



May 22, 2015

Dear Friends,

Here is the 108th issue of our weekly gardening newsletter for Houston, the Gulf Coast and beyond. We really appreciate all of our readers hanging in there with us, sharing stories and inspiring us in so many ways.

Thanks so much!

This newsletter 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.

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GREAT OPPORTUNITIES TO TRY SOME NEW CACTUS, SUCCULENTS AND BEGONIAS!

BY BRENDA BEUST SMITH

Going to be ecumenical today. Great plants for both sun and shade in Houston area gardens.

- * For shade, hard to beat begonias.
- * For our droughts, cactus and succulents can be our best friends.

If you're new to this area, the array of begonias that are perennials here in our gardens will probably come as a surprise. They aren't just little container plantings. They are lovely shrubs that thrive and bloom. The trick with begonias is to buy them from folks who know which varieties do well here and which don't.

Great opportunity coming up this weekend. An American Begonia Society Judged Show and Sale will be held at the Sheraton Brookhollow Hotel, 3000 North Loop West (details: 713-686-8539).



Among the great begonias for sale will be, (above left to right), "Down Home," 'Peach Parfait' and 'Lots of Dots.' And, below, l to r, 'Flo Belle Mosley,' 'Flutterby,' 'Blueberry Sorbet' and 'Black Fancy.'



We have a number of American Begonia Society branches in this area, including:

- * Astro Branch (begoniahouston.org)
- * Houston Satellite Branch (Houstonsatellite@begonias.org)
- * San Jacinto Branch (absastro.tripod.com)

Now that we have shade covered, let's move on to cacti and succulents - ideal plants for our bouts of extreme drought.

Know the difference between cacti and succulents? Almost all cacti are succulents. But not all succulents are cacti.

"Succulents" covers a wide variety of plants almost the world over with the ability to store plants.

Cacti originated in the Americas. Aztec Indians founded the capital of their empire on a spot where they saw an eagle perched on top of a large cactus. That scene is now on the flag of Mexico.

Who else would tell you these things?

Of course, the real attraction of these fabulous plants is their sculptural shapes and incredibly vividly colored flowers. And, more importantly, how do we get our hands on some!

First a caution. These are low-water plants. Low-water is a gift from heaven during our droughts.

But we have had tremendous rainfall lately - not an unusual situation in our subtropical pocket. And, as Dee in the Heights sadly discovered, when our monsoons come, cacti and succulents may need a little extra oversight.



In the case of succulents like the desert rose, above, this may mean lifting up that pot so air can circulate around the pot's bottom drain hole. If water collects in the soil, roots will be damaged resulting in rot.

Dee, a Heights gardener, sent in the picture at center of the rot she found at the base of her prized desert rose, a succulent prized for its swollen branches and stunning flowers. I checked with one of my cacti gurus, Liliana

Cracraft of the Houston Cactus & Succulent Society. She guesses probably Dee did not provide enough air circulation and too much moisture collected in the container.

This is going to be a major problem in coming months with inground plants as well. Too much water in soil translates into too little oxygen for plant roots. They become weakened and the first signs will be no or too few flowers or fruit production. Growth looks pooppy and pretty soon the plant dies. The solution?

Improve the drainage. Raise the bed. The organic matter you add to raise the bed (compost, humus, enriched soil) will hold water in a form roots can access without reducing the oxygen level.

But, back to Dee's desert rose, she may be in luck. Liliana says they almost always have these gorgeous plants at the Houston Cactus & Succulent Society's Spring Sale, this year on May 30-31, 9am-5pm at the Houston Arboretum and Nature Center, 4501 Woodway Dr. in Memorial Park. Details on this free event: <http://hcsstex.org>



Among the great plants available at the big May 30-31 Houston Cactus & Succulent Society Spring Sale will be, L to r above, *Cephalophyllum* species, *Gymnocalycium* (chin cactus) and *Cylindropuntia* species.

And, below, l to r, *Epiphyllum guatemalense*, *Parodia magnifica*, *Pereskia grandifolia*, *Rebutia heliosa* x *albiflora* and *Rebutia*



* MORE NATURE FUN FOR CHILDREN: Add this to the [children's programs listed last week](#) :
- Houston Audubon Society's Summer Nature Camps, at Sims Bayou Nature Center, Audubon's educational campus in Southeast Houston. Details:
<http://www.houstonaudubon.org/default.aspx/MenuitemID/1084/MenuGroup/Education.htm>

* 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. For a free page of this month's TO-DO list, email Brenda at lazygardener@sbcglobal.net
Want to invest in companies building a better world? Visit: moneyspentwell.org

JOHN'S CORNER



Peat Moss Revisited

This week the topic of peat moss came up on a couple occasions hence I want to revisit the subject. There have been several new research studies released showing the tremendous environmental

destruction caused by using peat moss.

The Norwegian University of Science and Technology has found that the temperature balances of the Earth are directly tied to the peat moss bog regions of this planet. Peat stores over one third of all the carbon that is stored on land. They estimated that five hundred and fifty BILLION tons of carbon are sequestered in peat bogs around the world. Since peat moss decomposes anaerobically (without oxygen) it forms large carbon sinks (storage). When the permafrost melts, carbon in the form of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and methane (CH₄) is released (a molecule of methane contributes at least 23X more to global warming than a molecule of CO₂). It is now well documented that glaciers are melting and the areas of permafrost are retreating and releasing greenhouse gasses. The destruction of peat bogs (mining of peat) accelerates this process. Companies would not do this environmental destruction IF gardeners and the horticultural industry did not purchase peat moss!

Peat moss grows and spreads by killing off other species of plants with its acidity. Hence when we use it in horticulture we have to neutralize the acidity for many species of plants. A research article in the journal HortScience Vol. 50(4) April 2015 reflects this problem where steel slag was used to neutralize the acidity. The issue occurs is that steel slag, depending on many factors, may release a lot of toxic environmental pollutants.

Note: Using waste products from one industry to solve problems in another can be a very good thing and that is what research is all about.

We now have many natural organic materials made from recycled organic material (horse and cow manure, composted mulches, and best of all fungal based composts). Fungal based composts have very similar physical properties to peat moss, are rich in nutrients (peat is devoid), full of beneficial microbes (peat is almost sterile hence a good media for pathogens to grow) and is sustainable as it is made from recycled tree material. By using these alternatives, we become part of the solution as these organic wastes are not burned or land filled where they would create greenhouse gasses. As a society we are faced with a choice, we can stop using peat moss hence quit destroying these wetlands and use our peat bogs to remove carbon from the air and be part of a solution OR we can keep using peat and contribute to our environmental destruction. In my opinion, using peat moss today is a crime against nature and humanity.

Note: While technically coconut coir works well as a peat moss substitute, it is not sustainable to ship it half way around the world to the USA when locally available substitutes are available. Below is the original article for your reference.

Soil Amendments - Peat Moss

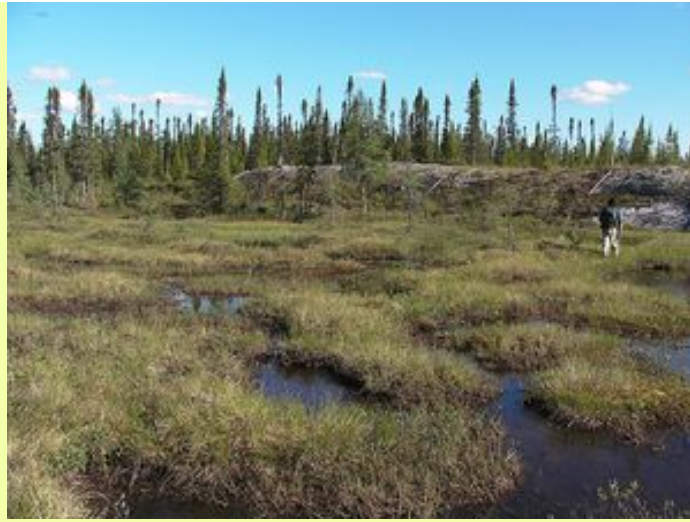
Peat Moss is widely used in gardening and horticulture. However have you ever considered the question; is it the best choice and what are the consequences of using it?

Historically, peat has been used as a fuel, insulation, building bricks, planting medium, and as a top dressing for potted plants in floral arrangements.

Peat moss is from a group of plants called Sphagnum that is a genus of over 350 species of mosses. These plants grow in wetlands found in cooler climates and are an extremely important part of our ecosystem in cleaning water, removing pollution and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere (more than any other ecosystem). These bogs capture 110 tons of carbon every year from the atmosphere and store more than 562 billion tons of carbon even though they compose only 3% of the land and fresh water areas. Mining of peat requires the draining of wetlands, drying, milling, packaging and transport the product many thousands of miles to market all of which require energy which releases tremendous amounts of CO₂ to the atmosphere.

Some companies in Canada and in the Northern states have started trying to reestablish bogs after mining which is a step in the right direction. However, scientists say it takes over 90 years to just reestablish the original biodiversity and much longer to become a fully functioning wetland. Over 10 million cubic yards are harvested each year in Canada and another 1 million cubic yards in the USA. It takes about 1,000 years for a one yard thick layer of peat to accumulate, hence tens of thousands of acres of wetlands are destroyed each year.

Peat forms over many thousands of years in these bogs, swamps and other wetlands. Peat grows on the surface of the bog where there is oxygen. As the plants die they settle to the bottom where there is very little if any oxygen (anaerobic) and slowly decays forming thick mats of partially decomposed plant material.



This decayed and dried sphagnum moss is often called peat or peat moss. More correctly the live moss growing on top of a bog is called Sphagnum moss and the dead decaying matter underneath is called sphagnum peat moss or just peat moss. These plants provide a habitat for other wetland plants like sedges, orchids, carnivorous and many other plant species.

More than 90% of the extremely valuable wetland peat bogs in England and New Zealand have been destroyed by the mining of peat. Many countries now prohibit or have placed severe restrictions on the mining of peat wetlands and the sale of peat moss.

Sphagnum and peat do not decay readily due to phenolic compounds in the plants cells. As the new moss grows it pushes the older moss down into the bog where it slowly decays often reaching many feet in thickness with the older more decomposed peat moss at the bottom.



The most valuable form of peat in horticulture is the layer that forms just under the surface with deeper layers becoming lower and lower in quality and value. This is why a gardener often sees big price differences for peat moss at the garden centers. The worthless low quality peat moss is sold at the lower prices because it does not work well.

The reason this low quality peat moss is sold, is for the producers of peat moss to make more money. Once they have spent the money to dig ditches and drain the wetland, construct roads, create drying beds, etc. to mine the good peat moss, it costs very little extra to remove the worthless bottom layers also. They just package it up and sell it to retailers whom do not care about giving their customers a quality product. High quality peat moss is often used for growing orchids. The standard low quality peat moss (and most other products) sold in most chain nurseries and box stores works

poorly if at all, making many people think they do not have a "green thumb".

The surface moss and the high quality peat moss layer can hold 16-20 times their dried weight in water in their cells. The low quality peat moss at the bottom does not hold near the same amount of water or have the beneficial properties hence it is sometimes sold under the name of "Peat Humus" to get unsuspecting customer to buy it.

Due to its very acidic nature peat moss can absorb cations (plant nutrients) such as calcium and magnesium and release hydrogen ions into the soil (which causes the acidity). It is so acidic it can kill bacteria (good or bad) hence it was used as a bandaging material in treating wounds as recently as WWII.

Several companies selling peat moss recommend using it as a mulch. It makes a terrible mulch for many reasons: it is highly acidic hence very bad for most plants, it forms unsightly surface cracks when it dries out, it is very light thus it blows and washes away in wind and rain events, it is dusty and difficult to apply (especially when it is windy), and it provides very little if any nutrition to the plants.

Horticultural research has shown that we now have many alternatives to peat moss that work better, at lower cost, and do not have the environmental consequences. A few of these are composted bark, compost and mulches, substrates made from cow manure, brewery wastes, coconut coir, olive mill waste, pulp and paper by products, peanut hulls, and of course perlite, vermiculite and pumice. Even PTS (Pine Tree Substrate) has been found to work better on many species of plants. Many of these substrates have repeatedly worked better than peat in terms of plant vigor and quality!

PROS:

- readily available
- light in weight
- good structural stability
- ability to hold water
- good aeration (high porosity) IF sphagnum peat moss
- low in microbes
- good to store bulbs and tubers over the winter as it is anti-microbial (Ancient cultures used peat to store food in)

CONS:

- virtually devoid of nutrients
- extremely acidic (low pH) and must be neutralized for use with most plants
- very difficult to re-wet once it becomes dry
- repels water when dry
- often not sterilized hence may contain pathogens
- inhibits the growth of microbes initially but quickly becomes conducive for the rapid development of pathogens
- peat moss from lower layers is often very fine in particle size hence does not have good aeration as the better grades do
- low anion capacity hence negatively charged anions like phosphate and nitrate will easily leach from the media
- Some people experience a skin disease causing lesions when exposed to peat moss (rare). It is from the fungus Cutaneous sporotrichosis and is more common with sphagnum moss. Several states have laws requiring nursery workers to wear double gloves and micron filtration masks when handling peat moss. Those whom use peat moss regularly are at risk for developing pneumonias and other illnesses.

Conclusion:

Peat moss is environmentally bankrupt in today's gardening environment and one should not purchase and use it.

**WEEKLY GARDENING EVENTS &
ANNOUNCEMENTS**

CALENDAR

TO SUBMIT EVENTS: Find a similar event in our calendar below and copy the format EXACTLY.
Then you can add additional information. Email to lazygardener@sbcglobal.net
Any other formatting will result in a delay in publication. Events will not be picked up from newsletters.

SAT., MAY 23: JUST IN TIME, DRIP IRRIGATION, 10:15am, Cornelius Nursery, 2233 S. Voss. Free. Details: www.corneliusnurseries.com/events/

SAT., MAY 23: HOUSTON AREA DAYLILY SOCIETY AND HOUSTON HEMEROCALLIS SOCIETY FLOWER SHOW. 1-3pm. PLANT SALE 10:30 am, Gethsemane Lutheran Church, 4040 Watonga Ave., Houston, TX 77092. Free. Details. 281-332-2965, leslie.j.wong@gmail.com

SAT., MAY 23: AMERICAN BEGONIA SOCIETY JUDGED SHOW AND SALE, 9:30-3:00, Sheraton Brookhollow Hotel, 3000 North Loop West, 77092. Free. Information: 713 686-8539

TUES., MAY 26: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS OPEN GARDEN DAY AND BASIC PEST CONTROL FOR GARDENERS WORKSHOP, 9-11:30am, 3033 Bear Creek Drive. Free. Details: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/docs/2015-open-garden-days.pdf> 281-855-5600

WED., MAY 27: KOKO CRATER BOTANICAL GARDEN ON OAHU, HAWAII BY KARLA HALPAAP-WOOD, 7:30pm, Stude Community Center, 1031 Stude St. Free. Houston Cactus & Succulent Society event. Details: www.hcsstex.org

WED., May 27: SIGHT PREPARATION FOR A PRAIRIE GARDEN BY SCOTT BARNES, 6:30-8:30pm, McGovern Centennial Gardens, Hermann Drive, 1500 Hermann Drive. Free. Houston Chapter of Native Prairies Association of Texas event. Details: hnpat@wordpress.com or hnpat@texasprairie.org

SAT., MAY 30: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS FIRST ANNUAL TOMATO CONTEST AND SEMINAR; "EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT GROWING TOMATOES"; 9 am-Noon, 3033 Bear Creek Drive. Free. Details: <http://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/pubSpecialEvents.aspx> 281-855-5600

SAT., MAY 30: FRIENDS OF PECKERWOOD GARDEN DAY, Hempstead. Garden Conservancy event. Tours 11am & 1pm. \$10. Details: peckerwoodgarden.org, 979-826-3232; info@peckerwoodgarden.org

SAT., MAY 30: DESIGN STYLISH CONTAINER GARDENS FOR POOLSIDE AND PATIO, 10:15am, Cornelius Nursery, 2233 S. Voss. Free. Details: www.corneliusnurseries.com/events/

SAT.-SUN., MAY 30-31: HOUSTON CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY'S SPRING SALE, 9-5, Houston Arboretum and Nature Center, 4501 Woodway Dr, Houston, TX 77024. Free. Houston Cactus & Succulent Society event: <http://hcsstex.org>

MON., JUNE 1: OPEN GARDEN DAY WITH HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS AT PRECINCT 2 & PLANT SALE, 8:30-11am, Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa-Red Bluff Rd. Reservations/details:<https://hcmga.tamu.edu>; 979-826-3232.

TUES., JUNE 2: TOMATO EVALUATION AND TESTING WITH TERRY CUCLIS, 6:30-9pm, Galveston County AgriLife Extension in Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. Free. Details: www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston.

THURS., JUNE 4: FROM GOLF COURSE TO CONSERVATION EASEMENT: CLEAR LAKE'S EXPLORATION GREEN BY JERRY HAMBY, 6:30-8:30, Judson Robinson Community Center, 2020 Hermann Drive. Free. Gulf Coast Chapter Texas Master Naturalists event. Details: Lan.shen@txgcmn.org

SAT., JUN 6: TOMATO CONTEST, 10am, The Arbor Gate, 15635 FM 2920, Tomball. Free. Details: www.arborgate.com or 281-351-8851

SAT., JUNE 6: CREATING GARDENS FOR BEAUTIFUL BIRDS, 10:15am, Cornelius Nursery, 2233 S. Voss Rd. Free. Details: www.corneliusnurseries.com/events/

SAT., JUNE 6: FABULOUS FRAGRANT GRANGIPANI BY LORETTA OSTEEN, 9-11am, Galveston County AgriLife Extension, Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. Free. Details/reservations; Ph 281-534-3413; galv3@wt.net, www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston

SAT., JUNE 6: CULTURE & CARE OF PALMS BY O. J. MILLER, 1-3pm, Galveston County AgriLife Extension, Carbide Park, 4102 Main, La Marque. Free. Details/reservations; Ph 281-534-3413; galv3@wt.net, www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston

SAT.-SUN., JUNE 6-7: CLEAN GALVESTON BACKYARD GARDEN TOUR and BETTY HEAD OLEANDER GARDEN PARK, 27th at Sealy, Galveston. Free. Details: 409-762-3363

SUN., JUNE 7: AMERICAN HIBISCUS SOCIETY/LONE STAR CHAPTER SHOW & PLANT SALE, 9:30AM-3PM, Sheraton Brookhollow Hotel, 3000 North Loop West. Free. Details: 713 686-8539

WED., JUNE 10: STARTING A WORM COMPOSTING BIN, noon, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine-Westfield. Free. Details: 281-443-8731; <http://www.hcp4.net/community/parks/mercer>.

THURS, JUNE 11: GROWING & USING HERBS BY HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS. 6:30-8:30pm. Barbara Bush Library, 6817 Cypresswood Dr., Spring. Free. Details: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/docs/2015-green-thumb.pdf> 281-855-5600

THURS., JUNE 11: GULF COAST MASTER NATURALISTS NATIVE PLANT PROPAGATION WORKDAY second Thursday every month. Volunteers needed. Pavilion near 6520 Alameda (between N. MacGregor & Holcombe). Details: Lan.shen@txgcmn.org

THURS., JUNE 11: Thurs., June 11: Chilli Thrips - Scourge of the Roses., 7:30pm, St. Andrews Episcopal Church parish hall, 1819 Heights Blvd. Free. Houston Rose Society event. Details: www.houstonrose.org

SAT., JUNE 13: PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA SALE, 9:30am-3pm, Bay Area Community Center, 5002 NASA Parkway, Seabrook. Details: theplumeriasociety.org

SAT., JUNE 13: PREMIER SHARPENING - TOOL SHARPENING, 2pm-5pm, The Arbor Gate, 15635 FM 2920, Tomball. Free. Details: www.arborgate.com or 281-351-8851

SAT., JUNE 13: TOP BAR BEEKEEPING, 9-11am, University of St. Thomas, Welder Hall, Room 115, 3812 Yoakum Blvd. \$45. Urban Harvest class. Details: [713-880-5540](tel:713-880-5540) or www.urbanharvest.org.

SAT., JUNE 13: SUMMER COLOR CONFERENCE & PLANT SALE, 8am-3pm, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine-Westfield. Free. Details: 281-443-8731; <http://www.hcp4.net/community/parks/mercer>.

SAT., JUNE 13: HEALTHY GREEN SUMMER LAWNS, 10:15am, Comelius Nursery, 2233 S. Voss Rd. Free. Details: www.comeliusnurseries.com/events/

MON., JUNE 15: OPEN GARDEN DAY WITH HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS AT PRECINCT 2 & PLANT SALE, 8:30-11am, Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa-Red Bluff Rd. Details: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu>

WED., JUNE 15: WETLANDS AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION BY ANDREW SIPOCZ, 10am, Clear Lake Park meeting room, 5001 NASA Parkway, Seabrook. Free. Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 event. Details: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu>

TUES., JUNE 16: GROWING & USING HERBS BY HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS. 6:30-8:30pm, Spring Branch Memorial Library, 930 Corbindale. Free. Details: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/docs/2015-green-thumb.pdf> 281-855-5600

WED., JUNE 17: FUN GARDEN STEPPING STONES (children), 9am-12:30pm, The Arbor Gate, 15635 FM 2920, Tomball. Free. Details: www.arborgate.com or 281-351-8851

THURS., JUNE 18: GROWING & USING HERBS BY HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS. 6:30-8:30 pm. Freeman Branch Library, 16616 Diana Lane. Free. <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/docs/2015-green-thumb.pdf> 281-855-5600

SAT, JUNE 20: GROWING & USING HERBS BY HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS. 10am-Noon. Maude Smith Marks Library, 1815 Westgreen Blvd., Katy. Free. Details: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/docs/2015-green-thumb.pdf> 281-855-5600

SAT., JUNE 20: HEAT-THRIVING AND COLORFUL PLANTS, 10:15am, Comelius Nursery, 2233 S. Voss Rd. Free. Details: www.comeliusnurseries.com/events

TUES., JUNE 23: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS OPEN GARDEN DAY AND GROWING & USING HERBS WORKSHOP, 9-11:30am, 3033 Bear Creek Drive. Free. Details: <https://hcmga.tamu.edu/Public/docs/2015-open-garden-days.pdf> 281-855-5600

SAT., JUNE 30: LOW VOLUME IRRIGATION, 9am - 11:30am. \$30 members. \$45 non-members. University of St. Thomas, Welder Hall, Room 115, 3812 Yoakum Blvd. Urban Harvest event. Details: [713-880-5540](tel:713-880-5540) or www.urbanharvest.org.

WED., JULY 8: MONARCHS & MILKWEEDS, noon, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine-Westfield. Free. Details: 281-443-8731; <http://www.hcp4.net/community/parks/mercer>.

SAT., JULY 11: TEXAS ROSE RUSTLERS ANNUAL MEETING. 9am-4pm, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine-Westfield. Free. Details: 281-443-8731; <http://www.hcp4.net/community/parks/mercer>.

TUES., JULY 14: PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA QUARTERLY MEET, 7pm, Garden Center, 1500 Hermann Drive in Hermann Park. Details: www.theplumeriasociety.org

MON., JULY 14-16: MERCER BOTANIC GARDENS CHILDREN'S SUMMER CAMPS BEGIN. Details: 281-443-8731; <http://www.hcp4.net/community/parks/mercer>.

FRI., JULY 17: WHIMSICAL WIND ART (children), 9am-12:30pm, The Arbor Gate, 15635 FM 2920, Tomball. Free. Details: www.arborgate.com or 281-351-8851

SAT., JULY 25: PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA SALE, 9:30am-3pm, Fort Bend County Fairgrounds, Richmond. Details: www.theplumeriasociety.org

Sat, July 25. Urban Harvest's Fall Vegetable Gardening. 9am - 11:30am. \$45. Location TBA. Details: [713-880-5540](tel:713-880-5540) or www.urbanharvest.org.

TUES., AUG 4: ALL ABOUT HUMMINGBIRDS (children), 9am-12:30pm, The Arbor Gate, 15635 FM 2920, Tomball. Free. Details: www.arborgate.com or 281-351-8851

TUES., OCT. 13: PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA QUARTERLY MEET, 7pm, Garden Center, 1500 Hermann Drive in Hermann Park. Details: www.theplumeriasociety.org

[If we inspire you to attend any of these events, please let them know you heard about it in](#)

[THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS NEWSLETTER!](#)

[TO SUBMIT EVENTS: Find a similar event in our calendar below and copy the format EXACTLY. Then you can add additional information. Email to \[lazygardener@sbcglobal.net\]\(mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net\) Any other formatting will result in a delay in publication. Events will not be picked up from newsletters.](#)

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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 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 periodic article contributor.

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.



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