January 16, 2015

Dear Friends,

Here is the 90th issue of our weekly gardening newsletter for Houston, the Gulf Coast and beyond. This is 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.

Please or sign yourself up to receive this newsletter by clicking the "Join Our Mailing List" link just below. We will never sell or share our mailing list to protect the privacy of our subscribers.

Enjoy!

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST!

By BRENDA BEUST SMITH

THIS WEEK: Left, not all tropicals might succumb to our cold. Center top: think you have no room for a citrus tree? How about that empty house or garage wall? Center below: want a wow plant for winter eye-popping? Right, let friends & neighbors help improve your soil.

So, how did your plants survive "The Cold"? Probably pretty well. It never got "that cold" and, relatively speaking, it didn't last very long. If you live in the southern half of the Greater Houston area, chances are your plants fared a lot better than those of, say, Jere Noerager.

Jere was watching the weather even more closely than the rest of us. He's into tropicals and not just any tropicals. He's in charge of those that will be available at Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Garden's famous March Mart sale (March 20-21 this year).

So it was with some nervousness that Jere dropped by Mercer's delightful Tropical Gardens to check out the long-anticipated bloom atop the 5-foot Voodoo Lily (*Amorphophallus konjac*). Jere explains this one is a relative of the giant, olfactory-challenged*Amorphophallu titanium*, or "corpse flower" that received so much publicity when it bloomed at the Houston Museum of Natural Science a couple of years back. Mercer's Suzzanne Chapman admits theirs supposed to be stinky too. But, so far, it's been too cold to tell!

Jere reports Mercer's Voodoo Lily survived just fine, as did the giant, eight-foot elephant

ear (*Colocasia gigantea*var 'Thailand Giant'). Also doing well, he says, is his own white Angels Trumpet (Brugmansia sp.). This chance seedling, then 2-years-old, froze to the ground in last year's ice storm in his front yard. It came back, and is currently blooming with 20 fragrant 10"-12" flowers on an 8' plant.

Think of Mercer as our living plant library, making it a great place to visit after any weather trauma - cold, heat, drought. See what survives at Mercer and you may discover hardier recommendations to replace wimps in your own landscape.

My thryallis was a mass of blooms before the cold hit, and it's still has a lot of flowers hanging on. But the real surprise has been the firespikes. Normally these die back quickly, and come out reliably in spring. They didn't bloom until late this past fall and are still covered with bright red stalks that, pre-freeze, were attracting hummers. Haven't seen any since.

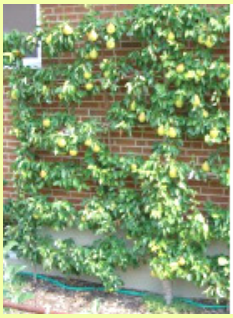
TALK ABOUT A FROSTY WINTER WONDER! Lucky folks who are members of the Houston Arboretum & Nature Center received a real treat in their recent emailed newsletter: a photo of the icy delights formed by frostweed during the recent freezing temperatures.



Frostweed (*Verbesina virginica*) grows happily between the Arboretum's driveway and the Alice Brown lawn. Normally it's a pleasant white-blooming wildflower, above. But in the first hard freeze, the sap starts to expand, creating pressure the plant's epidermis (outer layer). The epidermis splits, the sap makes contact with frigid air and it freezes instantly into these fascinatingly-artistic ice slivers pictured at right above.

Arboretum staffers are collecting and starting seed now so they can offer frostweed at future plants sales. In the meantime, one source is Native American Seed (http://www.seedsource.com). And while you're online, log onto houstonarboretum.org and become a Houston Arboretum & Nature Center member. That way, you won't have to wait for me to tell you about such neat things.

*** POTPOURRI**




*** DON'T FORGET TO CHECK THE CALENDAR for some great upcoming events, including numerous citrus and other tree sales. Think you don't have enough room for a citrus tree? See photos above left. Do you have a blank house wall or empty fence that gets full day sun? For advice on using such walls or fences, check out Angela Chandler's "How to Espalier Citrus Trees" onThe Arbor Gate website.)**

No free wall or fence space for even dwarf fruit trees? How about creating an arbor (second photo from right above)? For great tips on patio container fruit trees, check out: http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/patiocitrus/containers.html

Or, you can create what KTRK GardenLine's Randy Lemmon calls a "High Density Home Garden" filled with fruit trees. While you're checking out this link, sign up for his newsletter. It's a great companion to his weekend gardening radio show.

*** MEA CULPA, DR. NOVAK:** Unfortunately at the end of Dr. Joe Novak's great Spotlight article on Holistic Gardens last week, I mistakenly listed all his upcoming lectures as free. Only the "Holistic Garden" lecture onWed., Jan. 21, is free. The rest of his series are $20 each, as correctly listed in the calendar.

* Galveston County Master Gardeners are now taking application for the GC Master Gardener Class of 2015. Details: www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston

*** CELEBRATING "THE YEAR OF THE SOIL" con't.** Last week we noted this United Nation's declaration for 2015. Houston's OHBA (Organic Horticulture Benefits Alliance) is joining with Urban Harvest and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension to hold four different opportunities for everyone to learn more about "*Setting Up Your Own Successful Organic Gardens and Lawns.*" The four repeat Saturdayprograms - Feb. 14 (Houston), Feb. 21 (The Woodlands), Feb. 28 (Kingwood) and March 7 (Sugar Land)- will focus on how to become more organic. See **CALENDAR** below for addresses. $5. Details: www.OHBAonline.org. Individual programs have other sponsors including Nature's Way Resources, Ace Memorial, Bering's Hardware, Buchanan's Native Plants, Edible Earth Resources, Heights Plant Farm, Quality Feed, Southwest Fertilizer, Wabash Feed and Garden Store, the City of Sugar Land, Keep Sugar Land Beautifiul, Woodlands Township, Urban Harvest and Mercer Botanic Gardens.

*** WHAT BETTER WAY TO CELEBRATE SOIL** than by composting? Harris County Master Gardeners can get you off to the right start on http://www.ktrh.com/onair/gardenline-with-randy-lemmon-25172/Below, HCMG's Bob Lucey will get you started with tips on how NOT to compost.

*Brenda's group lectures include: "How to Reduce the Size of Your Front Lawn to Save Water Without Infuriating Your Neighbors," "Landscaping for Security," "10 Commandments of Lazy Gardening," and "What's Blooming in the Lazy Gardener's Garden." Details: lazygardener@sbcglobal.net. * Brenda's "Lazy Gardener's Guide" - a when-to-do-what in Greater Houston area gardens - is now available on CD only (pdf file). $20. Checks payable to Brenda B. Smith and mailed to: Lazy Gardener's Guide on CD, 14011 Greenranch Dr., Houston, TX 77039-2103.*

Top 10 Mistakes Gardeners Make with Compost Piles!

BY ROB LUCEY
HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

Composting is not difficult but there are a few things you need to know NOT to do to have a successful compost mixture. According to Harris County Master Gardener, Rob Lucey, here are the Top Ten things to avoid when composting.

10. Weed seeds. After tidying up your garden, it's convenient to toss everything onto your compost pile. But if you've pulled up pernicious weeds with seeds, those seeds might not be bully neutralized by the composting process. Then you'd just be planting a new crop of weeds when you spread your compost.
9. Spreading disease. Certain garden diseases, such as fungi affecting tomato and squash plants, can survive the composting process. If you have a diseased plant, it should go into the trash rather than your compost pile.
8. Missing the microbes. For a new compost pile, you can speed things up by adding layers of soil, "old" compost, or manure which provides the workers for breaking down plant materials.
7. Dying of thirst. All of those microorganisms dining on your garden scraps need a bit of moisture to keep working. During dry spells, sprinkle a bit of water on top before turning your pile but don't soak your pile so much that the microbes drown.
6. Being too cool. A good compost pile should generate heat when all of the microbes are hard at work. If yours isn't working, it might need a boost of nitrogen. Add fresh grass clippings, fresh manure or blood meal. Another problem may be that the pile isn't large enough to reach critical mass. Keep adding layers and you'll get there.
5. Not shredding and chipping. Leaves, hedge clippings, newspapers and other bulky items break down very slowly if you don't provide a head start by mulching them first.
4. Adding pet feces. If you have a pet chicken, cow, horse, goat or other vegetarian species, their manure is a great source of nitrogen for your compost. But cat or dog feces are a no-no, decomposing slowly and carrying disease organisms.

3. Not mixing in enough "brown" and "green." Ideally, you'll alternate equal layers of brown material (such as dry leaves, sawdust or wood chips) and green material (grass clippings, manure and food scraps).
2. Failing to let the mix breathe. If you don't have air entering from the sides of your compost container and/or turn it frequently, it can get compacted so that the microbes and "bugs" breaking down your material don't get the air they need to do their job.

And the NUMBER ONE composting mistake...
1. Adding animal products such as grease, fat, meat trimmings or dairy products. They break down slowly, smell unpleasant when decomposing and can attract pests. (Eggshells are fine and help add calcium to your end product.)

* * *

Harris County Master Gardeners have three compost workshops planned to help you get started.

**** Sat., Jan. 17: Compost-Why & How. 10am. Maude Smith Marks Library, 1815 Westgreen Blvd., Katy. Harris County Master Gardener event. Free but registration required at 281-855-5600.***

**** Tues., Jan. 20: Compost-Why & How. 6:30pm. Spring Branch Memorial Library, 930 Corbindale. Harris County Master Gardener event. Free but registration required at 281-855-5600.***

**** Tues., Jan. 27: Harris County Master Gardeners Open Garden Day, Soil & Composting: 9am- noon (10 am- adult workshop, children's activities). Free. AgrilLife Extension Office, 3033 Bear Creek Dr. Details: https://hcmga.tamu.edu***

Also check out these in the calendar below:
**** Sat., Feb. 7 and Sat., Mar. 7: Compost Class, 10-11am, The Woodlands Township Parks, Recreation and Environmental Services Campus. Details:http://thewoodlandstownship-tx.gov or 281-201-3800***

* Tues., Feb. 24 "The ABC's of Home Composting" by Ken Steblein, 9-11am, Galveston County AgriLife Extension in Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. Details: www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston

JOHN'S CORNER

To TILL OR NOT TO TILL

I've heard we should NOT till garden beds, that it disturbs the microbes, soil bacteria, whatever. Back in my boyhood we used to disk and harrow the fields to break up the soil every year, and I've carried that same practice over to my garden beds today. If I have to pack away my beloved Mantis Tiller I will, but I'd like a fuller explanation as to why it's beneficial.

Thanks!
Jere

Tillage is a root cause of agricultural land degradation, one of the most serious environmental problems worldwide. Over the years as a member of the Soil Science Society of America, the American Agronomy Society and the Crop Science Society and numerous others, I have read hundreds of articles related to tillage or no-till methods. However, I have never looked at the history of tillage so I thought a brief overview would be interesting.

Tillage has been around since 8000 B.C. when a sharp stick was pulled through the ground to make a trough to plant seeds. By 6,000 B.C. draft animals (oxen) were used to pull the simple plow. Around 1100 A.D. the moldboard plow was developed with a curved blade to invert the soil, burying the weeds and crop residue. In 1837 John Deere developed the steel moldboard plow that allowed farmers to break up the tough prairie sod. In the early 1900's tractors could pull multiple plows at once and finally roto-tillers were developed to pulverize the soil and we thought all was well. Then the "dust bowl" era of 1930-1939 occurred. This environmental (and financial) disaster exposed the dangers of tillage.

In 1943 an agronomist named Edward Faulkner wrote a book called "Plowman's Folly" that questioned the need for tillage and the no-till era had begun. In his first paragraph he stated, "The truth is that no one has ever advanced a scientific reason for plowing".

In the 1950's the Soil Conservation Service (now National Resources Conservation Service) began measuring soil erosion and loss. Research on modern no-till methods began in earnest during the 1960's, triggering counter-publicity from plow, tiller and tractors manufacturers.

Over the years many types of tillers (plows) and methods have been developed but that is beyond the scope of this article. In general, conventional tillage uses a moldboard plow which turns and covers 90% of the crop residue (primary tillage). Another pass through the fields with a disk tiller to smooth the ground surface and finally a third pass with a cultivator to prepare the seed bed is required (secondary tillage). In gardening our gas powered roto-tillers do both types in one pass. In the 1990's researchers from Cornell University estimated that the cost of undoing damage from tillage was costing the USA $44 billion per year. In 1993 a study by researchers at the University of Kentucky found that no-till methods decreased soil erosion by 98%! Other research found that for every dollar invested in soil conservation would save society $5. Additionally, no till methods saved farmers the cost of buying expensive equipment and the fuel and labor costs of multiple trips through their fields.

The 1985 Farm Bill gave farmers incentives to switch to no-till methods along with the much higher fuel prices. As a result the USDA developed a program called conservation tillage as a first step toward no-till and to help farmers make the transition.
It is estimated that no-till methods have helped the USA avoid 241 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions which is equivalent to the annual emissions of 50 million cars.
So, what is No-till?

By definition a no-till system allows no operations that disturb the soil other than planting or drilling. So, why did we till (plow) in the first place?

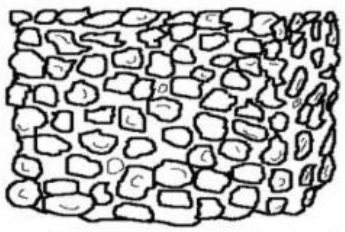
The assumption was that tilling the soil would loosen it so that more air and water could reach the root zone. It seemed logical that friable, loose earth would allow roots to grow and spread. However this was not the case. Plowing and disking results in a soil with a broken structure lying on top of a heavily compressed plow pan layer that forms beneath the plow depth. The broken soil structure clogged the pathways (channels) between soil particle that allowed air and water to freely enter the soil. With reduced airflow in and out of the soil they becomes more anaerobic or low in oxygen. The low oxygen conditions reduce root growth and encourages soil pathogens to grow. This same sealing prevents water from easily entering the soil which causes water to pile up on the surface of the soil and run-off which then leads to massive erosion. The loss of soil structure returns the soil to its original very tiny components that are light and can blow (e.g. wind erosion that created the dust bowl).

Healthy soil is composed of *peds*. These are the basic units of soil structure formed by microbes gluing the individual soil particles together, whether it be clay, silt or sand. They have distinct boundaries and well-defined planes of weakness between the aggregates. Peds consist of primary particles bound together by cementing agents like organic matter, clay, and hydrous oxides of iron and aluminum. Peds can take many shapes and creates the channels that air and water use (See figure below).

Many microbes help build or create the ped structure found in healthy productive soil (sometimes referred to as soil tilth). The glomulus fungus produces a glue called glomalin that helps form the peds. The fecal material from this fungus is food for a bacteria that produce chemicals called polysaccharides a type of complex sugar that also glues small particles together or as shell around the bacteria to prevent it from being eaten by protozoa forming a micro-aggregate. Other fungal species tie these micro-aggregates together forming the ped.

Granular Structure

- Resembles cookie crumbs and is usually less than 0.5 cm in diameter.
- Commonly found in surface horizons where roots have been growing.



http://soil.gsfc.nasa.gov/pvg/granular.gif

http://soils.usda.gov/technical/manual/images/fig3-30_large.jpg

When we till the soil we rip apart the fungal hyphae in the soil which kills the good fungus. Without the fungus we do not have the populations of the correct bacteria to form peds. Without the creation of new glues, the existing ones are biodegraded over a couple years and the soil structure collapses. Additionally, tillage kills earthworms, microanthropods and other soil life that also contributes to good soil structure.

Every gardener should have read the following book by now and will help one understand the biological processes better.

Teaming with Microbes. 2nd edition, A Gardener's Guide to the Soil Food Web, by Jeff Lowenfels & Wayne Lewis, Timber Press, 2013, *ISBN-13:* 9781604691139, *Highly Recommended*
This book is a great non-technical explanation of soil biology and why organic gardening methods work so well.

SUMMARY:
The only time we should till is in preparing a new bed for the very first time. In this case tilling can help kill weeds and grass, mix soil amendments into the soil, and help level the bed area.

PROS:
- aerates soil (temporary)
- reduces compaction (temporary)
- accelerates the conversion of organic N into plant available mineral N
- mixes amendments into soil (gypsum to break up high salt crusts and evenly spread throughout mix zone)), incorporate fertilizers for better utilization
- break up soil aggregates, creates a temporary loose porous condition conducive to young roots and emergence tender seedlings (long term it weakens soil aggregates)
- mechanically destroys weeds
- dries out soil before seeding
- if tilling in the fall then the exposed clods with repeated wetting/drying, freezing/thawing tend to flake and crumble making a smooth bed for seeding in spring
- lower cost than some herbicides for weed control

CONS:
- dries soil before seeding
- soil looses a lot of nutrients
- soil loses its ability to store water
- decreases the rate at which water soaks into the soil which results in more runoff and erosion
- tilling dislodges the cohesiveness of the soil leading to more erosion

- increases chemical runoff
- reduces organic matter in soils
- reduces all life in soil (fungus, earthworms, microanthropods, etc.
- destroys soil aggregates
- creates soil compaction
- causes eutrophication (dead zones) of nearby waterways
- attracts slugs, cutworms, army worms and other harmful insects
- crop diseases can be harbored in crop residues as reduced beneficial microbes to control them
- greatly accelerates soil erosion
- sediment downstream clogs waterways
- the aeration provided in the short term usually declines after a few years
- sub-surface hardpans formed by conventional tillage
- increase decomposition rate of organic matter previously protected (destroys humus)
- leads to crusting and additional compaction by rainfall
- changes soil properties erodibility, hydraulic conductivity, increase soil bulk density over time (less air space, less organic matter (humus))
- dust bowl caused by tillage (1930's)
- if soil is too wet, tillage smears soils destroys macro porosity (puddled conditions)
- reduces CEC (cation exchange capacity - the ability to hold and store nutrients)
- destroys soil ped structure
- reduces water holding capacity of soils
- destroys pores and worm tunnels that allow deep drainage recharge water table
- destroys fungus allowing soil to become highly bacterial - conditions which are preferred by many weedy species of plants
- forms many types of hard-pans (silt pans, iron or aluminum pans, clay pans or simple compaction pans
- heavy equipment created plow pans (traffic pans) that became worse each year as multiple passes of equipment
- kills many microanthropods that eat pest nematodes
- destroy fungus species hyphae that stores calcium in the soil
- lack of organic N leads to increased N fertilization requirements which increases a plants susceptibility to fungal diseases
- makes some nutrients unavailable leading to nutrient imbalances in plants (more susceptible to insects and disease)
- increases weeds (weed seeds need light to germinate, hence tilling exposes buried seeds to light causing them to germinate)
- increases nitrous oxide (NO_2) emissions from soil (NO_2 is 200X worse than CO_2 to global warming)
- increases carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions from soil increasing the contribution to global warming

PROS of NO-Till:
- soybeans had more nodules, more biomass (8%), and fixed more N (74kg/ha)
- plants roots, worms, arthropods, other life forms are much higher
- after 7 years work root density was 36X higher
- reduces methane (CH_4) emissions from soil (methane is 23X worse than CO_2 to global warming)
- erosion control, water conservation, cleaner environment, greater crop yields, greater water infiltration
- increase mean residence time of carbon in soil (increase humus or stored CO_2)
- after decades of tillage (destroying the soil) in may take many years to see benefits (must undo the damage) versus virgin ground that shows benefits immediately
- increases all forms of organic matter in soils
- dark color of organic matter enhances soil warming in spring which promotes growth
- 98-100% less erosion

References:
Encyclopedia of Soil Science, Editor -in-Chief Rattan Lal, Ohio State University, 2002, Marcel Decker, ISBN: 0-8243-0634-X
Handbook of Soil Science, Editor -in-Chief Malcolm Sumner, CRC Press, 2000, ISBN: 0-8493-3136-6
The Nature and Properties of Soils, N. Brady & R. Weil, Prentice Hall, 14th Edition, 2008, ISBN: 0-13-227938-X
Hands-On Agronomy, Neal Kinsey and Charles Walters, Acres, USA Press, 2006, ISBN: 0-911311-95-5

WEEKLY GARDENING EVENTS &
ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALENDAR

Gardening events only. Events listed are in Houston unless otherwise noted.
Events must be written in the format used below, specifically earmarked for publication in the "Lazy Gardener & Friends Newsletter." Email to lazygardener@sbcglobal.net

Sat., Jan. 17: Compost-Why & How. 10am. Maude Smith Marks Library, 1815 Westgreen Blvd., Katy. Harris County Master Gardener event. Free but registration required at 281-855-5600.

Sat., Jan. 17: Preview of Fort Bend County Master Gardener Jan. 24 Fruit and Citrus Tree Sale, 9-11am, Bud O'Shields Community Center, 1330 Band Road, Rosenberg. Free. Details: www.fbmg.com or 281-341-7068

Sat., Jan. 17: Urban Harvest's 15th Annual Fruit Tree Sale, 9am-1pm (or sell-out), Rice University's Greenbriar lot. Details: www.urbanharvest.org/fruit-tree-sale.

Sat.-Sun., Jan. 17-18: Arbor Day Celebration & Tree Giveaway, 10am-4pm, Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center, 20634 Kenswick, Humble. Free. Details: hcp4.net/jones or 281-446-8588.

Mon., Jan. 19: Open Garden Day, 8:30-11am, Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff. Free. Q & A with Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2. Details: https://hcmga.tamu.edu

Tues., Jan. 20: Garden Design Spring 2015 by Billy Marberry, 10am, Knights of Columbus Hall, 702 Burney Road, Sugar Land. Sugar Land Garden Club event. Details: http://sugarlandgardenclub.org/

Tues., Jan. 20: Gardening by the Square Foot by John Jons, 6:30-8:30pm, Galveston County Agri-Life Extension in Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. Free but reservations required at 281-534-3413. Details: www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston

Tues., Jan. 20: Compost-Why & How. 6:30pm. Spring Branch Memorial Library, 930 Corbindale. Harris County Master Gardener event. Free but registration required at 281-855-5600.

Wed., Jan. 21: Citrus and Fruit Trees for the Houston Area by Heidi Sheesley (preview of trees available at Feb. 14 Harris County Master Gardener Sale), 10am, Clear Lake Park Meeting Room, 5001 NASA Parkway, Seabrook. Details: https://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/

Wed., Jan. 21: Sociohorticulture - The Holistic Garden by Dr. Joe Novak, 7-8:30pm, White Oak Conference Center, 7603 Antoine. Free. Register at www.nnmd.org.

Sat., Jan. 24: Fort Bend Master Gardeners Fruit and Citrus Tree Sale, 9am-1pm or sell-out, Fort Bend County Fairgrounds, Barn H, 4310 Highway 36 S, Rosenberg. Details: www.fbmg.org or 281-341-7068.

Sat., Jan. 24: Montgomery County Master Gardeners Fruit and Nut Tree Sale, 8am: presentation. Sale: 9am-1pm, Texas AgriLife Extension Office, 9020 Airport Rd., Conroe. Bring your wagon. Details: www.mcmga.com or 936-539-7824.

Sat., Jan. 24: Successful Spring Vegetable Gardening by Luke Stripling, 9-11:30am, Galveston County Agri-Life Extension in Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. Free but reservations required at 281-534-3413. Details: www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston

Sun., Jan. 25: Tomato Varieties and Growing the American Gardener's Favorite Plant by Dianne Normal, 1:30-3:30pm, Wabash Feed & Garden Show, 5701 Washington. Free. Details: wabashfeed.com; 713-863-8322.

Tues., Jan. 27: Harris County Master Gardeners Open Garden Day, Soil & Composting: 9am- noon (10 am-adult workshop, children's activities). Free. AgrilLife Extension Office, 3033 Bear Creek Dr. Details: https://hcmga.tamu.edu

Tues., Jan. 27: Anyone Can Grow Roses by John Jons, 6:30-8pm, Galveston County Agri-Life Extension in Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. Free but reservations required at 281-534-3413. Details: www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston

Thurs., Jan. 29: The Soil Will Save Us by Kristin Ohlson, 4-8pm, United Way Building, 50 Waugh Dr. Organic Horticulture Benefits Alliance (OHBA) event. $75. Details/registration: OHBAonline.org.

Fri., Jan. 30: 3rd Annual Sustainable Landscape Conference - Sustainable Parking Solutions, 8:30am-3:30pm, Big Stone Lodge, Dennis Johnston Park, 709 Riley Fuzzel Road, Spring. Hosted by Mercer Botanic Gardens. Reservations/fees: 281-443-8731

Sat., Jan. 31: Harris County Master Gardeners Fruit Tree Sale and Symposa. 9am-1pm, County Extension Office, 3033 Bear Creek Dr. Preview at 8am. Details: hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/pubSales.aspx

Sat., Jan. 31: Winter Tree ID Walk, 10am & 2pm, Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center, 20634 Kenswick Dr., Humble. Free. Details: www.hcp4.net/jones or 281-446-8588

Sat., Jan. 31: Growing Great Tomatoes (Part 2) by Ira Gervais, 9-11:30am, and **Growing Blueberries by Dr. David Cohen,** 1-3pm, Galveston County Agri-Life Extension in Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. Free but reservations required at 281-534-3413. Details: www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston

Wed., Feb. 4: Bonsai Repotting Round Table, 7:30pm, Hermann Park Garden Center, Houston.Houston Bonsai Society event. Details: www.houstonbonsai.com

Thurs., Feb. 5: 30th Annual Fort Bend Vegetable Conference, 8am-3:30pm, Fort Bend County Fairgrounds, Buildings B&C, 4310 Hwy 36 S, Rosenberg. $25 ($20 before Jan. 26). Sponsored by Fort Bend, Austin, Brazoria, Colorado, Galveston, Harris Waller

and Wharton Counties. Details/registration: agriliferegister.tamu.edu/FortBend or 979-845-2604.

Sat., Feb. 7: Galveston County Master Gardeners Annual Fruit, Citrus Tree and Vegetable Sale, Wayne Johnson Community Center in Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. 8am - Preview of Sale Plants by John Jons; 9am-1pm - Sale. Details: www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston; 281-534-3413.

Sat., Feb. 7: Compost Class, 10-11am, The Woodlands Township Parks, Recreation and Environmental Services Campus, 2801 Millennium Forest Drive, The Woodlands. Free. Co-sponsored by The Woodlands Township, Montgomery County Master Gardeners, Nature's Way Resources and Waste Management. Details:http://thewoodlandstownship-tx.gov or 281-201-3800

Sat., Feb. 7: Starting Transplants for Your Garden by Dr. Joe Novak, 9-11am, White Oak Conference Center, 7603 Antoine. $20. Near Northwest Management District event. Details/registration: www.nnmd.org or 713-895-8021.

Sat., Feb. 7: Texas Camellia Show, 1-4pm, Katy and E. Don Walker Sr, Education Center ,1400 19th St Huntsville, Tx. Hosted by Coushatta Camellia Society. Free. Details: Don Marcotte, funny-farm2@sbcglobal.net; 936-661-1101

Sat.-Sun., Mar. 7-8: Spring Branch African Violet Club 35th Annual Show and Spring Sale, Judson Robinson Jr., Community Center, 2020 Hermann Park Drive. Sat.: Show 1-5pm, Sale 9am-5pm. Sun.: Show & Sale 10am-3pm. Details: Karla Ross, 281-748-8417, kjwross@yahoo.com

Sat., Feb. 14: HarrisCounty Master Gardener Fruit Tree Sale, 9am-1pm, Campbell Hall, Pasadena Fairgrounds, 7600 Red Bluff Rd., Pasadena. Details: hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/pubSales.aspx

Sat., Feb. 14: Make Your Garden Grow - Really! by Dr. Joe Novak, 9-11am, White Oak Conference Center, 7603 Antoine. Near Northwest Management District event. $20. Details/registration: www.nnmd.org or 713-895-8021.

Tues., Feb. 17: Plant a Diverse Garden by Chris LaChance, 10am, Knights of Columbus Hall, 702 Burney Road, Sugar Land. Sugar Land Garden Club event. Details: http://sugarlandgardenclub.org/

Tues., Feb. 17: Spring Vegetables-Harvesting Know How by Harris County Master Gardeners, 6:30-8:30pm, 930 Corbindale. Free. Details: http://harris.agrilife.org/hort. Register 281-855-5600

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Sat., Feb. 21: Brazoria County Master Gardeners Fruit and Citrus Tree Sale. Details: brazoria.agrilife.org

Sat., Feb. 21: Composting for the Home Garden Garden by Dr. Joe Novak, 9-11am, White Oak Conference Center, 7603 Antoine. Near Northwest Management District event. $20. Details/registration: www.nnmd.org or 713-895-8021.

Sat., Feb. 21: Texas Tuff landscape Plants - Blooming and Beautiful by Sandra Duvall, 9-11:30am, and **Kitchen Gardening" by Mary Demeny,** 1-3pm, Galveston County AgriLife Extension in Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener event. Free. Reservations: 281-534-3413; galv3@wt.net. Details: www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston

Sat., Jan. 24: Montgomery County Master Gardeners Fruit and Nut Tree Sale, 8am: presentation. Sale: 9am-1pm, Texas AgriLife Extension Office, 9020 Airport Rd., Conroe. Bring your wagon. Details: www.mcmga.com or 936-539-7824.

Tues., Feb. 24: Harris County Master Gardeners Open Garden Day, Spring Vegetable Gardening: 9am- noon: 10am adult workshop, children's activities. Free. AgrilLife Extension Office, 3033 Bear Creek Dr. Details: https://hcmga.tamu.edu

Tues., Feb. 24 "The ABC's of Home Composting" by Ken Steblein, 9-11am, Galveston County AgriLife Extension in Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener event. Free. Reservations: 281-534-3413; galv3@wt.net. Details: www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston

Thurs., Feb. 26: Preview of Fort Bend County Master Gardeners Feb. 28 Vegetable-Herb Plant Sale, 9-11am, Bud O'Shields Community Center, 1330 Band Road, Rosenberg. Free. Details: www.fbmg.com or 281-341-7068

Sat., Feb. 28: Harris County Master Gardener Tomato & Pepper Sale & Symposia. AgriLife Extension office, 3033 Bear Creek Dr. Details: http://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/pubSales.aspx

Sat., Feb. 28: Fort Bend Master Gardeners Vegetable-Herb Plant Sale, 9am-noon or sell-out, Agricultural Center Greenhouse, 1402 Band Road, Rosenberg. Details: www.fbmg.org or 281-341-7068.

Sat., Feb. 28: Soil Management for the Home Garden Garden by Dr. Joe Novak
, 9-11am, White Oak Conference Center, 7603 Antoine. Near Northwest Management District event. $20. Details/registration: www.nnmd.org or 713-895-8021.

Thurs., Mar. 5: History of Shangri La Botanical Gardens by Joseph Johnson, 9:30am, Municipal Utility Building, 805 Hidden Canyon Drive, Katy. Free. Nottingham Country Garden Club program. Details: nottinghamgardenclub.org; o713-870-5915 or 979-885-6199.

Mar. 6-8: 2015 80th Annual Azalea Trail. River Oaks Garden Club event. Details; http://www.riveroaksgardenclub.org

Sat. Mar. 7: Compost Class, 10-11am, The Woodlands Township Parks, Recreation and Environmental Services Campus, 2801 Millennium Forest Drive, The Woodlands. Free. Co-sponsored by The Woodlands Township, Montgomery County Master Gardeners, Nature's Way Resources and Waste Management. Details: http://thewoodlandstownship-tx.gov or 281-201-3800

Mar. 7: Pest ID and Management in the Home Garden Garden by Dr. Joe Novak, 9-11am, White Oak Conference Center, 7603 Antoine. Near Northwest Management District event. $20. Details/registration: www.nnmd.org or 713-895-8021.

Sat., Mar. 14: Growing Vegetables in Containers Garden by Dr. Joe Novak, 9-11am, White Oak Conference Center, 7603 Antoine. Near Northwest Management District event. $20. Details/registration: www.nnmd.org or 713-895-8021.

Sat.-Sun., Mar. 14-15 Galveston Home & Garden Show, Convention Center, 56th street at Seawall Blvd. Horticulture speakers: Saturday 10:30am-Rainwater Harvesting-Jim Jahnke; 11:30-Tree Conservancy-Priscilla Files; 1-Roses-Baxter Williams; 2:30-Lazy Gardening-Brenda Beust Smith. Sunday 11:30-Growing Peppers-Gene Sepller; 12:30-Plumeria-Loretta Osteen. Other speakers,fees, hours: www.**galvestonhome**and**garden**.com.

Tues., March 17: Hummingbirds! "Allen or Rufous, it's all *Selasphorus* to me!", http://sugarlandgardenclub.org/

Sat., Mar. 28: Nottingham Country Garden Club Annual Plant Sale, 10am-1pm, Villagio Courtyard, Westheimer Pkwy. @ Peek Rd. Details: nottinghamgardenclub.org; 713-870-5915 or 979-885-6199.
Sat., Apr. 11: White Oak Garden Spring Plant Sale, 9-10am Presentation on featured plants by Heidi Sheesley, 10am-2pm Sale; White Oak Conference Center, 7603 Antoine Dr. **Details: www.nnmd.org**

Mon., April 21 2015: What's Blooming in the Lazy Gardener's Garden by Brenda Beust Smith, 10am, Walden on Lake Houston Club House. Lake Houston Ladies Club event. Non-member reservations required:Carol Dandeneau. #832-671-4475

If we inspire you to attend any of these events,
please let them know you heard about it in THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS NEWSLETTER!

WANT YOUR EVENT IN THE LG&F CALENDAR? YOU HAVE TO SEND IT TO US!
EVENTS WILL NOT BE PICKED UP FROM OTHER NEWSLETTERS OR GENERAL MEDIA RELEASES.
Events submitted in the exact format used above will receive priority in inclusion in the calendar.
Events NOT submitted in our format take longer to get published as someone has to reformat and retype them. Email to: lazygardener@sbcglobal.net

Need speakers for your group? Or tips on getting more publicity for events? Brenda's free booklets that might help: "Lazy Gardener's Speakers List" of area horticultural/environmental experts, and "Lazy Gardener's Publicity Booklet" (based on her 40+ years of her Houston Chronicle "Lazy Gardener" coverage of area events) Email specific requests to: lazygardener@sbcglobal.net.
Please help us grow by informing all your membership of this weekly newsletter!

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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 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.

Brenda recently ended her decades-long stint as Production Manager of the Garden Club of America's **BULLETIN** magazine. Although still an active horticulture lecturer and broad-based freelance writer, Brenda's main focus now is **THE LAZY GARDENER & 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 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, certified permaculturist 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 a co-editor and article contributor.

MARY BOWEN

Mary is a Realtor with Coldwell Banker United and an avid volunteer with the Montgomery County Animal Shelter.

With respect to the newsletter, Mary came up with the idea for the Garden Tails column and co-writes it. Mary is the newest addition to our group of contributors. We will expand her bio as we go.

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.