



June 28, 2013

Dear Friends,

Here is the 16th 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](mailto:lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com). Thanks so much for your interest.

Please .

Enjoy!

## MUST HAVE PLANTS...MUST KNOW SNAKES...DIS-ROBING OAKS



BY BRENDA BEUST SMITH

Since the rest of this column might make you cringe, thought I'd start off by making your eyes pop. And if this blood lily doesn't do that . . . well . . .

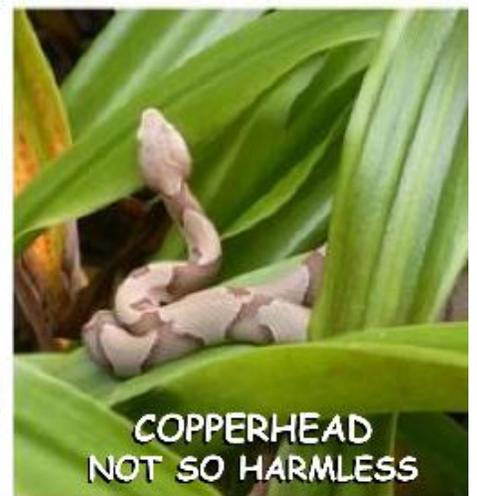
This lily, and the darling shade-loving peacock gingers next to it, are just two of the perfect-for-Houston-summer plants [Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens](#) will have for sale at its big upcoming Summer Symposium and Plant Sale, Saturday, July 28, 8 am to 3 pm. The workshop focuses on hardy, heat-loving tropical-looking plants. Gardening experts share tips on plant selection and watering during the summer heat.

The fee is \$85 for nonmembers; this includes lunch and early entrance to the plant sale. Space is limited. For information call (281) 443-8731.

[Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens](#), in North Harris County, is a living plant library with numerous speciality gardens and labeled plants. If you've never been, this is the perfect time to go and see what thrives in Houston gardens in the summer heat.



GARTER SNAKE  
HARMLESS



COPPERHEAD  
NOT SO HARMLESS

Before you snap your eyes shut or hit delete, remember:

When you live near a bayou - as almost all of us do to some degree - snakes in the gardens is an sempiternal occurrence, especially during periods of great heat and drought.

It's getting hot. Like the rest of us, they will be seeking cool and moisture.

You need to know about our garden snakes!

Especially if you have children around.

For example, this harmless garter snake above at left is really kind of pretty on my giant white spider lily (*Hymenocallis*), a must plant for lazy gardeners.

She eats termites, ants, slugs, mice and rats, so can hang around my garden all she wants! The copperhead, well, best stay way from these guys!

The information below appeared in one of my Houston Chronicle Lazy Gardener columns. Now that our temperatures are rising, it bears repeating:

When you see a snake, chances are good it will have spotted you long before you spot it.

So it will:

1. Lie very still in hopes you will go away and not bother it.
2. Hightail it out of there in hopes you won't bother it.

The absolutely WORST thing an adult can do in front of a youngster is to grab the nearest stick, rake or broom and start beating the snake.

All you're doing is teaching that youngster how to react.

This is what that child might do the next time he/she spots a snake, and might end up getting really hurt.

Snakes are all over this area.

Most of the time you never ever see them because they don't like people.

They want a quiet, undisturbed spot.

So when you see one, make all the noise you want. Then leave as quickly as possible.

Teach your children if they spot a snake to come immediately and inform you.

When you come back, 99 times out of 100, that snake will be gone.

And he probably won't come back. That is not a nice, undisturbed spot.

But don't be foolish.

When working in heavily-shrubby spots in this heat, beat the bushes, ferns, whatever, well with a stick, broom or shovel before poking your hand in there.

A lot of wildlife will be attracted now to nicely-watered garden areas where snakes, at least, will eat roaches, mice and rats which - in my book - ranks them above squirrels, for example.

Let's face it: if it weren't for snakes, we'd literally be living amid a "plague of rats, mice, frogs and toads."

We're already in a plague of roaches and squirrels. Snakes are not rhizophagous; they won't hurt your plants either.

Fortunately, the vast majority of our area snakes are completely harmless.

And you'll be glad to know that, despite many rumors to the contrary - there have been NO verified reports of rattlesnakes in Harris County for many, many years.

The rumors are probably due to the fact that many other heavily-patterned snakes are often mistaken for a rattlers.

So it's a smart gardener who learns to recognize snakes likely to wander into his yard, especially during this period of such intense heat, and the drought likely to follow. And who teaches his/her children to recognize them.

I highly recommend you attend snake identification programs at a nature center near you. Several are listed at

the end of this column. These may be the best outings your family ever takes.

If you can't, at least drop by [Jesse H. Jones Park Park and Nature Center](#) where you can see live snakes in displays, or other area nature centers where displays picture many of the varieties you're most likely to encounter in a Greater Houston area home landscape.

The pictures below were provided by Jesse H. Jones Park staffers.

Of the hundreds of snake varieties found around here, only 3 are venomous: - the Southern Copperhead, Western Cottonmouth and Texas Coral Snake.

====



Copperhead



Coral Snake



Cottonmouth

Photos courtesy of Jesse H. Jones Nature Center

====

Copperheads and cottonmouths are with triangular-shaped heads, vertical eye slits, and heat-sensing pits or depressions between the eye and snout.

**COPPERHEADS** - The pale orange-colored copperhead is perfectly camouflaged among oak leaves and pine needles. It can also be identified by markings resembling hour glasses or Hershey's Kisses along the sides of its body.

**COTTONMOUTHS** - The charcoal-colored, faintly mottled cottonmouth (or water moccasin), has a telltale black mask running across its face and through the eye area. It sometimes exposes the white lining of its mouth, and vibrates its noticeably narrow-tipped tail. Juveniles are more heavily mottled and have a yellow or green tipped tail. Although they prefer moist areas, they are also Although favoring semiaquatic habitats, cottonmouths can do well in entirely dry environments.

**CORAL SNAKE** - "Red touch yellow, hurt a fellow; red touch black is good for Jack" is an old saying that is helpful in identifying the venomous coral snake with its red and yellow touching rings alternating with black. The harmless Louisiana milk snake has contiguous rings of red and black alternating with white."

Heavily-patterned non-venomous snakes are often mistaken for rattlers, among them:

====



Bi-Colored Texas Rat Snake

Anita Howlett photo



Hognose Snake

Matt Abernethy photo



Texas Brown Snake

Photo courtesy of Jesse H. Jones Nature Center

=====

**TEXAS RAT SNAKES** - One of the heavily-patterned snakes often mistaken for a rattler is the non-venomous Texas Rat Snake which can grow to seven feet. (We had one of these high up in one of our trees one time. They are absolutely awesome to see.) Rat snakes can be aggressive if pursued, but they do an excellent job of keeping down the rodent population. Good climbers, they also prey on birds, nestlings and eggs.

**EASTERN HOGNOSE SNAKE** - The strongly patterned yet non-venomous Eastern Hognose Snake, so called because of his little turned-up snout, uses a number of ploys to put off its enemies, including puffing up its body and moving its head as if to strike. If all else fails, he will flip over and play dead, but he does not bite. Toads are a favorite hognose snake meal.

**ROUGH EARTH SNAKE** - The harmless, brown-colored Rough Earth Snake, one of the most common snakes found in urban yards and gardens, is only 7-10 inches long. Never known to bite humans, it makes its living by eating slugs, snails, sowbugs and ground skinks. Not much bigger is the Texas Brown Snake with white cheek patches, also a non-biter.

**ROUGH GREEN SNAKE** - The non-venomous Rough Green Snake likes to hang out in a completely green environment of trees and bushes. Its diet consists of caterpillars, spiders, grasshoppers, crickets and dragonflies.

Many water snakes look like cottonmouths, but the other water snakes are non-venomous, although some are quick-tempered and will readily bite. They have clearly visible round pupils instead of vertical slits. The names are descriptive, including the Yellowbelly, Blotched, Broad-banded, Diamondback and Western Mud Snake, all found throughout Harris County.

Round up all the neighborhood kids and take them with you to A snake education program. They need this information probably more than you do:

June 29 - "Snakes of Harris County," 10am, free, [Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center](#), 20634 Kenswick Drive, in North Harris County, 281-446-8588.

Saturdays, June-July - Free Snake Programs, 1:30 p.m., [Brazos Bend State Park](#), Needville.

July 24 - "Snakes in the Neighborhood" by Mr. Clint "The Snake Man," 6:30-8 p.m., Heritage Colony Clubhouse (kids) and Aquatic Center (adults); \$20 per family; register at 281-634-9555.

"Texas Snakes" offers numerous programs throughout the area, including weekend presentations at Space Center Houston. For details, log onto the Texas Snakes website: <http://www.texassnakes.net/>

If you need to have a snake identified, email the picture to [clint@texassnakes.net](mailto:clint@texassnakes.net).

(P.S. Those great-looking giant white spider lilies pictured above? Those are hard to find in nurseries, but they will be available at two upcoming sales:

Any snakes-in-the-garden stories you'd like to share? Or gardening questions, comments?

Email me at [lazygardener@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net).

---

## DISROB-ING OAKS?

Anyone else having a problem with striptease-ing oaks?

Marcia Raskin wrote: *My oak trees are dropping small pieces of bark - from the branches, I think, and not from the trunk -- thinking it is the drought or the construction.*

I had never heard of this problem, altho we have lots of oaks. My first thought was squirrels, because they did this to our pecan. Eventually killed it. Seems there are 3 possibilities.

1. Squirrels.

2. The past two years of heavy drought, followed by our cooler, wetter spring, may have triggered faster internal growth than the bark can expand to accommodate.

3. Smooth patch disease. This is a fungus that loosens the outer bark. Then it falls off. It's not dangerous. Just part of life with oaks.

All the websites I checked said as long as your trees' canopies are green and healthy looking, the trees should be fine. Anyone else having this problem?

## **Farewell, Grande Dame!**

The upcoming free July 11 Houston Rose Society's Annual Ice Cream Social (a regular festival) will be a wonderful opportunity to say goodbye to a truly wonderful lady close to the hearts of so many of us: the Houston Garden Center in Hermann Park.

She's been the heart of Houston horticulture for 72 years, many of them under the loving care of the Houston Federation of Garden Clubs.

In her place, the City of Houston will erect the Cherie Flores Garden Center. The Houston Rose Society proudly points out that Cherie and Jim Flores and their children have been HRS members since 2004.

## ARCHIVES OF BRENDA'S COLUMNS

(Link to archives: <http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs172/1112503958110/archive/1112822112421.html>)

"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, 14011Greenranch Dr., Houston, TX 77039-2103.

For correspondence that is specific to Brenda, feel free to email her directly at [lazygardener@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net).

## WEEKLY EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS CALENDAR

June 29 - "Snakes of Harris County," 10am, free, [Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center](#), 20634 Kenswick Drive, in North Harris County, 281-446-8588.

July 6th: Jerrys Jungle will be open to the public July 6th, Saturday, 9 to 5, for visitors to stroll the gardens and enjoy the vast array of new plants. Plants that were not available in April, are now. 712 Hill Rd, 77037, for info see [jerrysjungle.com](http://jerrysjungle.com) or call 832-978-5358.

July 6: 10:15 a.m. Growing Fall Tomatoes Clinic at both Cornelius Nursery locations, 1200 N. Dairy Ashford and 2233 S. Voss: <http://www.calloways.com/clinics>. Free.

July 11 - Houston Rose Society "Annual Ice Cream Social and Organic Roses," free, 7pm, Houston Garden Center, 1500 Hermann Dr. in Hermann Park. HRS will provide the ice cream, you bring your own favorite topping. Dr. Harold L. Wade will entertain with "rose music" on an electric "pipe" organ. Multiple "gardening" vendors including The Arbor Gate, "rose-y" Designs by Marie, Enchanted Gardens and Enchanted Forest, Nature's Way Resources, Nitro-Phos, RCW Nursery, Wabash Antiques and Feed and Tom Boy Tools. Free admission. For more information: [www.houstonrose.org](http://www.houstonrose.org) or Like us on Facebook

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 13: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Honey Extractor Day, Lecture by John Berry at Wabash Antiques & Feed Store, \$30. Looking for an efficient way to extract your honey? Sign up for a two-hour class to harvest your honey. Bring in your super and we will have uncapping and extracting equipment available. This is an economical solution for a small-scale beekeeper to harvest their honey without the expense of an extractor. Spectators are welcome. Space is limited, only 4 two-hour spots are available. Check out website to reserve your time slot. <http://www.wabashfeed.com/>

July 13: Water-wise Gardening Clinic, 10:15 a.m. at both Cornelius Nursery locations, 1200 N. Dairy Ashford and 2233 S. Voss: <http://www.calloways.com/clinics>. Free.

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](http://www.theplumeriasociety.org). Location: Fort Bend County Fairgrounds 3350 Hwy 36S--Rosenberg, TX.

July 24 - "Snakes in the Neighborhood" by Mr. Clint "The Snake Man," 6:30-8 p.m., Heritage Colony Clubhouse (kids) and Aquatic Center (adults); \$20 per family; register at 281-634-9555.

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 J.J.L. 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net).

## JUST FOR KIDS

Fort Bend County Master Gardeners Earth-Kind® Kids' Kamp

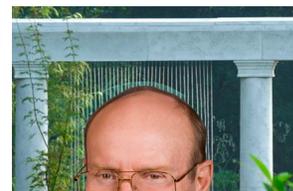


The Fort Bend County Master Gardeners are hosting the fifth annual Earth-Kind® Kids' Kamp August 5 through 9, 2013 for youth entering 3rd, 4th and 5th grades. FBMG volunteers have helped to teach nearly 100 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students about gardening basics, where food comes from, and the wildlife often encountered in the garden. Each year a new curriculum is selected from the nationally acclaimed Junior Master Gardener program supported by 28 universities, including Texas A&M University which serves as JMG headquarters. This year's curriculum is Wildlife Gardener and includes lessons taught by Master Gardeners and other subject matter experts about birds, insects, amphibians, reptiles, vermicomposting and much more.

"Twenty to thirty years ago, nearly all kids were exposed to nature on a day to day basis. Times have changed and it gets harder and harder for youth to have the same experiences. This camp gives youth the opportunity to learn about and experience the best that nature brings, and get their hands dirty along the way" said Boone Holladay, Fort Bend County Extension Agent - Horticulture, who advises the Master Gardener volunteers.

Kids' Kamp will be held at the Fort Bend County Extension office at 1402 Band Road in Rosenberg from 9 am until 3 pm each day. A registration fee of \$50.00 includes all materials, snacks, and a T-shirt, and is limited to the first 25 paid registrants. Download and print a registration form at <http://www.fbmjg.com/events/event/jmg-kids-kamp/> or call Margo "Mac" McDowell at 281-633-7033 for assistance or information. FBMG is sponsored by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

# MULCH CORNER



BY JOHN FERGUSON

Last week we talked about a few other types of mulch that are available. This time we are going to continue our discussion on some of the other types of organic mulches a gardener may want encounter and want to use.

**Biodegradable Weed Barriers** - New biodegradable weed barrier mulches are entering the market that are made from recycled paper and cardboard. Better ones contain holes for air and water penetration and will last about one growing season. A few examples are:

**Paper + Poultry Manure** - This is a medium quality mulch that should be applied 3-4" layer thick. It is easy and quick to apply, breaks down easily, provides some nutrients, is made from recycled materials, is a good soil amendment, and it has been reported that the waste paper has some herbicidal effects on weeds. It may be expensive, and it does not support the variety of beneficial microbes as other organic mulches. Products from some producers may contain a high salt content. If supplemental nitrogen is not added, it may cause a temporary nitrogen tie-up in the soil. If used 1" thick as suggested by some advertising literature, it will not provide needed thermal protection against excessive heat or cold that would be the case with other mulches. High water absorption properties may prevent water from reaching root zones and result in too much water being held in the mulch layer increasing the possibility of diseases.

**Note:** This mulch is relatively new to market, it only lasts one season, is made from recycled telephone books, newspaper and poultry manure (one product is produced by Tascon, Inc. of Houston using techniques developed by the Agricultural Research arm of the USDA called Enviroguard). Paper fiber is mixed with poultry manure and heat dried at 160 degrees Fahrenheit to kill pathogens, then extruded into pellets 3/16" thick by 1" long. Pellets will fluff up upon wetting and will hold 4-5 times their weight in water. This product is still in the early stages of testing and development and is designed for agricultural use. It has the potential to be a very useful product for agriculture as experience is gained in usage.

**Note:** Research at Auburn University has found that recycled paper mulches often contain toxic forms of Aluminum that was used in the manufacturing of the paper (newspaper, magazines, yellow pages, etc.). As the paper decomposes the Aluminum leaches into the soil and prevents plants from absorbing phosphorus, hence greatly reducing the plants growth. This problem is worse in acidic soils and with shallow rooted plants.

**Note:** Some of these type mulches are reported being used with ammonium sulfate as a fire retardant and with copper (Cu) compounds to slow down the decomposition rates.

**Note:** Poultry manure (unless organic) has high levels of arsenic in it along with lots of salts which often cause problems in clay rich soils.

Occasional usage should not be a problem. However, frequent use can lead to soil problems and eventually insect and diseases in our plants.

**Pelletized Recycled Paper** - A special purpose mulch of medium to poor quality depending on the source

materials it is made from. Generally requires a 3-4" thick layer. It is easy and quick to apply, is available in bags, breaks down easily, provides some nutrients, is made from recycled materials, makes a good soil amendment, and it has been reported that the waste paper has some weed suppression effects as it has a very high C: N ratio. Early studies indicate that one of the best uses is in the nursery industry for weed control in container grown plants as it naturally suppress weeds without the need for dangerous herbicides (outperforms crumbled paper and is easier to use). It does not support the variety of beneficial microbes as the better organic mulches do. Products from some producers may contain a high salt content. Due to the high C:N ratio, if supplemental nitrogen is not added, it may cause a temporary nitrogen tie-up in the soil. If only used 1" thick as suggested by some advertising literature, then it will not provide needed thermal benefits against heat or cold or the weed suppression of other types of mulch. Also the high water absorption properties may prevent water from reaching root zone and cause too much water to be held in the mulch layer increasing the possibility of diseases. Repeated use can cause soil chemical balance problems.

Paper (Other) -Colored paper, coated paper, etc. are being researched as specialty mulches for use in agriculture. By coloring or coating the paper the reflectance, light transmissibility, biodegradability and other physical properties can be altered. These properties may be varied depending on the need of the crop. More on how these types of colored mulches affect plant growth in future issues. Mainly used in commercial agriculture.

Hydraulic Mulches: These are a group of special purpose mulches often used commercially for hydro seeding and vegetation establishment. These are often used in a water based slurry and mixed with tackifiers (works like a glue) to help hold seed and fertilizer pellets to the soil for vegetation establishment. They can be applied with spraying equipment to cover large areas quickly. These mulches are often used to prevent erosion while vegetation is being established. There are dozens of brands and variations produced by many companies. Often seen as the blue-green product after road construction. These mulches are commonly used as they are relatively cheap, but they are not the most effective choice.

Wood Cellulose Fiber - This mulch is derived from trees and sometimes recycled newspaper or cardboard. Sometimes polyester or other synthetic fibers may be added for greater strength. This mulch is also used in combination with straw, hay or other organic mulch. For many years this was the accepted way of stabilizing soil and planting grass to prevent erosion. Many new studies from Texas A&M and others have found that recycled native mulches and/or compost work better and at lower total cost.

Corn Stover fibers - Derived from corn stalks, the ground up stalks often gives longer fibers which may hold better for erosion control.

Erosion Control Blankets: These are special purpose mulches made from various types of organic material (fibers) held in place by a mesh (often plastic or polyester fiber). They are used commercially to prevent erosion on steep slopes and disturbed soils. The fiber may be straw, shredded wood, coir, cotton, hemp, or other organic material. These are made into blankets that are shipped in rolls. To apply, the blanket is unrolled at the bottom of a slope and is pinned to the soil. The second roll is applied above the first with a small overlap of the material like shingles on a house. Sometimes the blankets will also contain seed and fertilizer to prevent nutrient tie-up.

Other: Depending on where you live, other types of mulches may be available at little or no charge. Spent brewery hops, apple pumice, blueberry husks, pole peelings from lumber mill, old carpet (cotton or wool will also biodegrade), etc. Each offers benefits and problems, best to contact a local agriculture extension office for use on one's soils.

# GOT GARDENING QUESTIONS?

Be sure to check out our gardening blog at [www.lazygardenerandfriends.com](http://www.lazygardenerandfriends.com) to get your gardening questions answered and to interact with other gardeners.

## 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 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://www.arborgate.com/>



<http://wabashfeed.com/>



<http://microlifefertilizer.com/>



<http://natureswayresources.com/>

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST!



**Save 20%: Redeem this coupon for a big discount on Nature's Way Resources Native Aged Double Ground Mulch( <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: 8/1/13**

