

LAZY GARDENER AND FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

HOUSTON GARDEN
NEWSLETTER



Nov-30-2023 | Issue 516

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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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WHAT ARE PROS PLANTING FOR WINTER COLOR?



MERCER BOTANIC GARDEN, above, and other gardens are busy planting for color this winter! Mercer's 20,000 new plants being set out include (inserts from left above) pink snapdragons, yellow wallflowers and red-stem Swiss chard.

Whether you're new to Houston or just new to WINTER flower/vegetable gardening here, know this — It's a gamble, just like our summer vegetables are a gamble (freezing & 3-digit temps, floods, droughts, world-class insect populations, etc.). You name it, we got it! How do you learn about new plants available and improved varieties of old favorites?

USE OUR BOTANIC GARDENS! Both [Houston Botanic Garden](#) and [Mercer Botanic Garden](#) and other gardens near you are great sites to learn. Mercer, for example, has made flood-proof plantings one of its many focuses.

Coming up is a opportune time to see first-hand winter and local-weather-tolerant plants: Mercer Garden's Mon., Jan. 8: 50th Anniversary celebration. I'm greatly honored to speak during the special presentations. My family was "utilizing" Mercer's site long before it became a world-noted botanic garden! Registration is recommended but not required at pct3.com/MBG. Come prepared to take notes during guided tours to remember new-to-you flowers/plants. Be sure to specific ask variety names!



Above, l-r: 'Camellia japonicas 'White Empress', 'Debutante', 'Professor Sargent' and 'Herme'.

Hopefully these beautiful Camellia japonicas planted decades ago by Thelma Mercer (right) will be in full bloom Mon., Jan. 8, for Mercer's 50th Anniversary celebration! These (as well as many other plants Thelma grew) will be for sale at [Friends of Mercer Botanic Gardens The Mercer Society](#)'s 2024 plant sales. Stay tuned!



* * *

Potpourri

- TALK ABOUT A LIVING SCULPTURE!**

JANE NEEL reports her *"poor yard is half dead, but the yucca is doing great!"* It has bloomed for the past several years, but — surprise! — this is the first double bloom.

This famously-drought-tolerant Texas native is in a bed with a homemade watering system but not where it gets much water. Jane has other yuccas, healthy but no blooms so far. They get no watering.at all



- PLUMERIA PROBLEM** My still-young plumeria wouldn't pull out of the ground. To be safe, I asked Houston-based [Plumeria Society of America](#) 's **Paula Furtwangler** who said, "Sure!" You do know that here we just pull them out of the ground and throw them in a corner for winter?

Pictured: 'Kiamata' (tho not mine. It's yet to bloom!)



Always learn the background of a named plant. Sometimes fascinating! Kiamatia was the young girl who spend the miserable winter of 1821 on Bolivar Peninsula with Jane Long (now Mother of Texas). My plant is a cutting off the one propagated by noted Galveston oleander hybridizer **Robert Newding** and donated to the Bolivar Peninsula's Jane Long Society. See? Neat story!

Back to plumerias: In spring, take them out, replant and they'll continue as tho nothing happened. Or, if potted, just move the pots inside. Mine had just gotten too big for me to move. [PSA Facebook Page](#)

* * *

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.

* BRENDA'S "LAZY GARDENER GUIDE" is no longer sold.

However, free pdf copies upon request at lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com

* * *

OHBA *Presents...*

The Lone Star Yule Ball Fundraiser



An Evening with Shake Russell

The Legendary Texas Singer-Songwriter

Join Us In Your Western Wear Attire!

Date:

Thursday, December 7th

Time:

5:30-9:30PM

TICKETS:

MEMBERS \$85

NON-MEMBERS \$115

TABLE (10 SEATS) \$850

Location: The Ballroom at Tanglewood
5430 Westheimer Rd, Houston, TX 77056

Agenda:

5:30-7PM Sign-in, Cocktails, Magician, Divisi Strings, & Fortune Telling

7-8PM Delicious Dinner & Silent Auction Winners Announced

8-9:30PM Shake Russell Performance



GET TICKETS ONLINE TODAY!

ohbaonline.org/register



John's Corner



**NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND
PLANTS # 265**

Subject: GMO garden plants herbicide paraquat and Parkinson's
disease topsoil

We have talked about the dangers and problems of genetically modified (GMO) vegetable plants on many occasions. This issue may soon be affecting gardeners and the plants we grow, especially the food plants for birds and pollinators, as GMO plants and flower seeds become more available.

Our pollinators and wildlife are already struggling to survive and GMO flowers and fruits, will harm them even more. One of the most common GMO vegetables is soybeans which has some of the highest levels of the toxic chemical glyphosate on them. Researchers are now looking at how they compare to non-GMO varieties.

The Third World Network provided a summary of the new research on GMO soybeans. They found increased levels of allergens, and 70 proteins that were differentially altered or expressed compared to non-GMO varieties. Detailed analysis found altered metabolic pathways leading to increased allergenic potential. The negative effects of consuming these altered proteins are just beginning to be discovered.

For example, during the recent COVID pandemic, researchers at MIT found a strong correlation that people whom ate the most GMO foods, had the highest level of deaths from this disease. They also had higher cancer rates.

Hence to protect our butterflies, birds and other wildlife make sure the plants or seeds you purchase are non-GMO. Similarly, as we are finding in vegetables, heirloom varieties have the highest nutrient density, the most health promoting compounds, and the most anti-cancer compounds (sometimes called secondary plant metabolites).

Another problem we are seeing in society is a large increase in Parkinson's disease. Numerous researchers have found that the herbicide paraquat can cause neurological changes that are the hallmark of Parkinson's disease. A full report summarizing the latest research can be found in the report: **"Revealed: The secret push to bury a weedkiller's link to Parkinson's disease"**

Which can be found [here](#).

I read a scary article last week that stated the United States has lost **57.6 billion tons** of topsoil due to its farming practices over the recent decades. The rate of erosion is over 25 times higher than the formation of new topsoil. "It turns out the that the far greater driver of soil erosion in the midwestern U.S. has been conventional agriculture. Research from the University of Massachusetts published in the journal, Earths Future (2023)

When I read something like this, it reminds me that the bible mentions, "the earth will wear out" on several occasions (Isaiah 51:6, Psalm 102:26, Hebrews 1:10-12, etc.). I wonder how much is a prophecy of our future.

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

WED., DEC. 6: GALVESTON COUNTY PECAN SHOW ENTRY

DEADLINE, 3pm, AgriLife Bldg., Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (FM 512), La Marque <https://galveston.agrilife.org/events>, or 281-309-5065.

FRI. DEC. 8: MERCER GARDEN TOUR, 9–10 am, Mercer Visitor's Center, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., Free. Register at www.pct3.com/MBG. 713-274-4160.

SAT., DEC 9: GROWING TOMATOES FROM SEED, by IRA GERVAIS, 9-11:30am AgriLife Bldg., Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (FM 512), La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener event. Free. Register; 281-309-5065

SAT., DEC 9: GOING NUTS FOR PECANS by STEPHEN BRUEGGERHOFF, 1-2:30pm,; AgriLife Bldg., Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (FM 512), La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener event. Free. agrilife.org/events; 281-309-5065

TUES, DEC 12: PRE-FREEZE AND POST FREEZE LANDSCAPE CARE by BRANDI KELLER (in person & virtual), 11am, 500 McKinney St. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, hosted by Houston Public Library. [Facebook Live](https://www.facebook.com/houstonpubliclibrary).

WED. DEC. 13: THE SECRET OAKS OF BIG BEND by JACOB MARTIN, noon – 2pm, Mercer Visitor's Center, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd. Register: pct3.com/MBG. 713-274-4160. Free.

MON. JAN 8: MERCER'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION, 9am-noon, Mercer Visitor's Center, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., Register: pct3.com/MBG. 713-274-4160. Free.

WED. JAN. 10: SENSATIONAL SUCCULENTS by LEE ROWELL, noon– 2pm, Mercer Visitor's Center, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., Register: pct3.com/MBG. 713-274-4160. Free.

SAT., JAN. 20: COUSHATTA CAMELLIA SOCIETY SALE & FLOWER SHOW, First Christian Church in Conroe

WED. FEB. 7: LA IRISES AND SPECIES PRESERVATION by CHARLES PERILLOUX, noon–2 m, Mercer Visitor's Center, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., Register: pct3.com/MBG. 713-274-4160. Free.

*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 show 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.



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