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June 15th, 2018

Dear Friends,

Here is the 254th 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](mailto:lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com). Thanks so much for your interest.

Please [click here](#) or sign yourself up to receive this newsletter by clicking the "Join Our Mailing List" link just below. We will never sell or share our mailing list to protect the privacy of our subscribers.

Enjoy!

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## UNIQUE GARDENS PROVIDE SPECIAL MOMENTS ... TOMATO CONTESTS CELEBRATE WINNERS

*"Don't live by your own rules, but in harmony with nature."*

- - Epictetus (c. 55 - c. 135 AD)

**BY BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

Gardens with special meanings, or a special focus, are always a little more interesting, certainly more rewarding, than just general landscaping. They don't have to be big or particularly complex plantings. Any spot that brings to mind a specific treasured thoughts, or solves a frustrating challenge, is worth treasuring. Our former neighbor Mel created spots in her yard for special folks she had lost, such as the one planted around a bicycle. I created a special spot to remember our beachhouse lost in Ike. Two delightful such gardens have come across my desk recently:

- Ingrid Hamilton created her "Marian Garden" (left above) as a special place to commemorate her Catholic faith and special devotion to the Virgin Mary. My late mother always had one with similar statuary so it touched a place in my heart too. In Ingrid's special niche are gerbera daisies, a red Robin Hood rose, red begonias and geraniums, montbretia, Jewel of Omar and lots of dill and mint. Unfortunately snails got the marigolds!
- Steve Moore's new special garden not only pleases him and adds curbside appeal, it appeased the power-that-be who insisted his previous corner planting was growing so happily, it was starting to obstruct traffic views. A victim of his own gardening success!



*Before & after -- left, Steve Moore's too-successful, drought-tolerant plantings eventually drew the ire of traffic powers-that-be. Center & right, the new non-view-blocking corner from two perspectives with different natural lighting conditions.*

Best known to Houstonians from his long years with Cornelius Nursery, Steve's old choices for curbside plantings (where watering is such a hassle) are actually great choices for hot, dry, hassle-to-water spots:

agave, yucca, opuntia, baptisia, hesperaloe, native asclepias and chasmanthium. Perhaps, tho, not right under a corner stop sign!

A low-profile solution seemed more appropriate. Steve had always wanted to try his hand at gravel gardening. Now with Cornelius Nursery's headquarters (Calloway's Nursery) in Fort Worth, Steve was delighted to learn this is an actual official gardening approach with design criteria and supporting research.

Two resources he particularly mentions are "Planting in a Post-Wild World" by Claudia West and "Perennials and their garden habitats" by Hansen & Stahl. The latter focused on plant communities, and how plants work together for their mutual survival. Steve noted, "One might wonder what this might have to do with a gravel garden, but having fought weeds and reading how having the right plants growing together would help solve the weed challenge, it all made sense."

And he particularly credits Beth Chatto's book "Drought Resistant Planting," which chronicle's how she created a gravel garden "out of a dry windswept parking lot."

Steve had long faced the weed problem of " *bermudagrass, yellow nutsedge, spurge, oaks and pecans planted by squirrels.*" The solution, he was advised, was to utilize something sustainable, not weed fabric.

*(If I may digress here, I found this fascinating. The house we bought post-Harvey, on a wonderful acre of land, was used as a home business. A great deal of the yard is either deep gravel and/or blacktop. I immediately decided to see which super-hardy drought tolerant plants would send down roots through -- and break up - blacktop. Stay tuned!)*

To prepare for his switch from soil to gravel, Steve spent weeks gathering newspapers to use over the existing soil. Newspapers were laid, 4-5 layers deep, over the soil, wetted well, then criss-crossed with twine to keep them from blowing away. Landscape staples helped anchor the twine. Over this he placed heavy craft paper. Rocks from the original bed helped anchor this layer.



Steve used three different sizes of gravel and decomposed granite augmented by native limestone pieces and nice large boulders to give a more natural look. The smaller-sized decomposed granite also acted as a stabilizer when it filtered down through the gravel, aiding in weed suppression to some extent.



***First newspaper, then heavy craft paper covered the soil.  
Right, v arious gravel sizes and shapes add eye interest.***

Older larger specimens from the original garden were transplanted to the new bed and to other areas. Steve's *Agave victoriae-reginae* were over 10 years old and survived transplanting without blinking. He used taller stones to hide them from the street, since these are somewhat prone to being stolen.

Excellent drainage is essential with drought-tolerant plants. Even though Steve lives to our north, he shares our soil drainage challenges. Added expanded shale (pea gravel will also work) protects roots from becoming waterlogged during heavy rain periods.

P. S. Steve's agave did die after blooming. But, unlike most of these agaves, it didn't produce any pups, as agave new plantlets are called. As ecologist Paul Ehrlich reminds us: *"Mother Nature always bats last."*



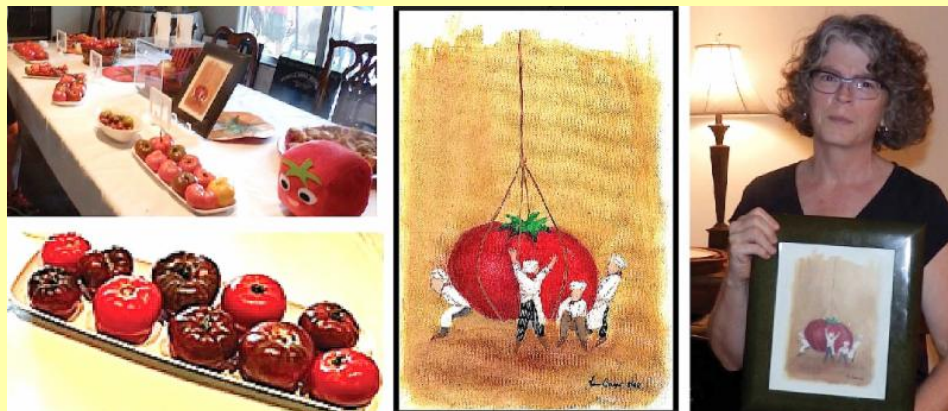
**Above, l to r, Pink muhly, Artemisia 'Silver Cascade,' Artemisia 'Silver Bullet,' dusty miller (Senecio) 'Angel Wings,' Lemon Ball and ice plant. Below, l to r, Calylophus Sundrops, Copper Canyon Daisy or Blackfoot Daisy, 'Brakelights' Hesperaloe (dwarf Red Yucca, H. parviflora), and Ambition Blue Grama Grass (Bouteloua gracilis Blonde Ambition PP#22,048).**



Among the plants Steve is considering for future planting in this Xeriscape (drought-tolerant) setting are pink Gulf Muhly on the backside, ground-creeping plants like Artemisia 'Silver Cascade' and/or Artemisia 'Silver Bullet,' that he thinks would look really great surrounding a couple of the boulders, creating a "boulder island" in a silver patch. A new Dusty Miller, Senecio 'Angel Wings' stays low and produces large round beautiful white leaves. Steve pictures this with a contrasting color of sedum like Lemon Ball or a hardy ice plant in fuchsia or magenta.

Also being considered are Calylophus Sundrop, Copper Canyon Daisy or Blackfoot Daisy. I've also fallen in love with 'Brakelights' Hesperaloe, a nice dwarf Red Yucca around the native H. parviflora. And a grass he loves, Blonde Ambition Blue Grama Grass (*Bouteloua gracilis Blonde Ambition PP#22,048*). ) might look nice near the Pink Muhly.

\* \* \*



**Maureen Spector and her tomato plate won the 2018 Houston Tomato Faceoff trophy plaque (center)**

## HOUSTON AREA TOMATO CONTEST WINNERS & TIPS ON SPONSORING A COMPETITION

### • HOUSTON TOMATO FACEOFF:

- Maureen Spector took home the trophy with her group of tomatoes (submission method) that included Cherokee purple (the favorite), Beefsteak & Early Girl. Small ones in winning group: Chocolate Cherry, Husky Cherry, and (small sized) Celebrity. Plus one single Green Zebra and pull-apart tomatoes called German Travelers.

### • WESTBURY COMMUNITY GARDEN 5TH ANNUAL TOMATO TASTING winners were:

- SLICER TOMATOES: 1st. Black Krim. 2nd. Cherokee Purple
- SALAD: Juliet
- PASTE: San Marzano
- CHERRY: 1st. Braveheart. 2nd. Sun Gold. 3rd (tie): Sugary & Sweet Chelsea

### • THE ARBOR GATE TOMATO CONTEST

- Best Tasting Small-Vic Rosato-Sungold
- Best Tasting Large-Vic Rosato-Tasmanian Chocolate
- Most Uniform Sample-Jason Newton-Tati's Wedding
- Largest By Weight-Tim Kava-Big Zac
- Prettiest Single Tomato-Jason Newton-Mexico
- Best Tasting Marinara-Sharon Cabral
- Best Tasting Bloody Mary-Ed McCrory
- Best Tasting Salsa-Sharon Cabral

\* \* \*

**WANT TO HOLD YOUR OWN TOMATO CONTEST?** Now's the time to start planning for one this fall or next spring. Tim Fleck from the Houston Tomato Faceoff says they judge on Best Looking (unsliced), Best Texture and Best Taste. Cherry tomatoes are judged on overall look and taste. Judges score entries on a scale of 1 to 5.

Westbury Community Garden's Debbie Gordon says competitors are ask to bring two pounds of tomatoes of each variety, so they have enough cut pieces for 60-8- tasters. Some competitors combine and bring one pound each. Other tips she shared:

- pick a date early for next year
- develop a score card - we score 1, 2 or 3 points for criteria like Sweetness, Tartness, Color, Texture, Seediness, Traditional Tomato Flavor, etc.
- talk up the event among your gardening friends
- 6 weeks before the event, contact gardeners with a "Call for Tomatoes." The growers must be sure they labeled their plants! They will have to anticipate what will be ripe on the date.
- When you get a preliminary list of tomatoes, prepare some info about each type to be revealed after the tasters have scored the samples.
- Advertise your event on Social Media.
- Expect the list of tomatoes to change in the last week - add or subtract.
- Do:
  - Let ripe fruits sit on the counter for a day or two to become fully ripe.
  - Have water and rather plain crackers or breads to "cleanse the palate" between tastes.
  - Save your notes to help plan what you want to plant next year
  - Warn competitors not to refrigerate tomatoes picked for the tasting.

\* \* \*

**RITCHIE BROS AUCTIONEERS RESPOND** Maxie S. wants to know if I ever heard from Ritchie Bros Auctioneers in response to my letter asking them not to mow the prairie-like section of their property before the wildflowers could reseed. After reading about my letter, she wrote to a company (she did not name) asking that they also postpone mowing until their adjacent wildflower-filled field could have time to reseed.

The good news, Maxie, is that, yes, I did hear back. Although our reasons may differ (Ritchie Bros mow four times a year right before their auctions), the end result is that my beloved spring and early summer wildflowers have had plenty of time to drop enough seed to ensure next spring's flowers. Yippee!!!!

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](http://natureswayresources.com)

\* \* \*

## JOHN'S CORNER

### NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS #48

A study in the Journal HortScience (May 2018) has found that plants grown in soil media grown with high levels of available silicon (Si) accumulated more silicon in their tissues especially in their roots. This made the plants more resistant to abiotic (non living factors) and biotic (living or dead factors) stresses.

A massive study by Utah State University with 98 scientists and thousands of field staff in 21 countries have found that the largest 1% of trees in mature forests comprised 50% of forest biomass worldwide. Big trees provide functions that small and medium size trees cannot. The study shows that it is critical to protect our mature forests for the ecosystem services they provide.

Research from the University of Bath has found that microbes are good investors. They have learned that even though of different species, they will work together for the common good. For example slime molds normally live as single cell creatures, but if food is scarce they will come together to form a slug-like feature and may eventually form a fruiting body (Science Daily, May 2018).

Research from the Soil Health Institute composed of dozens of Universities, has found that improving soil health provides the following benefits: boosts crop yield, enhances water quality, enhances water storage and infiltration, increases a plants drought resistance, reduces greenhouse emissions, increases carbon sequestration, provides pollinator habitat, and builds disease suppression. Soil improvement is the single most cost effective tool a gardener can do to have a beautiful lawn and garden. I remember growing up and my grandmother listening to Dewey Compton on his gardening radio show saying "It is far, far, far, far, cheaper to put a one dollar plant in a ten dollar hole, that a 10 dollar plant in a one dollar hole". This is still the biggest mistake gardeners do, they purchase low quality soils, mulch, and compost and when the plants die, they say I guess I do not have a green thumb.

A survey of 28 studies reported in Life Extension (June 2018) found that people experiencing their first psychotic episode were deficient in folate (one of the B vitamins) and vitamin D. Maybe another reason gardeners are healthier and happier as we get plenty of sunshine required for our bodies to make vitamin-D.

The fruit we know as pomegranate is full of health promoting bioactive compounds called polyphenols like tannins and flavonoids. Multiple studies now show that pomegranate has tremendously powerful chemo-preventative agent against prostate, breast, colorectal, and lung cancers (Life Extension (June 2018). This is another good reason to grow our own fruits and vegetables organically.

One of the most persistent problems gardeners deal with is weeds. A company in Switzerland has developed the first robotic weeder. It is solar powered and will move through a field and with artificial intelligence apply herbicides directly and only to the weed. I expect to see in the near future robotic weeders that are chemical free and use laser energy and or electrical current to kill weeds.

In past issues we talked about how dangerous fluoride in our water systems is to microbes in the soil and to many plants. The Fluoride Action Network has filed a lawsuit against the EPA under the Toxic Substance Control Act for lying and falsifying safety data on fluoride. They presented over 2,500 pages of scientific documentation detailing the dangers and health risks. As an example, a study published in the journal Environmental Health Perspectives has linked the fluoride in the urine of pregnant women to lower intelligence in their children. "At these levels a staggering loss of six IQ points". There are now 220 animal studies that link fluoride exposure to the disruption of various aspects of brain function. Over 40 animal studies that show fluoride interferes with the animals ability to learn and remember, and an additional 53 human studies show that fluoride exposure is associated with loss of IQ. Note: Many of these studies are at levels of exposure a lot less than what is in our water systems! Additionally, from our study on minerals (elements) last year, fluoride prevents the absorption of iodine (I) from the soil that is critical to the health of microbes, plants and animals.

Most gardeners love our butterflies and bees as well as other pollinators. For years we have known that a class of pesticides called neonicotinoids have been killing them and the EPA and USDA has failed to remove them despite overwhelming evidence. In April 2018 the European Union voted to ban neonicotinoids as they found them linked to the decline in butterflies, bees, aquatic insects, and birds.

Below is a link to a short video by Michael Pollan, a well known author, nutritionist, and activist on health. This is about how Russet Burbank potatoes are grown for the fast food industry. It illustrates the importance of growing and cooking our own food.

<https://www.facebook.com/11246196569/posts/10155583822026570/>

\* \* \*

## **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**

**lazygardener@sbcglobal.net**

**\_ 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 16: ORCHID CARE, 10am-noon, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. \$40. Register: [themercersociety.org/events](http://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](http://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](mailto:galvcountrymgs@gmail.com), 281-309-5065. [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/](http://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. [tgcferns.org](http://tgcferns.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](http://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](http://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](http://bromeliadsocietyhouston.org)

WED., JUNE 20: EVOLUTION OF ORGANIC -- STORY OF ORGANIC MOVEMENT, 6:30-9pm, Rice Cinema, Rice Media Center, Entrance 8, University at Stockton Dr Houston Green Film Series event. Free. [facebook.com/HoustonGreenFilmSeries/](https://facebook.com/HoustonGreenFilmSeries/)

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](http://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.

THURS., July 12: HUGELKULTUR GARDENING by MARY KARISH, 9-10 am; Waller County Extension Office, 846 6th St., Hempstead 77445. Waller County Master Gardener event. Free. RSVP [wallermgardener2013@gmail.com](mailto:wallermgardener2013@gmail.com), 979-826-7651 X 3068

THURS., JULY 12: BEGONIAS by Tony Collins & Plant Sale, 10-11:30am, Genoa Friendship Gardens Educational Center Building, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Road, Pasadena. Harris County Master Gardener event. Free. 713-274-0950; [hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

THURS., JULY 12: RAISED BEDS, DRIP IRRIGATION & RAIN BARRELS, 6:30-8:30pm, Barbara Bush Library, 6817 Cypresswood Dr., Spring. Harris County Master Gardener event Free. 713-274-0950; [hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

THURS, JULY 12: HOUSTON ROSE SOCIETY ICE CREAM SOCIAL AND SUMMER CELEBRATION 7pm, Cherie Flores Garden Pavillon, 1500 Hermann Dr. Free. [houstonrose.org](http://houstonrose.org)

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](http://mcmga.com)

SAT. JULY 14: IRISES FOR THE GULF COAST GARDEN by MONICA MARTENS, 1-3pm, AgriLife Extension Bldg, Carbide Park, 4102 Main (Hwy 519), La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener events. Free., Register: [galvcountrymgs@gmail.com](mailto:galvcountrymgs@gmail.com), 281-309-5065. [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html)

MON., JULY 16: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS OPEN GARDEN DAY & PLANT SALE, 9-11am, Genoa Friendship Gardens Educational Center Building, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Road, Pasadena. Free. Harris County Master Gardener event. 713-274-0950; [hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

TUES., JULY 17: A HOMEOWNER'S GIDE TO WEED CONTROL, 6:30-8pm; AgriLife Extension Bldg, Carbide Park, 4102 Main



(Hwy 519), La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener events. Free., Register: [galvcountrymgs@gmail.com](mailto:galvcountrymgs@gmail.com), 281-309-5065. [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html)

TUES., JULY 17: RAISED BEDS, DRIP IRRIGATION & RAIN BARRELS, 6:30-8:30pm, Spring Branch Memorial Library, 930 Corbindale, Houston. Harris County Master Gardener event. Free. 713-274-0950; [hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

THURS., JULY 19: RAISED BEDS, DRIP IRRIGATION & RAIN BARRELS, 6:30-8:30pm, Freeman Branch Library, 16616 Diana Lane, Houston. Harris County Master Gardener event. Free. 713-274-0950; [hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

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

SAT., JULY 21: RAISED BEDS, DRIP IRRIGATION & RAIN BARRELS - 10:30am-12:30pm, Maud Smith Marks Library, 1815 Westgreen Blvd., Katy. Harris County Master Gardener event. Free. 713-274-0950; [hcmga.tamu.edu](http://hcmga.tamu.edu)

TUES., JULY 24: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS OPEN GARDEN DAY, 10-11:15am, Weekley Community Center, 8440 Greenhouse Rd., Cypress. Free. Register by July 22: [ogd.harrishort@gmail.com](mailto:ogd.harrishort@gmail.com)

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](http://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](http://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](mailto: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](http://themercersociety.org/event)

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

**THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS NEWSLETTER!**

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**SUBMITTING AN EVENT FOR THIS CALENDAR.**

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.

Sorry, no children's programs. - Submit to: [lazygardener@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lazygardener@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 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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