



June 17th, 2016

Dear Friends,

Here is the 161st 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](mailto:lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com). Thanks so much for your interest.

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**MORE POLLINATOR PLANTS! . . . UPCOMING DELIGHTS**

## By BRENDA BEUST SMITH

Pollinators and the plants that attract them are sure great for a gardening columnist! I'm awed by:

1. how happy so many folks are to submit their own observations
2. the wide variety of easily-observed, highly-successful, pollinator-attracting plants readers are reporting
3. having another excuse to point out that Monday, June 20, is both the Summer Solstice and the beginning of National Pollinator Week. Appropriate, eh?

Want to know what's going on worldwide to celebrate? Check out the [POLLINATOR PARTNERSHIP](#) website.

We are not alone in this crisis. Just consider this column a "Part Two" to last week's "[POLLINATORS - WE CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT THEM](#)" column.

*(A personal ps for my "more pickier" editor-type readers: some gardeners/horticulturists like to put botanical names first. Some like common names first. Since these folks have all been nice enough to share with us, I'm listing them just like they're sent in. Doesn't matter to me which comes first. Just try them!)*

\* \* \*



***Blackfoot daisy, pipevine, flame acanthus and shrimp plants***

**CITY OF HOUSTON'S SENIOR SUPERINTENDENT/HORTICULTURIST BRENT MOON** added these great butterfly attractors he's observed (that weren't listed in last week's column):

- **BUTTERFLIES:** *Aristolochia fimbriata* (pipevine); *Baptisia sphaerocarpa* (bush pea); *Calylophus berlandieri* (sun drops); *Gaillardia pulchella* (Indian blanket); *Helenium drummondii* (fringed sneezeweed); *Helianthus maximiliani* (Maximilian sunflower); *Lupinus texensis* (Texas bluebonnet); *Melampodium leucanthum* (blackfoot daisy); *Monarda citriodora* (plains horsemint); *Passiflora lutea* (passionflower); *Phyla nodiflora* (frog fruit); *Rudbeckia* (black-eye Susan - various species)
- **HUMMINGBIRDS:** *Anisacanthus wrightii* (flame acanthus); *Bignonia capreolata* (crossvine); *Hesperaloe parviflora* (red yucca); *Justicia brandegeana* (red shrimp plant); *Lonicera* sp. (honeysuckle); *Tecoma stans* (yellowbells or esperanza)



***L to r: lion's tail, fringed sneezeweed, frog fruit, passion vine, and pink powderpuff***



**PAULA BAZAN ON BEES:** Thanks to Paula Bazan who wrote that while her African blue basil attracts a lot of bees, her pink powderpuff (*Calliandra emarginata*) is literally covered with them.

**\* SHANGRI LA GIRLS & A "BIG" POLLINATOR EXHIBIT**

In listing all easily-identified pollinator-attracting flowers, I didn't credit the great list from Shangri La Gardens and Nature Center in Orange.

In a way, I'm glad. This gives me a chance to tout both Shangri La Gardens and their really special "pollinator" exhibit (below) that has been extended through June 25. Kids will love these larger-than-life insects scattered across the 252-acres of gardens:



Back to "real" pollinators' plants found in Shangri La gardens, sent in by Horticultural Specialist Jennifer Buckner, Shangri La Horticulture Specialist. Look for these while the kiddos are ogling the giant "bugs":

- Almond verbena (*Aloysia virgata*); beebalm (*Monarda citriodora*); blazing star (*Liatris*, spp.); blue mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*); *Buddleia davidii* and hybrids; bottlebrush (*Callistemon viminalis* 'Hannah Ray'); buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*); cigar plant/batface cuphea; clasping leaf coneflower (*Dracopis amplexicaulis*) Coneflowers (*Echinacea purpurea*, *E. sanguinea*);
- Also: coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*); *Cosmos sulphureus*; *Duranta erecta*; false indigo (*Baptisia* spp); mealycup sage (*Salvia farinacea* 'Henry Duelberg'); Gulf Coast pentstemon (*Penstemon tenuis*); milkweed (butterflyweed - *Asclepias curassavica*, native species); firebush (*Hamelia patens*); firespike (*Odontonema strictum*); lion's tail (*Leonotis leonurus*); *Pentas lancifolia*; porterweed (*Stachytarpheta* spp.); Turk's cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus* var. *drummondii*); vervain (*Verbena bonariensis*); Verbena 'Homestead Purple,' and Zinnia elegans, hybrids.

When you consider the credentials of those who, this week and last week, recommending these as good pollinator plants, this is a pretty impressive compilation, the apotheosis of options that not only create a healthy ecology, but also are extremely hardy in our unique subtropical climate.

Appreciate it, too, the listings of specific names. Not all the different varieties of the same plant do well in all areas. E.g., of all the different types of bottlebrush available, now you know "Hannah Ray" (*Callistemon viminalis* 'Hannah Ray') does really well along the Upper Texas Gulf Coast.

SPEAKING OF GETTING CHILDREN INVOLVED . . . make sure they can take pictures when visiting any garden. Norchester Garden Club -- the moving force behind Precinct 4's beautiful Matzke Park Butterfly Garden, Jones Rd at Grant Rd in Northwest Houston -- encourages parents to challenge photography skills with a "Children's Photo and PreSchool Picture Contest.

"Look for caterpillars, butterflies, bees, bugs and birds among the butterfly weed, passion flower, butterfly bush," advises NGC's Janet Carpenter. "A collection of what and when you have seen them this summer . . . becomes a great reference for later study," she adds. Contest entry deadline is Aug. 31 Details: [matzkebutterflygarden.blogspot.com/](http://matzkebutterflygarden.blogspot.com/) (scroll down to April 17 at bottom of page)

\* \* \*

**NOTES FROM READERS** make this column so much fun (and easier!) to do. I love notes from readers! For example, when Paula reported on her pink powderpuff and bees above, she added:

*" . . . I am pretty obsessive about deadheading and prefer to deadhead the Pink Puff because the puff part turns black and icky before it falls off. Normally I garden with all types of bees, I don't bother them and they don't bother me. I swear, the bees are so thick on the Pink Puff I have enough respect for the bees not to try to get in there to deadhead. It is on its own."*

This gives me a chance to talk about deadheading -- lazy gardeners, you can just tune out. We don't deadhead. BUT! Should you choose to do so, know that removing those dead flower heads is not only good for those who want an obsessively clean garden, it also reaps more flowers! Plants are genetically-programmed to bloom to produce X amount of seed to ensure species survival. To do this, they must produce X number of flowers. Removing spent blooms before they turn into seed keeps many plants flowering longer to reach that goal.



But, do it right. At left, a cut like this works only if you're cutting right above a leaf node. Don't leave a bare stick length. Cut back right above existing leaves, or existing leaf nodes as has been done at right. Only catch: newer varieties of many of garden favorites are hybridized to hold flowers longer, and NOT to produce seed, hence they don't need deadheading. Or rather, there's no point in doing it, except for the neatness factor.

\* \* \*

**HCMGA OPEN GARDEN DAY WILL CONTINUE AT TEMPORARY LOCATION** Harris County AgriLife Extension Center, closed due to flooding, may not reopen until early 2017. **Harris County Master Gardeners Association's Open Garden Days** continue every fourth Tuesdays (through Nov.), 10-11am at Weekley Community Center, 8440 Greenhouse Rd. Details: [ogd.harrishort@gmail.com](mailto:ogd.harrishort@gmail.com). The next Open Garden Day will be June 28 with activities for all 3 age groups:

*\*Brenda's column in the free, emailed LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER is based on her 45+ years as the Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener. To sign up: [CLICK HERE](#)*

*Two favors? 1. If I don't respond to an email, send it again! 2. Check Calendar for your submitted event. If not there, let me know!*

*Email questions & comments to Brenda at [lazygardener@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net).  
Brenda's column in the LG&F Newsletter is based on her 45+ years as the Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener.*

## JOHN'S CORNER

## News from the wonderful world of soil and plants



As summer approaches, many of us are busy with our vegetable gardens. I was reading in the July 2016 issue of the magazine "Life Extension," and there were several articles on the health promoting properties of fresh vegetables. We all know that vitamin-C will prevent scurvy. Researchers have found that chemicals in spinach called carotenoids (lutein/zeaxanthin) can reduce macular degeneration caused by aging. Another article in the Journal of Nutrition (March 1, 2016) has found that chemicals in broccoli (chopped or steamed) called sulforaphane, reduced the risk of fatty liver disease and liver cancer. In the Journal Ophthalmology researchers found that consuming high amounts of vitamin-C could slow the progression of cataracts. The Journal Nutrition Research found that people with high levels of lycopene another carotenoid (gives tomatoes and watermelons their red color) reduced one's risk of dying by 33%. Another article found that the spice saffron from the *Crocus sativus* flower improves visual acuity. They used a dose of 20 mg per day over an 11-month period and the average visual acuity improved by two lines on the Snellen test chart! A flavonoid (Cyanidin-3-glucoside or C3G) found in many fresh berries was beneficial in improving night vision. These are many good reasons to grow our own vegetables organically.

A paper in the Journal Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences (2016; 371) has found that the function and quality of forest ecosystems is directly related to the diversity of animals and plants. The food webs are extremely complex and that the flow of energy through the leaf litter is extremely high if the decomposer community is rich in species and individuals. "The study showed that the functioning of the ecosystem is ultimately determined by simple relationships: the higher the number of individual animals and the higher the species richness, the better the system functions". The suffix "cide" means to kill. When one uses the toxic pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, etc. the landscape does not function as well. When one uses these chemicals, we lose species numbers and diversity. This results in more weeds, disease, and insect problems as well as more fertilizer and water required.

An issue affecting mulch prices on the East Coast and deep southeast USA is the clear cutting of our forests to make wood pellets to fuel electric generating plants in Europe to replace coal. New studies have shown that burning wood pellets actually increases the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> produced. The spin is that using trees is carbon neutral, however when a tree is burned it will take 50 years for another to grow and reabsorb the same amount of carbon. The loss of tree material to make mulch has created shortages in some areas raising the price of mulch.

There is a good article on the E-Nature blog on Poison Ivy. It can be found at:

<http://www.wild.enature.com/blog/how-can-you-avoid-poison-ivy-and-poison-oak-and-treat-them-if-disaster>

This quarter's issue of the Journal Compost Science and Utilization (2016, Vol.24) had several good articles. If one's soil has a carbon to nitrogen ratio (C:N) between 20-30:1, then nitrogen is immobilized in the soil and not lost to leaching. Composts in this range (mature composts) were found to be as effective as artificial fertilizers in increasing yields on barley. The compost also increased nutrient uptake (nitrogen and phosphorous) by the plants, particularly in drought years. The compost also provided substrate and energy needed for microbially mediated N<sub>2</sub>O production (free nitrogen from the air).

Another article found that adding small amounts of gypsum (CaSO<sub>4</sub>) to the active composting phase reduced the amount of nitrogen lost, increasing the finished compost's nitrogen levels. This is very important when composting with lots of manure as a feedstock.

A study on growing Agave's found that using vermi-compost (earthworm castings) significantly increased the dry weight, the fructan, glucose, and fructose content of the plant. It also increased the mycorrhizal colonization of the roots. This led to the plant being able to absorb water and nutrients better. Organic

gardeners have known for years that earthworms in our soil provide that service for us, **if** we do not kill them with pesticides and artificial fertilizers. A related study found that medicinal plants when grown in media that had been vermi-composted were of higher quality.

In the journal of the Soil Science Society of America (April 2016) researchers found that the turnover of roots from deep rooted perennial grasses increased organic matter far more than most amendments. They also found that substances with the most nutrients (bio-solids, manure, and compost) produced the greatest organic matter, which persisted seven years after the last application.

There is a study with 40 years of data in the journal, Rangeland Ecology and Management (2016) by researchers at Kansas State University. They learned managers need to increase burning to more than once every three years to keep the tall grass prairie eco-system from transitioning to woodlands. It was also the most economical way to manage their land.

**Question from a subscriber:** I have two worm bins, and can't supply enough eggshells for them; some sources say I should use dolomite or some source for calcium carbonate. C.P.

Charlie, I have two worm bins, a large one at the business and a backyard one at home. At work, I do not add anything but feedstocks. However, at home I do add mineral dusts with each new layer of material. I use an equal mix of basalt sand, granite sand, and greensand. I just mix it together and have it well blended. I add a couple ounces each time I add feedstock by sprinkling it on top of the new layer. The combination provides grit and all minor and trace minerals.

Note: The greensand is high in calcium

A few times a year I add a couple cups of good compost to ensure the bin is full of good microbes for the worms to eat.

Regards,

John

\* \* \*

## WEEKLY GARDENING EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS CALENDAR

TO SUBMIT AN EVENT FOR THIS CALENDAR, PLEASE NOTE.

Events **NOT** submitted in the **EXACT** written format below may take two weeks or longer to be reformatted/retyped. After that point, if your event does not appear, please email us.

Submit to: [lazygardener@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net)

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

SAT., JUNE 18: DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR LANDSCAPES, by KAREN LEHR, 9-11am, AgriLife Extension, Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (Hwy 519), La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener event. Free, but registration required: [galv3@wt.net](mailto:galv3@wt.net); <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/>



SAT., JUNE 18: FAMILY/KIDS DAY IN THE GARDENS, 9-11am, Montgomery County AgriLife Extension Office, 9020 Airport Rd., Conroe. \$5/family. Master Gardener event. [mcmga.com](http://mcmga.com); 936-539-7824

SAT., JUNE 18: SUMMER COLOR SALE, 9am-3pm (free), ALL ABOUT BEGONIAS INDOORS & OUT WORKSHOP, 10:30am (\$10), & EASY CARE OF ORCHIDS WORKSHOP, noon (\$10). Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield. Workshops register: 713-274-4166.

SAT., JUNE 18: EDIBLE LANDSCAPING WITH URBAN HARVEST, 10-11am, Buchanan's Native Plants, 611 E 11th. Free. 713-861-5702; [buchanansplants.com/events](http://buchanansplants.com/events)

TUE., JUNE 21: GROWING CUCURBITS by HERMANN AUER, 6:30 & 8:30pm, Galveston County AgriLife Extension, Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (Hwy 519), La Marque. Free, but register: [galv3@wt.net](mailto:galv3@wt.net); [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston)

WED., JUNE 22: NEWS FROM THE CHIHUAHUAN DESERT RESEARCH INSTITUTE, 7:30pm, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 West Gray. Free. Houston Cactus & Succulent Society event. [hcsstex.org](http://hcsstex.org)

WED., JULY 6: EDIBLE LANDSCAPE by RON RICHTER, 10:30am, [Glazier Senior Education Center](http://Glazier Senior Education Center), 16600 Pine Forest Lane. Free. [www.pct3.com/senior-centers/glazier-senior-center](http://www.pct3.com/senior-centers/glazier-senior-center)

SAT., JULY 9: FLORAL GARDENING IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY. 9-11am, AgriLife Extension Office, 9020 Airport Road, Conroe. Master Gardener event. \$5. 936-539-7824 or <http://www.mcmga.com/>

SAT., JULY 9: ALL ABOUT GINGERS WITH LINDA FIELDS, 10-11am, Buchanan's Native Plants, 611 E 11th. Free. 713-861-5702; [buchanansplants.com/events](http://buchanansplants.com/events)

SAT., JULY 9: KATY/HOUSTON AREA SEED, PLANT & GARDEN SHARE, 1-3pm, & EDIBLE FRONT YARD LANDSCAPING by Ron Richter, 1pm, 5414 Franz Rd., Katy. Free. [facebook.com/groups/KatyHoustonAreaSeedPlantGardenShare/](https://facebook.com/groups/KatyHoustonAreaSeedPlantGardenShare/)

THURS., JULY 14: ANNUAL ICE CREAM SOCIAL, 7pm, Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion, 1500 Hermann Dr. Free. Houston Rose Society event.

THURS., JULY 14: GROWING GRAPES by RAYMOND HAAK, 10am, Clear Lake Meeting Room, 5001 Nasa Parkway. Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 event. Free. [hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

MON., JULY 18: OPEN GARDEN DAY, 8:30-11am, Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 event. Free. [hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

SAT., JULY 23: PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA SHOW & SALE, 9:30am-3pm, Fort Bend Country Fairgrounds 4310 Texas Highway 36, Rosenberg. [theplumeriasociety.org](http://theplumeriasociety.org)

SAT., JULY 23: AQUAPONICS, by ROBIN COLLINS, 9-10am; Galveston County AgriLife Extension Building, Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (Hwy 519), La Marque. Master Gardeners event. Free, but register: [galv3@wt.net](mailto:galv3@wt.net); <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/>

SAT., JULY 30: SUCCESSFUL FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING by LUKE STRIPLING, 9-11:30 am, Galveston County AgriLife Extension Building, Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (Hwy 519), La Marque. Master Gardeners event. Free, but register: [galv3@wt.net](mailto:galv3@wt.net); <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/>

SAT., AUG. 6 : PECKERWOOD INSIDER'S Tour, 10am, 20559 FM 359 Road, Hempstead. Garden Conservancy event. \$10. Register: [peckerwoodgarden.org](http://peckerwoodgarden.org), 979-826-3232; [info@peckerwoodgarden.org](mailto:info@peckerwoodgarden.org)

MON. AUGUST 22, ORGANIC METHODS IN GARDENING- THE SOIL FOOD WEB, by John Ferguson, South Montgomery County Friends of The Library (SMCFOL), 2 PM, Mitchell Library, 8125 Ashland Way, The Woodlands, Sari Harris, 281-681-0470

TUES., OCT. 11: GROWING PLUMERIAS, 7:30pm, Cherie Flores Garden Pavillion, Hermann Park Conservancy, 1500 Hermann Dr. Free. Plumeria Society of America event. [theplumeriasociety.org](http://theplumeriasociety.org)

WED., AUG 31: CHILDREN'S PHOTO AND PRESCHOOL PICTURE CONTESTS ENTRY DEADLINE. Matzke Butterfly Garden competition. Contest rules: [matzkebutterflygarden.blogspot.com](http://matzkebutterflygarden.blogspot.com)

OCT. 21-23: AMERICAN ROSE SOCIETY SOUTH CENTRAL DISTRICT CONVENTION. [houstonrose.org](http://houstonrose.org).

**If we inspire you to attend any of these events,  
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## ADOPTABLE DOG OF THE WEEK:



## 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. 50% off pomegranates, apples, asian pears and selected antique roses.** (Offer good for retail purchases of this product (101 Sherbrook Circle, Conroe TX). Expires 06/30/16.