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OCTOBER 27, 2017

Dear Friends,

Here is the 227th 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. . . E mail your thoughts to: lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com. Thanks so much for your interest.

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READERS REPORT IN . . . ON MOLES, HELL STRIPS & MORE

By BRENDA BEUST SMITH

It's been great fun reading responses to our "Hell Strip" column and reader reports. Obviously these oh-so-common, narrow strips of soil -- between sidewalk and street, driveways and house walls, etc. -- are the bane of a lot of homeowners.

- Sue J. in Tomball noted no one mentioned soil home builders leave in these little strips is often contaminated by lime leached from adjacent concrete. That could be true. It never hurts to add organic matter to any soil before planting. Remember, with compost, *"You get what you pay for."*
- Missy T. in Santa Fe wondered if putting lattice against a brick wall would damage bricks? Three thought:
 - Roots from vines could grow into brick mortar loosening it.
 - On the other hand, many European and other ancient buildings have covered with vines for centuries, proof that vines can protect bricks from elements
 - To be sure, however, never put lattice flush against bricks. Use blocks of some kind between lattice and walls will also provide good air circulation that, in our hot humid climate, will help with plant health and reduce insect infestations.

* * *



Charlona Ingram sent in great pictures with her solutions. Her two such "Hell Strips" pictured above"

- Left, sidewalk-and-street strip
- Right, driveway-and-neighbor's fence strip



Above, hardy salvias great for butterflies and hummers include, l to r, 'Indigo Spires,' 'Coral Autumn Sage' and 'Amistad'

To her delight, Charlona's sidewalk-street strip now attracts butterflies, hummingbirds and bees. Her plantings include:

- Several salvia (probably 'Indigo Spires,' 'Amistad,' and 'Coral Autumn Sage')
- Sage Rose (*Turnera ulmifolia*)
- Fireworks (*Gomphrena*) and some verbena (shows up in Spring).



Above l to r: , examples of Fireworks (Gomphrena), Sage Rose (Turnera ulmifolia) and Verbena

Charlona's other "hell strip" - between driveway and fence - was truly a major challenge, she admits. But finally she's had success with bulbine there that loves the hot sun.



Bulbine, the low-growing plants at the bottom of Charlona's fence (left), are ideal for a sun-baked, low-water concrete-adjacent site. Fully mature bulbine, center, make thin- clumps with vivid yellow or orange flowers.

Three vines with electric colors are planted on Charlona's fence including mandevilla (pink flowers left above). Hopefully soon they'll be joined by Mexican flame vine and coral honeysuckle. The trick, she warns, "is to weave the vines along the fence so they don't hit the cars when we pull out."



L to r: *Mandevilla*, *Mexican Flame Vine*, and *Coral Honeysuckle*

ANOTHER GREAT CALADIUM REPLACEMENT WINTER BLOOMER suggestion came in from Margaret Cherry. This planting of *Primrose obconica* was taken several years ago on the corner of Winrock and Woodway. A cold weather annual for full or semi-shade, produces geranium-like blooms in pink, red, white, salmon and blue. They're less expensive than the cyclamens touted last week and are usually available in nurseries starting in November. The white border plants in front are alyssum, another great winter annual (one season only) for us.

Margaret, who is with the horticulture company Abbott-Ipco, is a fantastic resource not only for area nurseries, but for area gardeners as well. She'll be sharing tips on Bulb Planting, 10am, Sat., Nov. 11 at [Maas Nursery](#), 5511 Todville Road in Seabrook.in Seabrook. [Details & Pre-register](#).

ANOTHER HARVEY NOSE THUMB-ER: COTTON or CONFEDERATE ROSE (*Hibiscus mutabilis*). These are truly beautiful HUGE shrubs around town now. They're so prolific and so hardy across the South, it's said the name came from soaking up blood of fallen soldiers during the Civil War. the flowers (often very subtly) begin with a deep red bud, open wonderfully pink and fade to almost white when they die. This one is blooming in my sister Audrey's backyard.

She says most years she gets only a handful of flowers at a time. This year it is a mass of buds and blooms. The most spectacular mass plantings I look for every fall is on the Maximilian St./Miranda St. curve in North Harris County. It's an annual treat for me to drive by.



L to r, *Audrey's Hibiscus mutabilis* and *Margaret's primrose* picture.

- **MOLES, CON'T. - JUICY FRUIT SHOULD LOVE THIS ONE!** To discourage moles, Lillian Leeds said a friend in Nacogdoches recommended shoving Juicy Fruit gum (unwrapped, of course) into the mole's tunnel path. Best to use gloves when you do this. "It oddly works great," Lillian reports.
- **MEA CULPA!** Always appreciate it when readers correct something that's obviously misstated. Especially when, like Mark Fox, they "sandwich" the correction between two sweet things: Mark wrote:

"Love your column. Minor correction. *Cassia corymbosa* is not a Texas native. From Argentina. So many cassias available now. I love the cream colored one. I think most cassias are classified as *Sennas* now. Like *eupatoriums* aren't *eupatoriums* and *American asters* aren't *asters*. Go figure, I can't. Thanks for your column,"

Brenda's column in the LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER is based on her 40+ years as the Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener. To sign up for this free, weekly Greater Houston area gardening report or to read past issues, go to [www.natureswayresources .com](http://www.natureswayresources.com).

JOHN'S CORNER

NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS

We hear more and more each day about the use and importance of natural or essential oils. They have been used in the medicine of Egyptian, Chinese, Greek, and other cultures for thousands of years due to the benefits they provide. Modern research has found these essential oils effective against cancer. From the organization, "Truth About Cancer" the top oils are:

Frankincense - It is anti-inflammatory which works against all cancers as it inhibits enzymes responsible for inflammation. It boosts our natural immune function and stimulates the production of white blood cells. It reduces stress and improves circulation, and has been shown to contract and tone tissue, which helps speed regeneration. It provides neurological support including the ability to destroy toxins that may lead to neurological damage. Additionally, It has been known to ease arthritic pain, help balance hormones, promote skin health, and aid in our digestion. No wonder it was valued by the Wise Men, and given as a gift to baby Jesus.

Lavender - This oil contains the phytochemicals perillyl alcohol and linalool both of which have been found to support cancer healing. It is a known pain reliever and *Lavender angustifolia* is anti-tumoral. It has also been shown to reset programmed cell death lacking in cancer cells. It reduces the weight of tumors and inhibits cell growth. This oil reduces stress, depression, anxiety, supports immune system function, and improves the quality of our sleep. Additionally lavender's oils have anti-bacterial properties.

Myrrh - This oil has been known for its healing properties since antiquity. It has noticeable effects on cancer cell growth and contains anti-inflammatory properties. It promotes a healthy hormone balance, which is essential in healing cancer. It is used as a pain reliever and is anti-fungal.

Peppermint - This oil has anti-oxidant and cancer inhibiting properties, which suppress the growth of tumors. It has anti-angiogenic effects that prevent cancer from developing its own blood supply. It is a well-known antiseptic and contains antimicrobial components that fight respiratory infections, open wounds, tonsillitis, and laryngitis. It is also effective against several antibiotic resistant bacteria.

Tumeric (Curcumin) - Curcumin has been shown to inhibit enzymes such as the COX-2 that cause inflammation, which can lead to cancer. It activates genes that suppress tumors, starve cancer cells of the required food (sugar and simple carbohydrates), and prevents them from getting oxygen they need to live. Curcumin interferes with several other areas of cancer cell metabolism and prevents cancer stem cells from growing. This nutrient helps regulate blood sugar, speed the healing of wounds, helps prevent dementia, and other ailments.

Parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*) - Parsley oil come from the seeds, roots and leaves of this plant. The leaves are often used in many culinary dishes and as a garnish. This oil is an ingredient in soaps, cosmetics, detergents, colognes and perfumes. It has been used for centuries to treat various illnesses including jaundice and malaria. This oil has powerful antibacterial and antifungal properties that can help treat pimples, acne and skin infections. Parsley oil has been found to help prevent hair loss when diluted. Parsley oil exhibits antimicrobial, antiseptic, astringent, carminative, digestive, diuretic, and detoxifying properties.

Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*) - Comfrey is a perennial herb that has been used for centuries as a healing agent. The plant is native to Europe but is found all over the world. Comfrey contains the chemical "allantoin" a substance that promotes new skin cell growth, reduces inflammation, heal bruises, pulled muscles and ligaments (University of Maryland Medical Center). Historically it was used in tea form to help with stomach problems, and several other health issues. Comfrey also contains several chemicals that can be toxic to ones liver if consumed in large amounts.

How About Our Wild Greens?

Dandelions (*Taraxacum officinale*) - this herb has been used all over the world to help treat health problems for thousands of years. The name is from the Greek word *taraxos* meaning "disorder" and *akos* meaning remedy. Chemicals in dandelions dissolve cholesterol, lower blood sugar, stimulate our immune cells, and retard tumor formation. Dandelions are full of nutrition with more vitamin A than broccoli, carrots, or spinach. They are a good source of potassium, iron, calcium, zinc, and vitamin E. They also have enough vitamin C to prevent diseases like scurvy.

Lambs Quarters (*Chenopodium album*) - This herb has been used in Europe since the Bronze Age. Their leaves are a rich source on vitamins A & C, as well as folate, calcium, iron, protein, and good fiber.

Nettles (*Urtica dioica*) - nettles are exceptional when it comes to nutrition, containing 25% protein, calcium, magnesium, potassium, selenium, zinc, and vitamins A & C. In Europe, they are a traditional meal every spring as they start growing before many other greens. They can be used as a replacement for any green, mixed with other greens, and used in soups and stews.

Chickweed (*Stellaria media*) - This is another common weed with a long history of use for nutrition all over the world as it is one of the first greens to grow in spring. Birds love it, hence its common name. It is high in vitamin-C and phosphorous and taste like spinach when cooked. It has been used throughout history to treat inflammation and ulcers. It can be crushed and applied to sooth irritated skin. When brewed as a tea it has been found to help with colds and flu.

Purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*) - Purslane is a relative of chickweed that thrives in hot sandy soil, often where nothing else will grow. Purslane has the highest amount of the extremely beneficial omega-3 fatty acids of any plant. It contains more beta-carotene and six times more vitamin-E than spinach. It has very good levels of vitamins-A &C, along with iron, magnesium, and potassium.

Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) - This invasive plant from Europe is a pest but is highly nutritious. It is full of vitamins, iron, calcium, and omega-3 fatty acids. It is used in stuffing for pork or beef or mixed with other vegetables to give them a zesty flavor.

Hydrangeas sp. - Even many of our ornamental plants can have herbal or health benefits. This plants contains *hydrangin* a naturally occurring phyto-chemical which makes it effective against kidney stones. It also includes flavonoids like *kaempferol* and *quercetin*. Dr. Mercola has a long paper on the health benefits of hydrangeas on his website.

Some of the above information above came from the American Gardener Magazine 2016, Dr. Mercola's newsletters and a few other sources.

Trees are healthy!

- One study found that in areas without trees there was an abundance of disease carrying mosquitoes. Conversely, areas with lots of native trees had very few disease causing mosquitoes.
- Another study that covered 35 counties in the USA, found that in areas with greater tree cover, children had far less cases of diarrheal disease.

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LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER CALENDAR EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

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THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER!**

SAT., OCT. 28: REBUILD THE HEALTH OF YOUR LAWN & GARDEN AFTER HARVEY by JOHN FERGUSON, 11:30am, The Woodlands Fall Home & Garden Show, The Woodlands Waterway Marriott Hotel & Convention Center, 1601 Lake Robbins Drive. <http://www.woodlandsshow.com/saturday-organic-gardening-stage/>

SAT., OCT. 28: PECKERWOOD OPEN GARDEN DAY & TOURS, 10am-5:30pm, FOODSCAPING GARDEN TO TABLE by BRIE ARTHUR, 6:30pm, 20559 FM 359 Road, Hempstead. Register: peckerwoodgarden.org

SAT., OCT. 28: PLANTS FOR FLOOD DAMAGED LANDSCAPES SUITABLE FOR THE FALL SEASON by MARK BOWEN, 3:00pm, The Woodlands Fall Home & Garden Show, The Woodlands Waterway Marriott Hotel & Convention Center, 1601 Lake Robbins Drive. <http://www.woodlandsshow.com/saturday-organic-gardening-stage/>

SUN., OCT. 29: REBUILDING THE HEALTH OF YOUR LAWN AND GARDEN AFTER HARVEY by JOHN FERGUSON, 11:30am, Woodlands Fall Home and Garden Show, The Woodlands Waterway Marriott Hotel & Convention Center, 1601 Lake Robbins Drive.

SAT., NOV 4: HEAT TOLERANT CONIFERS OF PECKERWOOD GARDEN, 10am, 20559 FM 359 Road, Hempstead. \$15. Must register: eventregistration@peckerwoodgarden.org. peckerwoodgarden.org, 979-826-3232

SAT., NOV. 4: OPEN GARDENS DAY. AgriLife Extension Office, 9020 Airport Rd, Conroe. 9-1 a.m. Free. 936-539-7824; mcmga.com

SAT., NOV. 4: THE WOODLANDS GARDEN CLUB PLANT AND CRAFT SALE, 10am-2pm, 2017 Woodlands Wildflower Festival, Hughes Landing, The Woodlands. thewoodlandsgardenclub.org

SAT., NOV. 4: 45th ANNUAL HERB FAIR, 9am-2pm, Judson Robinson Community Center, 2020 Hermann Dr. South Texas Unit/The Herb Society of America event. herbsociety-stu.org/

THURS, NOV. 9: DESIGNING YOUR LANDSCAPE WITH ROSES by GAYE HAMMOND, 7:30pm, Cherie Flores Garden Pavillon, 1500 Hermann Dr. Free. Houston Rose Society event. houstonrose.org

THURS., NOV. 9: MAGNOLIAS: QUEEN OF THE GARDEN by ANDREW BUNTING, 7pm, Ina Brundrett Conservation Education Building, Pineywoods Native Plant Center, 2900 Raguet St, Nacogdoches. 936-468-4404 or sullivanfa@sfasu.edu

THURS., NOV. 9: CITRUS TREES by MARY KHAZEN KARISH, 10 am, MUD Building, 805 Hidden Canyon Dr, Katy. Free, Nottingham Country Garden Club event. ncgctx.org

FRI., NOV.10: "I DON'T WANT TO GIVE UP MY GARDEN! - GARDENING FOR THE CHALLENGED LIFESTYLE by DR. JOE NOVAK. 10am, White Oak Convention Center, 7603 Antoine. Free. Houston Federation of Garden Clubs event. houstonfederationgardenclubs.org.

TUES., NOV 14: USING YOUR WINTER GARDEN FOR HOLIDAYS BY BETTY LAHIRI, 9am, Shenandoah Municipal Complex, 29955 I-45N, Shenandoah. Free. The Woodlands Garden Club monthly meeting. thewoodlandsgardenclub.org

SAT. NOV 18: SOIL HEALTH & EVALUATION by JIM GILLIAM, 1-2:30 pm; Galveston County AgriLife Extension Bldg, Carbide Park, 4102 Main (Hwy 519), La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener event. Free, but reservations requested: galvcountrymgs@gmail.com, 281-534-3413, for additional details visit www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston

SA T., NOV. 18: PECAN CELEBRATION, 10am-noon Houston Arboretum & Nature Center, 4501 Woodway. \$35. Register: 713-681-8433, houstonarboretum.org

MON., Nov 20: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER PREC. 2 OPEN GARDEN DAY, 8:30-11am, Genoa Friendship Garden, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Rd, Houston 77034. Free. Master Gardeners will answer gardening questions. hcmga.tamu.edu

WED., NOV. 29: SOIL FOOD WEB - HOW AND WHY ORGANIC METHODS WORK TO SAVE TIME & MONEY by DANIEL MILLIKIN, 6pm, McGovern Centennial Gardens, Hermann Park Conservancy, 1700 Hermann Drive. 713-360-1469

FRI., DEC. 8: 'HOLLY JOLLY' LUNCHEON GALA. SPEAKER: BILL MCKINLEY. 9 am, White Oak Convention Center, 7603 Antoine. Tickets \$30. Houston Federation of Garden clubs event. houstonfederationgardenclubs.org.

THURS., DEC. 14: THE YEAR IN REVIEW by DAVID CREECH, 7pm, Ina Brundrett Conservation Education Building, Pineywoods Native Plant Center, 2900 Raguet St, Nacogdoches. 936-468-4404 or sullivanfa@sfasu.edu

FRI., JAN. 12: A CAMELIA COLLECTION - RESTORING IMA HOGG'S CAMELIA COLLECTION AT BAYOU BEND by BART BRECHTER. 10 am. White Oak Convention Center, 7603 Antoine, Free. Houston Federation of Garden Clubs event. houstonfederationgardenclubs.org.

SUN., JAN. 28: AVOID STARVATION: DEVELOPING THE RIGHT FEEDING PROGRAM FOR PLANTS AND FACTORS THAT MAKE FERTILIZERS INEFFECTIVE by GAYE HAMMOND, 2-3pm. Klein United Methodist Church, Christian Life Center, 5920 FM 2920, Spring. Free. Cypress Creek Daylily Club event. cypresscreekdaylilyclub.simplesite.com

SUN., FEB. 25: DAYLILY BLOOM DESCRIPTION by JEANNIE MALLICK, 2pm-3pm. Klein United Methodist Church, Christian Life Center, Room #C112, 5920 FM 2920, Spring, TX 77388. Free. Cypress Creek Daylily Club event. www.cypresscreekdaylilyclub.simplesite.com

MON., FEB. 26: SOIL FOOD WEB & COMPOST AND MULCHES, 9am-noon, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Road, Humble. Texas Gulf Coast Gardener program. Register: Jennifer L. Garrison, 713-274-4160

FRI., MAR.9: THOSE ADDORABLE HUMMERS by SUE HEATH. 10 am. White Oak Convention Center., 7603 Antoine. Free. Houston Federation of Garden Clubs event. houstonfederationgardenclubs.org

SUN., MAR. 25: STEWARDSHIP OF THE SOIL by JOHN FERGUSON, 6pm, Sunday Evening Conversations on Creation Webinar, Lisa Brenskelle, brenskelle@aol.com

SUN., MAR. 25: HIBISCUS CARE by MARTI GRAVES, 2pm-3pm. Klein United Methodist Church, Christian Life Center, Room #C112, 5920 FM 2920, Spring, TX 77388. Free. Cypress Creek Daylily Club event. www.cypresscreekdaylilyclub.simplesite.com

FRI., APRIL 13: THE WORLD OF SEED by ANGELA CHANDLER. 10am., White Oak Convention Center, 7603 Antoine, Free. Houston Federation of Garden Clubs event. houstonfederationgardenclubs.org.

MON., MAY 14: INTRODUCTION TO THE SOIL FOOD WEB by JOHN FERGUSON, 6:30pm, University of Houston at Clear Lake, Forest Room on East of Bayou Building. Native Plant Society of Texas at Clear Lake Martha Richeson, 713-962-7747

FRI. MAY 11: HONEY BEES - JAMES AND CHARI OF BLUEBONNET BEEKEEPERS. 10am. White Oak Convention Center, 7603 Antoine. Free. Houston Federation of Garden Clubs event. houstonfederationgardenclubs.org.

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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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