



December 11, 2015

Dear Friends,

Here is the 136th 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. (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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## A WALTON CHRISTMAS CACTUS MEMORY . . . HOW DID TIM & HEIDI KNOW WHAT 2016 COLOR(S) OF THE YEAR WOULD BE?

BY BRENDA BEUST SMITH

**OLIVIA:** *Who wants to see something pretty?*

**WALTON CHILDREN:** *I do!*

**OLIVIA:** *My Christmas cactus. I'd practically forgotten about it...Just stuck it down in the basement last fall. And would you look!*

**ELIZABETH:** *How can a plant know it's Christmas?*

**BEN:** *Maybe it feels it in its bones, like Grandpa!*

**OLIVIA:** *I rooted this from one my mama had. It's 17 years old. I planted it the same year John and I were married, 1916 . . ."*

*"The Homecoming: a Christmas Story" (The Waltons) - aired Dec. 19, 1971*

Every year about this time, I remember this TV scene, when Olivia (upper left) brought up her beautiful red-blooming Christmas cactus up from the basement. I immediately start looking for a spot of fuchsia in a totally ignored area of my garden.

That's where I stick my Christmas cactus every February (or so) after it finishes blooming. It's never "covered" with flowers. But it blooms and it make me happy.

No flowers yet this year. Probably all the rain. But I have a bud!



Husband's Grandma Hazel pulled her Christmas cactus out every mid-December too, just like Olivia did. Grandma Hazel's was relegated in late fall to an unheated back room of her small frame house.

From these two women I learned that Christmas cactus don't want to be disturbed when they're setting blooms throughout the fall. They want to be left alone, they need cold and they don't want to be watered or fertilized during this important period. The branch-like leaves tend to break off easily, but panic not. Just stick them in the soil. They root VERY easily.

There is an Easter cactus too, and a Thanksgiving one. All this means is that they prefer to bloom at these periods or that they have been forced to bloom at whatever time the grower thinks will sell best.

## HOW'D YOU KNOW, HEIDI & TIM?

Months ago, when I first saw the [Project Runway promo pictured at the top](#), I wondered why Tim & Heidi would pick these colors? Baby pink & baby blue? Not exactly haute couture colors, I thought.

Well, they must have had advice notice or great instincts. These are exactly the colors Pantone just announced as the "IN" hues for 2016. Only they call them "[Rose Quartz](#)" & "[Serenity](#)".

I realize that many of you are thinking: "So?"

But some folks like to be *au courant* and we want to serve everyone. Look for baby pink/blue (aka rose quartz & serenity) in these flowers:

Rose Quartz: clockwise from left, antique roses, daylily, dianthus, evening primroses, gaura, hibiscus, hollyhocks, hyacinths, phlox, petunia, plumeria, veronica

Serenity: agapanthus (lily of the nile), ageratum, bluebonnets, caryopteris, Clerodendrum ugandense - Blue Butterfly Bush, hyacinths, hydrangeas, 'Heavenly Blue' morning glory, petunia, plumbago.

*Brenda's "book" -- LAZY GARDENER'S GUIDE ON CD (a pdf book based on her 40+-years as the Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener) -- is available wholesale as a fundraising item. Details: [lazygardener@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net). Individual books: \$20. Make checks payable to LAZY GARDENER'S GUIDE ON CD and mail to LGG on CD, 14011 Greenranch Dr., Houston, TX 77039.*

## JOHN'S CORNER

### What Is A Healthy Soil"

#### (Part 7)



Continuing our discussion of what is a healthy soil we are going to discuss item #6 below.

- 1) Organic matter from almost fresh to totally decomposed in the form of humus (humins, humic and fulmic acids)
- 2) Minerals (nutrients, sand, silt, and clay)

- 3) Soil life (microbes and macrobes)
- 4) Air & water
- 5) Plant choices
- 6) Care for and do not destroy the health of the soil one has

How to quit destroying your soil (The "Do Not's") - When I was in college over 40 years ago, it was all about the chemistry and physics of the soil. Today we know the biology of the soil is 10-15X more important to plant growth and health than the chemistry and physics. This new knowledge has caused our understanding of a healthy soil to change.

A) Do not use high salt products as they destroy the soil and weaken plants.

We now know that there is a good bacterium in the soil whose major function is to control soil diseases like the fungal disease called brown patch (*Rhizoctonia solani*). Ask yourself this question: "Why do we put salts into canned goods, ham, jerky, etc?" - TO KILL BACTERIA!

All synthetic fertilizers are chemically salts. They kill this good bacterium and with no natural control we get brown patch and many other fungal soil diseases.

Soils along the Gulf Coast are high in sodium from many sources, from salt domes to salt swept inland from tropical storms. Salts stunt plant growth, salts kill beneficial microbes, salts prevent plants from absorbing water, and plants roots cannot tolerate salts. These means if we want a beautiful garden along the Gulf coast we do not use high salt products. These include cow manure, poultry manure, spent mushroom substrate (sometimes called Mushroom compost), and artificial/synthetic fertilizers.



This photo shows the effects of salt on root growth. The diagonal line is a special membrane that does not let salt pass through. The photo on the left does not have any salt in the growing media and the roots penetrate the membrane and grow into the medium below. However, on the right picture there is a very mild salt solution below the membrane. Notice how the roots sense the presence of the salt and grow away from the medium with the salt.

As we all know salts dissolve in water and gravity pulls the salts downward into the soil. As the soil dries the salts are left behind forming a layer a few inches down into our soil. The salt does two things: 1st - it prevents the roots from growing deep into the soil as they sense the presence of this salt layer and quit growing down which results in very shallow root zone. As a result roots cannot reach moisture deeper in the soil and it dries out quickly. Hence we have to water very frequently and 2nd - the salts lock the soil particles together forming a hardpan layer that prevents air and water from penetrating the soil. The low oxygen conditions favor the growth of many soil pathogens. To give an example of how salt locks soil particles together think of a pair of pliers left outside for a few weeks. The pliers rust and the pliers are frozen and will not open. Rust is chemically a salt composed of iron and oxygen. All artificial fertilizers are chemically salts.

b) Do not use artificial fertilizers. We started learning as far back as 1999 that insects are attracted to plants fertilized with synthetic fertilizers (*Journal of Environmental Horticulture*, 17(2):95, June 1999). Due to osmotic pressure, plants will absorb nitrogen faster than they need or can use it. To prevent nitrous which could kill the plant, it causes fast growth made of weak tissue (the lignin of the cell walls becomes thinner) that actually attracts pest insects as they see in the ultraviolet portion of sunlight and can see the weakened tissue; hence they know it is easy to eat into. This also decreases a plants resistance to disease as the thin cell walls are easy for pathogens to penetrate.

c) Do not use pesticides. They work, but they kill beneficial insects, butterflies, and bees. One of the problems is that most pest insects breed 10 times faster than the beneficial insects hence the pests come back worse than before the pesticide was applied. When it rains or we turn on our sprinklers it washed into the ground and kills earthworms, good nematodes, microarthropods, etc. that turn leaves into humus just to name a few. The same idea applies to herbicides and fungicides. Read the articles on Round-Up to get an understanding of the toxic and extremely dangerous nature of these products.

Toxic synthetic horticultural chemicals do not work. According to USDA data in 1900 crop loss due to insects was 3-4%. By the 1940's crop loss due to insects was 7% and by the 1990's crop loss due to insects was 13%, despite a 33X increase in the volume of pesticides applied and at least a tenfold increase in toxicity. This is over a 330 fold increase in killing power and yet the problems have gotten worse. The bottom line is that these toxic chemicals are expensive and time consuming to use, do not work very well and this does not mention the side effects to one's health and to the environment. This is why more and more soil scientists and horticulturalists are using modern methods based on soil biology that is often referred to as "organic methods".

When we use dangerous synthetic chemicals in our gardening, we create most of our own problems. It is like a bunch of dominoes going down.

Turf grass Example: It starts when we use a synthetic fertilizer on our lawns in the spring. The salts present kill off the good bacterium that controls fungal diseases and the earthworms which results in soil compaction and poor drainage. Without the good bacterium we develop fungal problems like brown patch. We are told to treat the brown patch with a broad spectrum fungicide like terraclor which kills all the fungus in the soil (This is analogous to going to a Texan's game with 80,000 fans in the stadium and killing everyone to get the one criminal).

This does several things as it also kills beneficial fungus living in the soil like the endophytic fungus which lives in a symbiotic relationship with grass roots. This good fungus receives food from the grass and in return produces toxins that repel/kill chinch bugs and sod webworms. The fungicide also kills the good fungus that breaks down dead grass so we get a buildup of thatch as the weather warms up. This thatch layer makes a good home for chinch bugs (or webworms) since the fungus that repels and kills them is gone.

Now the chemical companies tell us that we need we need to apply Diazinon or some other pesticide to control the chinch bugs. Pesticides kill the earthworms and microarthropods that aerate the soil and prevent compaction. The earthworms also eat weed seeds destroying them. Air (oxygen) can no longer get into the soil hence root growth is very shallow. This requires us to water several times a week as the soil cannot hold much water and there is very little root zone for the grass to draw water from. Note: This excessive watering leaches nutrients from our soils that pollutes our bayous and streams and eventually leads to the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico.

Now we have to apply the artificial fertilizer 3-4 times per year to replace what was lost. Additionally the chlorine (Cl) in our public water systems in combination with the sodium (Na) in our soils forms sodium chloride which is known as table salt. This additional salt aggravates the problems a gardener experiences.

We are now told that we need to do a core aeration to break up the compaction and help air and water move into the soil since we no longer have the earthworms and other soil life doing that for us. Many of the plant species we call weeds are designed to grow on compacted and chemically out of balance soils. So without the earthworms and other soil life we have created a condition that favors weeds. The salts from the artificial fertilizer can cause a calcium (Ca) tie-up in the soil. For weeds like Dandelions to germinate and grow they require soils with low available calcium and low oxygen (compaction) hence we have created conditions that favor weeds over turf grass. Now we are told we need to use an herbicide or a weed and feed fertilizer since we have weeds.

The above scenario is very easy to avoid. One just needs to use an organic fertilizer instead of an artificial one. My favorite organic fertilizer is called MicroLife which I use for everything from house plants to fruit trees and turf grass.

Next apply a compost top dressing to the lawn to build organic matter and inoculate the soil with beneficial microbes. Note: Cheap low quality compost does not work very and some may actually kill the turf. During the 1980's when the composting industry was getting started there was a massive amount of research by the EPA, USDA and many universities. They found to have high quality compost there had to be a little manure used in producing it.

I enjoy the exercise I get from spreading compost but for those that are interested there are organic companies like "Green Pro" (713-553-7675) that will pick up the compost and do the work for you. If you listen to the Garden Line radio show every weekend, Randy Lemon has been repeatedly telling folks for years how important this simple compost top dressing procedure is

\* \* \*

## **WEEKLY GARDENING EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS CALENDAR**

**TO SUBMIT EVENTS - PLEASE - USE OUR FORMAT!**

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

**If we inspire you to attend any of these events, please let them know you heard about it in**

SAT., DEC. 12: GROWING TOMATOES FROM SEED (PART 1 OF 3) BY GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 9-11:30am, AgriLife Extension, Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. Free. Reservation: [galv@wt.net](mailto:galv@wt.net). 281-534-3413; [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston)

WED., DEC. 16: READING TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY V AND BOOK SWAP, 6-8pm, City of Houston Green Building Resource Center, 1002 Washington Ave. Free but registration required: 832-394-9050 or [steve.stelzer@houston.tx.gov](mailto:steve.stelzer@houston.tx.gov); [greenhouston.tx.gov/gbrceducation.pdf](http://greenhouston.tx.gov/gbrceducation.pdf)

SAT., DEC. 19: CHRISTMAS GARDENS BIRD COUNT, 8am, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: 713-274-4160

MON., DEC. 21: OPEN GARDEN DAY & PLANT SALE, 8:30-11am, Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. Free. Harris County Master Gardeners Precinct 2 event. [hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

MON., JAN. 4: GROWING CITRUS BY BETH HOUSE, 10am-noon, Amegy Bank Community Room, 28201 SH 249, Tomball. Free. Tomball Garden Club event, [tomballgardenclub@gmail.com](mailto:tomballgardenclub@gmail.com)

THURS., JAN. 7: IS YOUR STYLE IN YOUR GARDEN? BY MARGARET SINCLAIR, 9:30am, Municipal Utility Building #81, 805 Hidden Canyon Dr., Katy. Free. Nottingham Country Garden Club Program. [nottinghamgardenclub.org](http://nottinghamgardenclub.org)

FRI., JAN. 8: PERSONALIZING YOUR GARDEN FOCAL POINTS BY DARNELL SCHREIBER, 10:15am, White Oak Conference Center, 7603 Antoine Drive. Free. Houston Federation of Garden Clubs. [houstonfederationgardenclubs.org](http://houstonfederationgardenclubs.org)

SAT., JAN. 9: GROWING AVOCADO & PAPAYA BY JERRY HURLBERT, 9-11:30am; GROWING PEACHES IN GALVESTON COUNTY by Herman Auer, 1-2pm, AgriLife Extension in Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. Free. 281-534-3413; reservations: [galv3@wt.net](mailto:galv3@wt.net). [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galvestonT](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galvestonT)

UES., JAN. 12: FOREST ECOLOGY / TREE CARE BY JOHN ROSS. 9 am. South County Community Center, 2235 Lake Robbins Dr., The Woodlands. Free. Woodlands Garden Club event. [www.thewoodlandsgardenclub.org](http://www.thewoodlandsgardenclub.org)

TUE., JAN. 12: FOREST MANAGEMENT IN THE WOODLANDS AREA BY JOHN ROSS, 7 pm. South Regional Library, 2101 Lake Robbins Drive, The Woodlands. Free. A Woodlands G.R.E.E.N. event. <http://www.thewoodlandsgreen.org/>

WED., JAN. 13: TOP BAR BEEHIVES BY DEAN COOK. Noon-2pm, Mercer Botanic Garden, 2206 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. 713-274-4160.

THUR., JAN. 14: FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS PREVIEW OF THE JAN. 16 FRUIT & CITRUS TREE SALE, 6:30-8:30pm, Fort Bend County Fairgrounds, Building B, 4310 Highway 36 South, Rosenberg. Free. 281-341-7068; [www.fbmga.org](http://www.fbmga.org)

THURS., JAN. 14: BED BUILDING FROM THE GROUND UP, 7:30PM, CHERRIE FLORES GARDEN PAVILION, 1500 Hermann Drive, Houston 77004. Free. Houston Rose Society event. [houstonrose.org](http://houstonrose.org)

THURS., JAN. 14: HOW TO GROW OLIVES AND PRODUCE OLIVE OIL BY RANDY & MONICA BRAZIL, 10-11:30 am, Clear Lake Meeting Room, 5001 Nasa Parkway. Free. Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 event. [hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu) SAT.,

JAN. 16: FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS ANNUAL FRUIT & CITRUS TREE SALE, 9am-1pm or sold out, Fort Bend County Fairground Barn-H, 4310 Highway 36S, Rosenberg. 281-341-7068; [www.fbmga.org](http://www.fbmga.org)

TUES., JAN. 19: GARDENING BY THE SQUARE FOOT BY JOHN JONS, SAT., JAN. 16: COUSHATTA CAMELLIA SOCIETY SHOW, 1-4pm, First Christian Church Fellowship Building, 3500 N. Loop 336 W, Conroe. Don Marcotte, 936-661-1101. [funny-farm2@sbcglobal.net](mailto:funny-farm2@sbcglobal.net)

SAT., JAN. 16: FRUIT TREES - SELECTION, PLANTING, PRUNING, SPRAYING & CARE, 9-11am, Montgomery County Extension Office, Tom LeRoy Education Center, 9020 Airport Road, Conroe. Master Gardener event. \$5. 936-539-7824, [mcmga.com](http://mcmga.com)

SAT., JAN. 16: FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS ANNUAL FRUIT & CITRUS TREE SALE, 9am-1pm or sold out, Fort Bend County Fairground Barn-H, 4310 Highway 36S, Rosenberg. 281-341-7068; [www.fbmga.org](http://www.fbmga.org)

SAT., JAN. 16: WEDGE GRAFTING BY SUE JEFFCO, 9-11am; KITCHEN GARDENING BY MARY DEMENY, 1-3pm, AgriLife Extension in Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. Free. 281-534-3413. Reservations: [galv3@wt.net](mailto:galv3@wt.net). [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston)

MON., JAN. 18: 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. Free. [hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

TUES., JAN. 19: GARDENING BY THE SQUARE FOOT BY JOHN JONS, 6:30-8 p.m., at Galveston County AgriLife Extension in Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. Free. 281-534-3413. Reservations: [galv3@wt.net](mailto:galv3@wt.net). [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston)

THURS., JAN. 21: WALLER COUNTY MASTER GARDENER 2016 INTERN TRAINING PROGRAM BEGINS. Registration (\$160; Jan. 11 deadline). [www.txmga.org/walleimg](http://www.txmga.org/walleimg)

SAT., JAN. 23: MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENER FRUIT AND NUT TREE SALE, 8am program, 9am-noon sale, Montgomery Co. Extension Office, 9020 Airport Road, Conroe. 936-539-7824, [mcmga.com](http://mcmga.com)

MONDAYS., JAN. 25-FEB. 29: TEXAS GULF COAST GARDENER, TIER III: THE ART OF LANDSCAPE DESIGN. 9am-3pm., Mercer Botanic Garden, 2206 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. 713-274-4160

SAT., JAN. 30: WALLER COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ANNUAL FRUIT & NUTTREE SALE (and presale pickup), 10am-2pm, 850 Bus 290 N. Hempstead. [txmg.org/walleimg](http://txmg.org/walleimg)

SAT., FEB. 6: COUSHATTA CAMELLIA SOCIETY SHOW, 1-4pm, Katy and E. Don Walker, Sr. Education Center, 1400 19th St., Huntsville. Don Marcotte, 936-661-1101. [funny-farm2@sbcglobal.net](mailto:funny-farm2@sbcglobal.net)

TUE., FEB 9: SHADE GARDENING BY GUDRUM OPPERMAN. 9 am. South County Community Center, 2235 Lake Robbins Dr., The Woodlands. Free. Woodlands Garden Club event. [www.thewoodlandsgardenclub.org](http://www.thewoodlandsgardenclub.org)

WED., FEB. 10: SPRING INTO YOUR LAWN - ORGANIC LAWN CARE & SPRINGTIME PREP BY BOB DAILEY. noon-2pm, Mercer Botanic Garden, 2206 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. 713-274-4160.

FRI., FEB. 12: THE HOLISTIC GARDEN, BY DR. JOE NOVAK, 10:15am, White Oak Conference Center, 7603 Antoine Drive. Free. Houston Federation of Garden Clubs. [houstonfederationgardenclubs.org](http://houstonfederationgardenclubs.org)

SAT., FEB. 20: FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS PREVIEW FOR THE VEGETABLE- HERB PLANT SALE, 9-11am, Bud O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg. Free. 281 341-7068, [www.fbmg.org](http://www.fbmg.org)

SAT. FEB. 27: FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS ANNUAL VEGETABLE-HERB PLANT SALE, 9am-noon, Fort Bend County Extension Office, 1402 Band Rd., Rosenberg. 281 341-7068, [www.fbmg.org](http://www.fbmg.org)

TUES., MAR. 8: EASTER FLORAL DESIGN CONCEPTS BY TONY HUFFMAN. 9 am. South County Community Center, 2235 Lake Robbins Dr., The Woodlands. Free. Woodlands Garden Club event. [www.thewoodlandsgardenclub.org](http://www.thewoodlandsgardenclub.org)

WED. MAR. 9: MARCH MART VOLUNTEER TRAINING, 10:30-11:30am, MARCH MART PREVIEW OF SALE PLANTS, noon-2pm, Mercer Botanic Garden, 2206 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. 713-274-4160.

FRI., MAR. 11: BULLET PROOF VIBURNUMS FOR THE GULF SOUTH BY DR. DAVID CREECH, 10:15am, White Oak Conference Center, 7603 Antoine Dr. Free. Houston Federation of Garden Clubs. [houstonfederationgardenclubs.org](http://houstonfederationgardenclubs.org)

WED. MAR. 12: MARCH MART VOLUNTEER TRAINING, 9:30-10:30am, and MARCH MART PREVIEW OF SALE PLANTS, noon-2pm, Mercer Botanic Garden, 2206 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. 713-274-4160.

FRI.-SAT., MAR. 18-19: MARCH MART, 8am-4pm, Mercer Botanic Garden, 2206 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. 713-274-4160.

TUE., APR. 12: PLANT PROPAGATION TECHNIQUES. 9 am. South County Community Center, 2235 Lake Robbins Dr., The Woodlands. Free. Woodlands Garden Club event. [www.thewoodlandsgardenclub.org](http://www.thewoodlandsgardenclub.org)

FRI., APR. 9: XPLORING CREATIVITY BY LILLIAN RICO, 10:15am, White Oak Conference Center, 7603 Antoine Drive. Free. Houston Federation of Garden Clubs event. [houstonfederationgardenclubs.org](http://houstonfederationgardenclubs.org)

FRI., MAY 13: NIGHT SOUNDS - TWILIGHT WALK THROUGH THE GARDEN BY DEBBIE BANFIELD, 10:15am, White Oak Conference Center, 7603 Antoine Dr. Free. Houston Federation of Garden Clubs; [houstonfederationgardenclubs.org](http://houstonfederationgardenclubs.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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**Not using our format will result in a delay in publication.**  
**Events will not be picked up from newsletters.**

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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: Garden Mix Light Plus. <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 12/31/15.

**COUPON: Nature's Way Resources. 30% off all trees & shrubs including fruit trees, shade trees, antique roses and much**

**more.** (Offer good for retail purchases of this product by the cubic yard at Nature's Way Resources (101 Sherbrook Circle, Conroe TX). Expires 12/31/15.