe spores. Tropical butterflyweed does not die back (unless we get a hard freeze). The best alternative may be to treat tropical butterflyweed like an annual, like cosmos, zinnias, marigolds, pansies, all those plants we don't think twice about living only one year. In other words, dig up and destroy your tropical milkweeds in late September (before the migrating monarchs come through our area), and start over next spring with new plants.

If that thought tears at your sinews, Cockrell Butterfly Center Director Nancy Greig says it's okay to throw them in the compost pile. At least they're being recycled! She says as long as no monarchs lay eggs on the material, and no caterpillar eats it, the spores can't be spread. Neither one is likely on a dead plant.

Take the time to read Nancy's great blog - "[Cold Snap Raises Concern: How will the monarchs fare?](#)" - which arrived with perfect timing for reader Thalbert McGinness, who offered to rid of all her tropical butterflyweed to help combat Oe.

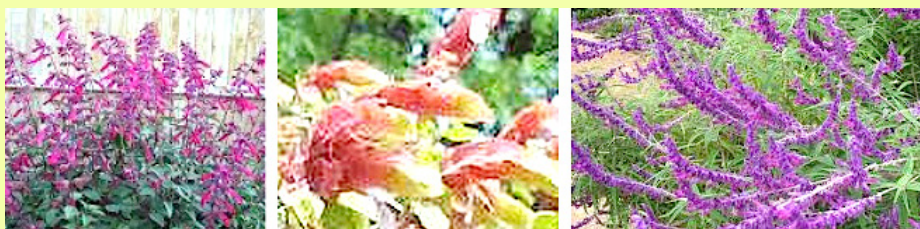
Tropical butterflyweed and native milkweed are both important plants to have in our spring and summer gardens, especially butterfly gardens. They provide both incredibly valuable host and nectar sources for monarchs. We just need to be willing to work with Mother Nature, not against her.

While monarchs are still plentiful in terms of sheer numbers, the number actually surviving the southern migration to Mexico's overwintering grounds has declined by an alarming 90 percent, prompting many to urge they be added to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife's Endangered Species List. Oe is only one possible factor in that decline, but it's a very real threat.

Some experts are also saying that trying to save our now expansive plantings of tropical butterflyweed over winter not only encourages the growth of Oe, but also encourages too many monarchs to (fatally) winter-over here instead of heading south into Mexico.

Says Nancy: "What we all need to work on is finding a native milkweed that can be propagated even half as easily as tropical milkweed, so we can give people an alternative host plant that doesn't have any detrimental effects. It is sad that all these well-intentioned people (including us, at the Butterfly Center) are now learning that their milkweed planting efforts may be doing more harm than good."

Husband and I had the great fortune to visit one of the monarch's wintering sites in Mexico with Nancy on a Museum of Natural Science (HMNS) trip. It was an opportunity of a lifetime and hopefully situations will one day allow these trips to resume. In the meantime, supporting the conservation group [Monarch Watch](#) is a great way to help. And keep up with the latest advice for Greater Houston area monarch lovers by joining HMNS at <http://www.hmns.org/>, so you receive continual updates via Nancy's blog.



*Winter hummingbird delights, left to right, 'Wendy's Wish' salvia, shrimp plants and Mexican sage (Salvia leucantha).*

### **SPEAKING OF MIGRATING TREASURES**

Reader Beverly Logan has taken to heart the America Audubon Society's plea to keep up those hummingbird feeders to help compensate for the loss of hummingbird habitat (due to urban sprawl among other factors).

You won't stop hummers who want to migrate further south. But you will help the varieties that do normally winter over here.

Beverly is now in her fourth year of hosting overwintering Rufous hummingbirds, she says thanks to the "cove" she created using Purple Porterweed, 'Wendy's Wish' salvia, hummingbird bush (altho those are going dormant now), Mexican sage, coral honeysuckle and shrimp plants.



*Left to right, mealy bugs (insert) are a threat to hibiscus. Center: Beverly Logan's hummingbirds love her swing and both coral vine (insert) and purple porter weed, right.*

### **MEALY BUGS INVADING...**

Isn't it fun when a good friend from your past turns out to share with you a common love? I never expected my lifetime buddy Jim Murillo to care about gardening, but he does. At least to the extent that he wanted to know what those furry white things were on his gorgeous hibiscus.

Turns out they're mealy bugs. Since I don't treat for anything, I turned to my hibiscus guru, Pat Merritt of the Lone Star Chapter/American Hibiscus Society for a solution for Jim. Pat says the picture Jim submitted (insert above) are mealy bugs for sure.

Pat reports members who grow hundreds of plants in the Manvel area (southeast of Houston) have been hit hard by mealy bugs this year. Pat, who lives in the Meyerland area, says she's not been plagued at all. But she has been in the past. Any other areas experiencing a mealy bug invasion?

Adds Pat: "I tried treating them with soapy water and all I got was clean mealy bugs. I finally resorted to cutting off affected limbs/branches and put them in a plastic garbage bag." She dumps the bags in the garbage can and lets the sun take care of them.

Left alone, mealy bugs can kill a plant. After removing the infested plant parts, Pat says to keep a watch on the remaining plant. Wash leaves with a hard stream of water and use your fingers to remove any eggs that might have drifted to nearby branches. And, she warns, "This is a difficult pest to get rid of, and seems to be cyclical...you have them one year and may go several years without their returning."

Frustrating, eh? But we live in a subtropical area and this is one of the prices we pay for our almost 12-month-a-year blooming season!

Remember, Nature always bats last.



*Left to right, poinsettias, jujubes and blueberries*

**THANKS FOR THESE ADDITIONAL "DOUBLE-DUTY" CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEAS THAT BENEFIT MORE THAN JUST YOUR RECIPIENT . . .**



\* SIMS BAYOU URBAN NATURE CENTER, 3997 River Drive, 713-640-2407. During the Sat., Dec. 6, the Houston Audubon Society's Holiday at the Cabin, 6-8 pm, will include (in addition to lots of holiday activities) great gift shopping at the nature store. Tickets \$3. [Purchase online](#) or at the Nature Center. If you've never been to this delightful little nature center, only minutes south of downtown off the Gulf Freeway, this is a good chance to visit. It is usually open to the public and groups by appointment only. Details: 713-640-2407 or [maweber@houstonaudubon.org](mailto:maweber@houstonaudubon.org).

\* BROOKWOOD COMMUNITY'S POINSETTIAS. Brookwood is a most extraordinary non-profit (501(c)3) residential facility and vocational program for adults with disabilities. Their nursery produces the most incredibly uniform picture perfect plants. But this time of year, a real treat are their poinsettias. Brookwood has three stores in the Greater Houston area. Details: <http://www.brookwoodcommunity.org/> or <https://www.facebook.com/BrookwoodCommunity>

\* PECKERWOOD GARDEN MEMBERSHIP. Peckerwood is the private Hempstead-area garden of John G. Fairey who has introduced a wide range of rare, native plants from Mexico to our landscapes. It is a member of the national Garden Conservancy and, with a gift of a membership, now also comes a free plant from the Peckerwood nursery. Details: <http://peckerwoodgarden.org/> or <https://squareup.com/market/peckerwood-garden-conservation-foundation>

\* HISTORICAL BUFFALO BAYOU PONTOON BOAT TOUR. This really-fun, 90-minute trek up our most famous bayou, led by Houston historian and author Louis Aulbach, also benefits the Buffalo Bayou Partnership. Better yet, "rent" this pontoon boat for your own private floating party!

If you know of other nonprofit groups with great Christmas gift ideas, email me: [lazygardener@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net)

\* \* \*

### GREAT CITRUS ADVICE (and a fun fruit ranking!)

Among the memberships touted in our "[Double-Duty Gift Giving](#)" newsletter column was [Houston Urban Gardeners \(HUG\)](#), a group devoted to supporting Houstonians who want to grow their own food and eat more fresh local produce. The monthly meetings are free as is the newsletter, but you have to sign up to receive it. Of special note [is a recap of a program given by Ray Sher](#), one of this area's most noted fruit tree experts. He lists plusses and minuses of growing a wide variety of fruits, including figs, jujubes, persimmons, pomegranates, citrus (grapefruits, mandarines, tangerines, oranges, lemons and limes), kumquats, blackberries, grapes, apples, pears, blueberries, peaches, nectarines, and plums.

By the way, the way these fruits are listed above? This is the way Ray lists them, starting with the easiest and ending with the most difficult. Now you know!

P.S. HUG has another great meeting coming up: Mon., Dec. 8, "What's Working for Us in Our Vegetable Gardens," 6:30pm, Multi-Service Center, 1475 W. Gray. Details: <http://www.houstonurbangardeners.org/>

\* \* \*

### FOR PROFIT - BUT FREE

\* Judy Barrett puts out a really nice, free, down-home-type emailed Texas garden newsletter that welcomes local article submissions. Check out the current and back issues at <http://homegrowntexas.com/homegrown-texas-back-issues/>

*\* Brenda's group lectures include: "How to Reduce the Size of Your Front Lawn to Save Water Without Infuriating Your Neighbors," "Landscaping for Security," "10 Commandments of Lazy Gardening," and "What's Blooming in the Lazy Gardener's Garden." Details: [lazygardener@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net).*

*\* Brenda's "Lazy Gardener's Guide" - a when-to-do-what in Greater Houston area gardens - is now available on CD only (pdf file). \$20. Checks payable to Brenda B. Smith and mailed to: Lazy Gardener's Guide on CD, 14011 Greenranch Dr., Houston, TX 77039-2103.*

## JOHN'S CORNER

## ORGANIC FERTILIZERS AND NUTRIENTS - 19

## DRIED SEWAGE SLUDGES



The other day I was reading an article on organic fertilizers and it was talking about a product called Milorganite. The article was so full of mis-information that it seemed like it was written by a public relations firm (which it probably was). Hence I thought I would address this topic in today's column. In our area there are several products made from dried sewage sludge and sold as fertilizers such as; "Milorganite" from Milwaukee, "Hou-Actinite" from Houston and "Gro-Co" from Seattle. These products are often sold as organic, natural, non-toxic, safe for children and pets, etc. These statements are false and mis-leading. I went to the City of Houston public works website and they call Hou-Actinite an organic fertilizer which is not true as it does not meet the USDA standards (NOP) for organic products.

As a society we produce a lot of "poop" that has to be managed in some fashion. We spend billions of dollars every year in treating and handling our wastes. For years we just dumped it into the ocean which created major problems. Then we started putting it in landfills where it created problems such as large amounts of greenhouse gasses and water pollution. Now we are land applying it to our agricultural fields, composting some of it, and drying and pelletizing some of it.

In horticulture we have known for years that manure is one of the best ways to fertilize and improve our soil. We also know that as one goes up the food chain to more complex animals the manure becomes more complex and more valuable. Thus theoretically, humans at the top of the food chain have the most valuable and nutrient rich manure. The problem occurs with us in what we consume and how we collect our manure.

Everything gets flushed down the drain, from schools, drycleaners, hospitals, industries of all sorts, auto repair shops, etc. Literally thousands of chemicals can be found in sewage sludge from PCB's, pesticides, dioxins, radioactive wastes, asbestos, phthalates, heavy metals, petroleum compounds, and pharmaceuticals to mention a few. The amount and type vary with the location of the sewage treatment plant. Trivia - The EPA allows over 20 times more toxic chemicals in the sludge than in Europe.

To make the dried sewage sludge products, the raw sewage goes through some form of digester where the raw fecal material is decomposed by microbes. This process creates a residual material of dead microbial bodies that we call sewage sludge ("Biosolids" is the politically correct name) after it is dewatered. Some of the toxic chemicals are bioremediated by the process but most remain in the sludge cake. The cake is then pressed into pellets and dried at high temperatures between 900-1200 degrees fahrenheit. This extreme heat does kill all the pathogens and other microbes and may destroy some chemicals. The dried pellets are then bagged and shipped to market for use as a fertilizer.

There are hundreds of studies that show these type fertilizers will help plants grow stronger, larger and faster from turf grass to trees. Their functionality are not in question as it is well established.

Some of the chemicals will bind to soil and not be available to plants and others over time will biodegrade. However many chemicals and toxics will leach into our streams and groundwater. For example, these types products can contain over 2% phosphorous (P), a plant nutrient. Most of the soils in the USA have too much phosphorous hence it runs off into fresh water supplies where it creates an algal bloom that sucks oxygen (O) out of the water killing the aquatic life and leaving a putrid mess.

As a society we have to do something with our human waste products and generally one application of these type dried sewage sludge products will not cause toxic amounts of chemicals in the soil. *Most problems occur with repeated application.* If they are used wisely and away from waterways then some benefit can be derived. I have included a few references below and there are hundreds of papers on the internet.

Note: The long term solution is to change the laws and clean up our waste water treatment, where we do not allow toxic chemicals to be disposed in our sanitary sewers. Then the waste products will have a much higher value to society and can be reused with less problems.

#### SUMMARY:

These products should never be used where food is grown or children may play, especially our yards and gardens. However there are applications where the benefits they provide have value and the dangers are minimized. They can be used to help establish vegetative cover at landfills or degraded sites, establish vegetation in erosion prone areas and along highways, establish vegetation and remediate old mine sites, and even help in re-growth of our forests after a fire or a clear cut.

#### PROS:

- good source of nutrients
- relatively inexpensive

- good availability
- available in bags or bulk
- pathogen free
- reported to repel deer in some areas

#### CONS:

- becomes very odorous when wet
- dust may bother some people
- contains toxic chemicals
- contains heavy metals
- upon wetting a good feedstock for pathogens to grow on
- some believe that exposure causes Lou Gehrig's disease and other health problems including death

#### REFERENCES:

**Sewage Sludge: Land Utilization and the Environment**, Soil Science Society of America (CSA, ASA), 1994, ISBN: 0-89118-813-4

**Municipal Sludge Use in Land Reclamation**, William Sopper, 1993, Lewis Publishers, ISBN: 0-87371-941-7

**Reuse of Sludge and Minor Wastewater Residuals**, Alice Outwater, CRC Press, 1994, ISBN: 0-87371-677-9

**The Humanure Handbook -A Guide to Composting Human Manure**, J.C. Jenkins, 1994, Jenkins Publishing, ISBN: 0-9644258-4-X

**Toxic Sludge Is Good For You - Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry**, John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton, Common Courage Press, 1995, ISBN: 1-56751-060-4

**Holy Shit - Managing Manure to Save Mankind**, Gene Logsdon, Chelsea Green Publishing, 2010, ISBN: 978-1-60358-251-3

**Surface Disposal of Sewage Sludge- A Guide for Owners/Operators....**, EPA-831-B-93-002c, May 1994

**Cooperative Testing of Municipal Sewage Sludge's by the Toxicity Characteristics Leaching Procedure and Compositional Analysis**, EPA-431/09-91-007, April 1991

**"Sludge by Any Name Will Never be Organic"**, Sue Smith-Heavenrich,  
<http://www.mofga.org/Publications/MaineOrganicFarmerGardener/Fall2003/Sludge/tabid/1447/Default.aspx>

**"Sewage Sludge as Fertilizer: Safe?"**, Food Safety News, Jill Richardson, October 4, 2010,  
<http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2010/10/sewage-sludge-as-fertilizer-safe/#.VH3Wx8mnX85>

**"Human Deaths Associated With Sludge"**, <http://deadlydeceit.com/Human-deaths.html>

## 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., 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).

**Mon., Dec. 8: Houston Urban Gardeners (HUG).** Potluck and Sharing What's Working for Us in our vegetable gardens. Multi-Service Center, 1475 West Gray, Houston. <http://www.houstonurbangardeners.org/>

**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 Carbine 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 Carbine 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)

**Thurs., Jan. 8: Spring Vegetable Gardening in Small Spaces by Peg Turrentine and Jennifer Plihal,** 9:30am, Municipal Utility Building, 805 Hidden Canyon Drive, Katy. Free. Nottingham Country Garden Club Program. Details: [nottinghamgardenclub.org](http://nottinghamgardenclub.org) or 713-870-5915 or 979-885-6199

**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)

**Mar. 6-8: 2015 80th Annual Azalea Trail.** River Oaks Garden Club event. Details: <http://www.riveroaksgardenclub.org>

**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





<http://natureswayresources.com/>

## GARDEN TAILS

### The adoptable dog of the week:

Please help us find a forever home for sweet little Chasity. Nature's Way Resources is helping foster Chasity as part of our in kind sponsorship of the Montgomery County Animal Shelter. For more information drop us a line at [lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com](mailto:lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com) or come visit Chasity at Nature Way Resources.



### Chasity ID 235050

Chasity is an amazing young adult dog with loads of personality. She loves to snuggle, play fetch, play in the pools and be loved. A favorite among the shelter volunteers. The dog walkers have **never** seen her show any aggression towards another dog or person. She is full of personality and is guaranteed to melt your heart. Give her a chance and you will find she is your canine soul mate.

**Chasity's Likes Include:** Tennis Balls, Playing in the Dog Park, Long Walks in the Woods, Playing Fetch, Running, Squeaky Toys, Snuggle with You while Watching Big Bang Theory, Sharing anything You're Eating, McNuggets, Hanging with her Doggie Friends, Pool Parties, Car Rides to her new home, and most of all having a Forever Home!

**Chasity's Dislikes Include:** Mean Dogs, People Who Don't Spay and Neuter their Pets, Fleas, Baths, Broccoli, Living at the Shelter.

**Chasity's Goals in Life:** To have her very own human family to love and protect.  
To have her very own home where she can feel safe.  
To have her very own bed and food bowl.

Please Take Me Out To The  
Dog Park and See How Very  
Special I am. I promise I will  
make you laugh and smile.  
Paws Honor,

Chasity





## 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 United 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.



**COUPON: BUY ONE OLD GARDEN ROSES & GET A SECOND FREE At Nature's Way Resources**

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

Offer Expires: 12/15/14