



July 19, 2013

Dear Friends,

Here is the 19th 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!

THRIVING AGAPANTHAS ... THRIPS ON HIBISCUS . . . FREE  
TREES ... JERRY'S JUNGLE P. S.

BY BRENDA BEUST SMITH

*There grew a little flower  
'neath a great oak tree:  
When the tempest 'gan to lower  
Little heeded she:  
No need she had to cower,  
For she dreaded not its power -  
She was happy in the bower  
Of her great oak tree!*  
-- "The Great Oak Tree" from "Ruddigore" by Gilbert & Sullivan



That's what I've been doing wrong! I should have been planting agapanthus under an oak tree (Okay, I know those are crepes. I just like this poem.)

Some folks in this area grow gorgeous agapanthus - also called lily-of-the-Nile. Not me.

Madeleine Hamm - former well-known Houston Chronicle HomeDesign Editor-turned-Astrrodome Preservationist - shot this picture in the garden of Clarewood House Senior Community, where she and husband Mike now live.

I've always attributed my lack of success to the fact that when it comes to my garden soil, what God put there we have not torn asunder.

Translation: agapanthus like a sandy (translation: improved) soil better than our native gumbo. They seem to do well in both part and full sun, for other folks, anyway.

What they can't stand is to be overwatered. In the Houston area, this means they need to be in raised beds or on a slope, in extremely well-drained soil (gumbo becomes a sponge during our usual spring and fall monsoons).

Other than that, they are said to love our heat and humidity. And that, when in pots, they like to be rootbound. Some say in soil too, they bloom better when the plants become a little crowded. Like gerberas, they sometimes seem to do better in pots (with bottom hole) sunk halfway into the soil. You might try that if yours aren't blooming.

Lilies-of-the-Nile are considered both medicinal and magical in their native South African homeland. The name comes from Greek words for love (agapé) and flower (anthos); they were used as love charms! They were used to treat heart disease, paralysis, coughs, colds and chest pains and to protect from thunderstorms.

Leaves in shoes soothe the feet. Longer leaves wound around the wrist are said to reduce fevers. Agapanthus root necklaces were worn by pregnant women to ensure healthy babies. Don't eat, tho. Lots of varieties exist and can be poisonous.

Ironically, even though they're not lilies, they were included in the lily family for a long time. Then they were moved to the amaryllis family, then to the onion family to, finally, their own family! "*Horticulturists in their little nests agree!*"

## THRIPS GOING DOMESTIC

Now that summer's here, and the wildflowers are dying back, our gardens are looking mighty tasty.

That point came home in this query from Regina Kinney in Hawaii. She has four inground hibiscus she prunes back 2-3 times a year. They come back quickly with - (okay to drool now) - "hundreds of flowers." Lately tho, the flowers open but the petals are shriveled, deformed with lackluster color. The leaves are fine as are the buds. No aphids, no whitefly.

Since Houston and Hawaii soils are about as different as can be, I hated to guess. So, of course, turned to my hibiscus guru, Pat Merritt. Her reply:

*She has a pest of some kind. Something is sucking the juices out of the flowers. Thrips? Mites? My first suggestion is to hit the buds with a strong stream of water every other day for a week. Do this every day for a week. Let me know if this works, or doesn't and I'll go back to the drawing board.*

Ironically, my sister Audrey (the antique rose fanatic) was in Hawaii when this query came in. I emailed it to her and, recalling similar symptoms, she emailed back:

*"If the little critters behave like rose thrips, she'd be able to see a little bore hole somewhere near the base of the bud."*

Audrey found this link to an interesting website on what "over there" they call Hawaiian thrips which really do only attack hibiscus: [http://www.extento.hawaii.edu/kbase/crop/Type/t\\_hawai.htm](http://www.extento.hawaii.edu/kbase/crop/Type/t_hawai.htm)

If you love hibiscus (and we all should), can't urge you strongly enough to join one of our two extremely active hibiscus societies - Lone Star Chapter <http://lonestarahs.org/> or Space City Chapter <http://spacecityahs.org> of the American Hibiscus Society.

Not only can you learn the basics, but also rub elbows with the elite such as Space City Chapter President Cindy Adkins Erndt, who won the AHS Seedling of the Year award with her creation 'Dragon Flirt,' below.





What does this talk about thrips have to do with wildflowers?

Thrips love wildflowers as much as we two-legged creatures do-tho perhaps for different reasons!

Nature produces billions of spring wildflowers. So what if thrips kill off a million or so? Not noticeable.

Wildflower numbers drop when temperatures rise and rainfall disappears. These minute sucking insects have to go somewhere. So they head for home gardens. Lots of flowers there.

These tiny insects lay their eggs inside the forming buds. The eggs hatch inside their meal-trucks, and the poor bud never develops fully. Since they also eat mites and other insects, thrips are considered beneficials . . . tho maybe not to you? They will bite people too, if they're really hungry, and are sometimes mis-identified as nose-ees or tiny mosquitoes.

The word thrips (which is both singular and plural) comes from the Greek word for wood louse. They actually date to prehistoric times. Who else would tell you these things? Or is it TMI?

Not sure you have thrips? Take a suspicious bud, cut it open and shake it over a white sheet of paper. Thrips look like small black pencil lines. Look for scratchy lines on healthy hibiscus flowers. If the thrips can't get into the bud, they may be there. Remove and dispose of affected buds. Don't allow generations to develop, as many as eight can arrive in one year. Hitting the plant every morning with a strong water spray will dislodge many of them.

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Duranta 'Cuban Gold'

## USE YELLOW IN NIGHT GARDENS

In response to my recent column on making colors do double-duty in your landscape, Barbara Harms sent in these great tips:

"I enjoy your weekly letter. Regarding tips for using color in the landscape, I read a magazine article a few years back about using yellows to light up a night garden. Usually we think of whites for this. Since I had some yellow foliage already (duranta 'Cuban Gold'), I checked out my window once it got dark, and sure enough, the yellows glowed.

"Along with the duranta I have 'Versa Lime' coleus, 'Creeping Jenny' lysimachia and golden oregano. A 'Hilo Beauty' alocaasia adds its bold leaves for texture in summer. I like to use purples, blues and magentas as contrast in the daylight, they pop with the golden hues.

"I use strobilanthes 'Persian Shield', loropetalum, agapantha, magenta hued 'New Look Vioet' pentas, lobelia, 'Powwow Wild Berry' coneflowers and magenta dianthus, and this year I am successful, so far, with a purple flowering clematis, 'Petit Faucin'.

"The choices are many. The golden foliage plants don't wash out in the hot and bright sunlight of summer and really catch your eye, night or day."

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## FREE TREES!

Would you like a tree for a community project, your front yard, or to beautify a street?

Trees for Houston has trees free for the taking, individually or in bulk (as long as supplies last). love to give you a tree to plant in your community. All you have to do is assure them you will be responsible for planting, watering, and maintaining your tree. Species include: Bald Cypress, Bur Oak, Nuttall Oak, Persimmon, Pine, Red Maple, River Birch, Swamp Chestnut Oak, Sweet Gum, and Sycamore, in addition to others. Details: Jessica Keener at [Jessica@treesforhouston.org](mailto:Jessica@treesforhouston.org) or [www.treesforhouston.org](http://www.treesforhouston.org)

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## FRIENDS OF JERRY SEYMORE'S JUNGLE

In a previous column, it was mistakenly stated Jerry's Jungle Garden would now be open every Saturday.

Nope. He was just going to be unusually open that one Saturday. So if you want to visit this extraordinary site, mark October 18-19 on your calendar. Those are the dates of Jerry's next Open House (which includes a plant sale) - 9 a.m.-5 p.m. both days.

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*Send your gardening questions to [lazygardeners@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lazygardeners@sbcglobal.net).*

## 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, 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](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net).

## WEEKLY EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS CALENDAR

July 20: 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 20: Arboretum at Night, Night Sounds of Summer. The snap of a twig, the fluttering of wings, the chirp behind the woodpile up ahead... What could it be? Nighttime in the summer forest is an enchanting symphony of sounds and mysterious spaces enlivened by wildlife on the move. 7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. Instructor: Jaime Gonzalez. <http://www.houstonarboretum.org/event/night-sounds-of-summer>

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 JJL 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.

July 27: Fall Vegetable Gardening. After the dog days of summer comes the perfect time to toss together iron rich salad greens, sauté veggie shish kabobs or simmer hardy vegetable soups that your whole family will enjoy. Sat, July 27. 9am - 12pm. \$24 members. \$36 non-members. UH Main Campus, 4361 Wheeler St. Bldg & Rm TBA. For more info: 713-880-5540 or [www.urbanharvest.org](http://www.urbanharvest.org).

July 27: Introduction to Chickens Lecture by John Berry, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

at Wabash Antiques & Feed Store, admission is free. Backyard chickens are more popular than ever. Learn poultry basics including food, shelter, care and what chicken is right for you. [www.wabashfeed.com](http://www.wabashfeed.com)

July 27: Class at Clown Alley Orchids. "Potting, Dividing, and Mounting Orchid", 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 [www.clownalleyorchids.com](http://www.clownalleyorchids.com)

August 3: Starting a Community/School Garden: Community Engagement & Planning #1

Class 1: Community Engagement & Planning - This class will explore goals, discuss organizing volunteers and funding, and help you set priorities for your garden. Sat, Aug 3. 9 - 11:15 am. \$24 members. \$36

nonmembers. Green Planet Sanctuary, 13424-B Briar Forest Drive, Houston, TX 77077. For more info: 713-880-5540 or [www.urbanharvest.org](http://www.urbanharvest.org)

August 5: The Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 Present a Children's Program - Growing Pineapples from tops, and a Program for Adults - Tool Sharpening, 9:30-10:30 a.m. Where: Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff, Houston, TX 77034. <http://hcmga.tamu.edu>. 281 855 5600

August 8: Propagate Your Own Plants, at Urban Harvest. Learn the various sexual and asexual ways to start plants from seeds, cuttings, divisions, and layering. Topics include the proper storage of seeds, seed dormancy, and methods of sprouting hard-to-sprout seeds. There will also be a hands-on workshop on propagation by cuttings. Thurs, Aug 8. 6:30 - 8:45 pm. \$24 members. \$36 non-members. Urban Harvest Classroom, 2311 Canal Street, Houston, TX 77003. For more info: 713-880-5540 or [www.urbanharvest.org](http://www.urbanharvest.org)

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):

August 17: Starting a Community/School Garden: Garden Design, Fruits & Vegetables #2 Class 2: Garden Design, Fruits & Vegetables. We will review and modify the garden design, set a schedule for ordering materials and set a build date. . Sat, Aug 17. 9 - 11:15 am. \$24 members. \$36 nonmembers. Green Planet Sanctuary, 13424-B Briar Forest Drive, Houston, TX 77077. For more info: 713-880 5540 or [www.urbanharvest.org](http://www.urbanharvest.org)

August 19: The Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 present a program for children - Garden Craft and a program for adults - Container Gardens, 9:30-10:30 a.m. Where: Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff, Houston, TX 77034. <http://hcmga.tamu.edu>. 281 855 5600

August 21: Master Gardener Lecture Series. Mary Karish will be speaking on "How to Grow and Care for Citrus for the home garden. Mary is a Harris County Master Gardener, a Citrus Specialist and Master Composter. She is a freelance writer and the owner of The Three Sisters - Your Backyard Gardener. 10:00 a.m., Where: The Meeting Room at Clear Lake Park (on the lakeside), 5001 NASA Parkway, Seabrook, TX 77586. <http://hcmga.tamu.edu>. 281 855 5600.

August 23: 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. A Gulf Coast Fruit Study Group Event. We have our pear event and pear



tasting with Dr. Ethan Natelson. George Mc Afee will do a hands on of multi-grafting and will have pictures of the many beautiful creations he has done. He and Ethan are both master Grafters. No fee. [www.gcfsg.weebly.com/newsletter](http://www.gcfsg.weebly.com/newsletter).

August 24: Irrigation For the Home Gardener (hands-on). A garden that conserves precious water resources is a rewarding investment. An irrigation system is a practical choice for most garden locations. Sat, Aug 24. 9 am - 12 pm. \$24 members. \$36 non-members. Private residence in Highland, TX. Location to be provided to enrolled students. For more info: 713-880-5540 or [www.urbanharvest.org](http://www.urbanharvest.org)

September 7: Rainwater Harvesting and Cisterns. We will discuss very low-cost methods of absorbing water on your property, as well as more expensive methods such as rainwater cisterns. Sat, Sept 7. 9 - 11:15 am. \$24 members. \$36 non-members. Westbury Community Garden, 12601 Fonmeadow, 77035. For more info: 713-880-5540 or [www.urbanharvest.org](http://www.urbanharvest.org)

September 7: WILDSCAPES WORKSHOP & Native Plant Sale, Landscaping with Native Plants to Attract Wildlife, 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. At the Houston Zoo's Brown Education Center in Hermann Park [www.npsot.org/houston](http://www.npsot.org/houston)

September 15: Organic Container Gardening. Don't have enough space to grow your favorite herbs and vegetables? Container Gardening may be your answer. Sun, Sept 15. 2:30 - 4:30 pm. \$36 non-members. Wabash Feed, 5701 Washington Ave, Houston, TX 77007. For more info: 713-880-5540 or [www.urbanharvest.org](http://www.urbanharvest.org)

September 17: Planting the Fall Vegetable Garden (hands-on). What better way to gain expert knowledge than to see how it is done firsthand through our fall gardening course. Tue, Sept 17. 6:00 - 8:30 pm. \$24 members. \$36 non-members. Westbury Community Garden, 12601 Fonmeadow, 77035. For more info: 713-880-5540 or [www.urbanharvest.org](http://www.urbanharvest.org)

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. We list calendar items up to two months ahead of time.

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).

MULCH CORNER

COMPOST AS A MULCH

BY JOHN FERGUSON



We were talking this week with one of our landscaping customers whom uses compost as a mulch, so let's explore this topic.

Compost makes a good mulch when applied 3 inches deep around most plants. A good compost has a high nutrient content, it rapidly improves soil fertility, it stimulates plant growth and general health and does not wash out in rain. If made properly compost is weed free, has a fair resistance to compaction and excellent resistance to blowing away in wind. Good compost contains and stimulates the growth of beneficial soil life (microbes, worms, good insects, etc.), it naturally suppresses the growth of many weed species (often better than dangerous chemical herbicides). Research at Ohio State University has found that a one inch thick layer of good compost is as effective a disease preventer as any synthetic chemical on the market.

More and more people are mulching their lawns with compost, a process that is often referred to as "topdressing". One of the best ways is to apply a good organic fertilizer like Microlife 6-2-4 first and then top dress with compost. Compost is applied from 1/4 inch to 1/2 inch thick layer at one time (never more than this at one time or it may smother the grass). When one uses this approach, they often see a 50% reduction in water requirements the first year alone and much more in future years as the process is repeated and the soil gets healthier. Turf diseases like brown patch, take -all, and St. Augustine decline become rare. The good microbes in compost decompose thatch so it never becomes a problem. The money ones saves on water, fungicides, insecticides, etc. pays for the compost. In addition one has lush green turf grass to enjoy, and since no toxic chemicals are used it is safe for children and pets to play on.

There are several ways to apply the compost from manually to equipment designed for this process. Since I have a cul-de-sac lot with only a small patch of grass in the front yard, I topdress it myself as the exercise is good for me. I also love the scent and feel of good compost. I use a wheelbarrow to move the compost to a given area. I take a shovel full of compost and sling it into the air scattering it over the grass. I then take a leave rake and even it up and settle it into the grass.

For larger areas, there are blowers and spreaders available. One can rent a spreader (still limited availability in the Houston area) or one can hire a company like Green Pro (<http://www.greenprotexas.com/>) to do the work for you.



Photo courtesy of Jim Faulk of Green Pro

For large areas, blowers can apply compost 300 feet from the truck and apply 40-50 cubic yards per hour. The picture below is from the Finn company, a manufacturer that makes blowers in several different sizes.



Good compost can be expensive but well worth it as the cost is recovered many times over by savings its usage generates. Good compost is in limited supply in some areas and there are large swings in quality from excellent to very poor. Many products are labeled and sold as compost that are not.

For use as a mulch, a green or partially decomposed (immature) compost is best. More composting time or maturity is effective when mixing into a soil layer. Good compost is mostly free of plastic, rocks, trash and other contaminants. Compost should have an index of at least 5 on the Solvita compost maturity test for use as a mulch.

Note: Mushroom Compost - Not a true compost. It is technically known as spent mushroom substrate. Often



use the word "compost" to help sell and get rid of the waste products from mushroom farms. We will talk more about this product when we do a series of articles on compost.

Certain types of mulches suppress weeds better than other types, and research is starting to evaluate these weed suppression properties. Research at the University of Connecticut has found that compost suppresses weeds almost as well as leaves and straw. However, weeds that made it through a compost layer were very healthy.

A recent study at the University of Maryland has found that the insect pest known as "Azalea Lace Bugs" are attracted to Rhododendron's (Azaleas) that have received supplemental synthetic nitrogen fertilizer. Many other studies have found that pest insects are attracted to plants that have received synthetic fertilizers. So, one of the best (and cheapest) methods of reducing insect problems is to fertilize naturally using compost as a mulch.

The results of a two year study released by the Texas Transportation Institute in 1997 (Texas A&M University) found that using compost as a mulch was as good or better than all other erosion control methods and much cheaper (Research Report 1352-2F). Similar results were found by the EPA (United States Environmental Protection Agency) and FHWA (Federal Highway Administration) when comparing "yard trimmings compost" to hydro mulch for erosion control and vegetation establishment. The results showed that compost outperformed the hydro mulch with synthetic chemical fertilizer added. Several other studies have found the same results, that compost and native mulch outperforms alternative methods and at lower cost.

## GARDENERS FORUM

### HOSTED BY MARK BOWEN



It is always great to hear from our readers and fellow gardeners. If you would like to share, email us at [lazygardenersandfriends@gmail.com](mailto:lazygardenersandfriends@gmail.com). A big thank you goes out to all who contribute. We really appreciate you!

### From Phoebe Lake:

Hi Brenda-

After reading your (great) article on snakes, thought I'd send you a short article I recently wrote for our garden club on the very same subject.

Also, a photo of the fellow I found on my rose arbor. I did just what you said, left him alone and when I came back later he was gone-to frighten me out of my wits another day probably!

Enjoying your new newsletter!

Phoebe Lake

Here is Phoebe's article:

## WHAT'S ON YOUR ROSE ARBOR?

Like most of our members, I love to spend time in my garden. Like some members, I am terrified of snakes. My fear is so profound that I won't even pick up a book on snakes because of the pictures! Venomous or non-venomous, they're all the same to me-very, very scary.

We've all heard the old adage that snakes are more afraid of us than we are of them. Not true in my case!

So, look what I found on my rose arbor this morning!



The above encounter prompted me to do some research in hopes of mitigating my fears (it didn't work). Following are some thoughts on snakes in the garden.

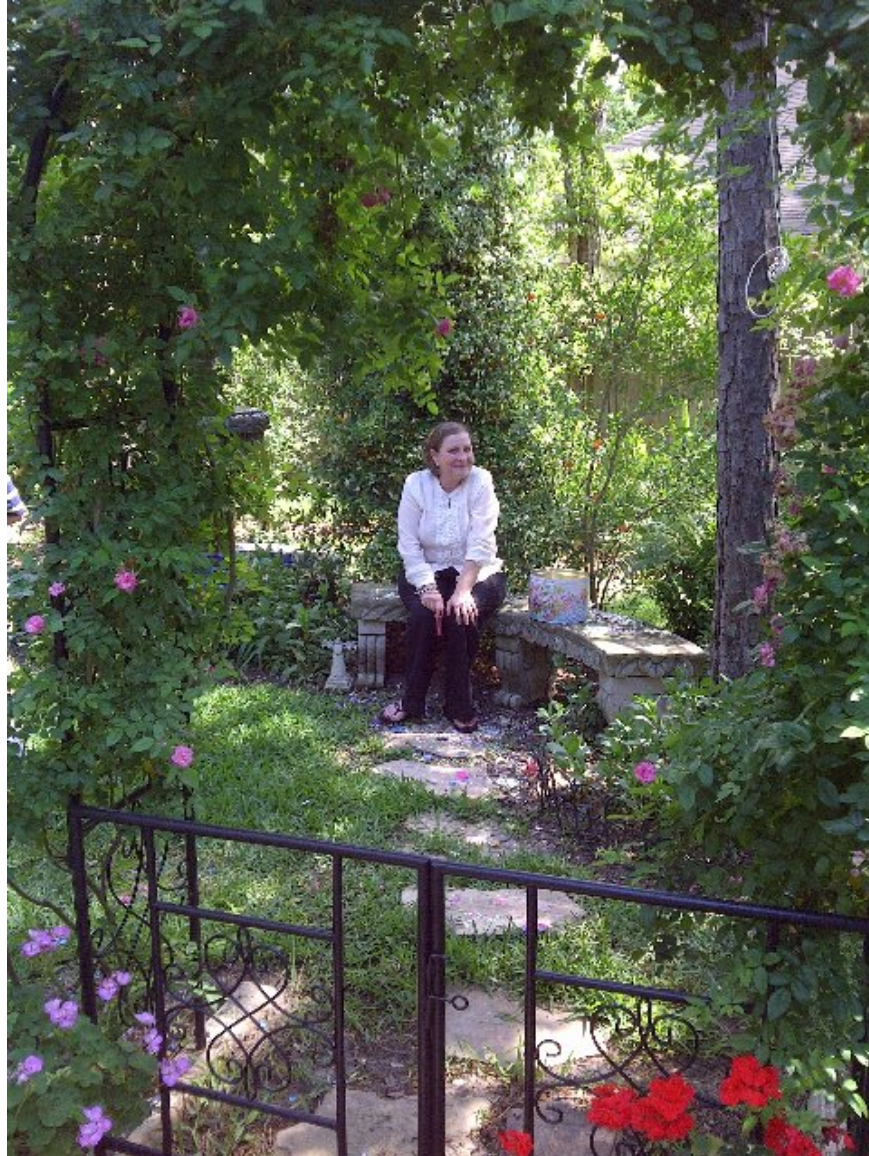
1. Unlike some other critters which have questionable use (fire ants) snakes are actually good in the garden. They eat slugs, Japanese beetles, moles, rats and mice among other things.
2. "The main disadvantage of having snakes in your garden is that they may bite you." Really?
3. Wear sturdy shoes. Wearing gloves or not is a personal choice but never put your hand where you can't see where it's going. I learned that in Girls Scouts years ago and it remains true today.
4. How do you know if you have snakes in your garden? If you see snakeskins, you have snakes (read that on the internet so it must be true). However, when I see a shed snakeskin it tells me there is a BIGGER snake out there somewhere!
5. Keeping snakes out of your garden isn't easy but there are repellents available (check for toxic ingredients). Also, eliminating hiding places (brush piles, foundation holes, wood piles, etc.) will also help. Cats will at least alert you to snakes in the area. I've been told Guinea Hens are the best snake deterrents.

6. But the best advice I read was to "Keep calm and keep your distance."

Phoebe Lake

From Grace M. De Fernandez:

THE MAGIC OF MY GARDEN.



Every morning as I walk through the magic of my garden, with the faint sent of Arabian jasmine still in the air, with surprise to discover what new leaf has unfurled or the promise of a new bud or the splendor and the color of a new bloom or maybe an unwanted resident who has established his new home. Birds must think this is paradise for its lush beauty and a refuge of safety, for they have chosen my garden to make it their home and raise their young.



It is my sanctuary where I take great delight in all of God's creatures and natural blessings. The songs of the birds, the bee buzzing by, the warmth of the sun on my face. This is heaven. I'm happy to be here to see it and enjoy it's beauty.

It is a noble garden for it rewards me splendidly for every little act of kindness I may bestow. We are one.

And so I walk everyday with my coffee in my hand and take in the energy of the garden. With the hope that it will sustain me through the entire day until the next morning, when I shall faithfully return.

From Ann Abernathy:

## John Fanick Phlox

I really liked this photo I took of John Fanick Phlox at Genoa Friendship Garden this morning. The yellow flowers are Golden Showers Thryallis. An excerpt from an article by Dr. William C. Welsh: "Greg Grant introduced 'John Fanick' in the early 1990's, which has become highly popular. Mr. Fanick was a well known nurseryman in San Antonio. It is a pale pink with a darker eye and particularly attractive when combined with the common pink-purple type. My experience has shown it to be the most vigorous of all the summer phlox, and it is also highly fragrant. Greg says that 'John Fanick' is one of the best butterfly-attracting plants available, especially swallowtails. It is a long-lasting and wonderful addition to summer bouquets."



Also, be sure to check out our gardening blog at [www.lazygardenerandfriends.com](http://www.lazygardenerandfriends.com).

# 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, natural

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.



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