



August 2, 2013

Dear Friends,

Here is the 21st 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.

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Enjoy!

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## GET TO SHAKIN', GARDEN!

BY BRENDA SMITH



Encouraging movement in the garden using, I to r, purple fountain grass, zinnias, dianthus, hummer feeder and bird feeder.

*"Movement never lies. It is a barometer telling the state of the soul's weather." ~Martha Graham*

Can't get around it. For a garden to reach its full potential, motion is an essential element.

And one seldom discussed in gardening columns.

We can't control winds, rains, or the sun's path.

Yet these fabulous triggers of Nature's lifeblood can be used to take our gardens to higher levels of tranquility. As someone once wrote: "No matter how beautiful your plantings, without natural motion something will always seem missing."

Health coach Carol Welch probably wasn't thinking about purple fountain grass when she wrote:

"Movement is a medicine for creating change in a person's physical, emotional, and mental states."

But that's just what seeing beautiful frothy soft maroon fronds swaying in the breeze, even subconsciously, does for an uptight soul. Even if just for a second.

We're already planting lots of enticements to bring butterflies, hummers and other birds into gardens. But don't overlook other sources to encourage more "flow."

\* Moving water is (almost) always a welcome, relaxing sound. A recycling pump in even the smallest of ponds or tubs will also attract beneficial wildlife.

\* Harness winds with feathery or paper-thin leaves that flutter like birds. Beautiful seed stalks produce pleasant rustling sounds.

\* Study prevailing wind patterns. Hang chimes to take advantage.

\* Plants with silver-back leaf sides create living sculptures on breezy days. Silver maples look like they're covered with shimmering water when the wind blows on bright sun days.

If you want to get really sophisticated about it, consider the sun's movements and which plants look best in which light.



For example, four o'clocks, left above, tolerate shade and come in such full bloom in the late afternoon and evening, they somewhat diminish plants around them.

If the spot gets good morning sun, purple oxalis, center, and Persian shield or purple oxalis both absolutely glow in sunlight, so perhaps you could situate this planting where it would get morning sun and afternoon shade - a better choice for shield and oxalis anyway.

That way, beautiful purple hues will glow morning and very early afternoon and the gay four o'clock colors will predominate in late afternoon and evening.

Pros often repeat colors and shapes from one part of the garden in another area, to give a visual "flow" - the same shade of a pink crepe, for example in geranium blooms farther along will pull the eye in whatever direction the pro wants you to look. Usually toward prettier views and away from less desirable ones!

This also helps create a sense of motion, as will repetitive use of textures. Picture a set of stepping stone leading from, say, your garden's entrance (back door, gate, driveway, whatever), leading to the back of your garden, perhaps to a particularly beautiful planting or corner.

The way the stones will visually become smaller the farther from you they are naturally pulls the eye to that section. That's a form of movement that makes your garden seem "more alive." The same thing is accomplished by using repetitive colors or distinctively shaped plants spaced along the way. The use of other plants, grass, etc., along the way makes the visual trip more relaxing, less forced.

That's getting pretty esoteric about it. And it's definitely not lazy gardening!

But some gardeners thrive on the challenge to - in the words of Alexander Pope - find "the genius of their place."

Any other suggestions you'd like to share? Email me at [lazygardener@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net)



**BOUGAINVILLEA? NO BLOOMS? NO THANKS!**

I always think it's a shame that most garden writers only say nice things about plants, too often ignoring the downsides. That's why here's a bougainvillea no-thanks from Diane Beust Criss in La Marque and a happy Mary Ann in Hempstead:

*I grew bougainvillea in the ground. It grew really well. Blooming was another problem. I think I had to put vinegar or something else weird on it to make it bloom. I finally got rid of it. Between that and the thorns I did not want it. - Diane*

I don't think Diane means vinegar. Vinegar is a natural herbicide. Works on weeds.

But she's not alone in frustration with no blooms. "Why won't my bougainvillea bloom?" is probably one of the most common questions garden writers get. Suggestions range from letting them get potbound in the container to doing what the growers do.

This borders on cruelty so don't cringe. They withhold water forever, maybe six months or more. The poor plant thinks it's dying. Suddenly they hit it hard with lots of water and fertilizer.

The plant thinks it has one last change to insure continuation of its species. It puts out tons of its obscure little flowers (surrounded by those colorful bracts we love) to produce tons of seed.

The neat thing about bougainvillea - from a nurseryman's point of view - is that the colorful bracts stay on for the longest time, months if you're lucky.

You wander around the nursery, spot this SPECTACULAR plant and take it home. Maybe those bracts have been on for weeks, maybe months. No way to tell. By the time the bracts fall off, you've been giving the plant tender loving care.

Now you have this plant that has no more color, it's horribly traumatized by the treatment it's just received but it's feeling very safe and secure. Translation: it's being watered regularly!

No need to rush to produce more flowers to produce seed. Let's just take a long, slow, quiet (translation: no blooming) to recuperate from the horrible torture it just endured.

What to do? Some say put it in a too-small pot so its roots get potbound (another form of torture). Water sparingly. After all, in its native habitat it only gets watered by rain which quickly pours past the plant leaving only drippings behind.

Some folks recommend hibiscus food every three to four weeks (follow directions!), with an added bonus of Epsom salts. Maybe that's what Diane meant instead of vinegar?

And now, a happy grower, Mary Ann. Her bougainvillea was planted in the ground when she moved in three years ago:

*Mine is huge. I have cut it down twice with a chain saw. Diameter about 14". It grows back taller than our 1 story house. Blooms like crazy. It's on the south side. Lots of sun & heat. Little water. If we freeze I may lose some branches. After winter, I trim the whole thing way back.*

Temps in Hempstead, she says, are about 5 degrees colder than Houston. This really surprised me. I thought the farther north, the harder it would be to put the ground. "The times they are a changin'!"

Any other reports? Check future newsletters in "Gardener's Forum" at the end of the newsletter, in which many readers' photos and comments are published.

Questions aimed at me can be emailed to [lazygardener@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net) (altho I'll get any you send to this newsletter as well).

(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

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 3: Saturday with the Master Gardeners - Garden Talk Topic "Shade Gardening". Join the Fort Bend County Master Gardeners' in their 4 acres of demonstration gardens and talk to the MG volunteers who design and maintain them. Gardens will be open from 9:00-11:00 a.m. Attend an informal garden talk on Shade Gardening which starts at 9:30 in the Japanese Garden. 281-341-7068 or [www.fbmga.com](http://www.fbmga.com)

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 8: 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm. "Mini-Florals" will be the topic of the Houston Rose Society Meeting Note new

meeting location: the Parish Hall of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 1819 Heights Blvd, Houston, Texas 77008. Our speaker is James Laperouse, who will discuss the newest of the rose types. Free admission. [www.houstonrose.org](http://www.houstonrose.org) or Like us on Facebook.

Aug. 10: Deadline for pre-order bulbs to be picked up at the 71st annual Bulb & Plant Mart, Oct. 4-5, at Holly Hall Retirement Community, 2000 Holly Hall St. Sponsored by the Garden Club of Houston, [www.gchouston.org](http://www.gchouston.org)

August 12: Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens New Volunteer Open House, 8:30 a.m.-noon, 22306 Aldine Westfield Road, Humble, TX 77338. Want to work in a beautiful garden while making new friends? Attend a volunteer orientation class and find out about all of the benefits of being part of the volunteer program at Mercer. Free! Reserve your place by calling 281-443-8731.

August 15, 2013 - "Heat & Drought Tough Roses for Texas Gardens" by Gaye Hammond, Master Rosarian. Texas summers can wreak havoc on the garden. The Houston Rose Society, in cooperation with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, has been collecting data on the effects of heat and drought on landscape roses. Gaye Hammond will share the preliminary results and identify the roses that gave superior landscape performance during recent periods of drought. The public is invited to this free program hosted by the Fort Bend County Master Gardeners at the Bud O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Road in Rosenberg. Social at 6:30 pm; program from 7:00 - 8:00 pm. For more information call 281.633.7033 or visit [www.fbcmg.com](http://www.fbcmg.com). FBCMG is sponsored by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

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 17 - Houston Urban Food Production Conference on small scale, local food production at 8:30am-4:30pm, United Way Building, 50 Waugh Drive. Also includes organic certification, fruit and nut, weed control, soil building, irrigation and poultry, goat, beekeeping and cut flower production, among other topics. Registration deadline: August 1 at \$35; \$50 day of event. Call Diana at 281-855-5614 to register for this program and for booth registration <https://www.facebook.com/HUFPC2013>

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)

August 24, 2013 Woodlands Home & Garden Show. Come check out the following gardening and green programs: 10:30-11:30 a.m: Drought Tolerant Landscape! Get your Lawn, Garden and Trees ready for the Fall Months by Randy Lemmon. 11:30-12:30 p.m: Build Healthy Soils the Organic Way! Save Money and Live Better! by John Ferguson. 12:30-1:30 p.m: Give your Home Extraordinary Air Quality and Energy Efficiency that's 100% Food, Water & Renewable Energy Capable! by LaVerne Williams. 1:30-2:30 p.m: Your Landscape, Your Way, Naturally with Beautiful Native Plants that Serve as the Foundation Elements of Your Landscape by Mark Bowen. [www.woodlandsshow.com](http://www.woodlandsshow.com)

August 28: 7:30 p.m., Houston Cactus & Succulents Society Membership Meeting, Program: The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum by Mike Cracraft, Location: Metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 W Gray St, Houston, <http://hcsstex.org/>

Sept. 6 - Registration deadline for 12-week Texas Gulf Coast Gardener Program at Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Garden. Call 281-443-8731 or visit park at 223-6 Aldine-Westfield, Humble, to enroll. The two-tier program for both beginner and intermediate-level gardeners was developed with guidance from Dr. David Creech and Stephen F. Austin State University's Mast Arboretum staff in Nacogdoches. Classes, starting the third week in September, will meet Tuesdays (Tier 1) and Thursdays (Tier 2), 9am-3pm (fee: \$225).

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)

September 20: application deadline for The Fort Bend County Master Gardener Training class, a program offered by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service that begins on Wednesday, October 2, 2013. Classes are Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9am - 3:30pm during the month of October. The cost of the class is \$200 (\$353 for couples). For more information visit [www.fbmng.com](http://www.fbmng.com) (under Become a Master Gardener) or you can call 281-633-7033 or 281-342-3034.

Oct. 4-5: Bulb & Plant Mart at Holly Hall Retirement Community, 2000 Holly Hall St. 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Oct. 4; 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m. Oct. 5. New this year: a Garden Garage Sale of garden treasures. Sponsored by the Garden Club of Houston. Details: [www.gchouston.org](http://www.gchouston.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

BY JOHN FERGUSON



This week I am just back from a vacation in Alaska. After spending the last 10 days in temperatures of 48-62 degrees, the return to high temperatures and humidity are quite a shock to the system. However, during my vacation I had the opportunity to spend some time in the temperate rain forests along Alaska's coast. The amount of lush vegetation was amazing, all growing without any artificial fertilizers or other toxic chemicals. The one item that stood out was the amount of decomposing material on the forest floor (e.g. mulch). As I dug around and studied this mulch layer I remembered this comment from Malcolm Beck, one of the early pioneers in teaching organic methods and composting in Texas.

*Walk into the woods or onto the prairies and look around; you will be in the presence of much life- plant and animal, large and small. Then look down; you will see an equal amount of death, many expired life forms covering the soil. You will find a mulch of dead things--twigs, leaves, grass, insects, manure, and even dead animals. Dig into the mulch and you will find it begging to decay--compost. The deeper you dig, the more advanced the decay until individual pieces fade into rich moist topsoil. Topsoil is the digestive system of the earth. It keeps the water and air clean and furnishes the food for all life. The quality of all life on earth--including human life--depends on the quality of the topsoil. That crucial thin layer of soil must be protected, maintained, built and nourished. The mulch cover of organic materials performs this service and much more."*

Malcolm Beck

## "The Many Benefits of Mulching"

As was mentioned above, there are many beneficial microbes at work breaking down mulch and organic matter into soil components. I want to laugh when I hear inexperienced gardeners often say, "The mulch was not any good, it just rotted away in only one year." Mulch and plant residues (litter, leaves, twigs, branches, root detritus and exudates, etc.) provide carbon (the energy source) which is the fuel (energy) for the soil foodweb that cycles and stores nutrients, creates soil structure, and prevents pathogens and pests from taking over. When we burn wood logs in our fireplace, the carbon in the wood is combined with oxygen in the air releasing energy. The same thing happens in the soil. Carbon from decaying organic matter is combined with oxygen from the air, in the bodies of microbes, giving them the energy needed to create soil structure, fight pathogens and pests. If we do not feed our army of beneficial microbes then they will die and the pathogens and pests will take over. In other words, "WE WANT MULCH TO DECAY!" In a healthy soil with a good quality mulch, about 2/3 should decompose in a one year time frame. If one applied a 3 inch layer of a good mulch then one year later there should only be about one inch left. The remaining mulch will break down at a much slower rate providing other long term benefits to the soil.

*If the mulch does not break down, then the soil is very unhealthy, or you purchased a very low quality mulch.*

### **Improving soil with mulch:**

We have had several questions this week on improving clay soils. Should I use gypsum, sand, till or what should I do, etc.

Over 30 years of research have shown that clay soils rapidly improve in all aspects of soil quality and health when native mulch is applied. The microbes that decompose the native mulch also break the clay down at a mineralogical level changing it from clay into rich loam. It is not a fast process but each year native mulch is used the clay breaks down deeper and deeper and more rich fertile soil is formed.

Sandy soils respond well to compost mixed into the sand and compost used as a mulch, with a top dressing of 1 inch of native mulch. If the native mulch has been composted a few months, it will work even faster and provide additional benefits.

Many soils develop a condition called *hardpan* after repeated exposure to excessive use of synthetic chemicals. The soil becomes extremely tight and often very hard, hence the name. Air and water cannot penetrate the soil, beneficial microbes and animals are limited. This hard layer can occur at the surface or inches below the surface. To correct the problem permanently one must quite applying the toxic chemicals. Composted native mulch works well in correcting this type of problem, just surface apply the mulch, water in and let the microbes go to work. In a few weeks you will start to see improvement in the soil under the mulch.

In general all types of organic mulches will improve all types of soils. Some just work faster than others. The amount of mulches used, how they are applied and handled, and the starting condition of the soil are all factors in soil improvement. As these materials break down they eventually become soil organic matter that we call *humus*. For healthy soils, the organic matter should be broken down enough that there are about 25- 30 carbon atoms for every atom of nitrogen present. We call this the carbon nitrogen ratio expressed as C:N (i.e. 30:1).

As organic materials age they breakdown into different type of chemicals that enter the soil. These basic constituents are grouped into some basic classes: cellulose, hemi-cellulose, lignin, water soluble fractions such as simple sugars, amino acids, and aliphatic acids (succinate and acetate), a protein fraction, an ether- and alcohol-soluble fraction (fats, oils, waxes, and resins). As organic material gets older, the content of the first 3 fractions increases and the latter groups decreases.

The native mulch (if composted first) makes an ideal ingredient to add to prepared soil planting mixes in small amounts. It helps lighten the soil mix, improves aeration and looseness, and most importantly provides a long

term energy source (i.e. carbon) to help promote a healthy soil food web and billions of good microbes.

### **Erosion and Compaction:**

Rain drops can hit the ground with velocities between 10-20 mph (miles per hour) in normal conditions and over 60 miles per hour during severe storms. The kinetic energy associated with the raindrop increases as the square of the velocity ( $V^2$ ). If the soil is unprotected by a mulch layer, the impact dislodges the soil and erosion begins. Compare this to the surface runoff on near level areas where the rain water only moves about 1-2 mph. Of course on slopes, gullies and streams the water can move much faster and carry away the valuable topsoil knocked loose by the raindrop. Another effect associated with raindrops hitting bare soil is surface sealing. This occurs when the dislodged soil particles wash down into the soil pore space and clog it up. This creates a thin compacted zone at the surface that seals off the soil, preventing rain water to soak in greatly increasing runoff and more erosion. When this seal dries it can become very hard and create a crust. This crust can prevent seeds from germinating and penetrating the layer. Since water cannot easily enter the soil, many roots and microbes can suffer or die from water stress or lack of water. Air flow into the soil is reduced preventing oxygen from reaching plant roots and microbes. It also allows gases to build up that are toxic to many plants and soil animals. The resulting conditions favor the growth of pathogens in the soil. Another reason to always use a good mulch to protect the soil.

## **GARDENERS FORUM**

### **HOSTED BY MARK BOWEN**



I am always looking for ideas to share with our readers. Ron Breland, a longtime organic specialist and the owner of Organoscapes, sent in the story below.

## **A Mechanic Shop Walks On The Wild Side!**

### **By Ron Breland**

West End Auto, my mechanic shop in far west Houston for many years, asked if I had any ideas to increase their curb appeal, due to increased competition in their area.

I suggested turning their landscape into a semi-desert oasis, which would surely get noticed from all the incoming traffic coming down Alief-Clodine.

The proposed landscape had to meet certain criteria:

- \* It had to pretty much take care of itself. There would be no one to really have time to water or provide other maintenance chores, such as mowing or trimming.
- \* It had to be able to withstand constant abuse from blazing hot and cold temperatures, year round. The entire area

was surrounded by concrete, providing no break from sun or wind.

\* It had to be tough enough to hold up to air pollution from 24 incoming traffic.

\* It had to be aesthetically pleasing with year round interest.

We removed all the existing plant material, conditioned the soil with a high organic mix, placed river rock and other stones for a permanent ground cover, and installed the following plant material:

- \* Red Flowering Yucca ( *Hesperaloe parviflora* )
- \* Gulf Coast Muhly ( *Muhlenbergia capillaris* )
- \* Blue Emu ( *Eremophila polycada x divaric* )
- \* Copper Canyon Daisy ( *Tagetes lemonii* )
- \* Yellow Fountain Plant ( *Russelia equisetiformis 'Aurea'* )
- \* Dwarf Palmetto ( *Sabal minor* )
- \* St. Elmo's Fire ( *Russelia sp.* )



Before



## After

Everything turned out great! The only maintenance, so far, has been keeping the beds weed free, once a month, and an annual organic feeding and heavy trim to keep things healthy and in bounds. The owner of the shop loves it and his customers do too!

Ron can be reached at [brelandr@comcast.net](mailto:brelandr@comcast.net), (281) 491-9534 or [www.organoscapes.com](http://www.organoscapes.com).

If you have a gardening story you would like to share, please send it to [lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com](mailto:lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com).

For correspondence that is specific to Mark, please feel free to email him directly at [markbowenhoutx@gmail.com](mailto:markbowenhoutx@gmail.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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