



June 24th, 2016

Dear Friends,

Here is the 163rd 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 (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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A TALE OF TWO CLEVER CURTILAGES

By **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

With all the enormous homes and other expansive concrete construction now being built property-line to property-line -- leaving very little exposed soil to absorb water during our spring and fall monsoons -- it's really nice to be able to write about folks who love -- and achieve double benefits from -- a wide variety of in-ground plantings around their residences.

- Gene and Marty Ward have challenges far beyond maintaining a neighborhood-pleasing front yard. Marty treasures her wildflowers but has ingenious ways to enjoy both native delights and a year-round presentable landscape.
- Ron Richter loves helping folks grow more edibles -- without the extra effort and care involved in having traditional row-designed vegetable gardens. In our Spotlight below, Ron explains how easy it is to have double-duty beds, even in the front yard -- a preview of his popular program for garden clubs.

First, Marty's unique approach:

If you had driven by Gene and Marty Webb's southwest Houston home any spring for the past 15 years, pictured below left is what their corner lot would have looked like. And what it looked like this past spring.

If you drive by now, in June, at right below is what you will see.



The key to this successful transition? Look at the insert photo. It's a **"Wildflowers Do Not Mow"** sign!

This is win-win landscaping. And the fact that the Webbs have developed a true subdivision-acceptable wildflower meadow look is absolutely amazing. It started as experiment to see if wildflowers would grow from seed sown in their St. Augustine easement. The Webbs' flower garden is designed as much for

neighbor enjoyment as their own. Now several neighbors in the Webbs' Woodside addition also plan easement spring wildflower gardens.

Marty is founder and executive director emerita of the Monarch School and Institute for individuals with neurological differences. (www.monarchschool.org) Gardening has always been a passion. Their yard's back and side flower beds are primarily native plants. Now that Gene has Alzheimer's, Marty has simplified some, removing various pocket gardens and nursing larger shrubs to reduce weeding.

Love of the outdoors and nature runs in the family. Son Doug Webb owns Tree Arts, a full service tree company serving southwest Houston and Sugar Land.

When wildflowers bloom in spring, walkers and drivers passing by frequently shout out "Thank you!" when Marty and Gene are in the yard. Children and pets pose in beds for photos. Marty cheerfully shares several handouts she developed using material from the Wildseed Farm website.

Adding a wildflower garden directly into a grassy area starts in the fall. Although it's easy, it's not a decision to make on the spur of the moment -- hence this early article. You need time to think about it and prepare.

Wildflowers sown from seed take time to reach the "beautiful" stage. And then they have down times during which they don't look so great. How will your neighbors - and your HOA - react?

Among the many that have proven successful in Marty's yard:



Left to right: Bishop's Flower (Ammi majus); Gloriosa daisy (Rudbeckia hirta), evening primrose (Oenothera speciosa) and cosmos.

Seeds are sown after the grass has stopped growing in November or December. Marty recommends ordering seed in fall September or early October. Her favorite source (especially good for Texans) is Wildseed Farms in Fredericksburg. www.wildseedfarms.com. Her specific instructions:

- For a typical 60 - 70 foot by 5 foot sidewalk easement, use 1/4 lb. of Wildseed's "Texas/Oklahoma" wildflower mix for \$10. Buy more if you have more space.
- Mix wildflower seeds with an equal amount of sand or dry soil to afford an even spread along your front sidewalk easement strip of grass
- Evenly distribute blended seed/sand by hand directly onto existing grass.
- Blast the seeds down to the level of the roots of the grass with a hose
- After planting, DO NOT MOW. If you use a lawn service, add a sign to remind them not to mow in areas where you've planted.
- When wildflowers grow in spring, you will have several months of blooms. Do not mow during blooming
- When the weather gets hot, the wildflowers will stop producing blooms and begin looking bedraggled. That's how you'll know to mow again. Before you do, you may want to harvest seeds to throw back into the grass next fall and/or to share with friends.

WHY MOW, YOU ASK? That's the neat part. Marty doesn't expect her wildflowers to fill her sidewalk-to-street strips all summer long. They typically last from late March to early June, although this year they bloomed earlier and died earlier. She believes in mowing when the majority of flowers have died back rather than waiting for them all to, as a courtesy to neighborhood beautification.

Allowing her St. Augustine lawn grass to take over in summer works well for Marty. There may be some bare spots where wildflowers have been particularly bountiful, but the St. Augustine quickly covers the spot.

Some wildflowers, such as Cosmos and Rudbeckia, can easily take our hot, dry (usually!) summers, but remember: Nature throws out BILLIONS of seed to get a few million plants. And summer is when many wildflowers often start to look very scraggly.

My advice for any gardener starting out: Start small with a lot of different varieties. See which ones you like and, most important of all, which like you!



Above are "**Wildflowers! Be Patient!**" signs I made up on my computer as suggestions for gardeners at my lectures. Print, laminate and stick in the "resting" wildflower gardens.

If you're really ambitious, you could use those Pollinator Journals (last week's column) to help your children find pictures of the flowers and which pollinators they attract to put on your signs.

NOW . . . INTERPLANT THOSE EDIBLES . . . SOME ARE REALLY BEAUTIFUL!



EDIBLES IN FRANNY OXFORD'S "WESTBURY HOUSE OF THE MONTH"

EDIBLE LANDSCAPING IN YOUR FRONT YARD

by Ron Richter
Harris County Master Gardener

Have you ever thought about the amount of time and resources it takes to sustain your grass and landscape in your front yard? The cost of cutting your grass, watering and fertilizing can add up quickly and is not very functional use of space.

Also it is really not something I look forward to doing in my spare time. This can all change if you consider reducing the amount of grass in your front yard and integrating herb's, vegetables fruit trees and edible flowers into your landscape.

One of the things I hear from people interested in implementing Edible Landscaping is that their HOA will object. But before we take on the HOA there are some subtle things you can do that are underneath the radar.

Evaluate the spaces you currently have and replace with edibles that add color, texture and diversity to your landscape that have the same light, soil and watering needs. Herbs, eatable flowers, berries, root plants, fruit trees and many vegetables can be added to your landscape and actually bring beauty to your yard. An example of this can be found in Westbury where Franny Oxford's house pictured above was awarded Yard of the Month.

Franny has three small raised-bed vegetable gardens at one end of her corner lot. She also tucks edibles and herbs into the traditionally-landscaped long beds in her front yard.



L to r: Long beans on trellis between two raised beds. Blueberries at the front door. Cucumber blossom on trellis between raised beds near the street.



Franny's side lot, left, not only offers a free library who anyone who wants a good book, it also hosts a fig tree, sweet potato, eucalyptus, lemon balm, parsley, thyme, milkweed, oak leaf geranium. Center: cucumber on trellis, carrots gone to seed, dill, cowpeas and tomatillo. Right: cucumbers on a support pole for a shade cloth on the back patio, along with butterfly bush, lemongrass, milkweed, and mint. (Franny Oxford photos)

Front yard edibles in Franny's long beds are primarily sweet potato, daikon radish, blueberries, artichokes, okra, mint, four kinds of basil, three kinds of tulsi. Other helpful plants included are burgundy cotton, bergamot, boneset (comfrey) astragalus, licorice, feverfew, valarian, vetiver, echinacia, and shiso. She also has eggplant, senna, and citronella.

What I have is lemon grass. Rue, lavender, bee balm, catmint, pineapple verbena, and Mexican mint marigold. I am looking at putting beans and sweet potato's as ground covering around my trees.



More attractive edibles with beautiful foliage and/or flowers, above l to r: sweet potato, tulsi (holy basil), okra, daikon radish and, below, artichoke, wild bergamont & blueberries



Contact Ronald Richter at ronrichter22@gmail.com or meet him in person at these events:

- **WED., JULY 6: EDIBLE LANDSCAPE** by RON RICHTER, 10:30am, Glazier Senior Education Center, 16600 Pine Forest Lane. Free. www.pct3.com/senior-centers/glazier-senior-center
- **SAT., JULY 9: KATY/HOUSTON AREA SEED, PLANT & GARDEN SHARE**, 1-3pm, & **EDIBLE FRONT YARD LANDSCAPING** by Ron Richter, 1pm, 5414 Franz Rd., Katy. Free. facebook.com/groups/KatyHoustonAreaSeedPlantGardenShare/

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POTPOURRI:

- **LAZY GARDENER'S WILDFLOWER WATCH:** Native hibiscus or mallows, above left, are blooming beautifully all along White Ranch Road (1985) and then along 124 to High Island. Remember, I'm a wildflower lover. It doesn't take masses of blooms to excite me -- just one will do it. More than usual and I have to report them.
- **"POLLINATOR PALOOZA":** Four fun "Lady Bug Releases" will be among myriads of activities at the Houston Zoo this weekend during its big 9am-3pm, Sat.-Sun., June 25-26, "Pollinator Palooza." Ladybugs (right above) will be released both days at 10:30am and 1pm at the Butterfly Garden near the McGovern Children's Zoo area. Details & schedule of all events: houstonzoo.org/pollinator-palooza/

Brenda's column in the free, emailed LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER is based on her 45+ years as the Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener. Two favors? 1. If I don't respond to an email, assume I didn't receive it and send it again! 2. Always check the calendar for submitted event notices. If you don't see them, let me know immediately at lazygardener@sbcglobal.net

JOHN'S CORNER



News from the wonderful world of soil and plants

I ran across a informative website the other day by IRT (Institute for Responsible Technology) at www.responsibletechnology.org. This website is devoted to exposing the dangers of genetically modified foods. They have power point presentations, technical articles, books, DVD's and more where one can learn more about the dangers of eating GMO's. There is also a buyer's guide on how to avoid GMO's when shopping for one's family.

The publication Food and Water Watch (June 17, 2016) found out that many of the fruits and vegetables from California were being irrigated with wastewater from oil field operations. This wastewater even after treatment can contain toxic chemicals like oil, acetone, methylene chloride, and benzene. All are toxic to humans and are known carcinogens (also in Endangered Earth, June 16, 2016).

They listed a few brands that sell food treated with this wastewater; Sunview raisins and grapes, Trincherro Family Estates (Sutter Home Wines), Halos (Cuties) mandarins, and The Wine Group (Cupcake and Fish Eye Wines).

A study from the University of North Carolina in the journal Nature Communications found that certain chemicals altered the gene expression in the brains of people with autism or Alzheimer's disease. They found that the class of fungicides called strobilurins; (pyraclostrobin, trifloxystrobin, fenamidol, famoxadone, azoxystrobin, fluoxastrobin, and kresomix-methyl) affected the communication between neurons in the brain. These chemicals also induced inflammation of the nervous system and increased the production of free radicals. These chemicals are found on conventionally grown leafy green vegetables such as spinach, lettuce, and kale. See NaturalNews.com for more information.

A study from The USDA Forest Service (published in Urban Forestry and Urban Greening, June 2016) found that trees just along streets in California produced benefits of one billion dollars per year. By category: carbon storage - \$10.3 million, removal of air pollution - \$18.5 million, interception of rainfall - \$41.5 million, and energy savings - \$101 million. They also bolster property values and home sales price to the tune of \$839 million! **For every dollar invested in street trees, the trees returned \$5.82 in benefits.**

A study by the University of Illinois (Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry, 2015; 63 (11)) has found that horseradish contains cancer-fighting compounds called glucosinolates that activates detoxifying enzymes. Horseradish has 10 times more glucosinolates than broccoli. It only takes one teaspoon to get the benefits, as it is 90% absorbable when eaten.

The journal Scientific Reports published a paper by British and French scientists that found striking effects on exposure to pregnant sheep and their female lambs in the womb. When sewage sludge fertilizers are used on pastures it exposes the animals to a cocktail of chemical contaminants found in the sludge. Low-level exposure poses a threat to the human reproductive system as eating meat from animals grazed on land fertilized with human sewage sludge fertilizers (dried sludge, bio solid compost, etc.) affects the fetus. Acres, USA May 2016. Note: Sewage sludge is expensive to get rid of; hence, several companies in Texas

(including some in the Houston area) use it to make low cost composts.

A recent issue of Science Daily summarized the work researchers at Texas A&M, Southern Illinois, Carbondale and the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment station are doing on nano particles and plant growth. They looked at multi-generational effects (3 generations of plants) and found that exposure to nano particle lowered the quality of seed and reduced the yield in future generations. The plants also displayed more signs of stress than the parent plants growing in the same soils. Nano particles are used in thousands of commercial products; they are unlike many other materials and have unique health and safety impacts on people and the environment. One common source of nano particles in agriculture is through irrigation from wastewater from sewage treatment plants and applying fertilizers made from human sewage.

A study from the Vienna University of Technology (Frontiers of Plant Science, 2016) has found out that trees go to sleep at night and adjust their rhythms to the day-night cycle as animals do. They found that trees "droop" their branches at night.

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WEEKLY GARDENING EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS CALENDAR

TO SUBMIT AN EVENT FOR THIS CALENDAR, PLEASE NOTE.

Events NOT submitted in the EXACT written format below may take two weeks or longer to be reformatted/retyped. After that point, if your event does not appear, please email us.

Submit to: lazygardener@sbcglobal.net

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

SAT., JUNE 25: WATER-WISE GARDENING, 9:30-11am, Houston Museum of Natural Science, Moran Hall, 5555 Hermann Park Dr. Urban Harvest event. \$45. 713-880-5540; urbanharvest.org.

WED., JULY 6: EDIBLE LANDSCAPE by RON RICHTER, 10:30am, [Glazier Senior Education Center](http://www.pct3.com/senior-centers/glazier-senior-center), 16600 Pine Forest Lane. Free. www.pct3.com/senior-centers/glazier-senior-center

SAT., JULY 9: FLORAL GARDENING IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY. 9-11am, AgriLife Extension Office, 9020 Airport Road, Conroe. Master Gardener event. \$5. 936-539-7824 or <http://www.mcmga.com/>

SAT., JULY 9: ALL ABOUT GINGERS WITH LINDA FIELDS, 10-11am, Buchanan's Native Plants, 611 E 11th. Free. 713-861-5702; bucharansplants.com/events

SAT., JULY 9: KATY/HOUSTON AREA SEED, PLANT & GARDEN SHARE, 1-3pm, & EDIBLE FRONT YARD LANDSCAPING by Ron Richter, 1pm, 5414 Franz Rd., Katy. Free. [facebook.com/groups/KatyHoustonAreaSeedPlantGardenShare/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/KatyHoustonAreaSeedPlantGardenShare/)

THURS., JULY 14: ANNUAL ICE CREAM SOCIAL, 7pm, Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion, 1500 Hermann Dr. Free. Houston Rose Society event.

THURS., JULY 14: GROWING GRAPES by RAYMOND HAAK, 10am, Clear Lake Meeting Room, 5001 Nasa Parkway. Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 event. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

MON., JULY 18: OPEN GARDEN DAY, 8:30-11am, Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd. Harris County Master Gardeners at Precinct 2 event. Free. hcmga.tamu.edu

SAT., JULY 23: PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA SHOW & SALE, 9:30am-3pm, Fort Bend Country Fairgrounds 4310 Texas Highway 36, Rosenberg. theplumeriasociety.org

SAT., JULY 23: AQUAPONICS, by ROBIN COLLINS, 9-10am; Galveston County AgriLife Extension Building, Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (Hwy 519), La Marque. Master Gardeners event. Free, but register: galv3@wt.net; <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/>

SAT., JULY 23: FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING, 9:30am-noon, Houston Museum of Natural Science, Moran Hall, 5555 Hermann Park Dr. Urban Harvest event. \$45. 713-880-5540; urbanharvest.org.

SAT., JULY 30: SUCCESSFUL FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING by LUKE STRIPLING, 9-11:30 am, Galveston County AgriLife Extension Building, Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St. (Hwy 519), La Marque. Master Gardeners event. Free, but register: galv3@wt.net; <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/>

SAT., AUG. 6 : PECKERWOOD INSIDER'S Tour, 10am, 20559 FM 359 Road, Hempstead. Garden Conservancy event. \$10. Register: peckerwoodgarden.org, 979-826-3232; info@peckerwoodgarden.org

SAT., AUG. 13: STARTING A COMMUNITY OR SCHOOL GARDEN WORKSHOP, 8:30am-2:30pm, University of St. Thomas, Malloy Hall, Rm 017, 2812 Yoakum Blvd Urban Harvest event. \$20. 713-880-5540; urbanharvest.org.

MON. AUG. 22, ORGANIC METHODS IN GARDENING- THE SOIL FOOD WEB, by John Ferguson, South Montgomery County Friends of The Library (SMCFOL), 2 PM, Mitchell Library, 8125 Ashland Way, The Woodlands, Sari Harris, 281-681-0470

TUES., OCT. 11: GROWING PLUMERIAS, 7:30pm, Cherie Flores Garden Pavillion, Hermann Park Conservancy, 1500 Hermann Dr. Free. Plumeria Society of America event. theplumeriasociety.org

WED., AUG 31: CHILDREN'S PHOTO AND PRESCHOOL PICTURE CONTESTS ENTRY DEADLINE. Matzke Butterfly Garden competition. Contest rules: matzkebutterflygarden.blogspot.com

OCT. 21-23: AMERICAN ROSE SOCIETY SOUTH CENTRAL DISTRICT CONVENTION. houstonrose.org.

**If we inspire you to attend any of these events,
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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.



COUPON: Nature's Way Resources. 50% off pomegranates, apples, asian pears and selected antique roses. (Offer good for retail purchases of this product (101 Sherbrook Circle, Conroe TX). Expires 06/30/16.