



JULY 10, 2015

Dear Friends,

Here is the 115th 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.

Please or sign yourself up to receive this newsletter by clicking the "Join Our Mailing List" link just below. We will never sell or share our mailing list to protect the privacy of our subscribers.

Enjoy!

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**SO DRUIDS BEAT THEIR APPLES, EH? . . .
SILKY STOCKINGS ON TREES: GOOD! . . . WEED-TACKLING TIPS**

BY BRENDA BEUST SMITH

*Here's to thee, old apple tree,
Whence thou mayst bud
And whence thou mayst blow!
And whence thou mayst bear apples enow!
Hats full! Caps full!
Bushel-bushel-sacks full,*

And my pockets full too! Huzza!
–Gentleman's Magazine, 1791

Interesting mail recently. Good example: a tree-beating email from England!

This one really made my day.

Phil Partridge of Herefordshire, UK, wrote that at the ripe old age of 65 (a youngster!), he's discovered gardening and loving it. Concern about his young apple tree - which fruited magnificently last year but produced not one blossom this year - sent him to the internet for help.

Google sent him to my old Chronicle blog and a 2009 column on beating your plants to make them bloom. I repeated this one in [one of our early Lazy Gardener & Friends Newsletters](#)

My writing reminded him of their Wassail, celebrated in late December or January in an orchard, where the custom is to beat fruiting trees with sticks. He sent this:

"The custom usually continues with the tree or trees being beaten about the trunk (and any branches within reach) with the sticks. This is believed to begin the process of awakening the tree and starting the sap flowing up the trunk. It is accompanied by much shouting and the making of as much noise as possible ... Again, this is believed to assist the tree in awakening from its winter sleep as well as frightening away any evil spirits which might be lurking in the branches."

This tradition, Phil says, is certainly known as far back as the 14th Century - but could well go back as far as the Druids. And he shared this link: <http://www.cotswolds.info/strange-things/wassailing.shtml>

Phil was nice enough to add: "it appears you've given some scientific respectability to the custom - they obviously weren't just trying to ward off spirits, they were making sure their trees fruited." And, he added, "I'll be beating that little apple tree."

After I wrote that first "beating column," (<http://blog.chron.com/lazygardener/2009/09/no-blooms-try-beating-your-plant/>), readers responded with a wealth of anecdotes:

- * a dogwood that wouldn't bloom until a neighbor grabbed a baseball bat and "whopped the trunk several times."
- * a ginkgo that didn't start growing until struck hard with a broom handle.
- * and, of course, switching okra (left below) to make it produce - an old Southern custom.

Also seems;

- * Old rose growers "peg" climbing roses, securing them to the ground with staked ties, to trigger "breaks" of flower clusters along bent stems.
- * Crepe myrtles, center below, forced to bloom by pulling branches down almost to the breaking point, then letting snap back into place.



Okra, left, is a cousin to cotton and hibiscus. Think switching would work on hibiscus too? Center, bending rose branches so they grow sideways, even to the extent of "pegging" them to the ground, definitely increases bloom production. Right, crepe won't bloom? Some say to bend branches down as far as you can (without breaking them) and then allow them to snap back upward. Your call on whether or not you want to try these ideas!

WHY DOES THESE "MISTREATMENTS" WORK? Two of my most favorite horticulturists offered their take:

- * [FELDER RUSHING](#) : beatings trigger the release of traumatin (a plant hormone similar to adrenalin in humans). This stimulates new growth and flower buds.
- * [BILL ADAMS](#): this kind of trauma also damages the phloem tissue which in turn reduces the amount of nutrient translocated back to roots from leaves. This concentrates more nutrition in the top of the plant.

Of course, do this at your own risk. No guarantee this won't make make your plant so mad it'll die on you.



In this area, the beautiful silky coverings on oak trees conceal beneficial insects. Two types are found here: *Cerastipsocus venosus*, right top, and the slightly smaller but more common *Archipsocus nomas*, right bottom. Tree photo by John Schuhsler

* WELCOME, BARKLICE! Our trees' good friends, the barklice (right, above) are here, hidden behind those silky "stockings" so beautifully photographed (left) by John Schuhsler on his oak tree. The protective webbing allows them to feed freely on harmful fungi, algae, dead bark and other undesirable materials on the tree trunks.

Don't disturb them. You want them to feed in peace and quiet. They won't be here long and as suddenly as it appeared, the silky web will disappear.

More details: http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/beneficials/beneficial-21_barklice.htm

Just goes to show how important it is to actually know what's living in your garden. Only 10% of our insects are harmful. This means 90% are beneficial. Kill them and you invite other problems down the line.

* AGAVE P.S. - Don Megow, whose '[Century Plant' agave saga was reported last week](#), has a follow-up warning. He recently tried to shovel-dig-out the ol' dead mother plant, only to discover that the root system is more than extensive, it's massive. Had he known this, he quipped, "I'd have used dynamite!"

WEEDS AND RECENT RAINS

If your yard looks anything like mine, it's a mass of weeds. We were gone just one week, and now every garden is lush green . . . with ruellia, nutgrass, you name it.

Fortunately, below, Anna Wygrys can name them all. Her accidence of weed control singles out our most common invaders and what to do about them. A Galveston County Master Gardener, Anna is a familiar name on the speaker circuit and her tips on how to control weeds are a sneak preview of her in-depth July 25 "Homeowners Guide to Weed Control" program 9-11am, at the County AgriLife Extension Center, Carbide Park, 4102 Mail in La Marque. See calendar below.

*** 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. * 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@sbcglobal.net**





Some of our most troublesome warm weather weeds, top, left to right: Dandelion officinale, spotted spurge, and chamberbitter. Below, l to r, stagger daisy, mulberry weed and yellow sedge.



NEWS FLASH! BUMPER CROP OF WEEDS!

By **ANNA WYGRYS**

Galveston County Master Gardeners

News Flash: A Bumper Crop of Weeds are Growing in the Upper Gulf Coast of Texas.

Moist soils, warm temperatures, and sunshine are providing the perfect growing conditions for an abundance of summer weeds.

Take a moment to assess the landscape and make a plan.

Some of the dominant summer weeds are Chamberbitter, Dandelions, Mulberry weed, Spotted Spurge, Staggler Daisy, and Nutsedge. Pictures are available on the internet to help in recognition and identification of these problem plants.

Start by removing weeds that are blooming and setting seeds. Bag and dispose of the culprits to keep from spreading additional seeds. DO NOT try to compost the debris. Compost pile temperatures must be 150-160 degrees to kill weed seeds. It is essential to stir and turn the material in the pile weekly to insure complete decomposition and destruction of unwanted seeds.

If the lawn is weedy, bag and dispose of clippings. Do not encourage weed growth by over fertilizing. Lush growth may require more frequent mowing to keep weeds from blooming. DO NOT scalp the grass. Three inches of blade growth will actually require less water and will shade the ground discouraging seed germination.

Use hand tools to stir and loosen the soil as juvenile weeds are removed from ornamental plantings. Bag and dispose of plant material. Growing conditions are still conducive for roots to reestablish if allowed to contact soil.

Placing seven to ten sheets of newspaper and three to four inches of course, organic mulch on bare soil will help prevent new weed infestations, plus this will keep soils moist and cool. An additional benefit is blocking sunlight from germinating seeds still buried in the soil.

If possible solarize large bare areas until fall planting time. In sunny locations, clean off the plant material and moisten the soil before covering with clear plastic. The sunshine will raise the temperatures under the plastic.

In a couple of weeks, remove the cover and turn the soil before replacing the plastic. Do this for six to eight weeks during July and August. Killing soil pests and diseases is an added benefit of solarization.

Contact Anna at afwygrys@hotmail.com



JOHN'S CORNER



Papal Encyclical by Pope Francis 2015

A few weeks ago the Vatican released Pope Francis Encyclical Letter on the environment written to everyone living on this planet. It was a 68 page report that consists of 216 points broken down into six chapters that cover almost ever environmental and ecological issue facing society today and what God's word has to say about them. A range of topics from the lack of fresh drinking water, loss of biodiversity, decline in quality of human life, global inequality, etc. all caused by human mismanagement of the Earth's resources are covered.

The Pope addresses issues on human health from the damage done by toxic chemical pesticides and herbicides to those issues around global warming, and dangers of GMO's. The Pope very clearly defines the issue, offers what scripture has to say on the subject and gives suggestion on what to do on solving many of these issues.

It was a very accurate and refreshing and easy to read report for all of us concerned about the future of our country and the world. This is a paper that every person (especially gardeners) needs to read and understand, so we can be part of the solution and not part of the problem.

A fact that I found very interesting is that Pope Francis did his graduate work in chemistry and worked as research chemist before entering ministry. ***As a result Pope Francis offers his perspective as both a scientist and a minister.***

An English translation of the paper can be found at:

http://m.vatican.va/content/francescomobile/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

**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 lazy_gardener@sbcglobal.net
Not using our format will result in a delay in publication.
Events will not be picked up from newsletters.

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

SAT., JULY 18: YOUR HERBAL HARVEST AND CONTAINER GARDENING BY LUCIA BETTLER, 1-4pm, Lucia's Garden, 2213 Portsmouth. \$55. Registration: 713-523-6494; earthwoman4@juno.com

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

TUES., JULY 21: BIRDS & BEES CAMP (CHILDREN), Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield. Through July 23. Details & registration, 281-443-8731 or visit www.hcp4.net/Community/Parks/Mercer

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/

SAT., AUG. 25: STARTING A COMMUNITY OR SCHOOL GARDEN WORKSHOP, 8:30am-2pm, University of St. Thomas Robertson Hall, Room 116, 3812 Yoakum Blvd. \$20. Urban Harvest event. Registration required. Details: www.urbanharvest.org/classes-calendar or 713-880-5540.

TUES., SEPT. 1: PRE-ORDER BULB DEADLINE FOR THE OCT. 1-3 2015 BULB & PLANT MART. Details: www.gchouston.org, 713-683-9450 or cgerikson99@gmail.com.

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/

MON.-TUES., SEPT. 21-22: LANDSCAPE DESIGN SCHOOL COURSE III, George HW Bush Presidential Amphitheater, College Station. \$145 by Sept. 1; \$165 after. Texas Garden Clubs, Inc./AgriLife Extension Service/Bush Library event. Registration/details: texaslandscapedesignschool@gmail.com or Michele Wehrheim, 313-649-1067

THURS.-SAT., OCT. 1-3: 2015 BULB & PLANT MART, St. John the Divine Church, 2450 River Oaks Blvd. Free. Garden Club of Houston event. Details: www.gchouston.org.

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, steve.stelzer@houston.tx.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!

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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, 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 07/19/15.