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December 31, 2016

Dear Friends,

Here is the 186th 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. Thanks so much for your interest.

Please [click here](#) 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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Popular Christmas gifts, l to r, potted azalea, bromeliad and Christmas cactus

RECEIVE A HOLIDAY GIFT PLANT? SO BEAUTIFUL, BUT . . . WHAT NOW?

By **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

Dehydrating central air draughts and overwatering are the main reasons most beautiful, typical, holiday gift plants drop flowers and/or colorful leaves too soon. Some tips:

- Water sparingly. For most, once a week.
- When watering, remove decorative foil so excess water won't collect in the bottom.
- Leave foil cover off 24 hours with pot drain hole slightly raised so air can circulate underneath. Then restore foil if you want.
- Position away from dehydrating heating drafts. Or, AC drafts when our crazy weather sends temperatures soaring!
- Maintain high humidity in the area (this is NOT the same as watering) by setting a bowl of water nearby.
- Or, fill a shallow dish with pebbles and set the plant on top. Keep the dish filled with water up to, but NOT TOUCHING, the plant base.
- At night, set pots on a plastic mat on the floor where it is cooler. (Condensation damages carpets and floors.)

ENJOY HOLIDAY GIFT PLANTS UNTIL FLOWERS AND/OR FOLIAGE FADE. THEN . . .

* **AZALEAS:** Repot using a slightly acidic soil. Place in cool location until spring. Plant in ground in a well-drained spot with filtered sunlight. Or, leave in the container, and place outside in filtered sun until fall. Then move it into stronger light to encourage blooming.

* **BROMELIADS:** Water in plant cup. Use rainwater or distilled water at room temperature. During summer, move to a shady outside location with good air circulation.

* **CHRISTMAS CACTUS:** Transplant into a mixture of 4 parts leaf mold, 1 part Perlite and 1 part sand. These need good bright natural light (no direct sunlight), good air circulation and excellent drainage. Don't overwater. To trigger blooms, in fall move plant into area of relative cool darkness from 6 p.m. to 10 a.m. As soon as color shows, bring it back into the light.



L to r, chrysanthemums, kalanchoes, poinsettias and Ed Holland's driveway poinsettia hedge

CHRYSANTHEMUMS, KALANCHOES, POINSETTIAS: Cut stems to 2".

Set in protected area. Keep soil barely moist until spring. Mist to compensate for lack of humidity if inside. In spring, move to garden, or plant in container with sand, predampened peat, Perlite and potting soil.

All can go in the garden or stay in pots. In the garden, all can partial shade. But must have at least some sun to produce color again. Chrysanthemums bloom in spring and in fall here in the garden. Kalanchoes bloom all summer, poinsettias in Nov.-Dec.

To trigger potted poinsettia color, treat as Christmas cactus above. Poinsettias hold color for months if humidity and other factors are to their liking. My grandmother, Mimi Gracida, kept brilliant red leaves on hers well into June. But she hated air conditioning and kept the windows open in her Montrose-area apartment. It was like a greenhouse in there!

On the other hand, Ed Holland in Memorial created the most incredible poinsettia "hedge" I've ever seen, right above. He planted his regular poinsettias 'neath an overhead pine tree canopy along his driveway. He pruned them back after "blooming" to encourage more lush growth and to prevent the long spindly stalks that snap easily in our heavy winds.

Am I the only one who remembers the gorgeous two-story high poinsettia that used to bloom on Bissonnet, somewhere around Morningside? It was a long time ago. But it was a drive-by wonder I did ever year.



L to r, cyclamen, florist gloxinia and fuchsia

*** CYCLAMENS AND FLORIST GLOXINIAS:**

Cut back on water. When plant is gone, set pot in a cool spot in garage. In spring, transplant into a mixture of 1 part soil, 1 part predampened peat and 1 part sand. Set in filtered light and pray. Neither likes our heat.

*** FUCHSIAS:** I used to say these iridescent hanging flowers need more cold than we can give them except in the middle winter. That's what ALL the experts say. But then I saw with my own eyes a fuchsia in full bloom in the middle of July, hanging from an eave at the former home of Clint Horne and Mary Alice Justice, just off I-610 and Ella Blvd.

Clint didn't understand my surprise. He said it bloomed all the time -- wasn't it supposed to? There truly is

such a thing as a "green thumb." Some folks truly can get plants to do things the rest of us just can't! But it never hurts to try, especially with these incredible beauties. Just don't spend a fortune on them until you see if they like you.



L to r, pansies, nemesias, monkey flowers

* PANSIES, NEMESIAS, MONKEY FLOWERS. If anyone has kept these blooming in the garden as late as July, I'd love to hear about it. These are truly "cold-lovers" but they sure are happy sights in the dead of winter cold. You can find all these in better nurseries. Plant them now . . . outside. Mulch well and deeply. They love (and demand) cold to bloom. If it drops below freezing, throw a blanket over them. Take it off the next day. And don't take it personally if they die in April. Down here, they're supposed to. It gets too hot. If you're really lucky they might live until May, but don't count on it.



L to r: forced amaryllis, paperwhite narcissus, hyacinths and tulips

FORCED BULBS: AMARYLLIS, PAPERWHITE NARCISSUS, TULIPS & HYACINTHS -- Count yourself lucky if you received either kit or already-started amaryllis or paperwhite narcissus. Only amaryllis and narcissus will rebloom for you. Tulips and hyacinths require cold (that's why they have to be refrigerated before forcing and will not rebloom afterwards).

Amaryllis and paperwhites, on the other hand, will provide such welcome beauty all through winter and for decades beyond. These have become harder to find because (I was told) of an amaryllis kit shipment (either accidentally or deliberately) that came in bringing rust disease. (*This is why we need strong oversight on imports!*). You can probably still find already-started forced bulbs or bulbs for forcing in better nurseries only. Be sure with tulips and hyacinths, at this late date, they are labeled "pre-chilled."

Back to my favorites, amaryllis and paperwhites, you can try to rebloom them in the pots. Don't cut off dying foliage on any bulbs you want to rebloom! All bulbs use dying foliage to replenish the bulb so it can produce more flowers.

With amaryllis and paperwhites, after blooms fade, set the pot aside (it'll be fine, it's going dormant) until spring. Then plant outside in sun or very bright shade in a well-drained spot. Make sure the amaryllis bulb "neck" is above the ground.

I have never done anything else, plant and forget. And my paperwhites and amaryllis have all bloomed for decades. Paperwhites start blooming sometimes in January. Amaryllis bloom later in spring. True Lazy

Gardener plants!

* * *

NOTICE ALL THE FABULOUS ORANGE-FRUIT-LADENED TREES ALL OVER TOWN? It's been an incredible production season. Key to success here with ANY fruit tree? Variety, VARIETY, **VARIETY**.

Find the best VARIETIES for your particular area at our multiple Master Gardener and other organization fruit tree sales in January and February. Use our Calendar below to find the ones closest to you.

I'll be doing wrap-up of upcoming FRUIT, NUT, VEGETABLE, etc., SALES next week (so get yours submitted NOW if it's not already in our Calendar below)!

Send info to:

lazygardener@sbcglobal.net

* * *

***SUBMITTING EVENTS TO THE LG&F CALENDAR BELOW? PLEASE READ!
See calendar for OUR CARVED-IN-STONE format. COPY EXACTLY!
Events submitted in this EXACT format will be copied & pasted in right away.
Any necessary re-typing/reformatting may take a couple of weeks***

* * *

***Always check the LG&F Newsletter* Calendar to make sure your submitted event is listed!
If not, let me know! Send to: lazygardener@sbcglobal.net***

****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.***

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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

**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**

MON., JAN. 4: PLANTS FOR SHADY SPACES by TRICIA BRADBURY, 9:30am, United Methodist Church at 16335 El Camino Real. Free. Gardeners by the Bay event. 281-474-5051.

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

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: galvcountymgs@gmail.com, 281-534-3413, 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: galvcountymgs@gmail.com, 281-534-3413, aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston

MON., JAN. 8: URBAN GARDENING TIPS, 6:30pm, Metropolitan MultiService Center, 1475 W. Gray. Free. Houston Urban Gardeners (HUG) event. 713-524-3542, houstonurbangardeners.org

TUES., JAN. 10: #TXPLANTS TWITTER TUESDAY EVENT - NATIVE AND PRAIRIE PLANTS FOR THE HOME GARDENER, 7-8 pm, Twitter.com follow hashtag #TXplants. Free. Native Plant Society of Texas-Houston Chapter npsot.org/wp/houston/2016/12/09/join-us-txplants-twitter-tuesday-native-prairie-plants-home-gardener.

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

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; 281-633-7070; FortBendmg@ag.tamu.edu

THURS., JAN. 12: VERMICULTURE, COMPOSTING WORMS by Charlene Perry, 10am, Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. Free. Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 event. hcmga.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

MON., JAN. 16: OPEN GARDEN DAY & PLANT SALE, 8:30-11am, Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. Free. Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 event. hcmga.tamu.edu

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: galvcountymgs@gmail.com, 281-534-3413, 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

THURS., JAN. 19: CITRUS DISEASE & PEST UPDATE by ROBERT (SKIP) RICHTER & DWARF SEVERENIA BUXITOLIA DWARF ROOTING STOCK by DR. ETHAN NATELSON, 6:30pm. Extension Office, 3033 Bear Creek Dr. Free. Gulf Coast Fruit Study Group event. Ute.Schaefer@ag.tamu.edu

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: galvcountymgs@gmail.com, 281-534-3413, aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston

SAT., JAN. 21: FRUIT & NUT TREES: PRUNING TO PLANTING!, 9-11am, Montgomery Co. AgriLife Extension Office, 9020 Airport Road, Conroe. \$5. Master Gardener event. 936-539-7824; mcmga.com

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: galvcountymgs@gmail.com, 281-534-3413, aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston

SAT., JAN. 28: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER FRUIT TREE SALE, Bear Creek Garden, 3033 Bear Creek Dr. 281-855-5600

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: galvcountymgs@gmail.com, 281-534-3413, aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston

THURS., FEB. 2: ATTRACTING BIRDS AND BUTTERFLIES TO YOUR BACKYARD BY KATHY ADAMS CLARK, 10am, MUD Building, 805 Hidden Canyon Dr, Katy. Free, Nottingham Country Garden Club event. nottinghamgardenclub.org

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. houstonfederationgardenclubs.org

SAT., FEB 18: 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)

SAT., FEB. 18: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER PRECINCT 2 FRUIT TREE AND TOMATO SALE, Campbell Hall, Pasadena Fairgrounds, 7600 Red Bluff RD., Pasadena. hcmga.tamu.edu.

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

MAR. 4: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER TOMATO-PEPPER SALE, Bear Creek Garden, 3033 Bear Creek Dr. 281-855-5600

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

MAR. 18: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER SPRING PLANT SALE, Genoa Friendship Garden, Campbell Hall, Pasadena Fairgrounds. 281-855-5600

APR. 22: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER SPRING PERENNIAL SALE, Bear Creek Garden, 3033 Bear Creek Dr. 281-855-5600

OCT. 7: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER FALL PLANT SALE, Bear Creek Garden, 3033 Bear Creek Dr. 281-855-5600

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



www.grandifloraservices.com



<http://natureswayresources.com/>

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.



COUPON: Nature's Way Resources. 50% OFF Pomegranates & Pears at Nature's Way Resources (expires 1/15/17)

Confirm that you like this.

Click the "Like" button.