

LAZY GARDENER AND FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

HOUSTON GARDEN
NEWSLETTER



Oct-20-2023 | Issue 510

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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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*'All that man needs for health and healing
has been provided by God in nature,
the Challenge of science is to find it.'*

by PARACELSUS (unknown-1541)

Swiss physician, alchemist, German Renaissance 'medical revolution' pioneer

SECRET WISH? SECRET WITCH? SECRET GARDEN? OR, JUST AN HERB LOVER?

BY Brenda Beust Smith

Some folks are delighted (often secretly) with witches. Others see them as fun Halloween delights. But the idea of a 'Witch's Garden' can be a secret treasure you don't even have to advertise to family, friends or visitors. It can be YOUR private delight! What makes a garden "witch-y"? (Not that I have any personal interest in this, of course . . .) Various sources list:

- Curves.
- Focal points (not necessarily including a broom), pond, birdbath, whatever immediately draws the eye.
- Visual 'pathways' (for landing brooms?) of any size. Brick borders or interwoven solid "runways".
- Dark-/purple-colored flowers and vegetables.
- Night-bloomers and white flowers or foliage that will reflect nearby lights. And, of course . . .
- Herbs -- an absolute must! (Pictured: Susan Wood's ornamental sage *Salvia guarantica* var. "Black and Blue")

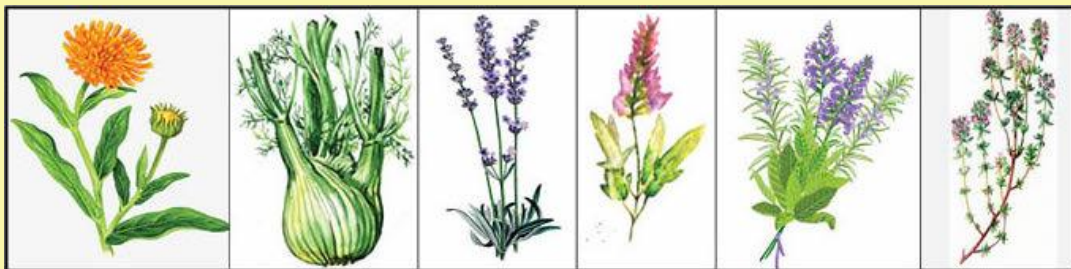


When it comes to herbs what greater resource than the Herb Society of America? Two members have cheerfully volunteered these notes:



LINDA ROWLETT, Ph.D., HSA Pioneer Unit, supplied this list of herbs traditionally used for witches gardens. Linda's historical research found witches closely associated with **Belladonna, Clary sage, Henbane, Hyssop, Mandrake, Mugwort, Poppy, Rue, Thorn apple, Vervain, Wild tobacco, Wormwood and Yarrow.**
(*Note: Some but not all of these herbs will be available at Nov. 4 Herb Fair!*)

MAYBE YOU LIKE THE HERB IDEA, but not "witches" per se? To your rescue comes the **SAT., NOV. 4, 50th ANNUAL HERB FAIR of the SOUTH TEXAS UNIT.** To help blend the transition from herbal witchery to serious herb growers, Linda adds five herbs that were musts in ancient Apothecary Gardens. Several varieties of these herbs will be available at the Nov. 4 Herb Fair: l to r below: Pot marigold (*Calendula officinalis*), Fennel, Lavender, Sage, Rosemary, and Thyme.



A friend, reading this, said she thought all herbs were green. Not true! Great examples above -- and, at right -- from the garden of **SUSAN WOOD**, HSA South Texas Unit: a yellow calendula (*Tagetes lucida*) and the scrubby Mexican Mint Marigold. All these will be available at the ANNUAL HERB FAIR



OUR SPOTLIGHT ARTICLE, BELOW, details more cool weather herbs can/should be planted now. Mark your calendar for the . . .

EDITOR'S NOTE:

- **SAT. NOV. 4: 50th ANNUAL HERB FAIR** by The Herb Society of America, South Texas Unit. Free, 9 am - 2 pm, Southside Clubhouse, 3743 Garnet St., Herb: plants, blends, jellies, teas, books, gifts, & more. herbsociety-stu.org/
- **NEED SPEAKERS?** Check websites of both Linda's and Susan's groups (both in our general area): herbsocietypioneer.org and herbsociety-stu.org

* * *

Potpourri

- **TIP O' TROWEL TO 'POTS FOR PLOTS'** and area gardeners who, over the past 7 months, dropped off over 20,000 (!) used plastic plant pots to keep them out of our waste stream! [Bayou Preservation Association](#)'s 2023 used plastic plant pots collection will help keep our bayous clean and safe ends this month.



Not too late! BPA's used pot collection continues through Wed., Nov. 1, in a marked bin at [Dirt Bag](#), 701 W Gray St, Suite #1 — noon-7pm, & Sat.: 11am-6pm, Sun.: 11am-6pm. On Wed., Nov. 1: special activities at this indoor plant shop with great mural (**pictured**)! Whole, clean, plastic plant pots only; no cracked/ broken pots. stack as much as possible. Carrying trays, seedlings, and sheet pots accepted. Will be donated to conservation groups growing natives to help restoration.

- **GORGEOUS MUMS** are everywhere but does anyone besides **SALLY JEROME, BRENT MOON** & myself remember chrysanthemums as garden perennials? Yes! They were often purchased in fall, but then debudded when blooms faded and moved into the garden where they bloomed again in spring, etc. Brent, Houston Botanic Garden Horticulture Manager, hits the nail on the head with this thought: ". . . we have, sadly, become more of a "throw-away" society. People just see them as a seasonal plant that they purchase for a quick spot of color and then it's off to the compost pile." Sad, but true!



No way to tell with newer mums, but if want to try wintering mums over, one tip: after now-blooms start to fade,, cut plants back, set in garden and cover with 3"- 4" of mulch. Keep mums moist through winter. Once threat of frost passes, remove the mulch layers and cut back any dead stems. Never hurts to try!

* * * □□□

Brenda Beust Smith's column is based on her 40+ years as *Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener* --- Email: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com
Note: This column focuses ONLY on the Greater Houston area.
Personal reports MUST include your area.
 * **BRENDA'S "LAZY GARDENER GUIDE"** is no longer sold.
 However, free pdf copies upon request at lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com



COOL WEATHER HERBS PLANTING CALENDAR

by **SUSAN GAIL WOOD**
 THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
 SOUTH TEXAS UNIT

- Cool season annuals to plant or start from seed in October and November:

dill, parsley, fennel, borage, coriander / cilantro, calendula. and nasturtium. They flower and set seed next spring; die back once the weather heats up in April. Let ripe seed fall for volunteer plants next fall.

- Perennial herbs for October or November: **rosemary, lavender, catnip, culinary & ornamental sage, bay, oregano, Mexican mint marigold, lemon balm, lemongrass, lemon verbena and mints.**
- **Rosemary:** do not let it go for more than a day or two in overly dry soil since it has very shallow roots.
- **Lavender:** plant in October or November and keep it from rotting during wet summers by adding lots of sand or pea gravel.
- **Catnip:** place a wire basket over the heart of plant to protect the base from cats who love to nibble the leaves and roll on it.
- Grey herbs like catnip & **culinary sage** do not appreciate consistently damp soil. Ornamental salvias: **indigo spires, Mexican bush sage, Argentine skies** and **black & blue salvia** bloom year around given at least 4 hours sun.
- **Bay:** if attacked by scale or a black sooty mold, it's in too much shade. Use a hard blast of water on all leaf surfaces every day until pests, including aphids, are until gone.
- **Oregano** is easy to grow, forming large clumps that need to be divided every 3 years since fertilizer and compost can't reach the plant interior.
- **Mexican mint marigold**, called "Texas tarragon", has yellow blossoms in the fall and grows beautifully throughout our hot, humid summer unlike true tarragon.
- **Lemon verbena:** mulch, water, and cover before freezes to protect this tender herb. Slow to bud out in spring: water and wait.
- **Lemongrass, lemon balm and mints** all thrive in fall weather.

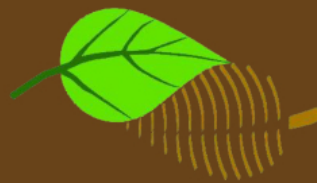
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John's Corner



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 260

Subject: straw mulch glyphosate food contamination seaweed extracts cover crops and tarping birds and metal health

A study in the journal HortScience (2022) on onion yield and quality, found that when the beds were mulched with straw compared to other mulches and methods, it gave the best results. The study was done over several years and on several varieties of onions.

The bulbs were larger, lowest internal decay, and fewest problems as compared to

other treatments.

Round-up - update 14 – A massive study by researchers at Duke University have found a strong link to exposure to glyphosate the active ingredient in the herbicide Round Up, and chronic kidney disease.

Glyphosate was originally patented as a demineralizer to clean pipes (US Patent # 3,160,632) as it would remove various mineral scales of calcium and magnesium from the walls of the pipes as it would bind tightly to them.

The researchers found that when glyphosate is exposed to minerals that makes water hard, like magnesium (Mg) and calcium (Ca), it forms metal ion complexes. These associations were found to persist up to seven years in water and up to 22 years in the soil! *It did not degrade as we have been led to believe.*

Many of us around Houston and in Texas have hard water full of calcium and magnesium carbonates. Environmental Science and Technology Letters (2023)

You will not see it on the nightly news as they do not want to lose advertising dollars, however the Epoch times newspaper reported that animal contraceptives and antibiotics have been found in ten popular fast foods. This study was funded by Moms Across America.

Another reason for gardeners to grow as much of our own vegetables and fruits as we can, or at least buy organic foods from local farmers markets to get the best tasting and most nutritious foods.

Most experienced organic gardeners could have told them this. Researchers at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University found that seaweed-based extracts helped turf grass (Bermuda) tolerate heat stress better and grow stronger.

The biweekly applications of seaweed consistently improved turf quality and leaf color. It also increased leaf chlorophyll and carotenoid concentrations, root growth and other desirable functions. HortScience (2022)

We have an excellent seaweed-based product produced locally called “Super Seaweed” by MicrolifeTM that I use regularly when a plant needs a little extra TLC.

Weeds are a constant problem for gardeners. For decades tilling was used to help control weeds, however we now know that tilling the soil is very damaging to the soil's long-term health which then encourages other weed species to germinate and grow, hence new techniques are being investigated.

A study found the usage of no-till, cover crops (a living mulch) and tarping to be very effective at controlling weeds. It also increased the quality and yield of cabbage plants.

When it was time to terminate the cover crop (helps build organic matter and soil quality) rather than tilling they covered it with a tarp to kill the cover crop. HortScience (2022)

More and more gardeners are putting in bird gardens. These gardens are designed to provide food, shelter, nesting sites, etc. for birds. Many trees and shrubs produce berries or nuts that birds need. Other plants are host plants for caterpillars that are essential for birds when they have chicks in the nests.

When I am at the farm, I love to get a cup of coffee and sit on the porch before sunrise and listen to the life wake up to start the day from the birds to the insects. A beautiful symphony of sound.

A study from Kings College London has found that seeing or hearing birds is associated with an improvement in mental well being that can last up to eight hours.

This improvement was also found to help those folks diagnosed with depression which is the most common mental condition. This indicates the potential role of birdlife in helping those with mental health issues.

The researchers showed that the links between birds and mental well-being were not explained by co-occurring environmental factors such as the presence of trees, plants, or water ways. Scientific Reports (2022)

LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER CALENDAR EVENTS

CALENDAR SUBMISSION RULES PLEASE READ!

- 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
- Actual gardening/plant events only. No harvesting, cooking, etc.
- No events picked up from flyers / NO PDFS! TYPE IN EMAIL
- Submit: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com. Check published entry!
- All events on-site and in Houston unless otherwise noted

FRI.-SAT. OCT. 20-21: CLEAR LAKE NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY FALL SALE, Fri. 4-6pm; Sat. 8-10am, UH Clear Lake 2700 Bay Area Blvd.

SAT., OCT. 21: PLANT SALE FUNDRAISER, 9am-1pm, Tapestry UU Church of Houston, 17115 Rustington Rd, Spring. fb.me/e/3RhCuEBHS

SAT., OCT. 21: THE WOODLANDS GARDEN CLUB ANNUAL FALL PLANT SALE, 9 am, The Woodlands Farmer's Market, 7 Switchbud Pl., The Woodlands. Free. thewoodlandsgardenclub.org

SAT., OCT. 21: 2nd ANNUAL FALL FESTIVAL & PLANT SALE, 9am-1pm, Galveston County Master Gardener Discovery Garden, Carbide Park, 4102 Main Street (FM 512), La Marque. txmg.org/galveston, 281-534-3413

SAT, OCT 21: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS FALL PLANT SALE, 9am- 1pm, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. Pre-orders open online Oct 1-19. Pickup at sale. hcmga.tamu.edu/shop/

SAT., OCT. 21: FALLING FOR HERBS by **MARILYN O'CONNOR**, 10-11am,

Beauty's Community Garden, 3201 Airline Dr. Free but [reservations required](#)

MON, OCT 23: CONTAINER GARDENING by **STEPHANIE GRAY** (in person & virtual), 11am, 2436 Gessner Rd. Free. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, hosted by Houston Public Library. Facebook Live: [facebook.com/houstonlibrary](https://www.facebook.com/houstonlibrary).

TUES. OCT. 24: NATIVE PLANTS OF SOUTHEAST TEXAS by **MARK MORGENSTERN**, 6-7:30pm. Urban Harvest event.
urbanharvest.org/stec_event/native-plants-of-southeast-texas/

TUES., OCT. 24: HOW TO START & MAINTAIN AN ORGANIC GARDEN by **WALLER COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS** (20-hour course), 7-9pm.
Register: [Community Education Catalog - Home & Garden](#); or 281-396-6365.

TUES, OCT. 24: LEARNING ABOUT BULBS by **DEBRA CALDWELL**, 1pm, Glazier Senior Education Center, 16600 Pine Forest Lane, Free. Presented by Harris County Master Gardeners, hcmga.tamu.edu.

WED., OCT. 25: CACTI OF THE BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK, by **JOSEPH RODD**, at 7pm. Metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 West Gray. Houston Cactus & Succulent Society, hcsstex.org

THURS. OCT. 26: GROWING RARE FRUIT by **RANDALL MOSMAN**, 6-7:30pm. Urban Harvest event. urbanharvest.org/stec_event/growing-rare-fruit/

SAT., OCT. 28: LANDSCAPE DESIGN, 9-11am, \$5. Montgomery County Texas AgriLife Extension 9020 Airport Rd., Conroe. 935-539-7824. [MCMGA.com](https://www.mcmga.com)

THU, NOV 2: SHADE GARDENING by **DEBRA CALDWELL**, 2pm, Glazier Senior Education Center, 16600 Pine Forest Lane. Free. , FREE. Presented by Harris County Master Gardeners, hcmga.tamu.edu

SAT., NOV. 4: 50TH ANNUAL HERB FAIR, 9am-2pm, Southside Clubhouse, 3743 Garnet St. Free. The Herb Society of America, South Texas Unit.
herbsociety-stu.org

TUES, NOV 7: TREES by **ALEXA HAASS**, 11am-12:30pm, Genoa Friendship Gardens, 1210 Genoa Red Bluff Road. Free. Harris County Master Gardeners event
hcmga.tamu.edu

WED, NOV 8: NATIVE PLANTS by **ROBIN YATES** (in person & virtual), 6pm, 2510 Willowick Rd. Free. Harris County Master Gardeners, hosted by Houston Public Library. Facebook Live: [facebook.com/houstonlibrary](https://www.facebook.com/houstonlibrary).

THU, NOV 9: PRE-FREEZE & POST-FREEZE LANDSCAPE CARE by **BRANDI KELLER** (in person/virtual), 11am, 500 McKinney. Free. Texas A&M AgriLife, hosted by Houston Public Library. Facebook Live: [facebook.com/houstonlibrary](https://www.facebook.com/houstonlibrary).

HURS., NOV. 9: HANDLING LAWN AND GARDEN PESTS by **JOHN KLIPSCH (virtual)** 7-9pm, Houston Rose Society event.
Free. <https://meet.goto.com/450262805>
meet.goto.com/450262805

FRI, NOV 10: ORGANIC GARDENING by **JEAN FEFER**, 11:30am, Weekley Community Center, 8440 Greenhouse Rd, Cypress. Free. Harris County Master Gardeners, hcmga.tamu.edu.

SATURDAY, NOV. 11: CELEBRATING CONSERVATION with **DOUG TALLAMY**, 3-7 p.m., 1 Botanic Lane, \$55. Houston Botanic Garden. hbg.org/events

SAT., NOV 11: TREE SELECTION FOR HOME, 9-11am; **WINTER PLUMERIA CARE** by **LORETTA OSTEEN**, 1-3pm. AgriLife Bldg, Carbide Park, 4102-B Main/FM 512, La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener. Free. [Register](#): 281-309-5065

WED., NOV 15: PUERTO VALLARTA BOTANICAL GARDEN, by **JOSIE WATTS**

and **BRUCE MOFFET**, 7pm. Metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 West Gray.
Houston Cactus & Succulent Society hcsstex.org

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

SAT., NOV 18: FALL FAIRY GARDEN WORKSHOP, 9am-Noon. Extension Bldg,
Carbide Park 41102-B Main/FM 512, La Marque, Galveston County Master
Gardener event. \$25/pair. [Register](#)

*If your event didn't get in right away, one possible reason is
you didn't submit it in our EXACT - NEVER CHANGING format.
These usually take longer to be re-formatted. Your choice!
SEE TOP OF CALENDAR FOR DETAILS.*

* * *



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 general feature 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 general reporting into also doing gardening reporting 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.

About her column, Brenda says: "I don't consider myself a 'garden writer.'" I started out 50+ years ago as a very lazy "gardening reporter." I still feel that way today. I hope my columns inspire/help newcomers, but I do not write to them. I write to very experienced gardeners who want to expand their horizons.

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.



Lazy Gardener And Friends | 101 Sherbrook Circle, Conroe, TX 77385

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