



September 6, 2013

Dear Friends,

Here is the 26th 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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Porterweed, left, and Mexican baubinia- two great plants for hummers and butterflies alike.

FALL MEANS HUMMERS IN THIS YARD AND MORE BULBS FOR CAREFREE BEAUTY!

*Under my window, a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
My father, digging. I look down*

*Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging. . .*

*Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.*

- - from "Digging," by Seamus Heaney (1939-2013)

Nice to think I have at least one thing in common with Seamus Heaney. This Nobel Prize-winning genius, often called the greatest Irish poet since Yeats, obviously must have viewed gardening as something he would much rather write about than actually do.

And he didn't even have a Houston September afternoon to discourage him!

Did you happen to read Leon Hale's great column on "[feeling fall](#)" coming? Loved it. The funny thing was, right before I read it, Husband and I had just been talking about do many hummers in our yard. All of a sudden it seemed they were buzzing around everywhere. Fall must be coming, we agreed. They're our "feel."

Actually the Upper Texas Gulf Coast has a lot of hummers who stay year-round. But they don't seem to stay in our yard. We have spring visitors and fall visitors. So fall must be coming.



Hamelia (hummingbird bush) and firespikes have yet to strut their stuff this year.

I wondered if hummers would come this fall. For some reason, my hummingbirdbush and firespikes -- by far and away usually my best hummer plants -- have done nothing this year. They haven't grown as tall and they haven't produced any summer flowers, which they usually do.

At least the firespikes have lush green. The hummingbird bush (hamelia) is a total laggard altho it is starting to bloom. It's normally 6-8' tall, 4'-5' wide and covered with orange "cigars." It's barely 4' this year, a little squat body.

I guess it would help if I'd water them. But plants in my yard are supposed to survive without such amenities.

Fortunately the porterweed and Mexican orchid tree (pictured at top above) are covered with flowers, bringing hummers to my kitchen window. The porterweed is an absolutely hideous plant except when it blooms and even then the flowers are sparse.

Those flowers may look good in the picture, but usually each long green bloom spike only has about 2 inches of flowers at any given time. But I guess if you're only 3 inches long, 2 inches of flowers probably look pretty inviting.

I'd get rid of it (it's right in the front yard) but how an you get rid of a plant that brings hummers to your kitchen window?

BACK TO SEAMUS ...

The right plants - those that tolerate Houston summer heat and drought without constant attention, like my porterweed and Mexican bauhinia - do translate for more time for writing about gardening.

Two great opportunities this weekend for folks interested in the best plants and the easiest gardening methods to cut workloads:

1. The Wildscapes Workshop and Native Plants Sale at the Houston Zoo's Brown Education Center in Hermann Park. At the workshop: John Ferguson's "Life in the Soil"; Cathy Downs' "Bring Back the Monarchs"; Mark Bronstad's "Plants for Wildscape Landscapes" (featuring plants found at the sale); Matt Warner Turner, PhD's "More Remarkable Plants of Texas" and Gary Clark's "Attracting Birds to Your Backyard."

The Workshop (\$40) runs from 8:30am - 3:30pm with an attendees-only 11:45am break for the plant sale. The sale then opens to the public from 1-3:30pm.

2. Have you ever heard of keyhole gardening? It's a rather interesting, efficient and lower maintenance (once you get it established) garden style that's well worth investigating. Google "keyhole garden" for pictures and plans. Or, drop by the Houston Urban Gardeners (HUG) free meet Mon. Sept 9, 6:30 PM, at a new location, 1475 W. Gray, Houston 77007. Among the free presentation will be one on the African approach to keyhole gardening. www.houstonurbangardeners.org.



Agapanthus, left, and Gloriosa lilies get kudos.

MORE GREAT BULBS FOR UPPER-TEXAS-GULF-COAST LAZY GARDENERS!

[In last week's column](#), we reviewed some of the favorite bulbs of Houston's Bulb Lady, the late Sally McQueen Squire. I asked if anyone had other favorite (translation: lazy gardener-worthy) bulbs to recommend. Here are two and would love to have more:

FROM JUDY WOOD: *"I have several agapanthus plants that have multiplied through the years. When is the right time to separate and transplant them? I have friends who would like some and mine need to be thinned out. Thank you."* (Fall is the ideal time to plant/thin/transplant bulbs.)

FROM ANGELA ROTH: *"I bought Gloriosa Rothschildanna lily at Bulb Mart last year. They are exquisite!"*

This year's Garden Club of Houston's free [Bulb & Plant Mart](#) is Oct. 4-5 at Holly Hall Retirement Community, 2000 Holly Hall St. (at Fannin, across from Reliant Stadium).

Questions aimed at me can be emailed to 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.

WEEKLY EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS CALENDAR

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

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

September 7: Saturday with the Master Gardeners, Garden Talk Topic "Water Gardening"
Join the Fort Bend County Master Gardeners' in their 4 acres of demonstration gardens on Saturday, September 7th and talk to the MG volunteers who design and maintain them. It's a great way to learn about gardening and plants well-suited to Fort Bend County. Gardens will be open from 9:00-11:00 a.m. on September 7th. Attend an informal garden talk on Water Gardening which starts at 10:00 a.m. in the Water Garden. Call 281-341-7068 or visit www.fbmq.com

September 7 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.: Become a Citizen Scientist. Help preserve native species in the area by learning how to monitor and eradicate invasive plants and animals at this workshop designed by the Texas Invasives Organization for those ages 16 and older. At Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center. Reservations are required. <http://www.hcp4.net/jones/>

September 7: Fall Shrubs & Tree Planting Clinic, 10:15 a.m. at both Cornelius Nursery locations, 1200 N. Dairy Ashford and 2233 S. Voss: <http://www.calloways.com/clinics>. Free. Fall is the ideal time of year to plant trees and shrubs. Discover new varieties and old favorites of trees and shrubs suited to the Texas environment. Get tips on designing your landscape with trees and shrubs, and learn how to properly prepare your soil and plant for a naturally healthy and beautiful garden.

September 7: "Gardening Under Glass," 9-11:30 a.m. Greenhouse Specialist and Galveston County Master Gardener Bob McPherson will give a presentation on how to properly set-up and manage hobby greenhouses.

Topics covered in the program include the various types of structures and the materials for building, as well as cooling, heating, water management, water injection of fertilizers, and sanitation. Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park, 4102 Main Street (FM 519), La Marque. For course reservations, call 281-534-3413, ext. 12 or email GALV3@wt.net.

Sept 9: HUG (Houston Urban Gardeners) Event: Cool Geeky New Ways to Grow Food; Seeking presenters I often have people come up to me with some wonderful new equipment, inspiring doo-dads or new (or old) ways of growing food that look very interesting. Our Sept. 9 meeting will focus on the theme of fun, new, geeky stuff and new/old methods of growing food. Even better if it's for growing in your apartment, balcony or vertically. We have 3 to five interested people involved so far. Is there something you heard about or saw that YOU want to share? Let me know at the next meeting or email me atlaurel@houstonurbangardeners.org.
org. <http://www.houstonurbangardeners.org/>

September 10: Precinct 2 Harris County Master Gardeners event: Green Thumb Series at 6:30 pm, Chris Hammen, a Harris County Master Gardener will be speaking on Fall Vegetable Gardening at the Clear Lake Mtg room, 5001 NASA Pkwy in Seabrook. FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. <http://hcmga.tamu.edu> or 281 855 5600

September 10th, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., Harris County - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension presents: Vegetable Gardening in Small Spaces, Location: Buchanan's Native Plants, 611 East 11th Street Houston, TX 77008, for more information: phone: 281-855-5624 or email Dinora.Galaviz@ag.tamu.edu.

September 11: Humble: "Texas Carnivorous and Bog Plants" will be presented Wednesday, September 11, noon - 2 p.m. at Mercer Arboretum & Botanic, located one mile north of FM 1960 at 22306 Aldine Westfield Road, Humble. Learn how carnivorous plants attract, capture, and digest prey from Mike Howlett, owner of PetFlyTrap.com. For more information, call 281-443-8731 or visit www.hcp4.net/mercer.

September 12: 7-8:30 p.m., Pearland Community Gardens (A Program of Keep Pearland Beautiful) Presents: All About Bees and Beekeeping by George Rodriguez, Owner of "Rose of Sharon" Honey, Member of Harris County Beekeeping Association, location: Pearland Public Library, 3522 Liberty Drive Pearland, Texas. please RSVP at: pearlandcommunitygardens.com (see upcoming classes and events).

September 12: Researchers and co-authors of A Dazzle of Dragonflies, Dr. Forrest Mitchell and James Lasswell, will take the audience from garden pond into the secret world of one of our most beneficial insects on Thursday, September 12 at 7:30 p.m. at McCullough Junior High School, 3800 S. Panther Creek Dr., The Woodlands. Discover the beauty and fascinating behaviors of the insect predator and learn about water gardening. Plus, book signing of A Dazzle of Dragonflies, a widely acclaimed volume released by Texas A & M Press. Free program. Call 210-210-3800 or more information or visit [Walk in the Woods Nature Lecture](#).

September 12; 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm. "Rose Rustling" 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. Entrance to parking lot is on W 19th Street near Yale St. Our speaker is Sandra Smith, who will speak about finding and identifying roses in the wild. Free admission. www.houstonrose.org.

September 14: Nacogdoches/Arcadia: Naked Ladies and Oxbloods: SFA Gardens Arcadian Fall Bulb Bus Tour, September 14. Visit Texas Gardener columnist Greg Grant's Emanis House dogtrot in Shelby County's rural community of Arcadia. Depending on the weather, see red oxblood lilies (Rhodophiala), several different colors of spider lilies (Lycoris), or assorted rain lilies (Cooperia, Zephyranthes, and Habranthus). Unfortunately their display depends on the first fall rains so a grand naturalized bulb display isn't guaranteed. Visit Grant's old family home with an open breezeway running through it, along with his small cottage garden, chickens, and bluebird houses. Dress comfortably for potentially hot weather. The bus tour will be from 9 a.m. until noon. All participants will meet at the SFA Ag building, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacognoches, at 9 a.m. \$25 for Friends of SFA Gardens members, \$30 for non-members. For more information and reservations contact Elyce Rodwald at 936-468-1832 orerodewald@sfasu.edu. Other SFA Gardens events and information can be found

at sfagardens.sfasu.edu

September 14: Brazoria County Master Gardeners presents Citrus Tree Grafting Seminar & Workshop at the BEES Gardens, 585 CR 443, Angleton 77515. 9 a.m. - noon. Fee is \$30/person and includes all supplies and tools for hands-on experience. Instructor will be Master Gardener Herman Auer from Galveston CMGA. Advance registration and payment is required and the class is limited to the first 20 registrants. Online form: <http://brazoria.agrilife.org> or call the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office at 979-864-1558 x 110. Deadline for registering in September 13, by noon.

September 14: Montgomery County Master Gardeners are presenting an Aquaponics System Design & Operation Workshop 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Saturday, September 14, at the Thomas LeRoy Education Center, 9020 Airport Road, Conroe. Aquaponics is the growing of plants in a symbiotic relationship with fish. Learn everything needed to set up and maintain a system; and by attending have the opportunity to win a system. Registration is \$60 per person, due by September 6. Lunch provided. For the registration form or for more information, visit www.mcmga.com or call 936-539-7824.

September 14: "Growing Onions and Garlic," 9-11 a.m. Because fall is the ideal time to plant onions and garlic in our area, Galveston County Master Gardener Ken Steblein will be presenting a program on what you need to know to grow your own onions and garlic. Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park, 4102 Main Street (FM 519), La Marque. For course reservations, call 281-534-3413, ext. 12 or email GALV3@wt.net.

September 14: "Kitchen Gardening," 1-3:30 p.m. Presented by Galveston County Master Gardener Mary Demeny, Mary will cover various techniques of vegetable gardening in your own backyard. She will include gardening near the back door, where Mary recycles, mulches and compost her garden. Mary will also cover how she makes use of an interplant technique of growing vegetables among the flower beds and in pots she has. Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park, 4102 Main Street (FM 519), La Marque. For course reservations, call 281-534-3413, ext. 12 or email GALV3@wt.net.

September 14: 9 a.m.- 5 p.m., Honey Extractor Day with 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://wabashfeed.com>

September 14-15: The Houston Cactus and Succulent Society Annual Show and Sale will take place at the West Gray Multi-Service Center, 1475 W. Gray St. Houston, TX . 77019. Plant sales hours are 9 am to 5 pm Saturday and Sunday. The show area opens at 10 am. There will be a wide variety of plants, including columnar and barrel cacti, Saguaro Cactus, Agaves, Aloes, Adeniums, Euphorbias, Sansevierias, Pachypodiums, Haworthias, Gasterias and Dyckias. Many plants are rare and will not be found anywhere else in the Houston area. <http://www.hcsstex.org/>

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

September 16: The Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 will host Open Garden Day at Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff, Houston, on Monday, September 16, 8:30 a.m. - 11 a.m. Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer gardening questions and will present an educational program about container gardening 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 am. For more information, visit <http://hcmga.tamu.edu>.

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

September 17th: The Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens kicks off the Texas Gulf Coast Gardener classes this fall! Starting with the first gardening series: Tier-1: Basic Gardening- runs Sept.17th-Dec. 10th, Designed for beginner to intermediate level gardeners. The curriculum will include topics such as site development, plant selection, propagation, mulching and composting, lawn care and many others. Meets on Tuesdays. For more information, call 281-443-8731 or emailmsociety@hcp4.net.

September 17: Heidi Sheesley of Treeseach Farm will give an advance look at plants that will be on sale Sept. 21 at the Sugar Land Garden Club Plants-a-Palooza sale. Heidi's free talk will be at 10 a.m. at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 702 Burney Road, Sugar Land. Details: www.sugarlandgardenclub.org

September 18: Precinct 2 Harris County Master Gardeners event: at 10:00 am, Gudrun Opperman will speak on Shade Gardening. Gudrun is a Harris County Master Gardener and a Clinical Biologist. She has been a volunteering at Mercer Arboretum and Botanic Garden for twenty years.FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. Where: The Meeting Room at Clear Lake Park (on the lakeside), 5001 NASA Parkway, Seabrook, TX 77586. <http://hcmga.tamu.edu> or 281 855 5600.

September 19th: December 12th: The Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens is offering Tier-2: Landscape and Garden Plants. Topics focus on plants that can be successfully cultivated and utilized in the Texas Gulf Coast climate. Participants will learn about new and exciting plants to add to their collection while improving their horticultural skills. Meets on Thursdays. For more information or to register, call 281-443-8731 or email msociety@hcp4.net.

September 19: Fall and Winter Vegetable Gardening presented by a team of Fort Bend Master Gardeners Master Gardeners will provide helpful and timely information on growing methods and proven crops for Fort Bend County. 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. Call 281.633.7033 or visit www.fbmj.com

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.fbmj.com (under Become a Master Gardener) or you can call 281-633-7033 or 281-342-3034.

Sept. 21 - Plants-a-Palooza: A Plethora of Perfect Plants! Sugar Land Garden Club's 15th annual Garden Art and Plant Sale at Sugar Lakes Clubhouse, 930 Sugar Lakes Drive, 8:30am-1:00pm. Garden art and other hand-crafted items.Heidi Sheesley of Treeseach Farms will be on hand to recommend plants and answer gardening questions. www.sugarlandgardenclub.org

September 21: Constructing the Home Fruit & Vegetable Garden (hands-on). This class is outdoors and is for anyone who wants to build a vegetable or fruit garden at their home. Saturday, September 21. 9-11:30 a.m. \$24 Urban Harvest members. \$36 non-members. Westbury Community Garden, 12601 Fonmeadow. For more information, call 713-880-5540 or visit www.urbanharvest.org.

September 21: "Grafting Workshop Using the T-Budding Method," 9-11 a.m. Galveston County Master Gardener Herman Auer, Propagation Specialist, will present a program and hands-on workshop on T-Bud grafting. Attendees will leave the class ready to begin their own grafting projects with confidence. The grafting method presented is used on many types of fruit and citrus trees usually about the size of a pencil. Class is limited to 24 participants and you must pre-register in order to attend. Other persons may attend for observation only. Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park, 4102 Main Street (FM 519), La Marque. For course reservations, call 281-534-3413, ext. 12 or email GALV3@wt.net.

September 21: Texas Gardening with Fall Flowers Clinic, 10:15 a.m. at both Cornelius Nursery locations, 1200 N. Dairy Ashford and 2233 S. Voss: <http://www.calloways.com/clinics>. Free.

September 21st, 8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m., Harris County - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension presents: Salsa in September, Location: Culinary Institute LeNotre, 7070 Allensby Houston, TX 77022. For more information: phone: 281-855-5624 or email Dinora.Galaviz@ag.tamu.edu.

September 22 & 23: 7th Annual Farm and Food Leadership Conference. Where: Bastrop Convention and Exhibit Center. Times: Sunday, September 22, 9 a.m. - 9 p.m. & Monday, September 23, 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. This unique conference focuses on the policies and regulations affecting our farms and our food. Hear top speakers on a variety of issues including genetically engineered foods, the politics of organics, the 2013 Farm Bill, FDA's food safety regulations, urban farming, raw milk, water, and so much more!
farmandranchfreedom.org/farm-food-leadership-conference/

September 24: "The Fabulous Fragrant Frangipani (Plumeria)," Tuesday, September 24, 6:30-8 p.m. Presented by Galveston County Master Gardener Loretta Osteen, the program will include information on the history of the Plumeria and tips for growing and caring for them in Galveston County. Also included will be information about different flower shapes, fragrance and colors of the different varieties of Plumeria successfully grown in our area of South Texas. Incorporated in the presentation will be methods of propagation, proper winter storage and care. There will also be a demonstration on how to make the popular Plumeria Lei. Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park, 4102 Main Street (FM 519), La Marque. For course reservations, call 281-534-3413, ext. 12 or email GALV3@wt.net.

September 24th, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m., Harris County - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension presents: Propagating Plants by Seeds, Cuttings, Layering & Dividing, location: Buchanan's Native Plants, 611 East 11th Street Houston, for more information: phone: 281-855-5624 or email Dinora.Galaviz@ag.tamu.edu.

September 26: Organic Pest Control. Come observe how one dynamic garden actively uses common plants to attract beneficial insects that will help your garden prosper. Thursday, September 26, 6:30-9 p.m. \$24 Urban Harvest members. \$36 non-members. University of Houston Main Campus, 4361 Wheeler St. Bldg & Room TBA. For more information, call 713-880-554 or www.urbanharvest.org.

September 28: 9 a.m. to noon. Meet the experts and discover trends in water-wise gardening at Woodlands Landscaping Solutions, 8203 Millennium Forest Dr., The Woodlands. Booths and demonstrations spotlight water-saving methods, rainwater harvesting, drip irrigation, lawn care, vegetable and habitat gardening, easy care techniques and more! The plant sale offers heirloom bulbs; native and nearly perennials, shrubs and understory trees. Compost, compost bins, worms, garden gifts, and organic products will also be available for purchase. Free event. For more information, call 210-210-3800 or visit www.thewoodlandstowship-tx.gov/gardenevents.

September 28-29: 8 a.m. - 4 p.m., Garden Faire & Fall Festival. Garden Faire is held on Mercer's west side at the picnic area. Kid's Korner provides families with free nature activities and crafts. The event features regional plant societies, local artists and crafts people who specialize in garden art. Garden-related arts and crafts and plants are available for purchase. There is no charge to attend and parking is free. <http://www.hcp4.net/mercer/gardenfaire/index.htm>

September 28: "Perennials for the Gulf Coast - Plant Sale Preview", 9-11 a.m. Heidi Sheesley of Treeseach Farms will give a presentation highlighting the plants that will be available at the October 12th Galveston County Master Gardener Ornamental & Perennial Sale. Seminar will be held at the Wayne Johnson Community Center. Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park, 4102 Main Street (FM 519), La Marque. For course reservations, call 281-534-3413, ext. 12 or email GALV3@wt.net.

September 29: Houston: Sustainable Living Through Permaculture 1: SLTP 1. The design principles of

Permaculture (PC) are explained, observed and illustrated in a series of breakout sessions at a home and garden remodeled to reflect PC sustainability principles. Sunday, September 29. 2 - 6 p.m. \$50. NE Loop Residence. Location to be provided to enrolled students. For more information, call 713-880-5540 or visit www.urbanharvest.org.

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

October 5: Nacogdoches: The SFA Gardens at Stephen F. Austin State University will host its annual Fabulous Fall Festival Plant Sale from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. Saturday, October 5, at the SFA Pineywoods Native Plant Center, 2900 Raguet St. in historic Nacogdoches. A wide variety of hard-to-find, "Texas tough" plants will be available, including Texas natives, heirlooms, tropicals, perennials, shrubs, trees, and exclusive Greg Grant and SFA introductions. Most of the plants are extensively trialed in the gardens before being offered to the public and most are produced by the SFA Gardens staff and volunteers. This popular event benefits the SFA Mast Arboretum, Pineywoods Native Plant Center, Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden, Gayla Mize Garden, and educational programs hosted at the gardens. The educational programs at SFA Gardens reach more than 15,000 students ages 1 to 100 on a yearly basis. The public is encouraged to arrive early and bring a wagon. For more information, call (936) 468-4404, or visit www.sfagardens.sfasu.edu two weeks before the sale for a list of available plants.

October 5-6: Spring Branch African Violet Club, Annual Fall Sale, West Gray Multiservice Center 1475 West Gray Street, Houston, Saturday, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. and Sunday, 10:00a.m. - 3:00p.m., Free Admission, Violets of all types such as standards, miniatures, semi-miniatures, and trailers will be available. Other Gesneriads such as Episcias and Streps and supplies such as potting soil, pots, and fertilizers will also be featured. Club members will be available to answer general questions on growing African Violets. For further information, contact Karla Ross, 281-748-8417, kjwross@yahoo.com. Note: This is our fall sale and does NOT include a show.

October 8th, 10 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Harris County - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension presents: Growing and Cooking with Herbs, Location: Buchanan's Native Plants, 611 East 11th Street, Houston, for more information: phone: 281-855-5624 or email Dinora.Galaviz@ag.tamu.edu

October 9: Montgomery County Master Gardeners will present "Landscaping with Texas Natives", 7-9 p.m., at the Thomas LeRoy Education Center, 9020 Airport Road, Conroe. "Landscape Design with Texas Natives" will be presented by Wm. Alan King, Registered Landscape Architect. "Why Choose Natives?" and "Native Alternatives" will be presented by Diana Foss, Texas Parks and Wildlife. Registration is \$20 per person, due by October 1. Late Registration will be \$25. Door prizes! Registration form and more information available at <http://www.mcmga.com/>, www.facebook.com/montgomerymastergardenerassociation or by calling 936-539-7824.

October 15th, 10 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Harris County - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension presents: Making Living Arrangements with Indoor Plants, Location: Buchanan's Native Plants, 611 East 11th Street Houston, TX 77008, for more information: phone: 281-855-5624 or email Dinora.Galaviz@ag.tamu.edu.

October 18th, 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Harris County - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension presents: Juicing, Drying & Freezing, location: Culinary Institute LeNotre, 7070 Allensby Houston, for more information: phone: 281-855-5624 or email Dinora.Galaviz@ag.tamu.edu

October 19-20: Peckerwood Garden in Hempstead, TX, would like to let everyone know of their upcoming Fall Open Days. We will be open two weekends, October 19 & 20 and November 9 & 10. Plant sales are from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm. Guided garden tours are at 1:00 & 3:00 pm. Tours are \$10.00. The garden is not wheelchair accessible and please, no young children. The Garden is not a "wander at will" type location and is only available through the guided tours. Peckerwood Garden is located at 20571 Hwy. 359 in Hempstead, TX. The phone number is 979-826-3232 and e-mail is info@peckerwoodgarden.org. We can also be found on Facebook.

Nov. 1-3: Antique Rose Emporium's 25th Annual Fall Festival of Roses. Free. Programs: Nov. 1 - 11am, Propagation by Glenn Schroeter; 1pm, Grow Roses by Judy Barrett; 2:30pm, Psycho Lighting by Linda Lehmusvirta; 3:30pm, Afternoon Tea. Nov. 2 - 11am, Grandma's Garden by Greg Grant; 1pm, Lawn Gone by Pam Penick; 2:30pm, Bulbs by Chris Wiesinger; 4pm, Fearless Gardening 101 by Felder Rushing. Nov. 3 - Behind Scenes Tour by Mike Shoup. Details: www.antiqeroseemporium.com

November 9th, 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Harris County - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension presents: Jams & Jellies for the Holidays

Location: Culinary Institute LeNotre, 7070 Allensby, Houston, for more information: phone: 281-855-5624 or email Dinora.Galaviz@ag.tamu.edu.

November 9-10: Peckerwood Garden in Hempstead, TX, Fall Open Days. Plant sales are from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm. Guided garden tours are at 1:00 & 3:00 pm. Tours are \$10.00. The garden is not wheelchair accessible and please, no young children. The Garden is only available through the guided tours. Peckerwood Garden is located at 20571 Hwy. 359 in Hempstead, TX. The phone number is 979-826-3232 and e-mail is info@peckerwoodgarden.org.

Submit calendar items to 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.

MULCH CORNER

BY JOHN FERGUSON



COLORED INORGANIC MULCHES

Last week we looked at specialty plastic, so this week we are going to review some of the research on plastic mulches.

Black polyethylene roll type plastic mulches often look bad, absorb excessive heat (if not covered by an organic mulch), essentially cooking the root systems of most plants. In wet years the plastic often traps too much moisture in the root zone, drowning plant roots and creating a breeding ground for disease. The perforated types often only work as a weed block if installed a certain way, and most need a large overlap of material to prevent roots/weeds from growing between layers. Also the use of plastic mulches creates indirect and hidden costs to society related to environmental issues, the direct cost of removal, collection and waste-disposal. Recent studies are finding that while plastic mulches help to obtain yields earlier in the season than bare ground, total yields over the entire season are often higher with bare ground and much higher with good organic mulches.

Over the last decade or so there has been a lot of research on how color affects plant growth, yield, insect or disease issues.

A five year study at Pennsylvania State University has revealed that colored polyethylene sheeting can increase yields as much as 25% when compared to black plastic. Each crop was found to have its own preference. Plant response is believed to be related to the way each color plastic reflects light and heat (Horticulture, January 1997). Additional research has been done at Clemson University, Pennsylvania State University, the USDA, and others. Some of what is being learned is discussed below:

Peppers - performed best when mulched with yellow sheeting
Tomatoes - red plastic worked best

Strawberries - with red plastic they ripen more quickly, emit a stronger aroma (90% increase in aromatic compounds than black plastic), were almost 20% larger, have higher sugar and organic acid concentrations as compared to black plastic mulch.

Squash - blue and red plastic worked best

Silver - aphids tend to ignore plants mulched with silver plastic

Orange - turnips grow bigger

Blue - turnips had a sharper taste

Green - turnips had the sweetest taste (chemical analysis confirmed the most sugars)

White - plants have thicker wax coat hence plants use less water

Yellow - attracts the greatest amount of insects

Other research has found that the frequency or color of light reaching plants affects the growth of disease organisms as well as plant growth. The spores from the pathogen botrytis require ultraviolet light to germinate. Several fungal diseases require blue, ultraviolet or infrared radiation to multiply. Research at Disney World's Epcot center has found that red light reduces foliar fungal diseases on tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers. It also found that blue wavelengths stimulated the development of these diseases. However, in some cases the elimination of some frequencies also reduced plant growth.

Many plant responses to light reflected from colored plastic mulch are dependent on the exact species and cultivar tested. This means that a different species of pepper may do worse with a given color than another. Also, it has been found that two red plastic mulches, that look identical to the human eye, have very different plant growth responses, as they reflect differently at wavelengths invisible to humans. It turns out that plants are sensitive to radiation in the far-infrared and ultra violet wavelengths that humans cannot see. It should be noted that the performance attributes listed in the research reports only compares colored plastic mulch to black plastic mulch.

This research into the reflective properties of plastic mulch explains why straw or hay and fresh ground wood chip mulches work so well. These mulches are very light in color and reflect all colors or wavelengths of light. This allows the plant to use all the colors or whichever color is best. They also enrich the soil as they breakdown.

As scientists continue to study the effects of light on plants and diseases we will learn how to use the reflective nature of different types of mulch to its fullest. Plastic mulches have their greatest benefits when used in commercial agriculture to help warm the soil in the spring. A lot of research on plastic mulches is in progress and we will learn how to use them more effectively in the future.

Effects of Colors:

This is a new area of research that we are beginning to understand. The color of mulch or other materials affects plant growth. Research at Texas A&M University studied trees that were planted in paving bricks (pavers) of three different colors; a light (blond), medium (red-brown), and dark (charcoal). The light and medium colored bricks reflected the most photo synthetically active (growth promoting) radiation. The air temperature above the plants was less for the lighter colors as compared to the darker colors. In the fall and winter on sunny days the air temperature was as much as 35 degrees Fahrenheit higher, which could make the trees (plants) more susceptible to damage from sudden cold snaps. In addition, the darker the color the more root growth was decreased in the upper portions of the soil which resulted in reduced growth above ground. This effect was more pronounced in the shallow rooted species.

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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.

Regarding this newsletter, Brenda is the lead writer, originator of it and the daily inspiration for it. We so appreciate the way she has made gardening such a fun way to celebrate life together for such a long time.

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*.

For this newsletter, John contributes articles regularly and is responsible for publishing it.

MARK BOWEN

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

With respect to this newsletter, Mark serves as the editor.

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, quality control, and he is a certified compost facility operator.

Pablo helps this newsletter happen from a technical support standpoint.



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