



Dear Friends,

This is the 9th issue of our weekly gardening newsletter for Houston, the Gulf Coast and beyond. This a project of The Lazy Gardener, Brenda Beust Smith, John Ferguson and Mark Bowen (both John and Mark are with Nature's Way Resources). We also have a great cast of contributing writers who will chime in regularly. We would love to keep receiving your input on this newsletter comments suggestions questions. . . .Email your thoughts to: lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com. Thanks so much for your interest.

Please .

Enjoy!

WILD OLIVES, SQUIRRELS AND THE OLEANDER STROLL



L to r: yesterday-today-and-tomorrow shrub, wild Texas olive tree and closeup of white flowers

Yesterday-today-and-tomorrow, pictured above, has really been beautiful this spring.

This unique shrub blooms in May with delightful flowers that age from a happy purple to shades of blue to white, all on the same 5-6 foot bush. Can take full sun but mine's blooming in part shade right now.

The olive tree pictured above center and right was photographed on a recent trek we took to bombilate around the state.

First stop was Corpus Christi where these beautiful white blooming trees were in full splendor all over the city. Then to take a tour of the King Ranch in Kingsville. What a delight! Especially the King Ranch Museum with its pristine old cars and buggies along with such spectacular pictures.

Continued to see them and beg Husband for a stop-'n'-shoot break. We will, he'd say, when we hit a good stopping point.

I had given up hope when we stopped to have dinner with Scott and Ann Powers and neighbors could probably hear me cachinnating all over.

My column readers may remember this photo:



Scott planted a tiny, 1-foot-long cactus stem years ago and this is what resulted!

You can just barely see the green leafed tree behind it. Well, that's one of the wild olive trees now in bloom all over South Texas, a close-up of which is pictured above.

Since our climate here in the Greater Houston area has warmed up so much, wonder if we can grow these here? Anyone know? I don't ever recall seeing any in our area.

It's a really beautiful small ornamental tree. And, trust me, if it's thriving down there right now, it's definitely quite drought tolerant.

You may know it already as *Cordia boissieri*, Mexican Olive Tree or White Cordia.

RIP - LAZY GARDENER'S CHRONICLE BLOG

I'm delighted that even though the Houston Chronicle unceremoniously dumped my Lazy Gardener's blog, my 40+ years of columns and 5+ years of blogs are still posted on the Chron's website.

And - thank you, guys! - they do still continue to send me comments that are coming in from readers.

I assume (hope) these are still being added to the appropriate columns, since readers - I have discovered - are constantly providing incredible solutions to problems.

For example, here's one from Mike, which (I hope) has been posted to a column titled "Squirrel-free birdfeeders, part 1" - <http://blog.chron.com/lazygardener/2009/06/squirrel-free-birdfeeders-part-1/> .

Hi, Just wanted to add that I have used the Squirrel Buster Plus for the past one year it has been doing it job so far. The Squirrel Buster Plus keeps out squirrels and some nuisance birds by using an adjustable weight mechanism that closes access to the seed. Features seed tube ventilation to keep seed fresher, adjustable perches and attachable cardinal ring. Disassembles for cleaning, is dishwasher safe and rustproof, with a 3 quart seed capacity and lifetime warranty. You can find it at <http://www.birdfeedersnmore.com/squirrel-buster-plus.aspx>. Have nice day ."

Normally I shy away from promoting any products. But, let's face it. Squirrels are beyond the pale. They're impossible to shoo away. While you're trying to out-thwart them, your neighbors are feeding them, increasing your area drays beyond all proportion.

I'm not just being ugly. Squirrels sit in our fig tree, wait until we're looking at them, grab an almost ripe fig, take one bite (never taking their eyes off us) and then throw the ruined fruit on the ground. Don't say net to me. Been there, done that.

What's worse, tho, they killed my pecan tree by eating the bark. When I researched why in the world squirrels would eat pecan bark, discovered what they're really after is the hormone pecan trees produce to repair the damaged bark.

Our squirrels were really in need of that hormone fix because they literally killed the tree. Then they started in on our second story cornerboards!

We're surrounded by woods. There is no hope.

Besides, we tried a similar product:



We even put those shower rod plastic covers on the wire the feeder is hanging from. It was fun to watch the squirrels roll off. But then they discovered they could easily jump the five feet from the tree to the feeder (it looks closer in that picture but it's not).

So we put up baffles like you see in Mike's product above if you click on that website. Took them a while to figure out how to get past the baffles, but they did.

On ours, the ring spun around when a heavier-than-bird-weight tried to perch on it. It was fun to watch them flung off 'til, as I said earlier, they learned to jam their feet in just so to stop the spin.

Then we tried a version that had not a ring, but little curved perch bars that dropped straight down when a too-heavy weight touched them.

That's what we have now. The sacrifice is that the poor doves have to stay on the ground, the little bars won't support them.

Squirrels do manage to hang on enough to eat sometimes. But mostly they just gather underneath with the doves to eat the spill from the birds above.

A small victory, but worth it!



Galveston's new Oleander Garden Park, 2624 Sealy at 27th St. includes, below l to r, 'Elmabeth Head,' 'Mrs. J. E. Thompson' ('Scarlett Beauty'), 'Terry O' and 'Mrs. H. L. Runge' ('Splendens Variiegatis') with its bright yellow variegated leaves and dark pink double flowers that are just coming into bloom.



'STROLL IN THE PARK'

At last Galveston has its own Oleander Garden Park, a beautiful new project of the isle-based International Oleander Society.

One of the truly neat things about owning oleanders is knowing the history of your plant's namesake - most of which are intimately tied to this isle's fascinating stories - past and present. My 'Kewpie Gaido' oleander, for example, is named after that grande dame who was a cousin-by-marriage.

You can collect your own named varieties and enjoy wonderful blooming oleander scents on Saturday, May 18, at IOS's first "Stroll in the Park" at the Oleander Garden Park, 2624 Sealy at 27th St. The plant sale, accompanied by music and light refreshments, will be held from 5-7 p.m.

Be sure to get the "why" on any named plant you purchase!

"THE LAZY GARDENER'S GUIDE ON CD" - Specifically for Houston Area gardens - WHAT TO DO EACH MONTH - when to fertilize, prune, plantwhat where, best plants for sun, shade, butterflies,

hummingbirds, etc. Based on Brenda's quirky 40+ year Houston Chronicle Lazy Gardener column. PDF format, print out only the month you need. \$20 total, checks payable to Brenda B. Smith. Mail to: Lazy Gardener's Guide on CD, 14011 Greenranch Dr., Houston, TX 77039-2103.

WEEKLY EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS CALENDAR

May 6-12: International Compost Awareness Week (ICAW) continues to grow each year as it attracts students, educators, homeowners as well as cities and business of all types. For the past 15 years ICAW has been on the forefront of promoting the message - Compost: Nature's Way to Grow! To bring positive attention to the possibilities that composting can provide, ICAW was designed to rally composting advocates and build awareness in every community. Compost workshops, State, municipal and other ICAW Proclamations, promotions with local compost distributors and landscape supply stores, informal lectures by well-known gardening experts, backyard composting bin promotions and urban gardening programs are examples of how municipalities and public and private groups can be involved. Check out USCC's website for ideas on how to participate and list of events near you. Celebrate ICAW by joining the USCC's Million Tomato Compost Campaign, which connects community gardens, compost producers, chefs and food banks to grow healthy soil, healthy food, and healthy communities. Find out more at www.buy-compost.com.

May 11: Brazosport Daylily Society will host their annual flower show & plant sale. It will be held at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 501 Willow Drive, Lake Jackson. The sale & show begin at 1:00 pm. Admission: Free

May 11: & 12: Nursery Open 12-5 pm, Peckerwood Garden Foundation Open Days, Guided garden tours at 1:00 & 3:00 pm \$10.00 per person.
www.peckerwoodgarden.org, 979-826-3232, 20571 FM 359, Hempstead, TX 77445

May 11: 1 - 4 pm, Hibiscus Show & Plant Sale, Nessler Center, Wings of Heritage Room, 2010 5th Ave. North, Texas City, TX

May 11: 10:15 am, Perennial Gardening Nature's returning friends - Perennials. ... Create garden focal points with perennial plants. Learn how to plan a perennial garden using plants that perform well in our area of Texas year after year. Identify the bloom times of perennials to aid you in planning natural splashes of color in your garden throughout the seasons. This Saturday morning garden clinic is free. Attend this clinic at any Cornelius Nursery (Houston) garden center location.
<http://www.calloways.com/event/perennial-gardening>

May 11: 2 pm, Beginners' Class at Clown Alley Orchids. Topic: "Orchids are Not Hard to Grow" 2:00 P.M.. Tuition \$25 includes a blooming orchid plant. Where: Clown Alley Orchids

3119 Lily Street, Pasadena, TX 77505. Phone: 281-991-6841 Fax: 281-991-3909 Mobile: 832-693-8140. En Espanol: 281-991-1436. ClownAlley@sbcglobal.net. www.clownalleyorchids.com

May 13: 6:30 pm, HUG's next meeting will be Monday May 13 at 6:30 pm in the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park, 5911 Hermann Park Dr. across from Miller Outdoor Theater. One of Houston's most beloved and knowledgeable vegetable growers will talk about "the ton of neat vegetables we can plant now, not to mention the fruits." We'll be selling Bob's book at a reduced price---see sidebar. <http://www.houstonurbangardeners.org/>

May 14: 6:30 pm, Green Thumb Lecture, Precinct 2 Harris County Master Gardener Will Isbell will present a program on "Insects in your Garden", Location: The Meeting Room at Clear Lake Park (on the lakeside), 5001 NASA Parkway, Seabrook, TX 77586. More info: jansidk@aol.com.

May 15: 10 am, Master Gardener Lecture Series, Diana Foss with Texas Parks and Wildlife speaking on Coyotes and Bobcats in our area, FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, Location: The Meeting Room at Clear Lake Park (on the lakeside), 5001 NASA Parkway, Seabrook, TX 77586. More info: jansidk@aol.com.

May 18: 1-4 pm, The Lone Star Daylily Society will host their 18th Annual Daylily Flower Show and Daylily sale at the Alvin Senior Center, 309 West Sealy, Alvin, Texas. Admission is free.

May 18: Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens. Cultivating Your Outdoor Pallet: Watercolor Technique Workshops. Saturdays, May 18 and June 8, 9 am - noon. Attend one or both classes to explore the techniques and wonder of watercolor through live demonstrations. A supply list will be provided following registration. Each class costs \$40, and TMS members receive a \$5 discount. Please call 281-443-8731 for details. www.hcp4.net/mercer .

May 18 & 19: 9 am-5 pm, The Houston Cactus & Succulents Society is having their Spring Sale at the Houston Arboretum and Nature Center in Memorial Park. 4501 Woodway Dr Houston, TX 77024, (713) 681-8433. Free and open to the public. <http://www.hcsstex.org/> .

May 19: 1:30-3:30 pm, Wabash Antiques & Feed Store. Tropical Fruits by Dianne Norman
Tropical plants need some special treatment to survive our winters. Learn what important treatments to help your Tropical Plants! <http://wabashfeed.com/eventcalendar.html> .

May 18 & 19 - The Houston Cactus & Succulents Society is having their Spring Sale at the Houston Arboretum and Nature Center in Memorial Park. 4501 Woodway Dr Houston, TX 77024, (713) 681-8433. Free and open to the public.

May 20: 8:30-11:00 am, Open Garden Day. You are invited to tour the working and demonstration gardens maintained by the Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2. Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer your gardening questions. A program on Dividing Bromeliads will be offered from 9:30 - 10:30 am. FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, CHILDREN WELCOME! Location: Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff, Houston, TX 77034. More info: jansidk@aol.com.

May 22: 7:30 pm, "Crossing the Andes" presented by Dick & Phyllis McEuen. This presentation will illustrate cacti & succulents found in Argentina, Chile, and the Atacama desert. Houston Garden Center, 1500 Hermann Drive. <http://www.hcsstex.org/>

May 25: The Houston Area Daylily Society in conjunction with the Houston Hemerocallis Society and Cypress Creek Daylily Club will be hosting their annual Daylily Show and Plant Sale at the Gethsemane Lutheran Church located at 4040 Watonga, Houston, Texas 77092. The Flower Show is from 1:00 -3:00 pm and the plant sale will begin at 10 am until sold out. Admission is free.

May 25: 9 am-5 pm. Jerry's Jungle Gardens Plant Sale, private collection, 712 Hill Road. Daylilies, crinum, gingers are blooming, and NEW Plants from recent collecting. www.jerrysjungle.com .

May 25: Butterfly and Hummingbird Gardening 101 Clinic, 10:15 am at both Cornelius Nursery locations, 1200 N. Dairy Ashford and 2233 S. Voss; <http://www.calloways.com/garden-events>
AA Free.

June 1: 10 am, The Arbor Gate. Attend a Field Trial without the Field; Saturday, June 1, 2013 Hear about & see the latest breeding of ever-popular caladiums. We'll have the latest introductions from the past 5 years to see, as well as the newest trial varieties to evaluate & vote on. Let your voice be heard - here's a chance to let the breeder know what you, the public, wants to see come to market. All your votes & comments will be compiled & added to the trial results for 2013, out of which 6-8 new varieties will be chosen. This is part of a formal field trial, that usually only large growers & university researchers get to attend - so come on out & give us your opinion! For more information, visit www.arborgate.com .

June 8: 10 am, Tomato Contest. Judges will choose winners in the categories of largest fruit and best tasting fruit. Don't miss out on the fun! For entry and category information, please go to www.arborgate.com and click on Class Schedule.

June 8: 9:30 am - 3:00 pm The Plumeria Society of America will hold two sales this year (June 8 & July 20). There will be a Gorgeous Bloom display of the flowers available, an 'Ask the Experts' table plus door prizes throughout the day. Arrive early for best selection. For more information visit www.theplumeriasociety.org or Like us on Facebook. Bay Area Community Center, 5002 NASA Rd 1 Seabrook, TX (Clear Lake area)

June 9: American Hibiscus Society/Lone Star Chapter Show and Sale, 1-4 pm, Bellaire Community Center 7008 S. Rice, Bellaire, TX

June 12: Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens. Lunch Bunch. Wed., June 12, noon - 2 pm, Spring Creek and Harris County Precinct 4 Greenway Projects: With just a few miles of connecting trails, the Spring Creek Greenway and adjoining Cypress Creek Greenway have the potential to connect over 300 miles of existing hard surface and equestrian trails, as well as many Precinct 4 parks and natural spaces from Humble to Tomball. Join Mike Howlett, greenway project manager, for an overview of the largest forested urban corridor in the United States, and discover the multitude of flora, fauna, and recreational opportunities that abound here. Anyone seeking additional information or requiring special assistance to participate in any program should contact Mercer at 281-443-8731 or online at www.hcp4.net/mercer .

Recipe for Success has summer internships available. For more information, visit <http://recipe4success.org/get-involved/internships.html>

Submit calendar items to lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com. Events must be submitted by the sponsoring organization. Please note: "garden calendar request" in the subject line.

Need speakers for your group? Brenda's "Lazy Gardener's Speakers List" of area horticultural/environmental experts is available free for the asking. Email your request to: lazygardener@sbcglobal.net.

MULCH CORNER

BY JOHN FERGUSON

Last week we talked about bark mulches available in Houston area and along the Gulf Coast. This week we are going to look at Cedar mulches.

Cedar Mulches:

Many users around the state report that they have had good results with cedar mulches while others report extreme failures and problems. This is because there are a lot of variations in the types of cedar mulch one finds in the garden centers. A couple patterns that have been observed are mulches made from species with the common name of "Junipers" (*Juniperus ashei*, *Juniperus deppeana*, etc.) versus species commonly called "Cedars" such as the Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), Southern Red Cedar (*Juniperus silicicola*) and Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*). The first group tends to grow on alkaline calcareous soils while the second group is often found growing on more acidic soils. Most reports of the cedar mulches made from "Junipers" have been positive and most reports of cedar mulches made from "Cedars" have been negative. Juniper mulch is primarily decomposed by fungus species that produce weak organic acids that help make nutrients available in alkaline soils.

The claim to fame for cedar mulch one often hears is that it repels insects. While this is true, it also repels butterflies and beneficial insects. This effect only happens with fresh ground cedar. After a few weeks the oils evaporate or break down and one is left with raw wood that has a very high carbon: nitrogen ratio that robs nitrogen from your plants. This is why one often sees yellowing on plants when cedar is used as a mulch.

A second issue with using Cedar mulches is the type of processing they have had. This could be fresh ground cedar from land clearing operations to de-oiled cedar flakes from industry. When de-oiled cedar flakes from industry are used they can weigh as little as 190 lbs./cy since they have been cooked at temperatures of 225°F or more to remove the oils and have almost zero moisture when they leave the mill. The low weight is good for bagging, handling and shipping purposes. After



cooking the cedar flakes can absorb water after application and weigh over 1,600 lbs./cy wet. De-oiled flakes are very low in nutrients and may cause nitrogen deficiencies in the soil and other mineral tie-up problems as it has a very high carbon:nitrogen ratio often over 500:1 (remember healthy soil is only 30:1).

Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*) is very rot resistant. While this characteristic makes it good for lumber, the chemicals such as resins and oils which act as preservatives are not good for plants. These chemicals resist attacks by insects and microorganisms (e.g. fungi) hence also render the wood toxic for soil or composting micro-organisms.

Note: Cedar from younger trees has less of these chemicals than older trees which contain more heartwood and have accumulated more of these compounds.

Note: Reports are showing up that cedar mulch is toxic to chickens and other bird species and should not be used as a bedding material.

Note: One good use for fresh ground cedar mulches is on the floor in greenhouse production. There the oils repel pest insects and reduce the need for pesticides.

Also: After reading Brenda's article above with great interest, John wanted to share he has grown a wild olive tree at his house for 18 plus years and that there is a big one planted at Buchanan's Native Plants. Additionally, at his house the squirrels have been stripping bark on his bald cypress tree and Lady Banks climbing rose to build nests.

Editor's note: We encourage everyone to share their stories. We love to hear what everyone is doing out there and what they have experienced.

GOT GARDENING QUESTIONS?

Be sure to check out our gardening blog at www.lazygardenerandfriends.com to get your gardening questions answered and to interact with other gardeners.


NATURE'S WAY
RESOURCES
an organically based service company
<http://natureswayresources.com/>


Wabash
Antiques & Feed Store
Houston's Organic Gardening Headquarters
<http://wabashfeed.com/>

 **The Arbor Gate**
<http://www.arborgate.com/>

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Save 20%: Redeem this coupon for a big discount on Nature's Way Resources Fungal Compost (<http://natureswayresources.com/products.htm>). Please note: this offer is for bulk material (by the cubic yard) purchases by retail customers only at Nature's Way Resources, located at 101 Sherbrook Circle, Conroe TX.

Offer Expires: 6/1/13



Try it FREE today.