

# LAZY GARDENER AND FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

HOUSTON GARDEN  
NEWSLETTER



Jun-9-2023 | Issue 491

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**Nature's Way Resources** owner John Ferguson, "The Lazy Gardener" Brenda Beust Smith and Pablo Hernandez welcome your feedback and are so grateful to the many horticulturists who contribute their expertise

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**"The Amen! of Nature is always a flower."**

"The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table" by OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES SR.,  
[American](#) writer (1809-1894)

## Learn about Gardening while helping preserve Freedmen's Town

by **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

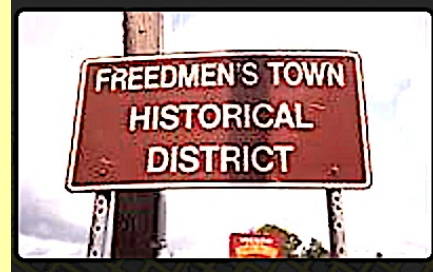
**FIRST, THO, A LITTLE HOUSEKEEPING.** Realized last week I left off one set of my "now" flowers. See above: *lantana*, *cosmos* (great in mailbox planter) *snapdragons* and -- **HERE THEY COME!** -- giant white milkweed starting to bloom!

\* \* \*

### **WANTED: GARDENING VOLUNTEERS!**

Although things have changed (somewhat) in recent decades, and despite enthusiasm and

hard work by folks who treasure remaining reminders of our past, Houston has lagged behind other major cities in supporting historical preservation and restoration.



Avid gardeners and nature lovers in particular will be delighted to know another historic horticulture preservation project is in the works.

At least, planners hope so, since volunteers will be sorely needed for hands-on work that — with experts in charge — will be wonderful educational experiences as well!

The main focus at first will be in the 40-block, endangered Freedmen's Town National Register Historic District, designated in 1985. Freedmen's Town was founded and built by previously enslaved families in 1865. (More on Freedman's Town: [tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/rutherford-b-h-yates-museum-inc](http://tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/rutherford-b-h-yates-museum-inc))

If you would like to be informed about upcoming projects focusing on these horticultural and other planned nature-related restorations and renovations, contact: [rbhyates@gmail.com](mailto:rbhyates@gmail.com)

This column, with permission, will recognize volunteering groups and companies and individuals in future columns.

\* \* \*

**BETTY HEAD  
OLEANDER PARK  
2624 Sealy (at 27th St.)  
in Galveston**



**R.I.P., BETTY HEAD.** If you've ever marveled at the massive blooms on huge oleanders in home yards and public places all around the Greater Houston / Galveston area, know this year, they will be shedding dewy tears for the loss of **ELIZABETH "BETTY" HEAD** -- namesake of Galveston's 'Betty Head Oleander Park' -- and longtime prime mover & shaker of the International Oleander Society, who passed away this week. Think oleanders are just a pretty shrub?

Check out [how Oleanders helped the island recover from the 1900 storm](#) (which my family personally experienced). And how Galveston became home base for the [International Oleander Society](#), which boasts oleander expert and professional members from across the globe, as well as home gardener members. New members always welcome.



\* \* \*

### WHY MOTHER NATURE IS MY GARDENING GURU!

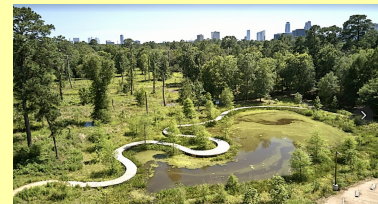
At right is a candlestick cassia. Photographer is longtime friend/gardener *extraordinaire* **DALE PHILLIPS**, but he takes no credit for this beauty. It's actually growing out of a 2-INCH-wide public, business-area sidewalk crack at a gas station near Dale's well-known Friendswood home garden.



Dale's been watching this Candlestick Cassia (*Cassia* or *Senna alata*) grow for over a year and now it's blooming! My kind of gardening guru and plant-loving friend. These tropicals can reach 10-15' if they really like you!

\* \* \*

**TIP O' THE TROWEL TO HOUSTON ARBORETUM & NATURE CENTER** whose Master Plan received a Merit Award at the 2023 World Landscape Architects (WLA) international competition for 2023. [Houston Arboretum](https://www.houstonarboretum.org/)



\* \* \*

Brenda Beust Smith's column is based on her 40+ years as *Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener Email*: [lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com](mailto:lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com)  
-- Note: This column's gardening advice focuses **ONLY** on the Greater Houston area. Personal reports **MUST** include your area.

\* \* \*



## John's Corner



### NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 242

**A** new study by the University of Bristol has found that artificial fertilizers limit pollination by changing how bumble bees sense flowers. They found that both toxic chemical sprays and artificial fertilizers altered the electric field around the flowers.

Flowers use a wide range of clues to attract pollinators from color to fragrance, and pollinators use these clues along with sensing the electrical and magnetic fields the flowers produce.

“It's much like how a motorboat noise hinders the ability of fish to detect predators or artificial light at night that confuses moths, the artificial fertilizers are a source of noise to bees trying to detect floral electrical fields.” Journal PNAS Nexus, 2023

**We** have often talked about the benefits of re-mineralizing our soils from a plant health benefit. Studies have found that re-mineralizing soils with one ton of basalt sand captures 0.3 tons of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). Re-mineralizer has basalt sand as one of its major components, hence it is a good way to remove carbon dioxide and convert it into humus (carbon chains) in one's soil. This is in addition to its huge mineral nutrient content.

**Some** tidbits of information from a paper last year on greenhouse gas emissions. High rates of artificial fertilizers increase greenhouse gas emissions. Excess irrigation also causes excess emissions.

They also found that organic matter accumulation was greater in soils when organic fertilizers were used as compared to artificial fertilizers. Journal of Environmental Quality (2022)

**On** many occasions I have talked about the dangers of sewage sludge (biosolids) and the compost made from it. The polio virus has been found in sewage sludge in both the USA and Europe. The researchers found that the weakened virus used in vaccines can be reactivated and infect people as it is passed from the human manure that composes the sludge.

The researchers speculate that is another way the virus spreads. Another reason not to use these dangerous products (fertilizers made from dried and pelletized sludge or biosolids compost made from them) in our yards and gardens.

**Another** reason to grow our own food organically and avoid typical processed food has been found. A study published in the journal JAMA Neurology (2022) found that people whom consumed only 20% of their diet from processed foods experienced a 28% faster rate of cognitive decline globally.

**A** paper published in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry (2023) found that two common fungicides used on strawberries reduced the flavor and sweetness of the berries. The fungicides also reduced the vitamin-C content along with several amino acids. Another reason to grow one's own strawberries organically.

Strawberries grow well in our area. I remember reading an article many years ago that stated the Pasadena area was once the strawberry capital of the world.

I used to grow strawberries in a full-size used whiskey barrel. I drilled twenty plus 2-inch holes all around it. As I filled the barrel with soil, I would lay in my transplants then cover with soil until the barrel was full. It worked very well and

grew lots of wonderful strawberries every day. Since there was no perch for birds to land on, they left the berries alone. Snails did not like the old whiskey barrel hence they were not an issue. The only problem I had was my two children whom would eat all the ripe strawberries before I got home from work.

The journal Cell (2023) had a paper where the researchers discovered that dry (water stressed) tomato and pepper plants emit distinct ultrasonic clicks. If the sounds were scaled down into the range for human hearing it sounds like someone popping bubble wrap. Additionally, sounds were produced when the fruit was cut off or stems were trimmed. When the plant was in good condition, they did not emit any sound. They have discovered that corn, grapevines, and cactus also emit sounds.

Maybe there is some truth that the plants talk to us. The bible teaches that if we do not praise God then even the plants and trees will cry out.

\* \* \*

## LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER CALENDAR EVENTS

### PLEASE READ! CALENDAR SUBMISSION RULES

- Use **ONLY** this (3-line max) format & style for notice  
**DAY, DATE: TITLE by NAME (if talk), time, address, Fee/free.**  
**Sponsoring group (if not in title). website/phone (NO MORE!)**
- Only events submitted specifically for LG&F calendar are used
- No events picked up from flyers / NO PDFS! TYPE IN EMAIL
- Submit: [lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com](mailto:lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com). Check published entry!

**SAT., JUNE 10: BRAMBLE ON: BLACKBERRIES** by **MONICA MARTINS / STEVEN BRUEGGERHOFF**, 9-11am, Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office, 4102-B Main St. (FM 512) La Marque. [galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture](http://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture)

**SAT., JUNE 10: PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA SHOW AND SALE**, 9am-1p. pm, Bay Area Community Center 5002 Nasa Road 1, Seabrook. Free. [theplumeriasociety.org](http://theplumeriasociety.org); 281-796-7185

**SAT., JUNE 10: TEXAS CARNIVOROUS PLANTS SHOW, SALE & SWAP.** 10am-4pm, 25811 W. Hardy Rd., Spring. Free. [petflytrap.com/texas-carnivorous-plant-show-sale-swap--06102023.html](http://petflytrap.com/texas-carnivorous-plant-show-sale-swap--06102023.html)

**FRI., JUNE 16: LANDSCAPE SUCCESS - WEED AND NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT** (virtual) by **FORT BEND MASTER GARDENERS**, 2-3:30pm, Register: [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)

**SAT., JUNE 17: "PLUMERIA PROPAGATION** by **LORETTA OSTEEN**, 1-3 pm, Galveston County Master Gardener Discovery Garden, Carbide Park, 4102 Main St./FM 519,, La Marque. Must preregister: [galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/](http://galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/)

**TUES. JUNE 20: WILDLIFE HABITAT GARDENS AT HOME: CREATING A POLLINATOR PARADISE** by **LAUREN SIMPSON**, 6-7:30pm, ZOOM Live Class, Urban Harvest event, [urbanharvest.org/stec\\_event/wildlife-habitat](http://urbanharvest.org/stec_event/wildlife-habitat)



**WED., JUNE 28: CACTUS AND SUCCULENT CONSIDERATIONS** by **DAVE THOMAS**, 7pm, Metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 W. Gray. [Houston Cactus and Succulent Society](#)

**SAT., JULY 8: AMAZING SUCCULENT PLANTS** by **PATRICIA MARTIN / STEVEN BRUEGGERHOFF**, 9-11am, Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office, 4102-B Main St. (FM 512) La Marque. [galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture](#)

**TUES., JULY 11: HOW TO GROW PLUMERIAS** 6:30-9pm, Cherie Flores Garden Center 1500 Hermann Park Dr. Plumeria Society of America event. Free. [theplumeriasociety.org](#), 281-796-7185

**SAT. JULY 15: NATURAL PEST CONTROL** by **ANGELA CHANDLER**, 9:30-11:30am, ZOOM Live Class, Urban Harvest event, [urbanharvest.org/stec\\_event/natural-pest-control/](#)

**SAT., JULY 8: AMAZING SUCCULENTS** by **PATRICIA MARTIN / STEVEN BRUEGGERHOFF**, 9-11am, AgriLife Extension, 4102-B Main St. (FM 512) La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardeners. [galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture](#)

**SAT. JULY 22: PREPARING FOR FALL ORGANIC GARDENING** by **BOB RANDALL, Ph.D.** and **CAROL BURTON**, 9:30-12:30pm, ZOOM Live Class, Urban Harvest event, [urbanharvest.org/stec\\_event/preparing-for-fall-organic-gardening/](#)

**SAT., JULY 29: BEAUTIFUL BLOOMING GINGER** by **STEVEN BRUEGGERHOFF**, 9-11am, AgriLife Extension Office, 4102-B Main St. (FM 512) La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardeners event. [galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture](#)

## LOOKING AHEAD . . .

**SAT., AUG. 5: PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA SHOW AND SALE**, 9am-1p. pm, Bay Area Community Center 5002 Nasa Road 1, Seabrook. Free. [theplumeriasociety.org](#); 281-796-7185

**THURS., AUG. 10: LEARN HOW TO PLANT BIRD-FRIENDLY SPACES**, noon-1pm, The Water Works, \$10. Buffalo Bayou Partnership Lunch and Learn event. Register: [https://buffalobayou.org/event/lunch-learn-bird-friendly-spaces/](#)

**FRI., AUG 18: LANDSCAPE SUCCESS - TREES FOR SMALL LANDSCAPES** (virtual) by **FORT BEND MASTER GARDENERS**, 2-3:30pm, Register: [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)

**SAT., AUG. 19: GROWING IN CONTAINERS**, by **ANGELA CHANDLER**, 9:30-11:30am, ZOOM Live Class, Urban Harvest event, [urbanharvest.org/stec\\_event/growing-in-containers/](#)

**FRI.-SAT., SEPT. 8-9: SUMMER SUNDOWN PLANT SALE (VIRTUAL)**, Noon-Noon, Galveston County Master Gardeners event. [/txmg.org/galveston/](#)

**SAT., SEP 9: GROW YOUR OWN - COMPOSTING** by **FORT BEND MASTER GARDENERS**, 9-10:30am, Register: [Grow Your Own RSVP Form - Fort Bend \(agrilife.org\)](#)

**FRI., SEPT. 15: LANDSCAPE SUCCESS - FALL IS FOR PLANTING** (virtual) by **FORT BEND MASTER GARDENERS**, 2-3:30pm, Register: [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)

**THURS-SAT. OCT. 12-14: THE GARDEN CLUB OF HOUSTON BULB & PLANT MART**, 5-7pm Thurs., 9am-3pm Fri., 9am-1pm Sat., The Church of St. John the Divine, 2450 River Oaks Blvd. Free. [gchouston.org](#)

**SAT.-SUN., OCT 14-15: 2023 SOUTHWEST BROMELIAD GUILD SHOW & SALE**, Show — 2-5pm Sat. & 11am-3pm Sun., Sale — 9am-5pm Sat. & 11am-3pm Sun., Holiday Inn, 18530 State Hwy 249. Free. [bromeliadsocietyhouston.org](#)

**FRI., NOV 17: LANDSCAPE SUCCESS - WINTER PROTECTION** (virtual) by **FORT BEND MASTER GARDENERS**, 2-3:30pm, Register: [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)

Don't see your submitted event? Email [lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com](mailto:lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com)

**JUST KNOW:** Events not submitted in our EXACT format  
usually take a lot longer to get into the calendar.

See top of calendar for required format.

\* \* \*



If we inspire you to attend any of these,  
please let them know you heard about it in . . .

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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 -- started in the early '70s as a fun side-project to reporting, it then ranked as the longest-running, continuously-published local newspaper column in the Greater Houston area. The name, she says, is not just fun, it's true.

Brenda's gradual sideways step from 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 which morphed into her ***Lazy Gardener's Guide on CD***, which she now emails free upon request.

Brenda became a Harris County Master Gardener and, over the years, served on the boards of many Greater Houston area horticulture organizations. She hosted local radio and TV shows, most notably a 10+-year "Lazy Gardener" specialty shows on HoustonPBS (Ch. 8) and her call-in "EcoGardening" show on KPFT-FM.

For over three decades, Brenda served as Assistant Production Manager of the **GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA'S "BULLETIN"** magazine. Although still an active broad-based freelance writer, Brenda's main focus now is **THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER** with John Ferguson and Pablo Hernandez of Nature's Way Resources.

A native of New Orleans and graduate of St. Agnes Academy and the University of Houston, Brenda lives in Humble, TX, and is married to the 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.

### **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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