June 5, 2015

Dear Friends,

Here is the 110th 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 may 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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MY DREAM 'ENAMELED MEAD' . . . PRAIRIE-TURNED-POLLINATOR PARADISE . . . MONARCHS & PLUMERIAS? - MAYBE SO!

BY BRENDA BEUST SMITH

First, an embarrassing apology. The big June 7 Hibiscus Society Show and Sale is not at the Brookhollow Hotel as stated last week. It's this Saturday, June 7, at the Bellaire Civic Center 7008 South Rice Ave. in Bellaire. Free, open to the public from 1-4 p.m. Mea culpa to Pat Merritt who gave such great hibiscus flood survival tips last week. (Just what she needed on top of having her home inundated by Braes Bayou. My fault completely. So sorry, Pat!)

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Don Dubois' wonderful Spotlight article on the native garden he developed to attract pollinators (below) reminded me of one of my as-yet-unfulfilled dreams - turning our vacant Bolivar beach lot into an enameled mead.

To be honest, I never heard of an "enameled mead" until the Martha Grimes' "The Winds of Change" character Melrose Plant mentioned it. A little research resulted in a really fun-to-write Chronicle column "Enameled Mead Gardening Revisited".

Also called a "flowering mead," this 17th Century technique of interplanting lawn grass with clusters of low blooming flowers creates actual patterns of color. Now I picture something like the beautiful photo at left above. This picture is from www.nokeslandscapedesign.com, the website of Jill Nokes, one of our state's premier natives experts, a prime mover in changing our attitudes about using native plants in our landscapes and a great speaker on how to accomplish this on large-scale projects.

The older Husband gets, the closer I get to at least having free-blooming wildflowers. Grassy weeds grow higher faster around our lot's lower, outer edges of our Bolivar Peninsula lot. Often he just mows only these areas now - which, in effect, allows wildflowers in the center to bloom, albeit on really short stems!

Wildflowers go hand-in-hand with pollinators - term ecology-minded gardeners are starting to use a lot. Birds, insects and some animals routinely transfer pollen from male to female - a survival must for at least 80% of Earth's flowering plants.

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Left: Dancing Flames Salvia, Sweet Memory Duranta, Butterscotch Cestrum (Butterfly Garden). Next: Stokes Asters and Wine Cup (Butterfly Garden). Next: Amastad Salvia with bee (Butterfly Garden). Right: Basil, Thyme, and Cucumber (Children's Zoo Garden)

We home gardeners may be slow on the update sometimes, but eventually, we catch on! Decades ago, when I first started giving gardening lecturers, I learned quickly to not show pictures of flowers with bees on them. I could almost see this "shade" come down over my audience's eyes. They'd suddenly look blank, or look away. Husband raised bees, so I always thought that was rather sad.

But ... talk about synchronicity. Today, when I lecture about lazy gardener plants, inevitably someone will ask - with a definitely positive tone, "...and will it attract bees to my garden?" The best thing about the growing focus on pollinators is how easy it is to interest children. Butterflies and other bugs are so much fun. And it's going to get even easier. Mark your calendar now for the Houston Zoo's big Pollinator Days, June 20-21. In the meantime, to help you learn more, the Zoo's website offers:

* A great general section on Pollinators (http://www.houstonzoo.org/protect-animals/texas-conservation/pollinators/)

* Pollinator information easy to print out (http://www.houstonzoo.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Pollinators.pdf)

* Pollinator blog http://blogs.houstonzoo.org/category/pollinators/

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Among the beautiful plumerias at upcoming sales will be, left to right, Japanese lantern, Raspberry Sundae. Loretta and Mardi Gras (PSA's logo, hybridized by the great late Elizabeth Thornton, PSA founder)

SPEAKING OF BEAUTIFUL POLLINATORS - PLUMERIAS!

Butterflies are definitely attracted to plumerias in greenhouse situations. But will they lay eggs on them in the wild? According to one Monarch Watch report, this was definitely happening in the University of Wyoming's Insect Museum's glasshouse environment, according to an article by Dr. Scott R. Shaw, Professor and Curator. (http://www.monarchwatch.org/update/2004/1123.html#6).

All the more reason to get excited about the Plumeria Society of America's two upcoming plant sales (at which you can find the varieties listed above among others):

* Sat., June 13: Plumeria Society of America Sale, 9:30am-3pm, Bay Area Community Center, 5002 NASA Parkway, Seabrook. Details: theplumeriasociety.org

* Sat., July 25: Plumeria Society of America Show & Sale, Fort Bend County Fairgrounds, Richmond. Details: www.theplumeriasociety.org

Paula Furtwangler, a PSA stalwart and one of my favorite plumeria gurus, recommends going early (these sales are very popular) and bringing your own wagon. She also offered post-flood tips to help plants survive all the recent rains:

* Examine leaves for snails, especially under newly emerging leaves.

* Raise potted plumerias up, using a few bricks as "legs" to make sure all the water drains out. * Don't panic over yellowing leaves. After too-rapid growth, plumerias sluff off old leaves. This is normal.

* Really fast growth, however, does indicate the plant is getting too much water. Leaf nodes will be far apart. During periods of drought, nodes appear closer together. This also happens when plumerias haven't been fertilized enough.

Experts at these sales are ideal sources for reliable plumeria cultural advice.

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 lazy gardener@sbcglobal.net

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Starting point. Now. Spring. Fall.

A FEW NECTAR SOURCES

FOR BUTTERFLIES AND BEES

by DON DUBOIS
BUTTERFLY ENTHUSIASTS OF SOUTHEAST TEXAS (BEST) MEMBER
MERCER BOTANIC GARDENS VOLUNTEER

Several years ago I began converting my backyard from a wildlife free zone into a more hospitable environment by incorporating Texas native plants. Over 250 species of native plants have been planted, with 200+ surviving and supporting local wildlife despite receiving only rainwater and no fertilizer.

The backyard garden has attracted more than 80 butterfly species, with 12± listed as new records for Montgomery County, including a rare hummingbird, the Green Violet-ear. The view changes with seasons and weather, giving an ever-changing look.

Butterflies, bees and hummers have shown distinct preferences for several nectar sources. For bees, blooming trees are popular, along with prairie clover (*Dalea compacta*), beebalms (*Monarda* sp.), vervains (*Verbena* sp.), penstemons (*Penstemon* sp.), thistles (*Cirsium* sp.) and prairie parsley (*Polytaenia texana*).

While not everyone welcomes thistles, other plants listed should have wider use in home gardens and "pocket prairies."

L to r, Retame Tree, Prairie Clover, Prairie parsley, Tiger swallowtail on Lindeimer's beebalm.

Bumblebees and carpenter bees dominate on Retama tree (*Parkinsonia aculeata*) blooms. Butterflies and hummers join bees on beebalms and vervains. Favorite beebalms are Lindheimer's (*Monarda lindheimerii*) and Peter's Purple Monarda (a hybrid of *fistulosa* and *bartlettii*).

These are tall, as are many of our prairie natives. Allow for expansion. Don't plant at the front of a bed. Lindheimer's beebalm is hard to find but Peter's Purple is available at most good nurseries.

Of the penstemons, Prairie penstemon (*Penstemon cobaea*) is showiest and Gulf Coast Penstemon easiest to grow. For Heller's penstemon, a Texas Hill Country beauty, ensure good drainage. Smaller bees and various wasps (including rare sightings) are drawn to prairie parsley blooms, as are black swallowtail caterpillars.

Our three blue and one white mistflowers are the very best butterfly attractors. In late spring Gregg's mistflower (*Conoclinum greggii*) begins the show, followed by the white mistflower (*Ageratina havanensis*) and wild ageratum (*Conoclinium coelestinum*).

Fall is finished in spectacular fashion with fragrant mistflower (*Chromolaena odorata*), whose bloom period coincides with the fall monarch migration and infusion of tropical species into the Greater Houston area.

L to r, Peter's Purple monarda, Gulf Coast vervain, *Penstemon triflorus* (Heller's Beardtongue),

Penstemon cobaea (*Cobaea beardtongue*)

Another great late summer/ early fall attractor is ironweed (*Vernonia missurica*), a magnet for painted lady butterflies. Rounding out the spectrum are liatris and standing cypress (*Ipomopsis rubra*), which attract hummingbirds, bees and butterflies.

Host plants are critical for monarch butterflies as they pass through Texas in spring. Native milkweeds that do well here are green milkweed (*Asclepias viridis*) and Butterflyweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*). Butterflyweed does double duty as both a nectar source and caterpillar host plant.

Some good nonnative butterfly nectar plants include the purpletop vervain (*Verbena bonariensis*) and Azure Skies heliotrope (*Heliotropium amplexicaule*). These are long-flowering, tough perennials.

(Contact Don at donandchrisdubois@att.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. For a free page of this month's TO-DO list, email Brenda at lazy gardener@sbcglobal.net

JOHN'S CORNER

Organic Fertilizers and Nutrients - 35

Biofertilizers

Over the last decade there has been a tremendous increase in our knowledge of how microbes act to acquire or provide nutrients to the soil and plants. We are now learning how to manage these microbes to provide many of the nutrients plants require.

First let's look at exactly what is in a plant, the major and minor nutrients (elements). The following are the average percentages of various elements in whole plants:

Oxygen	45 percent
Carbon	44 percent
Hydrogen	6 percent
Nitrogen	2 percent
Potassium	1.1 percent
Phosphorous	0.4 percent
Sulfur	0.5 percent
Calcium	0.6 percent
Magnesium	0.3 percent

Note the relatively low percentages of nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium and the high percentages of oxygen, carbon, and hydrogen.

When buying fertilizer, remember how relatively unimportant nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium really are in the total context. Think in terms of providing to the soil those ingredients that will help maintain the natural balance of nutrients in the soil. When we look at artificial fertilizers we often see very high numbers like 10-10-10 and we are led to believe that plants require these high amounts of nutrients. However, depending on the brand as much as 90% of the nutrients in the artificial fertilizer escapes to the atmosphere or is leached away polluting our rivers and streams. This is why a good organic fertilizer with a 6-2-4 rating will actually deliver far more total nutrients to the soil (plants) than a synthetic fertilizer with a 10-10-10 rating as it does not leach.

We have to ask ourselves, "How did plants get these nutrients before fertilizers were invented"? The answer is that nature provided these nutrients through the Bio-fertilizers (special microbes) that are part of the beneficial microbe family.

Soil scientists have known for years that bacteria (Rhizobium sp.) colonizing certain plants (legumes) can fix nitrogen from the air into the soil system where plants can get it. In the picture below look at all the nodules where the nitrogen fixing bacteria occur. In a healthy soil (good soil biology), over seeding with a legume like clover can provide more than the nitrogen required by plants for the next growing season with the extra building the long term fertility of the soil.

Photo courtesy of Sustainable Growth Texas

Later we learned that many species of algae living on the soil surface can also fix nitrogen from the air ***IF*** the trace element molybdenum (Mo) is present which acts

as a catalyst. Hence, the study of bio-fertilizers was begun. Today we know than many species of microbes can fix nitrogen if given the conditions they need.

A few years ago one of the first textbooks on the subject came out. It had almost 40 contributing authors supplying research from universities all over the world. The book states in the forward that the most important of the biofertilizers are the arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi.

Handbook of Microbial Biofertilizers , M.K. Rai Editor, Food Products Press, 2006, ISBN: 13: 978-1-56022-269-9

The subject is too long and complex for a lot of details here but a few examples how the microbes work.

A good compost contains many of these microbes. As one of my soil books stated, "Using compost as an organic soil amendment stimulates microorganisms to take nitrogen from the air and fix it in the soil where plants can use it. Up to **120 pounds of pure nitrogen can be fixed per acre** per year under ideal eco-conditions."

In previous articles we talked about the importance of trace elements and re-mineralizing our soils by using mineral dusts (green sand, basalt or granite sand, sea minerals, etc.). For other microbes to fix nitrogen (N) from the air they must have these trace minerals available.

If you noticed above that the two nutrients that a plant needs the most of are oxygen (O) and carbon (C), which compose 89% of all the nutrients required by the plant. Most of which are provided by microbes whether directly or indirectly. In order for the microbes in the soil to perform this service they must have energy. They are not in the presence of sunlight nor do they have chlorophyll like higher plants, so the microbes must get their energy from decaying plant or animal matter (carbon containing material) stored in the soil provided by good compost and mulches.

We have known for years that plant growth is often limited by the amount of CO_2 available to the plant. C.H. Wadleigh, 1957 USDA Yearbook of Agriculture, "Soils", (p.41). Agronomists and farmers are increasing yields by adding carbon dioxide (CO_2) to their bag of practices...Carbon dioxide is a basic requirement for plant growth (October 1968, World Farming, p.31).

We have evidence that CO_2 produced by the respiration of microorganisms in the soil is an important factor in the supply of the gas to photosynthesizing plants. A soil rich in decomposing organic matter provides a much higher level of CO_2 in the air just above the soil than a barren, infertile soil. Hence the soil and air will provide the carbon and oxygen required and the plant will grow quicker and stronger.

Arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi along with many other species of fungi grow on the roots of plants (or in the soil) increasing the plants' ability to pull nutrients and water from the soil. Root growth is greatly enhanced when plants and seed are exposed to the fungal spore products (inoculants) prior to planting. These living products can also be applied to growing plants but they have to get into the soil and have contact with the roots to work. Mycorrhizal fungi production works

better in soils rich in organic matter with good structure and aeration.

The photo below is from one of my co-authors Mike Amaranthus, PhD whom is a microbiologist specializing in beneficial fungi.

Organic Management for the Professional,Howard Garrett, John Ferguson, and Mike Amaranthus, University of Texas Press, ISBN: 978-0-292-72921-6, 2012. *Note: This book is on how to manage all landscapes large or small without toxic chemicals. It is written in an easy to read and understand format that a professional or homeowner can use.*

In the photo the trees on the right were inoculated with mycorrhizal fungi spores at the time of planting. The research site was in California in soils with high levels of salt. Tremendous growth difference in just 3 years!

Many of the rest of the nutrients that plants require are locked up in soil minerals or rock grains and are not water soluble or available to plants. It is the fungi that produce acids that will dissolve these minerals and allow the nutrient to escape and be absorbed by plants.

Fungi can also absorb excess nutrients from the soil and store them till needed. This process naturally "balances" the minerals in the soil so that maximum availability occurs. For example if excess calcium (Ca) is causing other minerals to be locked up and unavailable, fungi will form calcium oxalate crystals (CaC_2O_4) on their hyphae removing the excess calcium from the soil solution bringing the soil back into balance.

Another example is from one of the silicate minerals found in granite and many

clays that is called potassium feldspar ($KAlSi_3O_8$). The acids produced by fungi will dissolve the mineral allowing the potassium (K) to be released and used by plants.

A couple books that should be on every gardeners must read list are:

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***

Teaming With Nutrients, by Jeff Lowenfels, Timber Press, ISBN: 978-1-60469-314-0. This book is about how plants absorb nutrients and use them. It covers plant cell biology and how they work to move water and nutrients into the plant. It explains nutrition from a simple chemistry and microbial point of view.

SUMMARY:

For maximum beauty, productivity and health of our plants (from our turf grass or a rose bush to a fruit tree) we have to have organically rich soils full of microbes. This means we cannot kill them off using dangerous synthetic chemicals. If we follow modern organic methods based on soil biology then nature will provide much of the nutrition that a plant requires.

PROS:
- microbial and mycorrhizal inoculants are very cost effective
- make nutrients available to plants (major, minor and trace)
- does not affect soil acidity
- aerates heavy tight clay soils and helps light sandy soils hold moisture
- increases a plants resistance to insects and disease
- provides nutrients at NO cost!
- corrects many soil problems
- continue to provide benefits every year once established
- many nurseries selling organic products now carry inoculants
- several nurseries are selling compost tea rich in beneficial microbes
- helps prevent salt injury

CONS:
- sometimes hard to find
- limited availability
- killed by artificial fertilizers
- killed by herbicides, fungicides, pesticides and other dangerous chemicals
- killed by chemicals in municipal water supplies

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 lazy gardener@sbcglobal.net
Not using our format will result in a delay in publication.
Events will not be picked up from newsletters.

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

MON., JUNE 8: OUR FOOD SYSTEM BY SCOTT HOWARD AND LIBBY KENNEDY, 6:30pm, Moody Park Community Center, 3725 Fulton St. Free. Houston Urban Gardeners (HUG) event. Details: 713-528-1104, laurel@hal-pc.org

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 Almeda (between N. MacGregor & Holcombe). Details: Lan.shen@txgcmn.org

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 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, Cornelius Nursery, 2233 S. Voss Rd. Free. Details: www.corneliusnurseries.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, 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, Cornelius Nursery, 2233 S. Voss Rd. Free. Details: www.corneliusnurseries.com/events

SAT., JUNE 20: EDIBLE WILD PLANTS BY DR. MARK VORDERBRUGGEN, 9am-1pm, Houston Arboretum & Nature Center, 4501 Woodway Dr. $65. Details: 713-681-8433; www.houstonarboretum.org

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-green-thumb.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 or www.urbanharvest.org

SAT., JUNE 30: EDIBLE WILD PLANTS BY DR. MARK VORDERBRUGGEN, 9am-1pm, Houston Arboretum & Nature Center, 4501 Woodway Dr. $65. Details: 713-681-8433; www.houstonarboretum.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 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 inTHE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS NEWSLETTER!

TO SUBMIT EVENTS:
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Then you can add additional information. Email to lazy gardener@sbcglobal.net
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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 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.