

LAZY GARDENER AND FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER



Jun-30-2023 | Issue 494

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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

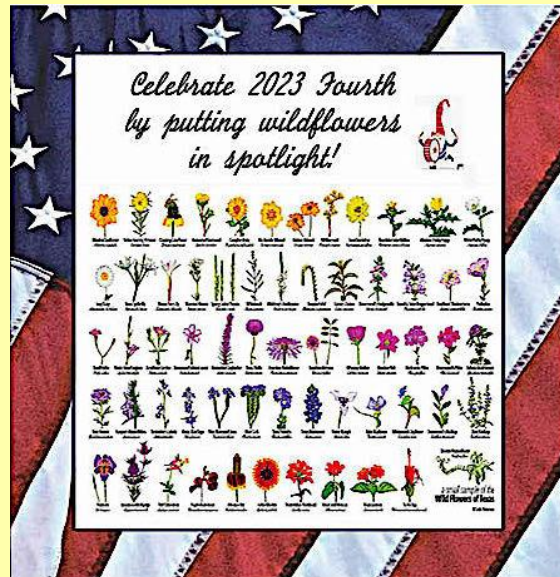
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BY BRENDA BEUST SMITH

IT'S NOT JUST FOR BEAUTY! A lot of folks in Texas are begging us to grow more Texas-friendly wildflowers for different reasons, impacting various aspects of our lifestyles. Many share growing tips make a difference between success and failure.

My favorite poster this one at right, photos by Seth Patterson for [Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine](#). [Order](#).



- **TEXAS NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY** ([local chapters](#))
- **TEXAS WILDFLOWERS** [facebook.com/groups/92643952383/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/92643952383/)
- A fun read: [Texas Wildflowers by Elizabeth Silverthorne](#). For more, just google: "Texas Wildflower books"
- Most arboretums and nature centers, as well as parks and related groups have their own wildflower enthusiasts gatherings/programs. ASK!
(if you know of other's, please share : lazygardeerbrenda@gmail.com)

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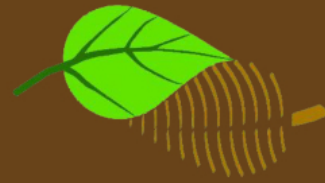
Brenda Beust Smith's column is based on her 40+ years as *Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener* Email: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com
-- Note: This column's gardening advice focuses **ONLY** on the Greater Houston area. Personal reports **MUST** include your area.

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* **BRENDA'S LAZY GARDENER GUIDE** is no longer sold. However, free pdf copies available upon request at lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com



John's Corner



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 245

I will start with a little trivia this morning. Most gardeners have noticed the rich earthy aroma that wafts up after a good rain. This wonderful aroma is called *petrichor* and often a sign of healthy soils and comes from a family of chemicals we call terpenes.

A member of the terpene family is known as geosmin, is produced by the *Streptomyces* bacteria along with a few other microbes. Researchers have discovered that this is a signaling chemical that tells most predator microbes I am not good to eat.

However, the study found that this chemical attracts springtails whom can eat the bacteria without harm and then they spread the bacterial spores throughout the soil. *Journal of Applied Microbial Microbiology* (2022).

Other studies have found this chemical repels fruit flies at levels as low as one part per 100 million molecules. Lastly, humans can detect geosmin at levels of only 400 parts per trillion! For humans to be this sensitive to it, I suspect it is good for us and why nature/forest bathing is so therapeutic.

The Alliance for Natural Health had an interesting report in their newsletter (11/01/22), on neonicotinoid pesticide treated seeds. The treated seeds are often used to make alcohol used in gasoline, however it creates a lot of toxic waste water in the process that is stored in large lagoons.

Farmers use these toxic seeds to grow our food and 150 million acres are planted with these seeds every year. A lot of this toxic pesticide escapes to the environment poisoning wells, streams, and lakes.

This process has led to some towns being declared a super fund site. From the article, "Let this sink in: the seeds used to grow our food have led to an entire town becoming a superfund site. The EPA is once again selling out consumers to protect special interests."

The recycling magazine *Biocycle* (April 2023), had a good article on micro-plastics that is contaminating our environment and causing many health problems.

For gardeners the micro plastics (MP's) can adhere to the surfaces of seeds and roots, and thus inhibit seed germination, root elongation, and absorption of water and nutrients, and ultimately inhibit plant growth. Which can lead to

insect and disease issues.

These MP's especially nano-plastics can be absorbed by roots and then moved to stems, leaves, and fruits. When consumed they lead to animal and human health problems.

We have talked about this issue in the past and a major source is biosolids (sewage sludge), fertilizers made from biosolids and some low-quality composts that use a lot of food waste residuals.

A new study of tree rings confirmed that the heat wave of 2021 that swept from parts of North America from British Columbia to Washington and Oregon was the worst in 1,000 years.

The tree rings also showed that the last 40 years are the hottest on record and 2021 the hottest year on record. It was even hotter than the Medieval Climate Anomaly during the years 1028-1307. Journal Climate and Atmospheric Science (2023).

We have often talked about the importance of the element magnesium (Mg) to plants, animals, and humans. A new study from the National Center for Epidemiology and Population Health of the Australian National University has found a relation to dementia which is the second leading cause of death in Australia and 7th worldwide.

They found a 41% increase in magnesium intake was found to help prevent age-related brain shrinkage.

Many foods from greens like spinach and most nuts are rich in this element which we discussed in detail during our study of the elements last year. However, if one eats conventionally grown food that was raised with glyphosate herbicides like Round-Up, it prevents the body from absorbing this essential nutrient.

Researchers at MIT university found that during the pandemic, the port cities that required ships to use biodiesel, which was made from genetically modified soy beans and had large amounts of glyphosate used on them, had greatly increased cases of COVID. Burning of the fuel aerosolized the glyphosate into the atmosphere where it could easily be absorbed in our lungs preventing the absorption of magnesium required by our immune systems to fight viruses.

My wife and I have quit buying strawberries at the grocery store as they lack flavor and often have the consistency of cardboard. A 2023 study has found that two fungicides, boscalid (BOS) and difenoconazole (DIF) are part of the reason.

When treated with these chemicals the strawberries had a dramatic reduction in vitamin-C, there was a reduction in sugar and some of the remaining sugars were converted to acids. The oxidative damage to the berry also muted the scent, flavor, and aroma.

The other reason is in the selective breeding to develop larger and pest resistant strawberries has resulted in strawberries with less nutrients, texture, and flavor.

I look forward to my retirement home being finished and having a large vegetable garden where I can grow organic heirloom varieties of strawberries again.

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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. Check published entry!

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

THURS., JULY 13: TRUSTED ROSES (in person & virtual) by **A.R.T.S (R)**, 7-9pm, St Andrew's Episcopal Church, 1819 Heights Blvd. Houston Rose Society/Houston event. Free. meet.goto.com/334990021

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 22: PREPARING FOR FALL ORGANIC GARDENING by **BOB RANDALL, & 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, Extension Office, 4102-B Main St. (FM 512) La Marque. Galveston Cty Master Gardeners event. galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture

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

LOOKING AHEAD . . .

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 YOU 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

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.

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

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Saturdays 7-9am • SportsRadio 610



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 became 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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