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December 9, 2016

Dear Friends,

Here is the 184th 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. . . E mail your thoughts to: [lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com](mailto: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!

[JOIN OUR MAILING LIST!](#)



## SAVE THE GNOMES! ... MULCH EVERYTHING ... BROMELIADS IN WINTER . . . START TOMATOES!

*"How few wizards realize just how much we can learn from the wise little gnomes -- or, to give them their correct names, the 'Gernumbli gardensi' !"*

-- X enophilus Lovegood, "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" by J.K. Rowling

### By BRENDA BEUST SMITH

Looking for a gift for a gardener? You might want to help support the Save the Gnomes campaign.

*(Just for clarity, talking about those cute little red-hatted, squatty body, pink-cheeked, round-faced creatures found in gardens -- not the anything-but-cute, counterfeit "cyberspace gnomes").*

Gnomes have been favorite garden creatures literally for centuries, primarily in Germany and England. History is riddled with various versions of their origin. The one I love best is this one below, excerpted from ***The Lazy Gardener's Guide on CD*** ("February chapter / pg. 13):

*ONE ANCIENT GERMAN FOLKTALE SAYS GNOMES are the offspring of a socially scandalous marriage between a mythical dwarf and a fairy (see page 52). From their fairy mother, gnomes inherited a love of flowers and plants and especially delight in statues of themselves.*

*Gnomes, say those who know these things, have rosy red cheeks, wear pointy hats and worked in mines wearing hats filled with grass to protect their heads from falling rocks. Most legends agree these little people are easy-going, fun-loving and a big help to gardeners. Eg, they might find a trowel you lost, setting it where you're sure to see it!*

*But gnomes don't have much use for those who think their statues are as gauche as pink flamingos. They aren't known for being spiteful, but if you say bad things about a gnome statue and then a favorite plant dies . . . well . . .*

Want proof in this magical season? This very week I shopped for greenery swags with lights to help my sister Judy holiday-decorate for baby sister Audrey & fabulous brother-in-law John.

No lighted swags to be found. Frustrating! Then I passed a sale table with a delightful ceramic gnome. I swear he winked at me (could have been twinkling lights nearby). He and I headed to checkout. On way, I passed a stack of random items. Right on top were three boxes of greenery swags with lights!

They turned out to be half price! Then Judy & I discovered each were the exact length we needed and three perfectly filled the spaces. I set the little gnome - now named Phred - in the garden where he could see the

lights. He deserved some thanks!

But gnome sales are so down, they may become an endangered species. Earlier this year, 38 delightful little [Steve Hoke-crafted gnomes](#) and their homes were ordered removed from a Pennsylvania park. The reason? They "could affect wildlife habitat."

Some folks do care. Other PA parks have happily welcomed the true treasures: "[Homeless Gnomes find new place to call home](#)." And the [Gnome Liberation Front](#) members made headlines by "freeing" (aka "stealing") gnomes out of British gardens, photographing them positioned in front of famous sites (Louvre, Statue of Liberty, etc.). The photos were mailed with notes of liberation to the kidnapped gnomes' owners. (No reported ransoms demanded.)



*Notable Gnomes - l to r, Phred in Audrey's garden; Royal Horticulture Society fundraiser gnomes painted by, l to r, Dame Maggie Smith, Sir Elton John and Helen Mirren; and, at far right, my own garden gnomes*

Still -- amid complaints of "too kitchy" -- sales of gnomes are less than half of what they used to be even in spite of the grand efforts of Sir Elton John, Dame Maggie Smith, Helen Mirren and other celebrities who handpainted 100 gnomes to be auctioned off in a Royal Horticultural Society fundraiser.

The campaign was enough to persuade RHS to finally lift its century-old ban on gnomes in display gardens at the prestigious Chelsea Flower Show, one of the world's premier annual bloomfests.

Unfortunately, the ban was lifted for only that one year. Placard-bearing protesters have been at the Chelsea gates for years, demanding "equal rights for gnomes." So maybe there's still hope. Also a lesson to be learned: RHS's motive in admitting the ""brightly-coloured mythical creatures" was to encourage children to get more involved in gardening. Help save gnomes! They're available in area nurseries or [online](#).

\* \* \*



**ONE OF MY FAVORITE E-GARDENING NEWS SOURCES** is Texas A&M's [WaterSmart Newsletter](#). A recent focus dealt with mulching -- a win-win activity this time of year.

Cold northers both reduce soil temperatures and dry out soil. A thick mulch layer, including leaves falling

from your trees, keeps soil warmer and more moist all winter long. WaterSmart offers these tips on making the best use of your mulch:

- Mulch ALL areas not in grass or thick ground cover.
- Trees and shrubs benefit from mulch spread at least as far as their outermost branches (the "dripline"). To prevent diseases and pest infestation, avoid piling mulch against tree trunks.
- Use a layer of coarse mulch 3 or more inches in depth for weed control.
- When converting grassy areas to mulch, smother the grass with a thick layer of cardboard or newspapers rather than kill it with chemicals.
- Blanket perennials with several inches of shredded leaves or whole pine needles.
- Use long-lasting mulches (wood chips, shavings, evergreen needles) for trees and shrubs.
- Spread mulches under annuals after they are well established (4 to 6 inches tall).
- Water ground thoroughly before and after applying a mulch cover.
- Never rely on a rainstorm to water in mulches. Rain often falls too heavily and quickly, and a fair amount of mulch may run off into the storm drain and local creeks.
- Never mulch with diseased or insect-infested yard trimmings.

You can't go wrong mulching now. But don't overlook one of your best, free, sources -- leaves falling from all those trees in your neighborhood. Far too many of them are bagged up and set out for garbage pickup. Think about how nature works. Trees take in nutrients from the soil, they use them to produce leaves, the leaves fall, decompose, help create the very nutrients that the tree needs and the cycle begins again.

We throw those leaves away, then buy expensive mulch often not nearly as beneficial for our trees as their own leaves are. Makes no sense at all to me. All that free, wonderful mulch just being carted to landfills. If you want the lovely mulch on top, why not put down layers of natural leaves first, and then the decorative mulch on top? Win, win!

\* \* \*



*Bromeliads, l to r, Aechmeas, Cryptanthus, Dickias and Neoregelias*

**SHOULD WE PROTECT BROMELIADS?** Increasingly shorter and (overall) warmer winters may be triggering overconfidence in expecting tropical plants to survive winter outside. For example, in my yard, if you don't survive winter without help from me, obviously, you don't belong in my yard.

Of course, not everyone feels that way. Becky in The Woodlands area wants to know about bromeliads. When it comes to specialty plants, I turn to my gurus, such as these [Bromeliad Society/Houston](#) members:

**Rick & Carole Richtmyer** lives in Spring (close to Becky) points out that as tropical plants, many bromeliads don't like frost or temperatures much below 40. However other factors do matter. The Richtmyers say the bromeliads left outside last winter actually did better than those they put in the garage. But it was a very mild winter (no prolonged cold) and the outdoor ones were growing along a fence that protected them. And they did cover with frost cloth when it dropped below 45. These cloths must be removed when it warms up.

But, they warn, if you aren't sure of the species or its cold hardiness, a garage would be a safer option with a heat source to keep it above 40 if possible. Indoors is definitely a better option if it gets into the 20s.

**David Whipkey** gets more specific: "My dickias were outside on the south side of the greenhouse and none were damaged. Many other genera were left out in a shade house, ignored all winter and most did fine. Some the Cryptanthus and Neoregelias were damaged, but pupped out this spring.

Many Bromeliads are damaged by frost more than slightly freezing temperatures. With this said, some of my Cryptanthus and Aechmeas are very cold sensitive and will be damaged by temperatures not much below 50 degrees." David's philosophy is to protect any plant that is dear to him. If he has a spare, experiment with it and see how much cold it will take.

**Cherie Lee** brings most of her bromeliads into a covered structure or the garage for winter and uses a small electric heater to keep temperatures above 40 if possible. She's kept them in there up to four months, she says, "not happy, but most of them lived."

You can talk with more Bromeliad Society/Houston members at their next meeting: Tues., Jan. 17, 7:30pm, West Gray Multi-Service Center, 1475 W Gray. Visitors are always welcome. Carole Richtmyer will speak on "Cryptanthus." [bromeliadsocietyhouston.org](http://bromeliadsocietyhouston.org)

\* \* \*

## POTPOURRI

\* **TIP O' THE TROWEL TO KEEP BOLIVAR BEAUTIFUL** on being awarded a Green Bag Grant from H-E-B, Central Market and Keep Texas Beautiful. This grant helps communities to support plastic bag recycling and reduction, water conservation education, among other projects. More info on these grants: [www.ktb.org](http://www.ktb.org).

\* **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT** Houston Parks & Recreation and Houston Audubon Society need volunteers for its annual Central Houston Annual Bird Count, Dec. 19. Details: [kelli.ondracek@houstontx.gov](mailto:kelli.ondracek@houstontx.gov)

\* **GOT YOUR TOMATO SEEDS READY TO PLANT?** The two keys to success with tomatoes in this area are 1. timing (mid-January for seed) and 2. variety. Mary & Roger Demeny dispense great tomato-growing advice at the Monday, Dec. 12, Houston Urban Gardens (HUG) Holiday Pot Luck Dinner, 6:30pm at the Multi-Service Center, 1475 W. Gray. Bring a dish, plus your own plate, mug and utensils for a great educational evening that will really pay off with tomato harvests next year. Anyone with extra tomato seeds is urged to bring some to swap. **Details:** [houstonurbangardeners.org](http://houstonurbangardeners.org)

\* \* \*

*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](#)*

*LG&F GARDEN CALENDAR EVENTS submitted in our EXACT format will be copied & added to calendar right away. Any necessary re-typing/reformatting may take couple of weeks. See calendar for format. Always check the LG&F Newsletter\* Calendar to make sure your submitted event is listed! If not, let me know!*

\* \* \*

## JOHN'S CORNER

## MINERALS - The Elements and What They Do Part 6



See the October 21, 2016 Newsletter for list of references and the Periodic Table.

13) Aluminum (Al) - Aluminum is the third most common element on the planet; it comprises 12% of the earth's crust and is the most common metal found in the crust. Aluminum is found in igneous rocks at 5,000 ppm, in shale's at 82,000 ppm, sandstones at 25,000 ppm, 4,200 ppm in limestone, and 71,000 ppm in clays. Aluminum can be found in every plant grown in soil, including common food crops, squash, wheat, grapes, etc. One cannot eat any grain, fruit, nut, or vegetable without taking in quantities of aluminum.

Aluminum is found in land plants at 500 ppm but only 60 ppm in marine plants. In marine animals, it is found at 19-50 ppm and in mammals the highest levels occur in the hair and lungs. It is now considered an essential nutrient for humans in small amounts. For example, it is used to activate the enzyme succinic dehydrogenase and it increases the survival rate of newborn babies.

Aluminum does not occur as a free or pure metal in nature, but only in combination with other elements. It is the second most used metal after iron. It can be found in many common items from bicycles and airplanes to cooking utensils. It is used in disinfectants and pesticides as well as vaccines. Aluminum production uses 5% of the electricity produced in the USA each year. Another source of aluminum pollution is from chemtrails from airplanes that have been found to have high levels of aluminum in them.

Aluminum oxide ( $Al_2O_3$ ) is used in many industrial applications and forms the mineral known as corundum. If we add a few atoms of iron (Fe) to this molecule, we get the gemstone topaz, if we add cobalt (Co) we get blue sapphires, and if we add chromium (Cr) we get red rubies. Only 30 mg is the amount of aluminum typical in a human body at any one time. Average daily intake of Americans is between 20-40 mg.

The name Aluminum is from the Latin name "alumen" which means bitter salt. Today we use the word Alum to refer to aluminum sulfate ( $Al_2(SO_4)_3$ ).

Aluminum sulfate is used in water purification, as it is soluble in water and is mainly used as a flocculating agent that causes contaminating particles to clump into larger, more easily trapped particles. It is used in paper manufacturing and repeated application of using newspaper as mulch can lead to aluminum toxicity in ones soil. Some water systems add aluminum compounds to make the drinking water clearer.

Aluminum is used in anti-perspirants/deodorants and is added to American cheese to make it melt easier on hamburgers. It is found in many of the food dyes used to color candy for

children. A 2013 study found that over 30 brands of baby formulas were contaminated with high levels of aluminum. The majority of soft drink cans are made of aluminum, which dissolves when exposed to acids like those in soft drinks.

Potassium aluminum sulfate, aluminum oxide, aluminum chlorohydrate, sodium aluminum phosphate are in baking powders, cheeses and other food products. The European Parliament banned these additives in 2008 due to the health problems they cause, both carcinogenicity and damage to DNA.

Even though it was debated for decades, a recent article in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease concluded that aluminum significantly contributes to this disease and may be the single largest factor.

Most aluminum passes through our digestive system without being absorbed. Prevention is caused by the presence of silicon (Si), however, once inside our body it is very difficult to remove aluminum. Aluminum hydroxide is used in anti-acids and it is added to vaccines, as it is believed to make the vaccine more effective. The Journal of Inorganic Biochemistry recently had an article that concluded that aluminum in vaccines was linked to the rise of autism. Aluminum is used as an adjuvant in vaccines along with mercury (thimerosal). Aluminum salts like aluminum hydroxide ( $\text{Al}(\text{OH})_3$ ) has been shown by research to be a major factor in macrophagic myofasciitis (MMF) as well as autism.

If one drinks fluoridated water (public water systems) the absorption of aluminum is much higher. Note: Fluoride in drinking water increases the aluminum ions absorbability 10 fold. Aluminum has only one oxidation state that is +3 which allows it to substitute for yttrium (Yt) which also has a +3 oxidation state, in epi-genetic studies. High aluminum and a low magnesium/calcium ratio are associated with Amotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) and Parkinsonism dementia. The presence of aluminum in our diet or bodies can cause trigger a suppression of probiotic organisms. This may be a contributing factor as to why so many people have microbe problems in their guts.

### **Gardening and Landscaping Problems Associated with Aluminum (Al)**

Aluminum influences plant growth but all the effects are not fully understood. It is found predominantly in the green leaves of plants hence there may be an association between aluminum and chlorophyll.

Hydrangeas are the best know users of aluminum to gardeners and the gorgeous blue color is caused by aluminum. However, like selenium (Se), aluminum (Al) is toxic to animals and that is why we seldom see insect damage on hydrangeas.

In some plants such as "tea", the bushes absorb a lot of aluminum and alum is used as a fertilizer. Wheat has developed a gene that creates a molecule that binds to aluminum

rendering it harmless, which allows wheat to grow on soils with high levels of aluminum. Grasses often accumulate aluminum in their tissues reaching 1% concentrations. Aluminum toxicity in plants is indirect, affecting root growth, uptake of essential nutrients, particularly phosphorus (P), and it causes antagonistic calcium-magnesium issues. If soil becomes acidic below a pH of 4.5 then the solubility of aluminum increases and absorption increases, reducing root growth and phosphate uptake by plants. High aluminum levels occur in plants when the soil is anaerobic and the roots are exposed to these conditions. In anaerobic conditions, microbes produce organic acids that can drop the pH to 2.0 or less at a microscopic level around the root zone.

Aluminum toxicity often occurs on soils fertilized with ammonium nitrate fertilizers, which acidify the soil, and is one of the most limiting factors in production.

It is well known that aluminum ions ( $Al^{+3}$ ) inhibits plant growth at very low concentrations. Excess aluminum in plants interferes with cell division and prevents some enzymes from working properly. It can also affect the uptake of several nutrients such as phosphorus (P), calcium (Ca), magnesium (Mg), potassium (K) and nitrogen (N).

Elevated aluminum levels in the soil (acidic conditions) will delay or prevent the formation of nodules full of nitrogen fixing bacteria. High levels have been shown to reduce or prevent many enzymes produced by soil microbes from working. This reduces their disease fighting ability and reduces their ability to breakdown organic matter. As a result, gardeners see more insect and disease problem if one uses artificial fertilizers like aluminum nitrate, or aluminum sulfate.

In general, in soils with lower levels of aluminum, plants grow better.  
Sources: clay, granite sand, artificial fertilizers, coal ash.

\* \* \*

## WEEKLY GARDENING EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS CALENDAR

**PLEASE READ BEFORE SUBMITTING AN EVENT TO THIS CALENDAR.**

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. Sorry, no children's programs. - Submit to: [lazygardener@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net)

**IF WE INSPIRE YOU TO ATTEND ANY OF THESE EVENTS, PLEASE TELL SPONSORS YOU HEARD ABOUT IT IN**



***THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER***

SAT., DEC. 10: WINTER AT MERCER BOTANIC GARDEN, 9am-noon, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: 713-274-4160.

SAT., DEC. 10: CITRUS FEST & Q&A by DR. BOB RANDALL, 8:30am-noon, Urban Harvest Farmer's Market, 3000 RRichmond Ave @ Eastside. Urban Harvest event. 713-880-5540, [urbanharvest.org](http://urbanharvest.org)

SAT., DEC. 10: CIITRUS TASTING EVENT by BRAZORIA COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 9am-noon, Agrilife Extension, 21017 CR 171. Free. 979-864-1558; [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/brazoria](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/brazoria).

MON., DEC 12: CITRUS SEMINAR & TASTING by MONTE NESBITT, TX A&M Extension Specialist, 6-8 pm, AgriLife Extension, Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener event. Free, but pre-register: [galvcountrymgs@gmail.com](mailto:galvcountrymgs@gmail.com), 281-534-3413, [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston)

WED. DEC. 14: CHRISTMAS CRAFTS USING NATURAL MATERIALS, noon-2pm, Mercer Botanic Gardens , 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: 713-274-4160.

SAT., DEC 17: PECKERWOOD GARDEN OPEN DAY, 10am-2pm tours, 20559 FM 359 Road, Hempstead. \$10. Garden Conservancy event. [peckerwoodgarden.org](http://peckerwoodgarden.org) , 979-826-3232; [info@peckerwoodgarden.org](mailto:info@peckerwoodgarden.org)

SAT., DEC. 17: CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT, 8am, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: [albbarr@comcast.net](mailto:albbarr@comcast.net).

MON., DEC. 19: STORYTIME IN THE GARDEN, 10:30 am- 11:30 am, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: 713-274-4160.

MON., DEC. 19: WALLER COUNTY MASTER GARDENER TRAINING REGISTRATION DEADLINE. 9am-4pm Saturday classes starting Jan. 14. \$160. Waller County Extension Office. [txmg.org/wallerimg](http://txmg.org/wallerimg); [wallerimggardener2013@gmail.com](mailto:wallerimggardener2013@gmail.com); 979-826-7651

THURS., JAN. 5: SOILS, FERTILIZERS & OTHER ORGANIC LANDSCAPE SOLUTIONS by LOUIS BENNETT, 10am, MUD Building, 805 Hidden Canyon Dr, Katy. Free, Nottingham Country Garden Club event. [nottinghamgardenclub.org](http://nottinghamgardenclub.org)

THUR, JAN 5: DORMANT PEACH & PLUM GRAFT WOOD by SUE JEFFCO & HERMAN AUER; 9-10am, Research & Demonstration Garden, Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener event. Free, but pre-register: [galvcountrymgs@gmail.com](mailto:galvcountrymgs@gmail.com), 281-534-3413, [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston)

SAT, JAN 7: WEDGE GRAFTING by SUE JEFFCO; 9-11am, & PROPAGATION OF PLANTS BY CUTTINGS by BILL CUMMINS, 1-2:30pm, AgriLife Extension, Carbide Park, 4102-B Main, La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener events. Free, but pre-register: [galvcountrymgs@gmail.com](mailto:galvcountrymgs@gmail.com), 281-534-3413, [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston)

WED., JAN. 11: EXPLORING THE PRIMEVAL FLORA OF NEW CALEDONIA, noon-2pm, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: 713-274-4160.

THURS., JAN. 12: BACKYARD ROSE HYBRIDIZING by JOHN JONS 7:30pm, Cherie Flores Garden Pavillion, 1500 Hermann Dr. Free. Houston Rose Society event. [houstonrose.org](http://houstonrose.org)

THURS., JAN. 12: FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS FRUIT & CITRUS PREVIEW PROGRAM, 6:30pm-8:30pm, Bud O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd. Rosenberg. [fbmg.org](http://fbmg.org); 281-633-7070; [FortBendmg@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:FortBendmg@ag.tamu.edu)

FRI., JAN. 13: PENNY WISE / POUND FOOLISH: WHEN & WHY TO HIRE A LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONAL by RITA HODGE, 10am, White Oak Convention Center, 7603 Antoine. Free. Houston Federation of Garden Clubs event. [houstonfederationgardenclubs.org](http://houstonfederationgardenclubs.org)

TUE, JAN 17: GARDENING BY THE SQUARE FOOT by JOHN JONS, 6:30-8:30pm, AgriLife Extension, Carbide Park, 4102-B Main, La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener events. Free, but pre-register: [galvcountrymgs@gmail.com](mailto:galvcountrymgs@gmail.com), 281-534-3413, [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston)

TUE., JAN. 17: CRYPTANTHUS by CAROLE RICHTMYER, 7:30pm, West Gray Mutli-Service Center, 1475 W Gray. Free. Bromeliad Society/Houston event. [bromeliadsocietyhouston.org](http://bromeliadsocietyhouston.org)

THU, JAN 19: FIG TREE PRUNING & PROPAGATION by TERRY CUCLIS, 9-10am, AgriLife GCMG Research & Demonstration Garden, 4102 Main, La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener events. Free, but pre-register: [galvcountrymgs@gmail.com](mailto:galvcountrymgs@gmail.com), 281-534-3413, [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston)

MON., JAN 23-FEB. 27: TEXAS GULF COAST GARDENER TIER III: THE ART OF LANDSCAPE DESIGN, 9am-3pm. Mercer

Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. \$250. Register: 713-274-4160.

SAT. JAN. 28: MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENER FRUIT & NUT TREE SALE, 8 am presentation, 9am-noon sale, AgriLife Extension Office, 9020 Airport Rd, Conroe. 936-539-7824; mcmga.com

SAT, JAN 28: GROWING PEACHES IN GALVESTON COUNTY by HERMAN AUER, 9-11am & KITCHEN GARDENING by MARY DEMENY, 1-3pm, AgriLife Extension, Carbide Park, 4102-B Main, La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener events. Free, but pre-register: [galvcountrymgs@gmail.com](mailto:galvcountrymgs@gmail.com), 281-534-3413, [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston)

TUE, JAN 31: ANYONE CAN GROW ROSES by JOHN JONS, 6:30-8:30 pm; AgriLife Extension, Carbide Park, 4102-B Main, La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener events. Free, but pre-register: [galvcountrymgs@gmail.com](mailto:galvcountrymgs@gmail.com), 281-534-3413, [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston)

WED., FEB. 8: MICROGREENS, noon - 2pm, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: 713-274-4160.

FRI., FEB.10: FLORAL DESIGN INSPIRED BY ART by HOUSTON DESIGNING WOMEN, 10am, White Oak Convention Center, 7603 Antoine. Free. Houston Federation of Garden Clubs event. [houstonfederationgardencubs.org](http://houstonfederationgardencubs.org)

SAT, FEB 18: GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS SPRING 2017 PLANT SALE, 9am-1pm, pre-sale seminar 8-8:50am, Jack Brooks Park Rodeo Arena (Galveston County Fairgrounds), 10 Jack Brooks Rd & Hwy 6, Hitchcock.

SAT., FEB 18, 2017: GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS SPRING 2017 PLANT SALE, 9 am-1 pm with pre-sale seminar 8-8:50 am, Jack Brooks Park Rodeo Arena, 10 Jack Brooks Rd and Hwy 6, Hitchcock, TX 77563 (Galveston County Fairgrounds)

MON., FEB. 20: STORYTIME IN THE GARDEN, 10:30-11:30 am, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: 713-274-4160.

SAT., SUN., MAR. 4-5: SPRING BRANCH AFRICAN VIOLET CLUB 37TH ANNUAL SHOW & SPRING SALE, Sat. Show 1-5pm, Sale 9am-5pm; Sun. Show & Sale, 10am-3pm; workshop Sat. & Sun. 1pm, Judson Robinson Jr. Community Center, 2020 Hermann Park Dr. Free. 281-748-8417, [kjwross@yahoo.com](mailto:kjwross@yahoo.com)

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

**PLEASE READ BEFORE SUBMITTING AN EVENT FOR THIS CALENDAR.**

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THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER**

**THIS NEWSLETTER IS MADE  
POSSIBLE BY THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS**





## ADOPTABLE DOG OF THE MONTH

### DIESEL

Diesel was abandoned by his owners when they moved, and he ended up at Montgomery County Animal Shelter.

Diesel is a American Blue Pittbull Mix and is thought to be about 10 years old.

He knows basic commands- is housebroken and crate trained- loves everyone he meets... Loves bones, treats and squeaky toys- even likes a nice jog. He has a good amount of life to live and would love to have somewhere to spend it. If he has siblings- they have to be female.

Diesel loves to play and socialize and is so much fun to have around.

He is fixed and has all of his shots.

If interested in adopting Diesel, please reply to this newsletter and type "Diesel" in the subject line. Diesel is not at the shelter currently. He is in foster care.



## 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.



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