



JULY 3, 2015

Dear Friends,

Here is the 114th issue of our weekly gardening newsletter for Houston, the Gulf Coast and beyond. We really appreciate all of our readers hanging in there with us, sharing stories and inspiring us in so many ways.

Thanks so much!

This newsletter 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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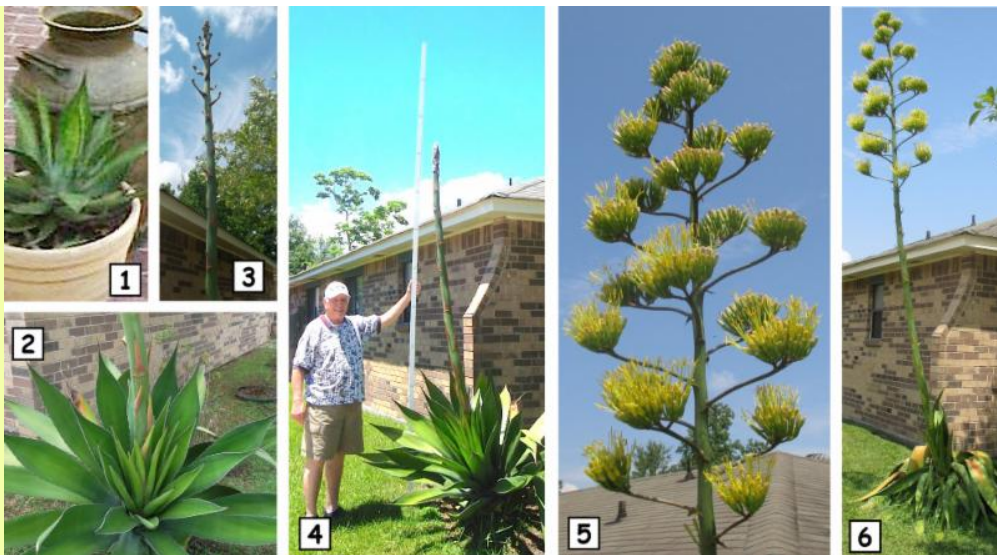


AN AGAVE GROWS IN SLIDELL . . . TWO TREES RETURN IN ALDINE . . . CELEBRATIONS IN ORDER!

By BRENDA BEUST SMITH

Don Megow has something truly fun to celebrate this Fourth of July. His century plant bloomed.

These agaves don't actually take a century to produce a flower. It just seems like it. Certainly did in this case!



Don's sculptural succulent was already potted and growing (#1 above) at the Slidell (north of New Orleans) home he purchased in 1991, making this plant about 24 years old when it finally produced a flower stalk. They don't all take this long!

Around 10 years ago, when it outgrew its pot, Don transferred this agave to the ground (2). To his surprise and delight, this past April a bloom stalk appeared (3). Don started using a 12-foot stick (4) to track the flower stalk's height just like he did for his own kids, Tammy and Nick. Eventually it reached about two stories high (5 & 6).



As the yellow-fingered flowers sprouted, the beautiful lower foliage began to wither away (7 & 8). It wasn't until the flowers started to die and the stalk was pretty well gone that Don noticed new agave "pups" (9) sprouting from the base of mama plant.

That's what agaves do! And, why they're called "century" plants. Note: century plants, and some other agaves, have sharp points. Don't plant where children or elderly might fall into one.



A TALE OF TWO TREES . . .

Planting two particular trees turned out to be a far, far better thing than I ever knew I'd done!

That's not my dogwood. It never bloomed. Sigh. But that is my cassia! Before I killed it. I thought.

Sometime in the '70s, most favorite English pointer, Bo, passed away. I had just started Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener column.

Over Bo's grave in our backyard (Aldine was "rural" then), I planted a dogwood. Wonderful neighbor Jerry Smith (no relation) had a dogwood, so I assumed mine would. Didn't take me long to discover 1. Jerry has a green thumb and 2. I don't. His dogwood thrived. Mine died.

I know now we live too far south and west for a non-green-thumber to grow dogwoods. I was sad, but didn't take it personally. Flash forward to 2015. Friend T Polk of Mother Nature Landscaping, standing close to Bo's gravesite, looked surprised. "You have a dogwood?" No, I said. "Yes," she said. And there it was.

I explained about Bo and the grave. Not likely a bird dropped a dogwood seed in Aldine. Could a seedling survive, or roots stay dormant, that long? Or roots stay dormant all those decades?

Our dogwood's now about 6' tall and really healthy. I tied some green, red & white ribbons on it to make sure no one (like Husband) accidentally cuts it down. How exciting is this?

AND THEN THERE'S THE CASSIA..

Around the same time, I planted a cassia at the top of the ditch in front of our house. It did well, too well. It spread over other choice plants.

It was July - not the best time to transplant. But the energy was flowing. Bad idea to ignore flowing energy. Digging it out proved impossible, even after soaking the soil. Not to be foiled by a mere plant, I tied a chain around the base, hooked it to my car and jerked that sucker out. Then I transplanted it at the other end of the bed.

All the leaves fell off. But that fall, it sudden burst into fiery yellow flowers. Gorgeous! That thrived until Husband decided we had too many gardens (to mow around). We took out that bed. I moved the cassia to the backyard fence. It didn't seem to care.

I killed it in 2001. Bought cheap mulch for beds in attempt to help plants survive the horrible hot summer that followed the Allison flood. Obviously mulch wasn't completely decomposed. Everything along fence died, including the cassia and my Meyer lemon.

Fast-forward to 2015. Husband's whacking away at overgrowth coming through said fence from the wooded lot behind us. Suddenly I screamed at him: "Don't touch that! It's a cassia."

As with the dogwood, I'd never planted another cassia. There are no cassias, or dogwoods, anywhere in our neighborhood. The only possible explanation is that seed, or roots, from these two plants have been alive all these years . . . and have finally become hardy enough to regrow into trees.

So I'm celebrating too. What a wonderful world we live in!

CONGRATULATIONS to . . .

* DOMINICAN SISTERS (who taught both Don Megow and me through St. Mary's Elementary School and me through St. Agnes Academy) on the 20th anniversary of their community garden. Under the direction of St. Heloise Cruzat, the garden produces and donates an average of 1,000 lbs of produce annual to feed Houston's hungry. A member of Urban Harvest, the [Dominican Community Garden](#) owes a great deal of its success to its faithful volunteers, who also plant to attract butterflies, hummingbirds and other birds.

* HOUSTON AUDUBON SOCIETY and all the others who so successfully persuaded the Texas Legislature to pass legislation that now ensures 100% of Sporting Goods Tax revenues will be used to address needs of local and state parks. Previously only a portion benefitted our parks. (www.houstonaudubon.org)

* CITIZENS ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION on its 44th Anniversary. Folks will be celebrating during a Open House, 4:30-7pm, at the CEC office, 1900 Kane St. Suite 111. If you aren't receiving CEC's free newsletter, you're missing out on this area's most important environmental news. Sign up at the website: www.cechouston.org.

POTPOURRI



Plants always mean more when you know a bit of history behind their names. Take some of the beautiful bloomers that will be available at Saturday, July 11, Great Galveston Oleander Sale, 7:30-11am at the Betty Head Oleander Garden, 27th St. at Sealy.

At the International Oleander Society's sale will be such treats as (pictured above, left to right), Calypso (this is the one you see blooming into the colder months), Centennial (named after the 100 anniversary of UTMB), East End Pink and Magnolia Willis Sealy.

Wonderful story behind the namesake of this latter oleander, whose luxurious home Open Gates at 2419 Sealy Ave. on the Isle (down the street from the Oleander Garden). According to legend, in the 1880s, after the birth of her fifth child, Magnolia told her husband, magnate George Sealy, she would give him a second son if he would build her the finest home in Galveston.

He did. So she did!

* 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. For a free page of this month's TO-DO list, email Brenda at lazygardener@bcglobal.net

JOHN'S CORNER

MULCH CORNER - Rubber Tire Mulch Update #2



I was reading another study this morning from Yale University where they were testing the crumb rubber that is used to make rubber mulch and used in sports fields with artificial turf. The crushed tires are used as padding under the synthetic turf used on sports fields.

The research found over 100 different compounds in the rubber and less than 50 had ever been tested for toxicity. Of those tested most were carcinogens or irritants.

In another set of tests they found 96 chemicals in 14 samples. Of these, 47 had never been tested for safety or health effects. Of these chemicals, 40 are known irritants and 12 are respiratory irritants of which some cause asthma and 10 are known carcinogens.

The researchers stated that the shredded tires contain a veritable "witches brew" of toxic substances and they are a hazardous waste.

Health data has also been collected by the sports department at the University of Washington and they found that 124 soccer players have cancer and 85 are goalies whom spend more time on the ground than other players.

The study was commissioned by the organization, "Environment and Human Health". They (Nancy Alderman) stated children should never be allowed to play on synthetic turf.

I believe that this should extend to playgrounds that use rubber mulch and children should not be allowed to play on them.

Rubber tire mulch should never be used in a landscape.

Children should never be allowed to play on synthetic turf that uses crumb rubber as padding.

BOOK REVIEW:

Water Conservation By The Yard: Estimating Savings From Outdoor Water Restrictions, National Wildlife Federation and The Sierra Club, March 2015

Water is an extremely important issue for every gardener. This free booklet is available on the website <http://www.texaslivingwaters.org/water-conservation>.

One of the main ideas being expressed is that water conservation cost far less than developing new water supplies. It explains many of the common ideas promoted by irrigators are incorrect. For example they found no scientific evidence that St. Augustine grass needs 1 inch of water per week. They found that if there was 6 inches of soil then, 1 inch every two weeks was more than sufficient. If the soil is high quality, the grass will need even less water.

They reported that most studies found that over watering was the biggest cause of problems in the landscape. The booklet is full of charts and pictures for all of the regions and towns in Texas and it is very easy to read and understand.

Landscaping in Texas is one of the largest users of water, especially during the summer and much of this is wasted. Through conservation we could save the billions of tax payer dollars to build new reservoirs and prevent or reduce the large increase in water rates that are coming.

WEEKLY GARDENING EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS CALENDAR

TO SUBMIT EVENTS: _____

Find a similar event in our calendar below and copy the format EXACTLY.
Then you can add additional information. Email to lazygardener@sbcglobal.net
Not using our format will result in a delay in publication.
Events will not be picked up from newsletters.

SAT., JULY 4: JERRY'S JUNGLE LIQUIDATION (continued), 9am-4pm, 712 Hill Rd. Details: [Lazy Gardener June 26 column](#) or 832-431-7599

MON., JULY 6: OPEN GARDEN DAY AND PLANT SALE WITH HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS AT PRECINCT 2, 8:30-11am, Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. Details: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu>

WED., JULY 8: MONARCHS & MILKWEEDS, noon, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine-Westfield. Free. Details: 281-443-8731; <http://www.hcp4.net/community/parks/mercer>

THURS, JULY 9; FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING BY HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS. 6:30-8:30pm. Barbara Bush Library, 6817 Cypresswood Dr., Spring. Free. Details: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/docs/2015-green-thumb.pdf> 281-855-5600

THURS., JULY 9: ANNUAL ICE CREAM SOCIAL, 7:30pm, St. Andrews Episcopal Church parish hall, 1819 Heights Blvd. Free. Houston Rose Society event. Details: www.houstonrose.org

SAT., JULY 11: TEXAS ROSE RUSTLERS SUMMER MEETING. 9:30am-4pm, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine-Westfield. Free. Details: 281-443-8731; www.texasroserustlers.com; <http://www.hcp4.net/community/parks/mercer>

SAT. JULY 11: LEARN TO COMPOST BY JARED MCNABB, DANIELA OCHOA AND JOHN FERGUSON, 9:30am-noon, A Moveable Feast, 9341 Katy Freeway. Details: Texas Campaign for the Environment, Melanie Scruggs, melanie@texasenvironment.org

SAT., JULY 11: THE GREAT GALVESTON OLEANDER SALE, 7:30-11am, Betty Head Oleander Garden Park, 27th & Sealy, Galveston. Details: www.oleander.org

MON., JULY 13: EXPERIENCED AND LESSONS OF A YOUNG FARMER BY TOMMY GARCIA-PRATS, 6:30pm, Moody Park Community Center, 3725 Fulton; free. Houston Urban Gardeners (HUG) event. Details: www.HoustonUrbanGardeners.org

TUES., JULY 14: PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA QUARTERLY MEETING, 7pm, Garden Center, 1500 Hermann Drive in Hermann Park. Details: www.theplumeriasociety.org

MON., JULY 14-16: MERCER BOTANIC GARDENS CHILDREN'S SUMMER CAMPS BEGIN. Details: 281-443-8731; <http://www.hcp4.net/community/parks/mercer>

WED., JULY 15: HIBISCUS BY MARTI GRAVES, 10am, Clear Lake Park Meeting Room, 5001 NASA Parkway, Seabrook. Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 event. Free. Details: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu>

THURS., JUL. 16: ARTIST BOAT: THE PRESERVATION OF COASTAL MARGINS THROUGH SCIENCE AND ART BY KARLA KLAY. 7-9pm. Houston Arboretum and Nature Center, 4505 Woodway. Free. Native Plant Society of Texas - Houston Chapter event. Details: npsot.org/wp/houston/activities/monthly-meetings/

THURS., JULY 16; FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING BY HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS. 6:30-8:30 pm. Freeman Branch Library, 16616 Diana Lane. Free. <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/docs/2015-green-thumb.pdf> 281-855-5600

FRI., JULY 17: WHIMSICAL WIND ART (children), 9am-12:30pm, The Arbor Gate, 15635 FM 2920, Tomball. Free. Details: www.arborgate.com or 281-351-8851

SAT, JULY 18; FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING BY HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS. 10am-Noon. Maude Smith Marks Library, 1815 Westgreen Blvd., Katy. Free. Details: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/docs/2015-green-thumb.pdf> 281-855-5600

SAT., JULY 18: BACKYARD BASICS - EARTH-KIND LANDSCAPES, 9-11am, Fort Bend County Extension Office, 1402 Band Rd #100, Rosenberg. \$15. Details: fortbend.agrilife.org

MON., JULY 20: OPEN GARDEN DAY AND PLANT SALE WITH HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS AT PRECINCT 2, 8:30-11am, Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. Details: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu>

TUES., JULY 21: FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING BY HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS. 6:30-8:30pm, Spring Branch Memorial Library, 930 Corbindale. Free. Details: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/docs/2015-green-thumb.pdf> 281-855-5600

SAT., JULY 25: PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA SALE, 9:30am-3pm, Fort Bend County Fairgrounds, Richmond. Details: www.theplumeriasociety.org

SAT., JULY 25: URBAN HARVEST'S FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING CLASS, 9am-11:30am. \$45. Location TBA. Details: 713-880-5540 or www.urbanharvest.org.

SAT., JULY 25: A HOMEOWNER'S GUIDE TO WEED CONTROL BY ANNA WYGRYS, 9-11am, Galveston County AgriLife Extension, Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. Free. Email reservations: galv3@wt.net. Details: www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/; 281-534-3413

TUES., JULY 28: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS OPEN GARDEN DAY AND SEMINAR: FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING, 9-11:30am, 3033 Bear Creek Drive. Free. Details: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/docs/2015-open-garden-days.pdf> 281-855-5600

TUES., AUG 4: ALL ABOUT HUMMINGBIRDS (children), 9am-12:30pm, The Arbor Gate, 15635 FM 2920, Tomball. Free. Details: www.arborgate.com or 281-351-8851

TUES., AUG. 11: SOIL FOOD WEB - LATEST ADVANCES IN SOIL BIOLOGY BY ELAINE INGHAM, Ph.D., 8am-4pm, Museum of Natural Science, 1 Hermann Circle. Organic Horticultural Benefit Alliance (OHBA) event. Fee, Register at: www.ohbaonline.org

THURS., AUG. 20: PLANTING FOR THE HOUSTON TOAD AND OTHER LOCAL AMPHIBIANS BY Dr. CASSIDY JOHNSON. 7-9pm. Houston Arboretum and Nature Center, 4505 Woodway. Free. Native Plant Society of Texas - Houston Chapter event. Details: npsot.org/wp/houston/activities/monthly-meetings/

TUES., OCT. 13: PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA QUARTERLY MEET, 7pm, Garden Center, 1500 Hermann Drive in Hermann Park. Details: www.theplumeriasociety.org

THURS., SEPT. 17: PREVIEW OF UPCOMING WILDSCAPES WORKSHOP PLANT SALE BY JOE BLANTON. 7-9pm. Houston Arboretum and Nature Center, 4505 Woodway. Free. Native Plant Society of Texas - Houston Chapter event. Details: npsot.org/wp/houston/activities/monthly-meetings/

SAT.-SUN., OCT. 3-4: 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.

TUES., OCT. 13: PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA QUARTERLY MEET, 7pm, Garden Center, 1500 Hermann Drive in Hermann Park. Details: www.theplumeriasociety.org

THUR-SUN., OCT. 15-18: MASTER COMPOSTER PROGRAM, Green Building Resource Center, 1002 Washington Ave. Details: Steve Stelzer, [832-394-9050](tel:832-394-9050), steve.stelzer@houstontx.gov

SAT., OCT. 24: ROSEAPALOOZA, 10am educational program. Afternoon Rose Show. Bear Creek. Houston Rose Society Event. Details: www.houstonrose.org.

If we inspire you to attend any of these events, please let them know you heard about it in THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS NEWSLETTER!

TO SUBMIT EVENTS:

Find a similar event in our calendar below and copy the format EXACTLY.
Then you can add additional information. Email to lazygardener@sbcglobal.net
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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 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 periodic 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: Nature's Way Resources. 20% off our: Native Soil Mix. <http://natureswayresources.com/products.html> . (Offer good for retail purchases of this product by the cubic yard at Nature's Way Resources (101 Sherbrook Circle, Conroe TX). Expires 07/12/15.