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November 29, 2018

Dear Friends,

Here is the 276 th 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. (John is 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.

Please 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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Pictured at top left is Cicely Mary Barker's "Fairy of the Rose."

FAIRY IN THEIR OWN GARDEN OR IN YOURS NEW! "HAVE YOU TRIED . . ."

*Best and dearest flower that grows / Perfect both to see and smell
Words can never, never tell / Half the beauty of a Rose -
Buds that open to disclose / Fold on fold of purest white,
Lovely pink or red that glows. / Deep, sweet-scented. What delight
To be the Fairy of the Rose*

-- "Flower Fairies of the Summer" by Cicely Mary Barker (1895-1973)

By BRENDA BEUST SMITH

ONE OF THE MOST FUN GARDEN articles I was ever assigned by a magazine was to be on Fairy Gardens. This was many decades ago, before they became a popular concept. I knew nothing about fairies and became so engrossed with my historical research, I found myself totally mesmerized (maybe that's what fairies do to one?) and soon had my own garden filled with small wrought iron fairy silhouettes.

Unfortunately, the editor of that particular magazine decided it was not "appropriate" for his magazine. His stupid loss, my gain. That story not only appeared in the Houston Chronicle, I sold rewrites to several other magazines.

Some folks seem to love fairy gardens because they love tiny plants, creating miniature worlds inhabited by delicate ferns or mini blooms. Others are more like me, into the fun, happy aspect of suddenly spying a fairy shadow behind a clump of greenery, or in among the usual garden flowers. Below are pictured a few of my own fairy silhouette friends:



*My only colorful fairy is at far right. Her apron quotes famed horticulturist JC Raulston:
"IF YOU AREN'T KILLING PLANTS, YOU AREN'T REALLY STRETCHING YOURSELF AS A GARDENER"*

Many folks warn that not respecting the role of fairies in gardens is a sure way to invite havoc in the landscape. One ancient legend says when Lucifer called for the angels in Heaven to follow him, some did. Others sided with Archangel Michael, electing to stay in Heaven and do good deeds. A third group of angels announced they just wanted to play all day. These angels fell to earth, and became the fairies.

Some early folk believed each plant has its own fairy, who gave it life and vitality, color and beauty. If the fairy is happy, the plant thrives. Makes sense, if you think about it. From time immemorial, folks have known that different plants have different preferences for shade, sun, little or lots of water, cold and heat. Ignore their preferences and chances are their "spirit" (or maybe their life-giving "fairy") will go somewhere else, leaving you with dead stalks.

In our Spotlight article, folks who prefer actually creating fairy gardens (or simply delightful little living "settings" or even are just looking for really small plants) will delight in the preview Pat Cordray gives below of the "Miniature Fairy Garden Class" she will help present Sat., Jan. 12, at Maas Nursery, a Seabrook-area landmark for over 60 years. The class, co-presented with Jim Maas, will meet 10-11:30am at the nursery, 5511 Todville Rd. in Seabrook. The \$40 fee includes supplies and plants. Register: <http://maasnursery.com>.

PS. If you're into fairy gardens, Cicely Mary Barker books are a must: flowerfairies.com

* . * . *

FIRST, THO, A BIT O' HOUSEKEEPING:

- Greater Houston lost a true horticultural treasure with the passing this month of Leah Gunter, described in her obituary as "one half and the driving force behind the family business Gunter's Heirloom Seedlings." Leah and her sister Pamela were well known as the Gunter Sister who generously shared their expertise growing traditional varieties with gardeners throughout our area.
- Starting Dec. 1, we will be sending out only two newsletters a month for a time. These will be sent out on the 1st and 15th of each month
 - Given this publication change, if your group is planning a big fruit or other tree sale in Jan. Feb. or Mar., please send in your calendar event notice as soon as possible, so it will get as much publicity as we can provide.
- In this issue, we've added a new feature below John's column, right before the calendar. **"HAVE YOU TRIED . . ."** will spotlight a plant that local experts think ought to be grown more in this area than it is now (we hope you agree).

* * *

**DON'T FORGET TO CHECK "LG&F CALENDAR" AT END
OF NEWSLETTER FOR MORE GREAT UPCOMING EVENTS!**

* * *

*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 find past issues and/or download PDF copies, go to www.natureswayresources.com*

* * *



MINIATURE FAIRY GARDENING

by PAT CORDRAY
[Maas Nursery, Seabrook](#)

Fairy gardens are miniature gardens for the home, patio or office. These can be planted and completed in a few minutes, a few hours or as a hobby taking months to complete. Fairy gardens can be changed seasonally or just on a whim. These miniature gardens are real gardens needing water, light, and pruning.

Any container can be used for fairy gardening, from a regular standard pot, to a broken pot, to a red wagon. Hang them on the wall or from a hook using a hanging basket. You can even stack containers. Whatever you use, make sure it has good drainage.

Creating your scene is the next step. Will you create a secret garden with paths and birds, a park, a vegetable garden with rows and tools, Southwest scene, quaint sitting area, wooded forest with a stream or river, beach, tropical oasis, putting green, sports field, etc.?

I usually start with an idea, for example, stairs on the edge of the container or a hovel, and the garden starts with that.

PLANTS -- Pick plants with similar water needs, different leaf color, texture, and growing habits. Don't crowd plants; allow room for them to grow. Room is also needed for fences, patios, paths, bridges, homes, stairways, fairies, and/or anything else that completes your fairy garden. As plants grow, pinch them back to keep them the ideal size and shape for your garden. If the plant takes over the container, replace it with something less vigorous.



Some of Pat's favorites include, l to r: Dwarf mondo grass (up to 6", easy to divide); ardisia 18", use as "trees," pink flowers, red berries); blue moneywort (use as "grass," blue/white flowers); and 'Chocolate Chip' ajuga (2-3', chocolate-green leaves, purple flowers).

SOIL -- Miniature gardens need soil and Baccto is nice and light soil for plants or succulents. Your soil does not have to be level across the container. Make hills, valleys, streams, rivers or a beach for interest. Once soil is in, press down and compact soil. If you build up soil, you will need a retaining wall. Use flag stone, sticks, or broken pottery, to keep the soil in place. Clean the inside edge of the pot before you cover the soil. Use rock, pebbles, mulch, sand, moss, tumbled glass, etc. to cover all the soil. With soil covered there will be less soil splash when you water.

WATER -- Water plants as needed. Use your finger to check for dampness. Sometimes soil may feel damp when it is just cold. Water with a turkey baster to direct the flow to plants roots without disturbing the garden. Succulents need only water occasionally, allowing the soil to dry before you water again.

PLANTING -- Arrange items and plants in the container before you plant. When placing plants decide how the garden will be viewed, from all sides or from the front. Move your items around until you like the arrangement. Push down firmly around each plant and fill in soil around them making sure the roots are completely covered. I find my design develops as I go, so I have to be careful when I plant to not disturb my scene.

Remember it is all the little details you add that make your fairy garden interesting, unique, and fun. Use found items like acorn caps for making mushrooms, birdbaths or bird nests. Use sticks to make fencing, houses, and doors. Small pieces of flagstone make excellent bridges, patios, retaining walls, cliffs, and paths. Broken pieces of pottery make interesting stepping-stones, garden walls, and bridges. Small Mexican beach pebbles also work well as stepping-stones.

Use crushed limestone for paths (make sure your area for the path is level before adding the limestone, just like any "real" garden). The list of items to use for your fairy garden is only limited by your imagination. As you add your items press them firmly in place, making sure they are secure. You can use wire to secure items if needed.

Fairy gardening is an excellent way to use your imagination to create the garden you always wanted.

* * *

SAT., JAN. 12: MINIATURE FAIRY GARDEN CLASS by JIM MAAS & PAT CORDRAY, Maas Nursery, 5511 Todville Rd. Seabrook. \$40 (includes plants, supplies). [Register: maasnursery.com](http://maasnursery.com). 281-474-2488; MAASNURSERY@GMAIL.COM

* * *



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 69

I often get asked about using biosolids the politically correct name for sewage sludge as a fertilizer. It has the potential to green things up.....but it come at a very high price to our health and the environment. We have known for years about the dangers of pathogens, heavy metals, and pharmaceuticals in the biosolids (or in compost made from biosolids). There is another reason to avoid them as they cause mineral imbalances in the soil. One of the issues is that the repeated use of biosolids leads to an excess of copper in our soils and the symptoms we see in our plants resembles an iron (Fe) deficiency. Hence, if we add iron we make the soil problems worse. Another issue with using biosolids it is high in manganese (Mn). When there is too much manganese in our soil the activity of required enzymes and hormones in plants are reduced. For example many legumes will no longer fix nitrogen into the soil. High levels of manganese prevents plants from absorbing and using calcium (Ca) efficiently and leads to a calcium deficiency in plants. This deficiency in turn, increases the insect and disease problems a gardener will encounter. High levels of manganese also stunts the growth of many plant species like Pines. A third issue is the high levels of zinc (Zn) often found in sewage (131-1,670 ppm). In soils, levels of zinc over 500 ppm are known to prevent plants from absorbing other critical elements which lead to many long term problems. Once the soil has been contaminated by excess elements (or toxins) it is very costly to fix the problems and takes a long time.

Note: There is a book on how the government falsified safety data on sewage sludge and the cover up by a whistle blower David Lewis.

Science For Sale : How the US Government Uses Powerful Corporations and Leading Universities to Support Government Policies, Silence Top Scientists, Jeopardize Our Health, and Protect Corporate Profits, by David Lewis, PhD., Skyhorse Publishing, 2014, ISBN: 978-1-62636-071-6

Note: Biosludged full movie launches Wednesday, Nov. 28th: See trailer 2 here, and prepare to be shocked

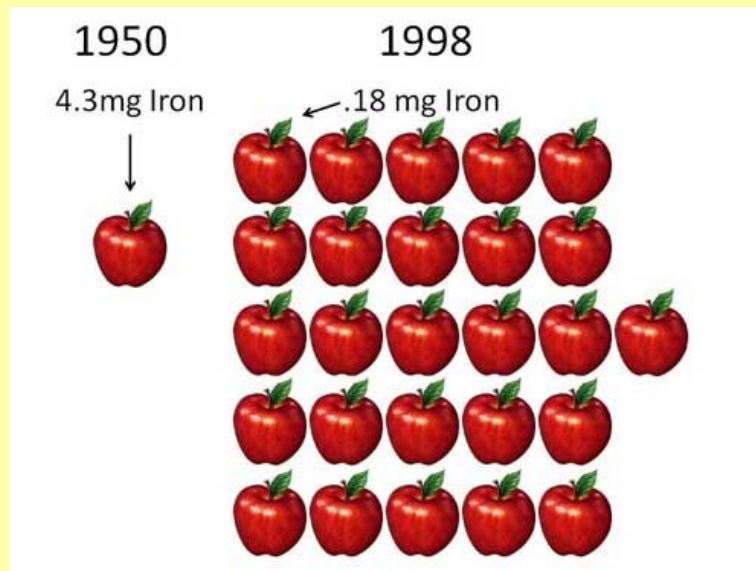


Your world is being deliberately mass poisoned with toxic sewage sludge that's dumped on forests, food crops, city parks and public school grounds. A massive, coordinated cover-up has been in place for years, making sure you never learn the truth about this deliberate environmental poisoning that's spreading toxins everywhere. Two years in the making, the Biosludge film launches this Wednesday, Nov. 28th, at Biosludged.com and BrighteonFilms.com. You can watch the full film for free, and you'll also be able to download the film's video file and post the full video to your own video channels. The full film is closed captioned for the hearing impaired.

Similarly, I often get asked about using poultry manure or fertilizers made from poultry manure. Poultry manure has been used for hundreds of years as a natural fertilizer, however the manure we have today is very different than in the past. Today's poultry manure is often full of arsenic, pharmaceuticals, and salt. Poultry manure is high in zinc (up to 495 ppm) hence repeated usage can quickly lead to zinc toxicity issues listed above. Poultry manure is not a balanced fertilizer and although it may give good results at first, repeated use can lead to problems in the soil.

The zinc issue is another reason to avoid rubber tire mulch as they can contain up to 2% of their mass as zinc. When iron is exposed to excess zinc, it forms the mineral called "Franklinite" a zinc oxide (ZnFe_2O_4) which then decrease the availability of both nutrients to plants and microbes. This is one of the mechanisms as to why "rubber tire mulch" is so toxic to plants and the soil.

In this newsletter I have often talked about the extremely low nutrient density of our food supply. The minerals (elements) in our food is one of the reasons they taste good to us. Food without nutrition is flavorless. The graphic below is a good illustration of the declining nutrient density. It took 26 apples in 1998 to give the same nutrition that one apple had in 1950. Since then with the advent of glyphosate herbicides and GMO crops, the decline in nutrients has accelerated. The reasons to grow our own food from fruits and vegetables to herbs is critical to protect our health.



This graphic is from the Dr. Mercola's newsletter, "How to Bring Minerals Back Into the Soil and Food Supply". The full article can be found at

<https://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2014/05/25/food-minerals-soil-health.aspx>

A new study in the International Journal of Human Nutrition and Functional Medicine, with thousands of people, has found that eliminating GMO food from our diet, improves 28 different health conditions.

HAVE YOU TRIED . . .



GIANT RED TURK'S CAP

My eyes popped out when I saw these in bloom at Nature's Way Resources. Had to have one. They have starter plants available now and this is good planting time so they can set strong roots over winter. Mulch really well.

Unlike our common red turk's cap, *Malvaviscus penduliflorus* has much large and longer, scarlet pendulous flowers from late summer through spring (if protected from frosts and given ample sunlight). Easily returns from roots if cold knocks it back. Can reach 8-12'. Prolific bloomer. And, yes, this is a type of hibiscus, but the flowers never fully open, much to the delight of butterflies and hummingbirds!

* * *

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

SAT., DEC. 1: STARTING A COMMUNITY OR SCHOOL GARDEN WORKSHOP, 8:30am-2:30pm. University of Houston Downtown, Room A625, 201 Girard St. \$20. Urban Harvest event. Register: 713-880-5540, urbanharvest.org/classes-calendar

SAT., DEC 1: GROWING TOMATOES FROM SEEDS by IRA GERVAIS, 9-11am; SMALL TREES, SMALL YARDS by MARIE LEAL, 1-3pm. Free. Galveston County Master Gardener event. Register: galvcountymgs@gmail.com, 281-309-5065. aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html

TUES., DEC 4: CITRUS SEMINAR & TASTING by MONTE NESBITT, 6-8pm; Free. Free. Galveston County Master Gardener event. Register: galvcountymgs@gmail.com, 281-309-5065. aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston

WED., Dec 5: GROWING AMARYLLIS by CHARLES PLASEK, 9-11am, Clear Lake United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall, 16335 El Camino Real. Free. Gardeners by the Bay event. gbtb.org

SAT., DEC. 8: HOLIDAY IN THE GARDENS, 11am-5pm, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. 713-274-4160

SAT., DEC.8: INSECTARY GARDENS - NATURE'S PEST CONTROL, 9:30am-11:30am. The Houston Museum of Natural Science, Moran Conference Room, 5555 Hermann Park Dr. \$30. Urban Harvest event. Register: 713-880-5540, urbanharvest.org/classes-calendar

SAT. DEC 8: GARDEN JEWELS - HUMMINGBIRDS by DEBORAH REPASZ, 1-3pm; Free. Galveston County Master Gardener event. Register: galvcountymgs@gmail.com, 281-309-5065. aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html

WED., DEC. 12: WINTER COLOR, noon-2pm, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: 713-274-4160

FRI., DEC 14: WINTER WONDERLAND LUNCHEON GALA, speaker: BILL McKINLEY. 10am, Houston Federation of Garden Clubs event. \$30. houstonfederationgardenclubs.org

FRI., DEC. 14: WALLER COUNTY MASTER GARDENER TRAINING PROGRAM REGISTRATION DEADLINE. Begins Thurs. Jan. 17. \$160. txmg.org/wallermg/training

SAT., DEC 22: PECKERWOOD GARDEN OPEN DAY, 10am-2pm tours, 20559 FM 359 Road, Hempstead. \$10. peckerwoodgarden.org, 979-826-3232

FRI., JAN.11: THE HISTORY OF THE PEGGY MARTIN ROSE by PEGGY MARTIN, 10am, First Christian Church, 1601 Sunset Blvd. Free. houstonfederationgardenclubs.org

SAT-SUN., JAN. 12 -13: 45th ANNUAL CAMELLIA SHOW & SALE, 1-4pm, First Christian Church, 3500 North Loop 336 West, Conroe. Free. Coughatta Camellia Society. coughattacamelliasociety.com

FRI., JAN. 25: MONARCH TRAIN THE TRAINER WORKSHOP, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: 713-274-4160.

SUN., JAN. 27: THE SECRET LIFE OF SOIL- FEED YOUR SOIL & IT WILL FEED YOUR PLANTS! by SHERRI HARRAH, 2pm, Klein United Methodist Church, 5920 FM 2920, Spring. Free. Cypress Creek Daylily Club event. cypresscreekdaylilyclub.simplesite.com

FRI: FEB. 8: PLANT SALE and speaker CORRIE TEN-HAVE, 10am, First Christian Church, 1601 Sunset Blvd. Free. houstonfederationgardenclubs.org

FRI: MAR. 8: NATIVE PLANTS ARE BEAUTIFUL TOO! by Linda Gay, 10am, First Christian Church, 1601 Sunset Blvd. Free. houstonfederationgardenclubs.org

SAT., MAR. 2: VEGETABLE & HERB SALE with presentations by JUDY BARNETT & WALLER COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 9am-Noon, Extension Office, 846 6th St., Hempstead. Free. txmg.org/wallermg/events

SAT., MAR. 16: MARCH MART PLANT SALE, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. 713-274-4160.

FRI: APR. 11: PLANT SALE and REFUGEES FROM THE ANIMAL KINGDOM by MARGARET PICKELL. 10am, First Christian Church, 1601 Sunset Blvd. Free. houstonfederationgardenclubs.org

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

THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS NEWSLETTER!
& please patronize our Newsletter & Calendar sponsors below!

PLEASE READ BEFORE
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

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

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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 Pablo Hernandez 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.

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 and quality control.

Pablo helps this newsletter happen from a technical support standpoint.



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