



October 25, 2013

Dear Friends,

Here is the 33rd 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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Free spirits, l to r — rainlilies, lycoris, hymenocallis (giant white spider lilies)



FREE SPIRITS . . . AND, WHEN LIFE HANDS YOU A LEMON . . .

by Brenda Beust Smith

If a flower does not keep pace with our calendar, perhaps it is because she hears a different drummer.

- - apologies to Henry David Thoreau

Three of my favorite "free spirits" have bloomed this month!

My "free spirits" are plants who defy predictions.

No matter what the books say, they bloom when they want to bloom and where they want to bloom.

No point in moaning if they haven't popped out in a long time. They will eventually, and that's the best part.

RAINLILIES: Might as well start with the ones not in my yard. Theoretically-speaking, rainlilies bloom after a rain. A million rainlilies have probably been planted in this yard, most transplanted out of sister-in-law Bess Allen's yard in Rose City. Her yard is sometimes a carpet of pink with all the rainlilies in bloom. One did bloom here once - an incredible thrill.

I have faith.

This white cluster pictured above has the largest and most rainlilies I've ever seen in one single clump. It was blooming in an empty lot on Olive St. in Crystal Beach on Bolivar Peninsula. If it hadn't been for the possibility (probability) someone in one of those now towering beachhouses (new FEMA codes) might have been watching, that clump might now be in Aldine.

But the truth is, all flowers belong to everyone - in the sense that no one can stop all of us from enjoying every one, even in someone else's yard. So those are MY rainlilies right where they are.

LYCORIS. Naked ladies. These usually bloom in the fall - when they bloom. Needle thin leaves appear in spring, disappear in summer, and are followed in fall by single stalks topped by the floral masterpieces.

The "own drummer" part is where in the yard they will appear. Plant them in one spot, and they may bloom there for a while, then stop, or you may never see them again ... in that spot. You assume they've died.

Suddenly a couple of years down the road, there's one blooming on the other side of the yard. Or in the lawn. Or poking up through concrete. I even had one pop up in a pot lying on the ground. Eerie.

The most logical conclusion is that they roam around underground looking for a better spot than the one where you planted them. When they find one they like, they'll bloom again. Maybe they'll stay there. Maybe they'll move on.

HYMENOCALLIS (Giant White Spider Lilies). Like rainlilies, these are supposed to flower after a rain. Sometimes they do. Sometimes they don't. Sometimes they bloom in the middle of a drought when you haven't been watering at all.

One thing's for sure. They are TOUGH. These full- to part-shade bloomers are totally carefree once established and are one of the few flowers that returned full strength after Ike devastated most plants on Bolivar Peninsula.

Their wonderful strapping leaves form shrub-like growth that is so lush and thick, it's virtually impossible for weeds to grow in them. They're also ideal for rain (or bog) gardens, or for low spots in the yard where water stands after a rain. And the flowers, when they deign to appear, are absolutely eye-popping.



Just thought of one more! My blood lily. This one blooms perhaps once every five years or so. Used to fret about that. But now that I'm older, five years passes so quickly, when it does appear, it's like: "Hey! You're back!" It makes me happy and that's what counts.

So what if - in the words of songwriter Mike Nesmith - "*You and I travel to the beat of a different drum...*"



"NATURE ALWAYS BATS LAST"

Another great saying, eh? (Thanks to Robert "Rob" Watson, founder of LEEDS. Don't know what LEEDS is? You should! Google it.)

Rob was so right.

Which is why, between our droughts and monsoons, some plants act like spring now comes in October! And we can't stop them.

The heat makes them go dormant, just as they do in winter. So when the weather changes for the better, it must be spring!

Pink magnolias usually bloom on bare branches, before the leaves pop out. Sometimes, just to prove Nature

rules, they pop out in the fall too, on leaf-laden branches. In fact Suzanne Chapman at Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens says theirs are in color right now.

Mine's not, drat.

I had contacted Suzanne about a yellow blooming vine Elyse Garrison had asked me to identify. Seems it was blooming at Carlene Garrison Willy's house and no one knew what it was.

The flower looked like an *esperanza* (*Tecoma stans*) but not the leaf. I could have sworn it was a Carolina jessamine. But this is October!

Never heard of one blooming in October. Usually these super-hardy flowers appear in spring, usually the first to do so, in fact, in the woods to the north and east of Houston.

That's what it was, Suzanne confirmed. I immediately ran outside to see if mine had any brilliant yellow buds about to burst open.

Not a single one.

That's okay.

Some folks want everything to bloom on schedule, to meet their expectations of carefully-planted, color-coordinated, immaculately manicured tableaux.

How unnatural. How pointless.

Might as well sit back and enjoy.

Nature always bats last.

WHEN LIFE HANDS US A LEMON . . .

My poor Celeste . She's absolutely desperate. She has a huge party planned, invitations have gone out and she just learned they're going to tear up her front yard to fix some pipe problem.

No, it can't wait. What can she do?

Make lemonade?

She didn't think that was funny.

Actually, tho, been there, done that. Exactly same pestilent problem. And with an extra burden tossed in she didn't have to face.

When folks come to party at the home of a garden writer - even one who brags about being a "lazy gardener" - folks expect, well, more than a muddy front yard. (On top of everything else, it rained the day before the party.)

Every email buddy got the plea: "Quick! Send funny poster quips about a horrible muddy front yard!" They did.



Everyone laughed. Can't ask for more than that!

* * *

NEED WHEN TO DO WHAT GARDENING HELP IN THE GREATER HOUSTON AREA? Brenda's "Lazy Gardener's Guide on CD" gives month-by-month reminders of when to to plant what, fertilize, prune, etc. \$20. Make checks payable to Brenda Beust Smith and mail to "Lazy Gardener's Guide on CD," 14011 Greenranch Dr., Houston, TX 77039. PDF file.

* * *

Need a gardening/environmental speaker for your group or school program? Brenda has list of dozens of great horticulture/ecology Upper Texas Gulf Coast area speakers, many of whom are free. Email her for a free copy or for criteria to have your name added as a speaker: lazygardener@sbcglobal.net.

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

ARCHIVES OF BRENDA'S COLUMNS:

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

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

MULCH CORNER

BY JOHN FERGUSON

EXPANDED SHALE



A question we often get asked is "What is expanded shale?"

The products we call Expanded shale may be produced from several sources (clay, shale or slate), and they have several different names depending on what part of the country one lives in.

To help us understand the materials we call expanded shale, lets review a little basic geology as clay, shale or slate may be used.

Clay - is made up of a number of different rock minerals in varying proportions. It is a fine grained , earthy material that becomes plastic with small amounts of water. Clays are made up dominantly of crystalline substances known as clay minerals and are all essentially hydrous aluminum silicates. Although a clay may be made up of a single clay mineral, there are usually several mixed with other minerals such as feldspars, quartz, carbonates, and micas. When clay is fired in a kiln, permanent physical and chemical changes occur. These reactions, among other changes, cause the clay to be converted into a hard ceramic material (bricks, pottery, etc.).

Shale's are basically very fine grained sedimentary rocks which have been formed by the consolidation of mud made of clay or silt. They often have a thinly laminated structure and their color is commonly some tone of gray although they may be white, yellow, brown, red, or green to black. They are mainly composed of clay minerals occasionally with quartz and mica. Clay is the major constituent of shale. As clay is compacted by pressure, over geologic time it becomes shale.

Slate's are exceedingly fine grained rocks which have the property that permits them to be split into thin , broad sheets. Their color is gray to black but may be green, yellow, red or brown. As shale's are subject to heat and pressure by a geologic process called metamorphism, they become slate.

When clay, shale or slate is crushed and then exposed to high heat (3,600 0F) and cooked for a period of time, they expand like popcorn into a very hard rock that is very porous and light weight. There are many names used for these products such as Haydite, Buildex, Expanded shale, etc. depending on the source material and where you live.

Originally they were used to make a strong light weight very durable concrete that would crack less and as a

result are used in overpasses, building construction, etc. or where ever a high quality concrete was required.

More recently expanded shale products have been used as a light weight component of a growing medium for "green roofs" to quickly improving heavy clays and other horticultural uses.

Expanded shale has good insulating properties, increases soil porosity, absorbs 38% of its weight in water, conservatively last for years (decades) in the soil, does not change pH, is environmentally friendly, is essentially a renewable resource, improves drainage and aeration (retains 30% air space), is non-toxic, odorless, 100% inert, inorganic so it does not decompose and go away. It also will not compress, degrade or decompose, does not react with chemicals, is light weight and easy to handle, and it is economical and readily available.

As a result it now is used in the higher quality soil mixes for containers as over watering causes more plant death than any other cause. It has been used for a general soil conditioner, soil amendments for turf (lawns, athletic fields, polo fields, horse tracks), and as a decorative ground cover. It is also used for a mud blocker (horse stalls, pens, walkways, walking trails, and running tracts). Additionally, it is used in hydroponics as it has a large amount of surface area for beneficial bacteria.

It is useful in all forms of structural soils and as a backfill and drainage material. It is valuable as filter material and in potting mixes as it does not deteriorate like vermiculite or decompose like peat moss . When used in a soil mix it has been shown that plants have increased roots and root development, hence they grow quicker and are generally healthier.

In the Earth-kind Roses research program led by Dr. Steve George at Texas A&M it has been found to greatly increase the growth and health of roses when tilled into heavy clay soils along with a good quality compost.

In summary, expanded shale is an economical way of solving many gardening problems and a useful tool (component) for one to have a beautiful and successful garden.

FREE TREES!

CenterPoint Energy and Trees for Houston are in the process of giving away 2,500 3-5 gallon trees as part of the Energy Saving Trees program. Studies have shown that the right trees planted in the right place can save up to 30 percent through summer shade and slowing cold winter winds, and these trees will be available to Houston-area electric customers who agree to plant them in energy-saving locations. The program will run through October 18, 2013, while supplies last.

Available trees
Live oak
Baldcypress
Burr Oak
Cedar Elm
Chinkapin Oak
Drummond's Maple
Loblolly Pine
Mexican White Oak
Nuttall Oak
Overcup Oak
Pecan Tree
Shumard oak
Water Oak

If you are a CenterPoint Energy customer [click here](#) to register for a tree. Be sure to register before Friday, Oct. 18.

IN THE NEWS

Stretching Your Dollars With Natives: <http://abclocal.go.com/ktrk/video?id=9288588>

Mosaiculture: <http://myvirtualgarden2.blogspot.com/2013/09/mosaiculture-exhibition.html>

WEEKLY EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS CALENDAR

Sat., Oct. 26th: OHBA's 'OktOHBAfest'! OHBA's annual party that raises money for college scholarships. This year it is at Buffalo Brewery 6:30 pm - 9:30 pm. Coming in costume gets you a discount. Please go to www.ohbaonline.org to register and see details.

Sat., Oct. 26: 10:15 a.m., Free Clinic - Spring Bulbs - Fall Planting at both Cornelius Nursery locations, 1200 N. Dairy Ashford and 2233 S. Voss <http://www.calloways.com/clinics>

Sat., Oct. 26: Brazoria County Master Gardeners will present the Third Annual EcoFest at the Brazoria Environmental Education Station (BEES) on October 26 from 9-noon. The BEES is located at 585 CR 443 Angleton, Tx 77515. The fall plant sale plus demos and participation in container gardening, yard art, Texas Superstar plants, seed harvesting, daylily and amaryllis dividing, seed saving, children's activities and a tour of the BEES gardens will be offered free to the public. Call 979-864-1558 x110 for more info.

Sat., Oct. 26: Have you wondered what Rainwater Harvesting is about? Are you concerned about our local water and would like local information? Would you like to collect water in a rain barrel! Then, we have the class for you! You are invited to a Home Landscape Series Water Conservation Workshop on Saturday, October 26, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the T. E. Harman Center, 226 Matlage Way, in Sugar Land, sponsored by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, City of Sugar Land, and the Fort Bend County Master Gardeners. Topics will include landscaping to conserve water, irrigation efficiency, managing water supplies, and rainwater harvesting methods, including the opportunity to assemble your own take-home barrel! The registration fee is \$25.00 and more information and a registration form are available at <http://www.fbmj.com/> or by calling Brandy Rader at 281-633-7029.

Sat., Oct. 26: 12 - 6 p.m: Edible Garden Tour, where: six locations throughout Houston, cost: \$30 for full tour package, or \$10/garden individually. Tour a selection of six beautiful edible gardens in the Houston area. Learn about food production in the Bayou City, share ideas and experiences, and build community. Leave with the confidence to return home, play in the dirt, and grow your own organic edible gardens. Spend a beautiful fall day with your neighbors sampling delicious organic food straight from the ground. A day among nature is a day well spent! For more info: blackwoodland.org/edible-garden-tour/

Fri. - Sun., 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

Sat., Nov. 2: 12 - 4:00 pm. Fall Rose Show of the Houston Rose Society. Note new meeting location: the Parish Hall of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 1819 Heights Blvd, Houston, Texas 77008. Free

admission. www.houstonrose.org or Like us on Facebook.

November 2: Saturday with the Master Gardeners - November 2, 2013
Garden Talk Topic "Fall Vegetable Gardening"

Sat., Nov. 2: Join the Fort Bend County Master Gardeners' in their 4 acres of demonstration gardens on Saturday, November 2nd 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. Park in front of the Agriculture Center located at 1402 Band Road, Rosenberg, 77471. Take one of the sidewalks back to the area behind the building where you'll find the gardens and Master Gardeners at work. Gardens will be open from 9:00-11:00 a.m. on November 2nd. Attend an informal garden talk on Fall Vegetable Gardening which starts at 10:00 a.m. in the Vegetable Garden. Call 281-341-7068 or visit www.fbmj.com for more information.

Sat., Nov. 2: Use fallen leaves! Jesse Jones Park and Nature Center, 20634 Kenswick Drive, Humble (www.hcp4.net/jones), 10 am, bring a plain white T-shirt and create a wearable item. Reservations required; can make starting Oct. 23.

Sat., Nov. 2: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Prairie Heritage Festival. featuring nature tours; real live owls, bats, bees, alligators, turtles, snakes & more; performers, food exhibitors, kids crafts and fun for the whole family, free admission, location: Seabourne Creek Nature Park, 3831 Highway 36 South, Rosenberg, for more info. visit www.coastalprairie.org or call 281-633-7042.

Sat., Nov. 2: Free Clinic, Birding Basics, 10:15 a.m. at both Cornelius Nursery locations, 1200 N. Dairy Ashford and 2233 S. Voss, <http://www.calloways.com/clinics>

Wed., Nov. 6: Gardening Daze begins, Wednesdays through Nov. 27, 8:30-10:30 a.m., Jesse Jones Park and Nature Center, 20634 Kenswick Drive, Humble (www.hcp4.net/jones). Teri MacArthur leader, plant ID, weeding native flower beds at Center or help tend demonstration heritage vegetable garden in pioneer homestead. Details online or at (281) 446-8588.

Sat. - Sun., Nov. 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.

Mon., Nov. 11: The next meeting of HUG (Houston Urban Gardeners) will be Monday, Nov 11, 6:30 PM at Houston's Multi-Service Center, 1475 W. Gray. Marcella Murff will speak on: What to Plant and Do Now in your home garden. If you want to learn more about Veriditas, they are having an Open House Nov. 2., <http://www.houstonurbangardeners.org/>

Wed., Nov. 13: Humble: Brenda Beust will present "The 10 Commandments of Lazy Gardening" noon-2 p.m., Wednesday, November 13, at Mercer Arboretum & Botanic, located one mile north of FM 1960 at 22306 Aldine Westfield Road, Humble. Learn how to enjoy the garden with less effort. For more information, call 281-443-8731 or visit <http://www.hcp4.net/mercer/>

Thur., Nov. 14: 7:30 p.m. "Patsy's Fool-proof method for Growing Roses from Cuttings" 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 Patsy Williams, Master Rosarian and Horticulture Judge who will share her time tested technique for rooting rose cuttings. Free admission. www.houstonrose.org or Like us on Facebook.

Sat., Nov. 16: 8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m: Home Landscape Series Water Conservation Workshop. The public is invited to a workshop that will cover many practical steps that homeowners can take to reduce water use in the landscape and maintain a healthy landscape with plenty of curb appeal. Location: Katy High School at 6331 Highway Blvd. Participants will have hands-on learning opportunities involving irrigation system components, including converting to a drip system and understanding the controller, and assistance in assembling their own take-home rainwater collection barrel. Workshop topics include landscaping to conserve water, irrigation efficiency, managing water supplies, and rainwater harvesting methods. \$25 fee. www.fbmj.com or call Brandy Rader at 281-633-7029.

Mon., Nov. 18: Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 will host Open Garden Day on Monday, Nov. 18 at their Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd., Houston, TX 77034. Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer your gardening questions. Hours are 8:30 am - 11:00 am with a program on dividing Overwintering Tropicals at 9:30 am. Free and open to the public. Children invited!
<http://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/> , 281 855 5600

Thur., Nov. 21: Forest Fungi Walk, 1-3 p.m., Jesse Jones Park and Nature Center, 20634 Kenswick Drive, Humble (<http://www.hcp4.net/jones/>) or 281-446-8588.

Wed., Dec. 11: Humble: Casey Scribner and Brooke Judice of Trees for Houston will present "Trees in Urban Areas" noon-2 p.m., Wednesday, December 11, at Mercer Arboretum & Botanic, located one mile north of FM 1960 at 22306 Aldine Westfield Road, Humble. Scribner and Judice will offer information about the importance of trees in an urban environment, recommended trees for our area, plus tips for how to plant and take care of them. For more information, call 281-443-8731 or visit <http://www.hcp4.net/mercer/>

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.

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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Offer Expires: 11/03/13



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