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MAY 31, 2018

Dear Friends,

Here is the 252nd 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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WILDFLOWER WINNING! SIGNS HELP . . . TOUTING TOMATOES . . . GIVING UP ON PLANTS? . . . CUTTING GARDEN IDEAS

"Where flowers bloom so does hope"

-- Lady Bird Johnson

BY BRENDA BEUST SMITH

TIP O' THE TROWEL TO THOSE ALLOWING WILDFLOWERS TO RESEED! You're following in the footsteps of Lady Bird Johnson. Thank her for our wonderful Texas wildflower-lined highways.

"Thanks!" too to whoever mows Galveston's historic Broadway Blvd. cemeteries (left below). This 15-acre memorial site is actually three levels of seven different cemeteries dating back over 175 years. In many cases you're only seeing the top 1/3 or so of the mausoleums & statuary. The rest on many is buried as the island has been raised over the years. ([nps.gov/nr/feature/places/pdfs/14000340.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/pdfs/14000340.pdf))

All of which makes it all the more wonderful that the Isle's powers-that-be now allow this massive spread of yellow coreopsis and other beautiful wildflowers to bloom freely and then reseed before mowers take over. It wasn't that long ago my cousin Diane Beust Criss (a BOI - born on island) was one of many speaking out when mowers cut these same wildflowers down before they reached their prime.

So glad the Galveston powers-that-be listened.



I hope the same "Lady Bird" spirit descends on Richie Brothers Auctioneers. Through March, April and into May, I was so grateful they left unmowed this huge unpaved, prairie-like strip of land (right above) along Bender Rd east of the Eastex Freeway. It was a virtual paradise bouquet of pink evening primroses, yellow dandelion flowers, white crow poison, and more others than I could name.

Finally wrote to thank them, and confirm this is really Richie land. Never heard back. But my wildflower panorama is still there so maybe someone listened? Those early bloomers have had plenty of time to reseed. Now the field is a mass of yellow and orange wildflowers, mostly tickseed (a type of coreopsis), Indian blankets, etc. I just hope, guys, you will put off mowing this strip until these too have had time to reseed. (Or, at least til this column is out.)

I don't mean to ascribe lovecraftian intentions to lawnmowing. Weeds do quickly get out of control. But Lady Bird proved it's not only possible, it's actually a money-saver to compromise with nature. Let us enjoy and treasure the wildflowers. By the time half the blooms have faded, enough seed should have been dropped to ensure future flowers. Decades ago, Lady Bird persuaded the Texas Legislature we would save literally MILLIONS of \$\$\$ by cutting out just the first one or two mowings. That got their attention. She got her way.

Now everyone thrills at, and takes for granted, the bluebonnets, Indian paintbrushes, etc., that bring smiles to passing motorists. But back then, it took time and effort to persuade the public as well as powers-that-be

to think outside the box just for the short period that the wildflowers need to reseed. Lady Bird did it.

When the City of Houston first started letting the wildflowers reseed in Memorial Park's Woodway medians, outraged motorists were quick to protest. Wise city folks (probably Dee Howell) stuck out **"Be Patient. Wildflowers reseeding"** signs. Protests stopped almost immediately.

Here are some signs I made up to demonstrate to garden clubs how they can stop protests if they want to protect wildflower patches in their areas from mowers long enough to reseed.



Feel free to copy these signs. Or, if you'd like a jpg to print out yourself, I'll be glad to share. No charge. Email lazygardener@sbcglobal.net.

* * *

TOMATO PRIZE TIME! We used to have dozens of Best Tomato Contests/Tastings around town. Don't seem to have so many anymore, but we will be happy to publicize here any tomato celebrations and report on winners of competitions (be sure to include variety of winners):

- **SAT., JUNE 2:**
 - **URBAN HARVEST EASTSIDE FARMERS MARKET TOMATO FEST & CONTEST**
 - 8am-noon, 3000 Richmond Rd. Free urbanharvest.org
 - **WESTBURY COMMUNITY GARDENS 5TH ANNUAL TOMATO TASTING,**
 - 10-11:30am, 12581 Dunlap St. <http://westburycommunitygarden.org/events/5th-annual-tomato-tasting>
- **SAT., JUNE 9:**
 - **THE ARBOR GATE TOMATO CONTEST.**
 - 10am, 15635 FM 2920, Tomball. Judges: Bill Adams, Jeremy Kollaus, Chef Chris Crowder. Free. arborgate.com; 281-351-8851.
 - **BRAZORIA COUNTY MASTER GARDENER TOMATO CELEBRATION/OPEN GARDEN**
 - 9am-noon, Brazoria Environmental Education Station (BEES) garden center, Angleton. Herbal pairing with tomatoes demonstration by Lee Withers, and 10am Tomato Culture talk by Stephen Bruggerhoff. Free. <https://brazoria.agrilife.org>; 979-864-1558

Even if yours is just a neighborhood competition, not open to the public-at-large, we would still like to know which varieties won by whom. Be glad to give them a public Tip o' the Trowel. Pictures welcome.

* * *

CELEBRATE - THEN DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO GIVE UP PLANTS

Barbara Cegielski is still patiently waiting for her treasured yucca to return from (she hopes) winter dormancy. But it's getting tough. Yuccas have been surviving on the Gulf Coast for centuries with no help whatsoever from us. Unless this plant was weakened going into Harvey/winter, it should come back.

But plants have really been challenged recently. Winds, floods, prolonged freezes, you name it. Those that endured earned our utmost respect. They've also earned a little extra time to get their acts back together.

My general rule is don't give up until July 4. If along with your patriotic celebrations, you aren't also celebrating the return of green growth, then no one should fault you for giving up.

Even at that, my Mexican bauhinia took three years to and then two feet north of its original site! Not that I ever thought of digging up the deadwood. Lazy gardeners tend to be extremely patient gardeners - which sounds nicer than saying we're just too lazy to replace a plant!

Having said this, however, I do understand while plant roots may or may not be active underground, the end result is a bare spot and/or dead stalks above ground and that's not always acceptable. Two thoughts:

1. It's just a plant. If you can afford to replace it, and want to replace it, replace it.
2. If it's a plant you'd really like to see return if at all possible, cut the dead stalks back (they won't return). Then plant some summer annuals around the spot.

Nurseries are full of beautiful bedding plants right now, many of which will not last anyway once it starts getting truly blasting dry and hot. Plant those over the "dead" spot and just keep an eye out for the old growth reappearing.



Mexican bauhinia, left, and hamelia

True story: When hummingbird bushes (Hamelia) came on the retail market (seems 100 years ago now), they were very popular. Then folks discovered if they died back in hard winters, they take a LONG time to come back out in spring. Often as late as May.

Most gardeners don't have much patience. They assumed these very hardy, South Florida native shrubs had died over winter. Some enterprising retailers began selling hummingbird bushes as annuals that must be replaced every spring! Gardeners bought it at first. But we're too sharp for that to have lasted long.

If you really love a plant, get to know it. Do a bit of research before chucking it into the compost pile.

* * *

CUTTING GARDENS - NEED YOUR INPUT! Now I have a favor to ask. Are there bedding plants (not shrubs) you grow regularly to use as cut flowers? If so, are they part of your landscape beds or do you have a special cutting garden? Would love to share your experiences.

Becky S. wants to start a cutting garden. Cutting gardens are, in many ways, much easier than "landscape gardens." Actual flower choices should be the final step. First you need to plan the bed.

- No need to worry about design, or attractive combinations. The garden's size and shape really doesn't matter either.
- Locate the garden where gaping holes in plantings won't matter, i.e., out of general sight lines.
- Most flowers, especially those best for cutting, prefer a sunny spot
- Careful spacing of plants isn't necessary. Usually taller stalks are better for cutting. Planting closer together than usual will often encourage this extra vertical growth.
- If beds can be raised, so much the better. Less bending to cut!

- Pick an easy access site so you'll pick flowers often. The more you cut, usually the more flowers produced.
- Use your own arm's reach to determine depth of beds to make cutting as easy as possible.

After all this is decided, it's time to think about what to plant. The frustrating problem with simply googling "cutting gardens," most recommended plants are those we plant in our early spring (February-March). Larkspur, hollyhocks, snapdragons, Shasta daisies, etc., usually cannot take our summers.

So check local sources before planting any of their recommendations now. Easier now to look for -- ask for -- good cutting plants that will survive our heat, drought and often intermittent monsoons. Many may be brand new to you. Raised beds help with these latter challenges and the organic matter you'll add will help roots cope with droughts. Some that should work include these below:



Above, l to r, bee balm, black-eyed Susans, celosia, sun coleus, coreopsis, cosmos, echinacea, gomphrena. Below, liatris, red hot poker, salvias, sunflowers, Mexican sunflower, yarrow, zinnias



If you're knowledgeable enough to find specific varieties, that's great. If not, look for flowers you like, rather than searching hours for specific varieties. So many different varieties are now identified by the same common name, especially in box stores.

For example, black-eyed Susan is used for a number of totally different plants. Ditto for sunflower. Once you start growing some, you'll begin to recognize which ones you do, and don't, like. Even more important, which do and don't like you!

Independent nurseries are far more likely to carry the hardiest plants for your area. They want -- need! -- your repeat business so they want you to be successful.

Some years ago, Kathy Huber did a great Houston Chronicle article on cutting gardens with great tips: blog.chron.com/houstongrows/2011/04/pick-these-flowers-a-cutting-garden-brings-seasons-of-blooms/ Also at www.wildflower.org, there's a Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center's "Cut Flowers" list.

NOW, BACK TO MY FAVOR, what popular summer garden flowers do you find work well as cut flowers? And do you have a cutting garden? Email me at lazygardener@sbcglobal.net. I'd love to share your recommendations.

* * *

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 read past issues, go to natureswayresources.com

JOHN'S CORNER

NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS #46

A growing problem is that many of our pets are developing cancer. They roll around in landscapes treated with toxic chemicals, from some of the dyes on colored mulch, to coal ash to harmful chemicals in artificial fertilizers. Each year, over 12 million dogs and cats are diagnosed with cancer... here's what you can do to SAVE them. A recent article speaks to this issue and gives the links to a documentary on how to protect our pets.

<https://www.naturalnews.com/2018-03-22-each-year-over-12-million-dogs-and-cats-are-diagnosed-with-cancer-heres-what-you-can-do-to-save-them.html>

A study from Michigan State University (Journal of Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment) has found that farmers whom have take steps to increase the number of birds and other wildlife on their land have actually increased yields and profits. Farmers are also learning how to use predator birds to control pest birds that eat crops from cherries to blueberries. By installing nest boxes the natural helpers like American Kestrels (small falcons) come in and nest preventing the pest birds from doing damage. Additionally they control rodents from voles to rats that kill fruit trees by gnawing on their bark and roots. Similarly, several times over the years I have read about gardeners whom got rid of squirrels that were damaging their fruit by installing nest boxes for owls.

A paper in the Proceedings of The National Academy of Sciences (January 2018) has found that salinity and alkalinity have significantly increased across 37% and 90% respectively of the drainage area of the continental USA. This was primarily due to the prolonged use of chemical salts as fertilizer (e.g. artificial fertilizers) and road de-icing treatments, and the accelerated weathering of mined areas and from construction materials like concrete.

The Rodale Institute along with scientists and others have developed a new third- party standard for regenerative organic agriculture (RO Certification). When completed in will go beyond current "USDA organic" by establishing higher standards for soil health, land management, animal welfare, farmer and worker fairness.

One of our native shrubs has been recently dubbed a "super food" for all the health benefits it provides. It is the common native American Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*). Elderberry is a perennial multi-trunked shrub that will grow into large colonies. This plant has beautiful white flower clusters all summer that are essential and irresistible for pollinating insects especially bees and butterflies. Many parts of the plant are edible from the delicious flowers to the fruits that are used to make many things from juice to jelly and jams to wine. Elderberries grow best when there are two groups to help complete pollination for larger fruit set. Elderberries are a very tough plant and the ones in our nursery came through the floods of Harvey and the freezes and did not blink an eye and are already full of flowers. For more information see <http://ecofarmingdaily.com> for additional information.

One of the reasons gardeners are moving away from peat moss or pine bark based potting media is the shrinkage which can cause many problems after a while. For example a study published in the Soil Science Society of America Journal (10/2017) found that in spite of pine barks high C:N ratio it will degrade by 50% in just five years. When one uses artificial fertilizers and irrigation water then the degradation occurs faster.

In gardening we sometimes hear the words "living mulch" while in agriculture it is called "cover crops". A study in the Journal Agricultural & Environmental Letters has found using a multi-species cover crop significantly increased soybean yield, moisture content, and soil inorganic nitrogen (N) content compared with single and double species cover crops. This supports other studies where the greater diversity of plants then the greater the benefit to the eco-system.

The reasons to grow our own fruits and vegetables organically continues to increase. One of these is depression which is a often symptom of nutrient deficiency. Over 13 million Americans now take medications every day for this issue. Several studies have found that a shortage of magnesium (Mg) is one cause of depression. From our study of the elements and minerals we know that 90% of Americans are magnesium deficient and the leading cause is eating foods with glyphosate (Round-Up) on them, especially GMO foods which have very high levels of glyphosate. People diagnosed with depression are also often low in the element zinc (Zn) and low in vitamin D. Experienced gardeners know that growing our own food on mineral rich soils (amended with greensand, granite sand and basalt sand) produces nutrient rich foods and the sunlight allows our bodies to produce vitamin D.

A new study in the Journal Animal by a team of scientists in Europe found that animal (live stock) health and performance was positively associated with the level of soil organic carbon (organic matter). Just by changing their grazing patterns for the animals, they were able to increase soil carbon and increase the sustainability and profit of the farms.

A study published in the Soil Science of America journal has found that chipped branches and limbs influence soil and water conservation. The mulch reduced erosion and increased water infiltration rate directly proportional to the amount of mulch applied. This study found the same results that Canada's department of Forestry found decades ago.

Another study in the Journal of Agronomy found that *fresh* woodchip mulches produced from branches and limbs has allopathic effects and suppressed some weeds. The mulch particles were less than two inches in size and had a carbon to nitrogen (C:N) ratio of 47. Weed biomass decreased as the amount of mulch used (thickness) increased. However, crop yields also decreased. After five years of mulching soil organic carbon significantly increased.

In the Journal HortScience (April 2018) there is a study comparing artificial fertilizers and organic fertilizers on growing onions by the University of Georgia. Nutrient content of the bulbs fertilized organically were significantly higher in concentrations of phosphorous (P), potassium (K), calcium (Ca), magnesium (Mg), sulfur (S), boron (B), iron (Fe), copper (Cu), and manganese (Mn). Another

study in the same issue by the same group found that the percentage of extra large bulbs also increased with increasing organic fertilization rates. They also concluded that if they had used higher levels of organic fertilizer they would have increased total and marketable yield even more.

* * *

LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER CALENDAR EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

**DON'T SEE YOUR ORGANIZATION EVENT LISTED? DID YOU SEND IT IN?
NO EVENTS ARE PICKED UP FROM OTHER NEWSLETTERS, MASS RELEASES, OTHER PUBLICATIONS, ETC.**

**Events NOT submitted in EXACT written calendar format below may take 2+ weeks to be posted.
Adult gardening/plants events only -- If you don't see your submitted event, email us**

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**_IF WE INSPIRE YOU TO ATTEND ANY OF THESE EVENTS, PLEASE TELL SPONSORS YOU HEARD ABOUT IT
IN THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER**

SAT. JUNE 2: SUCCESSFUL VEGETABLE GARDENING by HERMAN AUER, 9-11 am; Crystal Beach Fire & Rescue, 930 Noble Carl Drive, Crystal Beach. Galveston County Master Gardener event. Free. Register: galvcountymgs@gmail.com, 281-309-5065. aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/

SAT., JUNE 2: A PASSION FOR PLUMERIA with LORETTA OSTEEN, 1-3 pm, Galveston County AgriLife Extension Bldg, Carbide Park, 4102 Main (Hwy 519), La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener event. Free. Register: galvcountymgs@gmail.com, 281-309-5065. aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/

SAT., JUNE 2: URBAN HARVEST EASTSIDE FARMERS MARKET TOMATO FEST, 8am - 12pm, 3000 Richmond. urbanharvest.org

THURS., JUNE 7: HEIRLOOM VEGETABLES by PAM AND LEAH GUNTER, 9-10 am; Waller County Extension Office, 846 6th St., Hempstead. Waller County Master Gardener event. Free. RSVP: wallermgardener2013@gmail.com, 979-826-7651

FRI., JUNE 8: AQUAPONICS WORKSHOP, 9:00am-3:30pm, Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Rd. \$45. Harris County Master Gardener event. Register: <https://aquaponicsworkshop.eventbrite.com>

MON., JUNE 9: CHILDREN'S GARDEN GRAND OPENING, 10am-12:30pm, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free.

SAT., JUNE 9: PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA SHOW & SALE, 9:30am-3pm, Bay Area Community Center, 5002 Nasa Road One, Seabrook. Free. theplumeriasociety.org

SAT., JUNE 9: LOW VOLUME IRRIGATION (HMNS), 9:30-11:30am, Houston Museum of Natural Science. \$30. Urban Harvest event. Register: 713-880-5540; urbanharvest.org/classes-calendar

SAT., JUNE 9: ADDING BUTTERFLIES TO GARDEN, 8-10am, & BREEDING QUEEN BEES NICOT METHOD, 10:30am-12:30pm, AgriLife Extension Office, 9020 Airport Rd. Conroe. \$5/session; \$8 both. Montgomery County Master Gardener event. 936-539-7824; mcmga.com

SAT., JUNE 9: THE ARBOR GATE TOMATO CONTEST. 10am, 15635 FM 2920, Tomball. Judges: Bill Adams, Jeremy Kollaus, Chef Chris Crowder. arborgate.com; 281-351-8851

SAT., JUNE 9: BRAZORIA COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS TOMATO CELEBRATION, 9am-noon, Brazoria Environmental Education Station (BEES) garden center, Angleton. brazoria.agrilife.org; 979-864-1558

WED., JUNE 13: BUTTERFLY GARDENING, noon-2pm, Mercer Botanic Gardens West Side Arboretum Pavilion, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: 713-274-4160.

THURS., JUNE 14: 25 YEARS OF CHANGES & CHALLENGES IN THE RAINFOREST PYRAMID by Donita Brannon, 10-11:30am, Genoa Friendship Gardens Educational Center Building, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Road, Pasadena. Free. Harris County Master Gardener event & plant sale. 713-274-0950; hcmga.tamu.edu

THURS, JUNE14: ORGANIC ROSE PROTOCOLS & PLANT HEALTH by DANIEL MILLIKIN, 7pm, Cherie Flores Garden Pavillion, 1500 Hermann Dr. Free. Houston Rose Society event. houstonrose.org

SAT., JUNE 16: ORCHID CARE, 10am-noon, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. \$40. Register: themercersociety.org/events

SAT., JUNE 16: PROPAGATION & SEED SAVING, 10:30am-12:30pm, Maud Smith Marks Library, 1815 Westgreen Blvd., Katy. Free. Harris County Master Gardener event. 713-274-0950; hcmga.tamu.edu

SAT. JUNE 16: SOIL HEALTH by JIM GILLIAM, 1-3 pm. Galveston County AgriLife Extension Bldg, Carbide Park, 4102 Main (Hwy 519), La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener event. Free. Register: galvcountrymgs@gmail.com, 281-309-5065. aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/

SUN., JUN 17: GROWING FERNS FROM SPORE by JOAN HUDSON & PATRICK HUDNALL, 2pm, Judson Robinson Jr. Community Center, 2020 Hermann Dr. Free. Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society event. tgcfernsoc.org.

MON., JUNE 18: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS OPEN GARDEN DAY & PLANT SALE, 9-11am, Genoa Friendship Gardens Educational Center Building, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Road, Pasadena. Free. 713-274-0950; hcmga.tamu.edu

TUES., JUNE 19: PROPAGATION AND SEED SAVING - 6:30-8:30pm, Spring Branch Memorial Library, 930 Corbindale. Harris County Master Gardener event. Free. 713-274-0950; hcmga.tamu.edu

TUES., JUN. 19: SHADY SECRETS OF BROMELIADS by JOHN SCHMIDT, 7pm, West Gray Multi-Service Center, 1475 W Gray. Free. Bromeliad Society / Houston event. bromeliadsocietyhouston.org

THURS., JUNE 21: PROPAGATION AND SEED SAVING, 6:30-8:30pm, Freeman Branch Library, 16616 Diana Lane. Free. Harris County Master Gardener event. 713-274-0950; hcmga.tamu.edu

TUES., JULY 10: PLUMERIAS!, 7:30pm, Cherie Flores Garden Pavillion, Hermann Park Conservancy, 1500 Hermann Dr. Plumeria Society of America event. Free.

WED., JULY 11: PUTTING WETLANDS TO WORK IN YOUR HOMETOWN, noon - 2pm, Mercer Botanic Gardens West Side Arboretum Pavilion, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: 713-274-4160.

SAT., JULY 14: WATER & YOUR YARD-BASICS, 8-10am, & WATER & YOUR YARD-ADVANCED, 10:30am-12:30pm, AgriLife Extension Office, 9020 Airport Rd. Conroe. \$5/session; \$8 both. Montgomery County Master Gardener event. 936-539-7824; mcmga.com

SAT., JULY 21: MONARCHS ON THE MOVE, 10am-noon, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. \$40. Register: themercersociety.org/events

FRI., JULY 27: HOUSTON FOOD PRODUCTION CONFERENCE, 9am-3:30pm, University of Houston Downtown, 201 Girard. Harris County Master Gardener event. \$50 (\$30/students).

FRI., AUG., 10: GREATER HOUSTON ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMIT. Citizens' Environmental Coalition event. cechouston.org

SAT., AUG. 18: THE ART OF KOKEDAMA: JAPANESE GARDENING, 10am-noon, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. \$40. Register: themercersociety.org/events

THURS., SEPT. 6: ROSES by GAYE HAMMOND, 9-10 am; Waller County Extension Office, 846 6th St., Hempstead. Free. Waller County Master Gardener event. RSVP: wallermgardener2013@gmail.com, 979-826-7651

SAT., SEPT. 15: TERRARIUM TIME, 10am-noon, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. \$40. Register: themercersociety.org/event

If we inspire you to attend any of these, please let them know you heard about it in . . .

THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS NEWSLETTER!

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ABOUT US

BRENDA BEUST SMITH

WE KNOW HER BEST AS THE LAZY GARDENER . . .

. . . but Brenda Beust Smith is also:

- * a national award-winning writer & editor
- * a nationally-published writer & photographer
- * a national horticultural speaker
- * a former Houston Chronicle reporter

When the Chronicle discontinued Brenda 's 45-year-old "Lazy Gardener" print column a couple of years ago, it ranked as the longest-running, continuously-published local newspaper column in the Greater Houston area.

Brenda 's gradual sideways step from Chronicle reporter into gardening writing led first to an 18-year series of when-to-do-what Lazy Gardener Calendars, then to her *Lazy Gardener's Guide* book and now to her *Lazy Gardener's Guide* on CD (which retails for \$20. However, \$5 of every sale is returned to the sponsoring group at her speaking engagements).

A Harris County Master Gardener, Brenda has served on the boards of many Greater Houston area horticulture organizations and has hosted local radio and TV shows, most notably a 10+-year Lazy Gardener run on HoustonPBS (Ch. 8) and her call-in "EcoGardening" show on KPFT-FM.

Brenda recently ended her decades-long stint as Production Manager of the Garden Club of America's **BULLETIN** magazine. Although still an active horticulture lecturer and broad-based freelance writer, Brenda's main focus now is **THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER** with John Ferguson and Mark Bowen of Nature's Way Resources.

A native of New Orleans and graduate of St. Agnes Academy and the University of Houston, Brenda lives in Aldine and is married to the now retired Aldine High School Coach Bill Smith. They have one son, Blake.

Regarding this newsletter, Brenda is the lead writer, originator of it and the daily inspiration for it. We so appreciate the way she has made gardening such a fun way to celebrate life together for such a long time.

JOHN FERGUSON

John is a native Houstonian and has over 27 years of business experience. He owns Nature's Way Resources, a composting company that specializes in high quality compost, mulch, and soil mixes. He holds a MS degree in Physics and Geology and is a licensed Soil Scientist in Texas.

John has won many awards in horticulture and environmental issues. He represents the composting industry on the Houston-Galveston Area Council for solid waste. His personal garden has been featured in several horticultural books and "Better Homes and Gardens" magazine. His business has been recognized in the Wall Street Journal for the quality and value of their products. He is a member of the Physics Honor Society and many other professional societies. John is 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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