



June 14, 2013

Dear Friends,

Here is the 14th 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 supporting cast of contributing writers and technical specialists who will chime in and tweak away regularly. We would love to keep receiving your input on this newsletter comments suggestions questions. . . .Email your thoughts to: lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com. Thanks so much for your interest.

Please .

Enjoy!

**GARDEN FAIRIES . . . OFF WITH THEIR HEADS? . . . CRINUMS:
LAZY GARDENERS' BEST FRIENDS**



BY BRENDA BEUST SMITH

*Best and dearest flower that grows
Perfect both to see and smell;
Words can never, never tell
Half the beauty of the Rose -
Buds that open to disclose
Fold on fold of purest white,
Lovely pink, or red that glows
Deep, sweet-scented. What delight
To be Fairy of the Rose!*

-- "The Song of the Rose Fairy" by Cicely Mary Barker (Flower Fairies of the Summer)

Ancient folks believed every flower had its own special fairy. If they kept the fairy happy, the flower would thrive. If they didn't, strange things might start happening in the garden as revenge.

Have to admit I never gave much thought to fairies (in or out of the garden) other than marveling at mushroom fairy rings of in Hilly Park in Houston's Riverside area where I grew up.

Long story short, I was assigned to do a magazine article on fairy gardens and fell in love. Most specifically with the fairies as conceived by Cicely Mary Barker and even more specifically, with a fairy silhouette (the largest fairy pictured above) in among the flowers at Lucia's Garden. <http://www.luciasgarden.com> .

I badgered Lucia (who refused to sell it) until she found another one for me to purchase. That was the beginning of what is now a rather large collection of silhouettes.

My research turned up lots of fairy origin stories, but my favorite is this one, excerpted from Page 52, "Lazy Gardener's Guide on CD":

When Michael and Lucifer split ways, some angels sided with each. A third group weren't interested in doing good or evil deeds. They wanted to play all day. These angels fell to Earth, and became fairies.

Some ancient folk believed each plant has its own fairy, who gives it life, vitality, color and beauty. Planting a special nook just for the fairies helps keep them happy.

Fairy gardens are a fun tradition today in many areas - quiet, shady nook, perhaps right on the edge of a sunny, flower-filled bed - spot where they can "take a break" during a hot summer afternoon's play.

They like the cooling ambiance of ferns, especially the dainty-leafed maidenhair variety and the tiny Korean rockfern.

Fairies are also particularly fond (or so I am told) of clover and oxalis or wood sorrel. Fill the bed with small-flowered varieties that bloom in bright shade, like peacock gingers, snowbells, Katie's compact ruellia, pansies, torenia, toadflax and violets.

The delicate bell-shaped native *Clematis pitcheri*, Johnny jump-ups and 'Moonbeam' coreopsis would do perfectly.

On the sunny edges, it would be fun to have the whimsical bat-face cuphea, tiny daffodils, smallflowered daisies, rainlilies . . . well, you get the idea.

When I think about fairies, or fairy gardens, I feel happy - childhood happy.

Maybe it calls to mind playing among the fairy rings in Hilly Park. Or, maybe fairies like to have folks thinking about them and good feelings (and healthy, blooming flowers) are their way of saying thanks.

NOT INTO FAIRIES? THEN YOU WON'T HAVE ANY TROUBLE DEAD-HEADING YOUR ROSES!



DEAD-HEADING - A THERAPEUTIC BENEFIT?

Gardeners with lots of energy are dead-heading perennials right now.

Dead-heading is the act of snipping off spent flowers from perennials and shrubs, including, usually, roses.

Do you HAVE to do this? No!

Most hardy perennials and annuals produce lots of blooms even if they're totally ignored.

But there are those who say if you excise those dead heads, you will get even more flowers.

Perennial and annual flowers bloom to produce seed. Once enough flowers have gone to seed, the plant says to itself:

"WHEW! I've done my job for this year." And it stops blooming for a while. Usually they bloom again after resting.

We can trick them into blooming longer by cutting off the spent flowers before they go to seed (or form hips).

Then the poor flower thinks:

"Oh, shoot! I still haven't produced enough seed. Better put on some more flowers."

An upside to dead-heading (just cutting off the dead flower): It can be VERY therapeutic for gardeners.

Someone made you mad that day?

WHACK! WHACK! OFF WITH HIS HEAD!

Symbolically speaking, of course. Try it. It works.

One caveat here for the mommonistic (about flowers) folks among us: many newer hybrids of old garden

favorites are being tweaked so dead-heading is a useless activity.

They'll produce the same number of flowers whether you dead-head or not.

How do you know which ones? In most cases no way to tell without some research. If this matters to you, Proven Winners has provided a rather neat list at <http://www.provenwinners.com/learn/care/deadhead-or-not-deadhead>.

WORK WITH NATURE, NOT AGAINST HER!

Nothing is more frustrating than to have relative newcomers to Houston complain that "nothing will grow here!"

If everything you plant dies, then YOU ARE GROWING THE WRONG PLANTS.

You are probably trying to grow plants that God never intended to grow in our fabulous subtropical climate or in our incredibly rich gumbo soil.

Don't fight nature! Work with her!

Good example: crinum lilies. These fabulous bulbs - many of which are native to this area - have to be Lazy Gardeners' best friends. Many love our gumbo soil, they can easily take drought, heat, floods, insects, freezes . . . all the everyday joys of our lovely area . . . without batting an eye.

Not only that, many form beautiful shrub-like clumps with their huge cascading leaves that absolutely scare off invading weeds. What more could you ask for?

The only downside to crinums is their availability.

They don't look so good in nursery pots on nursery shelves.

These lily bulbs can get huge and want to be in the ground. That's why they're usually found in special sales by specialty groups.



Once such sale is coming up Saturday, June 22, 10am-2pm, at [Bayou City Heirloom Bulbs](#), 5842 Velma Lane, Humble, TX (just off Lee Road north of Beltway 8).

BCHB's Patty Allen is really "into" crinums as you can see by the *Crinum yuccaeides* photo at left above and *C. broussonetil*, both photographed and collected by Dave Lehmler, which BCHB will have (in very limited numbers) at her upcoming sale.

These collectibles from the world-wide travels of Dr. Lehmler will appeal bulb, especially crinum, lovers who want to really WOW neighbors and friends. Some of these bulbs are huge, measuring easily 20 inches around.

Patty also has many different varieties of hard-to-find, but great-for-us bulbs for all prices. Go early and bring your own wagon. This sale should really attract serious plant collectors.

After this sale, starting in July, Bayou City Heirloom Bulbs will be open every second and fourth Saturday, 10am-2pm. Her website, bayoucityheirloombulbs.com, is still being tweaked, but contains details on bulbs available and prices.

PS ON POLLINATORS

Speaking of working with nature, here's a follow-up on my recent column on the new focus on wildflower lovers' concerns about pollinators (Lazy Gardener and Friends Newsletter /11th edition).

They are tracking climatic changes that are threatening the delicate balance between wildflower bloom periods and the needs of migrating butterflies and other desirable wildlife. For additional information, check out: <http://archive.constantcontact.com>

"THE LAZY GARDENER'S GUIDE ON CD" - Specifically for Houston Area gardens - WHAT TO DO EACH MONTH - when to fertilize, prune, plant what 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.

For correspondence that is specific to Brenda, feel free to email her directly at lazygardener@sbcglobal.net.

WEEKLY EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS CALENDAR

June 15: 10:15 a.m. Cut Flower Gardening Clinic at both Cornelius Nursery locations, 1200 N. Dairy Ashford and 2233 S. Voss; <http://www.calloways.com/clinics>

June 17. Open Garden Day. A Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 event. Hours are from 8:30 am - 11:00 am. Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer your gardening questions and present programs from 9:30 am - 10:30 am. For Children - "Butterflies" & For Adults - "Irrigation for your Home Gardens." Where: Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff, Houston, TX 77034. FREE. <http://hcmga.tamu.edu>

June 19, 10 am. Master Gardener Lecture Series. Suzy Fischer will be speaking on "Edible Landscape". She is a founding and current board member of Urban Harvest. Her mission is to promote healthy communities and sound nutrition by educating the public. FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. Where: The Meeting Room at Clear Lake Park (on the lakeside), 5001 NASA Parkway, Seabrook, TX 77586. <http://hcmga.tamu.edu>

June 19: 9:30 a.m. Callie's Kids Story Corner: The Prince/Princess and the Pea, at both Cornelius Nursery locations, 1200 N. Dairy Ashford and 2233 S. Voss; <http://www.calloways.com/callieskids> Free.

June 22: 2 p.m., Beginners' Class at Clown Alley Orchids, Class: "Orchids are Not Hard to Grow", Tuition \$25 includes a blooming orchid plant. Where: Clown Alley Orchids, 3119 Lily Street, Pasadena, TX 77505 Phone: 281-991-6841, En Espanol: www.clownalleyorchids.com.

June 23: 1:30-3:30 p.m. Drip Irrigation Lecture by Clare LaGrue at Wabash Antiques & Feed Store. What is drip irrigation? And why do you need it? How important is it? Learn how to conserve water by setting up drip irrigation in your garden, beds and containers to save on water bills. This will be a hands-on class and questions are welcomed. www.wabashfeed.com, 713-863-8322.

June 25: 4 - 7 p.m., OHBA Summer Plant Series. Location: United Way, 50 Waugh Dr Houston, TX 77007. Speaker 1: Chris Wiesinger, President and Owner of The Southern Bulb Co. Topic: The Bulb Hunter: A Photographic Journey. Through a beautiful photographic journey Chris will describe his efforts to find rare bulbs and how best to use them in your landscapes to create magnificent beauty. Speaker 2: Mike Alexander, Danny Yarbrough & Casey Sherwood of New Nurseries. Topic: New & Underutilized Plant Varieties for Houston. Register today at: <http://summerplantseries.eventbrite.com/> .

June 26: 7:30 p.m. Program: "Star Cactus (Astrophytum asterias). A bedroom for bees and a cupboard for conies" presented by Anna Strong. Houston Garden Center, 1500 Hermann Drive www.hcsstex.org.

June 29: 10:15 a.m. Plants that Love Texas Heat Free Clinic, at both Cornelius Nursery locations, 1200 N. Dairy Ashford and 2233 S. Voss; <http://www.calloways.com/clinics>.

July 1: Open Garden Day. The Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 will be hosting Open Garden Days twice monthly during the summer months on the 1st & 3rd Mondays. Hours are from 8:30 am - 11:00 am. Master Gardeners on hand to answer questions & present programs from 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. Herbs & more available for sale in the Greenhouse. Children's Program: Cylinder Gardening/Propagation. Adult Program: Home Irrigation. Location: Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff, Houston, TX 77034. <http://hcmga.tamu.edu>

July 12: 11a.m. Brazoria County Master Gardeners, Texas AgriLife Extension Office, 21017 County Road 171, Angleton, speaker: John Ferguson, topic: composting (back yard and small scale), for more information contact Dana Morisse-Arnold (979) 864-7713.

July 15: The Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 Open Garden Day. 8:30 am - 11:00 am. Master Gardeners on hand to answer questions and present programs from 9:30 am - 10:30 am. Herbs and more available for sale in the Greenhouse. Programs on Herbs offered for children & adults. Where: Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff, Houston, TX 77034. <http://hcmga.tamu.edu>

July 17: 10 a.m. Master Gardener Lecture Series. On Wednesday, July 17, John Ferguson will be speaking on how the environment can effect our health. John is the Founder and Owner of Nature's Way Resources. He holds an MS degree in Physics and Geology and is a licensed Soil Scientist in Texas. FREE.
Where: The Meeting Room at Clear Lake Park (on the lakeside), 5001 NASA Parkway, Seabrook, TX 77586, <http://hcmga.tamu.edu>, 281 855 5600

July 20th: 9:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. The Plumeria Society of America Plant Sale. 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: www.theplumeriasociety.org. Location: Fort Bend County Fairgrounds 3350 Hwy 36S--Rosenberg, TX.

July 27: 8 a.m. - 3 p.m. Annual Summer Color Conference and Plant Sale. Splash into summer with this one-day immersion into perfect solutions for creating a glorious garden that thrives in Houston's summer heat! Reservations required. Speakers: Ceil Dow, avid enthusiast and ginger expert will speak on the gingers she loves, Chuck Bybee from JIL Greenhouses (a wholesale nursery) will present Bedding Plants and Annuals that are good for Houston summers and Norm Arnold of Glorious Gardens will present Landscape Designs that bring out color. Visit <http://themerchersociety.org/events-programs-2/summer-color-symposium/> for more information. Fee.

August 17: The Texas Master Naturalist Fall 2013 Training Session begins on August 17, 2013, and runs through October 30, 2013. Classes are on Tuesday evenings and field trips are on Saturdays. For more details, email training.officer@txgcmn.org, or you can visit the website of local chapters:

- [Heartwood](#) (Conroe area)
- [Coastal Prairie](#) (Rosenberg)
- Cradle of Texas (Brazoria County): training to start early 2014
- [Galveston Bay Area](#): training to start Spring 2014
- [Gulf Coast](#) (Houston)
- [Mid Coast](#) (Matagorda County & south):

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

COMPOST AS A MULCH

BY JOHN FERGUSON



Last week we showed an example of using compost as a mulch on turf grass and we had a few questions so I will give provide additional information on the subject.

Compost is a very high quality mulch when applied 2-4" deep for flowerbeds. For turf grass we should never apply more than 1/2 inch at one time as we do not want to smother the grass. Good compost has a high nutrient content, improves soil fertility, stimulates plant growth and general health, does not wash out in the rain, is weed free, has an above average resistance to compaction, excellent resistance to blowing away in wind, contains and stimulates the growth of beneficial soil life (microbes, worms, insects, etc.), and suppresses the growth of many weed species (often better than dangerous chemical herbicides). Research at Ohio State University has found that a 1" thick layer of good quality compost is as effective for disease control as any synthetic chemical on the market. A good compost costs more than a bad one, but experienced gardeners cannot get enough.

The only drawbacks from using compost as a mulch is a limited supply in some areas, with large swings in quality from excellent to very poor. Many products are labeled and sold as compost and they are not. Texas does not have labeling laws for compost hence many products are called compost for marketing purposes, and they do not work very well. In other words "Buyer Beware".

When using compost as a mulch, a slightly immature compost works best as it has the greatest diversity of beneficial microbes. There is an industry standard for testing compost maturity called the "Solvita compost maturity test". For use as a mulch the compost should have an index of at least 5 on the test. Note: If compost is used as a soil amendment, compost should have an index of 6 or higher and for seed germination a value of 7-8.

Many researchers have found that using 1-2" of compost directly on top of the soil with 2-3" composted native mulch on top is best combination possible as this copies the forest floor. In the forest there is a layer of dark brown crumbly organic material on top of the soil layer (e.g. compost) with a layer of brown material on top of that such as leaves, branches, twigs, etc.(e.g. mulch). The closer we copy nature the better our results.

Compost is like all other products, it can range from extremely good to very bad. For example, Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) compost while generally very inexpensive often contains pieces of glass, plastic, metals, and other contaminants. Over time, after repeated applications, these materials tend to rise to the surface and become very unsightly. Good compost is essentially free of plastic, rocks, trash and other contaminants

Mushroom Compost - Not a true compost. It is technically known as spent mushroom substrate. Mushroom producers use the word "compost" to help sell and get rid of the waste products from mushroom farms. It is high in salt and bad for gulf coast soils (a more detailed discussion will be in future articles).

Bio-solid compost - this is sewage sludge that has been composted and poses it own set of problems. It has its uses but not in home gardens (a more detailed discussion will be in future articles).

GARDENING Q&A

WITH MARK BOWEN



We have getting a number of questions lately about what to do about white grubs.

The great news is that unless you have more than 10 grubs per cubic foot of soil area, there is no reason to treat for them. A characteristic sign of unacceptable grub damage occurs when turfgrass can be pulled up/peeled up somewhat like carpet because the roots (rhizomes or stolons) have been chewed off to a great extent.

Grubs are quick to pioneer poor quality soils, but they are rarely present in large numbers in healthy soil. Grubs in large numbers can affect plant health noticeably by chewing herbaceous rhizomes and stolons. On the positive side, they also help aerate poor soils, digest fresh organic matter and serve as food for many types of wildlife. As soils get healthier, generally more organic matter is present that supports a wide variety of grub control agents such as beneficial nematodes and fungi. As a result, grub populations naturally and progressively dwindle as the organic matter content of soils increases as a result of organic soil building practices such as mulching lawn clippings, mulching beds and composting in general.

In fact, healthy compost is actually the best long term management tool for those who do have grubs present in numbers greater than 10 per cubic foot. Apply 1/2" of finished compost as a topdressing on lawns to make the soil less attractive to grubs and to introduce beneficial nematodes and fungi so these organisms can help keep the grubs in check. For those very few people out there who need serious control quickly, apply beneficial nematodes as a soil drench to bring them into balance, and then topdress with compost for long term management. You can find beneficial nematodes at area garden centers and feed stores that specialize in organic gardening and through online sources. Do not buy Milky Spore Disease for white grub control. This organic product does control Japanese Beetle grubs but not our local June Beetle grubs.

Yours in gardening,

Mark Bowen

GOT GARDENING QUESTIONS?

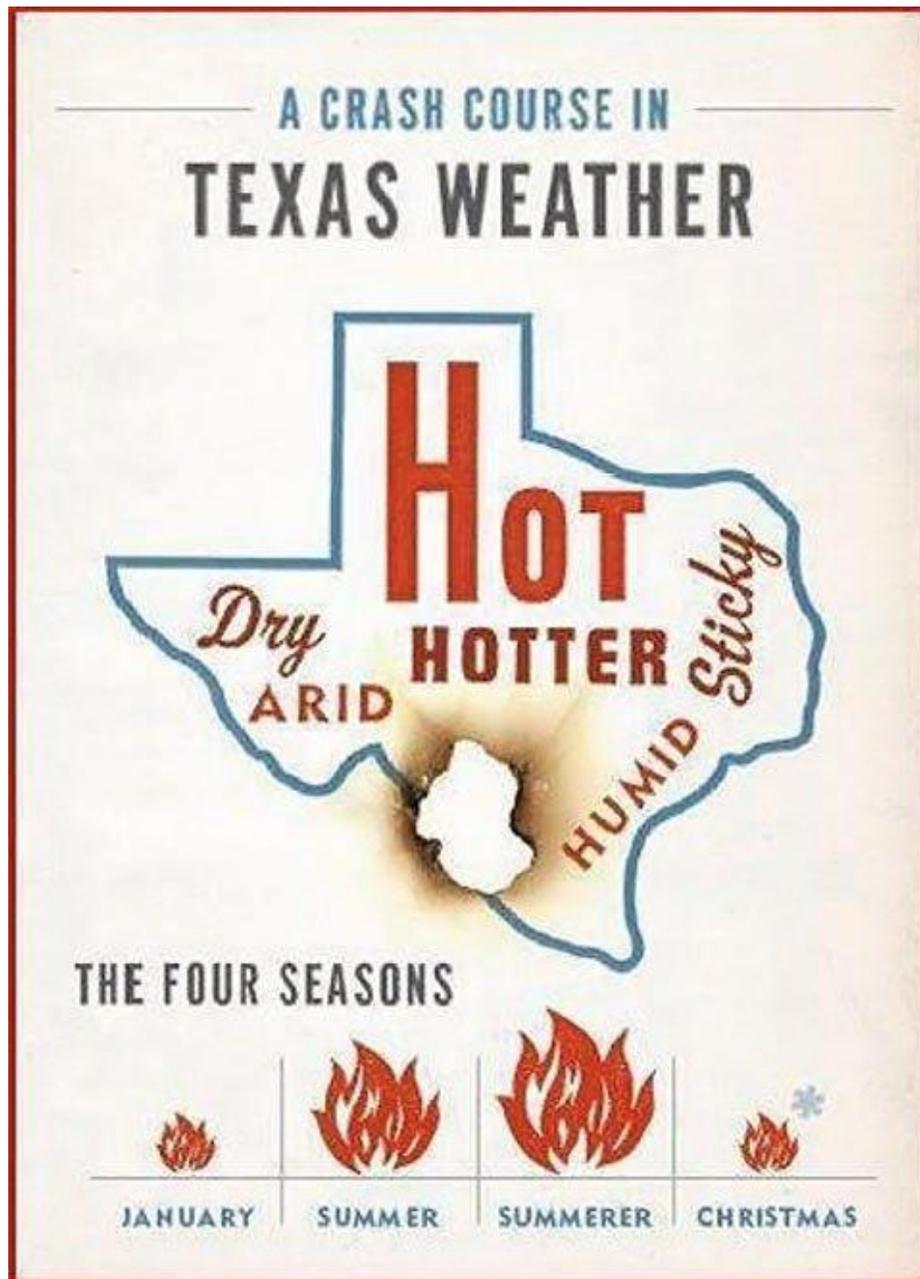
Be sure to check out our gardening blog at www.lazygardenerandfriends.com to get your gardening questions answered and to interact with other gardeners.

IN THE NEWS:

Bayou Planting Guide helps your garden grow: Five foolproof plants that thrive in the Houston climate <http://houston.culturemap.com>

Launch of U.S. Food Waste Challenge - <http://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/index.htm>

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE



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.

In addition to her position as Production Editor on the Garden Club of America's magazine and her freelance writing career, Brenda's latest venture is "THE LAZY GARDENER'S & 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.

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*.

Mark Bowen

Mark is a native Houstonian, a horticulturist and organic specialist with a background in garden design, habitat 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*.

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 and quality control. Pablo helps this newsletter happen from a technical support standpoint.



<http://natureswayresources.com/>



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<http://wabashfeed.com/>

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Offer Expires: 7/1/13



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