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LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS

Houston Garden Newsletter



Gardening Newsletter

Jul 25, 2019

Dear Friends,

Here is the 301st 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. Email your thoughts to: lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com. Thanks so much for your interest.

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

Enjoy!



WHY ISN'T MY FLOWER BLOOMING?

*"Flowers are restless to look at.
They have neither emotions nor conflicts."*

-- Sigmund Freud

BY BRENDA BEUST SMITH

NOTE: Not only is it somewhat presumptuous to disagree with Sigmund, I also beg pardon for repeating a column published before . But this same query above repeatedly comes in like clockwork this time of year! So . . .

Sorry, Sigmund, I disagree! I think plants are a LOT like us.

SPOILER . . .
You're not going to like this

Unfortunately, no single pat answer will tell you why your plant isn't blooming. Plants bloom when they're happy -- usually. They pout when not happy -- usually. Why might your plant be unhappy? Could it be . . .



- **TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE WATER?** Symptoms are often the same for both sins. Most drought-tolerant plants can't bloom with too-wet roots, including antique roses, black-eyed Susans, blue daze, bougainvillea, bulbine, cassia, cestrum, coneflowers, Copper Canyon daisy, coreopsis, coral vine, duranta, gaura, hamelia (hummingbird bush), lantana, fernleaf lavender, oleander, pavonia, pride of Barbados (Caesalpinia) and Rangoon creeper. Also, below l to r, russelia, hardy salvia and thyrsis.



- **TOO LITTLE OR TOO MUCH SUN?** Most often too little sun is the culprit. Some plants, including most grafted roses and tomatoes, require morning, noon AND afternoon sun to bloom. Some plants listed for full sun in northern areas may need afternoon shade in our hot climate. On the other hand too much sun may actually inhibit blooming in shade plants such as, l to r below, firespike, barlaria, hostas and ligularia.



- **BUD DAMAGE?** Buds that won't open may be infested with thrips, gall midge and other insects. As summer heat kills wildflowers, thrips and other insects search for new food sources. Tear open a few buds. See bugs inside? Put all buds on bush in a sealed bag and throw away.
- **GENETIC PROGRAMMING?** Many plants are genetically programmed to produce a certain amount of seed. They track flowers still on stalks. When they've reached their quota, they stop flowering. Removing spent blooms tricks these plants into producing more flowers. But newer hybrids are "reblooming" so don't need "deheading." How do you tell which you have? Research the specific variety or series name the best you can. Or just try deadheading if blooming slows down.
- **IMPROPER PRUNING?** Spring flowering shrubs (azaleas, camellias, bridal wreath, pink magnolias, etc.) bloom on old growth (gone through winter). Pruning in spring before blooming cuts off potential buds. Prune these immediately after blooming. Buds for next year start growing over summer. Summer flowering shrubs bloom on new growth. Prune them in winter. *(NOTE! Most of our common garden plants don't need pruning AT ALL unless they're growing out-of-bounds. Exception: hybridized roses.)*
- **INSUFFICIENT NUTRIENTS?** We have such a long growing season (sometimes year-round), plants may use up available nutrients. High quality compost will replenish almost all nutrients in a natural manner. A cup of Epsom salts sprinkled around the plant base may help too.
- **WRONG FERTILIZER?** Simplifying very complex chemical interactions: don't use a high nitrogen (high first number on bag) lawn food on blooming plants. Nitrogen promotes green growth (not flowers). Don't put a high phosphorus (high second number) on lawns. Phosphorus triggers blooming (aka weeds that drop seed). Compost is easiest.
- **OVERCROWDING?** Amaryllis and daylilies are just two of many plants that stop blooming when overcrowded. Lift, separate and replant. Can be done anytime. On the other hand, some plants – bird of paradise, gerbera daisies -- flower better when overcrowded.
- **IMMATURITY?** First come roots, then come flowers . . . in a plant happy world. Young plants don't want to bloom right away. They want to set good strong roots. Respect that!
- **UNKNOWN PLANT STRESSES/DAMAGE?** The plant may have been exposed to stressful heat/cold; allowed to completely dry out or treated

with stimulants to force blooms that will last as long as possible on nursery shelves. The plant may need to recoup its strength by concentrating on regaining internal health and setting strong roots.

- **TOO NEW TO YOU?** Just like us, even healthy plants need to acclimate to a new growing environment, maybe a year or more. Spider lilies, hibiscus, amaryllis, lycoris (right), rainlilies and crinums may be slow to bloom after setting out.
- 
- **WRONG BLOOM TIME?** Some plants bloom at different times in different climates. Larkspur, snapdragons, hollyhocks, delphiniums and many daisies bloom later in spring (April, May, June) in colder climates than they do here (Feb., March, April). Use only local bloom advice!
 - **WRONG PLANTING DEPTH?** Everything sinks in our gumbo clay soil with heavy rains, especially bulbs. Too deep roots may stop blooming. Dig up and raise. Azalea and camellia roots want to fan out across upper soil levels. Give them room to spread horizontally. Mulch well but don't let decaying mulch raise soil levels bury roots too deeply.
 - **WRONG VARIETY?** Some varieties of popular favorites do better here in our subtropical areas than do others. New hybrids that take more or less cold and heat are coming on the market all the time. Your neighborhood independent nurseries will carry varieties that do best for you.
 - **MAYBE NEEDS A GOOD SPANKING?** Ever heard of switching okra? Farmers and fruit tree growers know sometimes sap gets sluggish, triggering a production slow-down. A good switching works on okra. A hardy whacking with a broom may trigger flowers on fruit trees and roses too (personal experience with the efficacy of this one!). One tip: do it at night. Why? So the neighbors don't see you!
 - **BLAME THE WEATHER?** Plants may be a lot smarter than we are. Blooming takes a lot of energy. When they sense intense weather traumas (heat, cold, rainfall, floods, hurricanes) coming, they may stop blooming to conserve energy and concentrate on setting stronger roots.

ON THE OTHER HAND . . . blooms don't always indicate a happy plant. Spectacular bloom periods often occur after a hurricane, for example, when plants have been hammered by heavy winds. Or after a flood, a severe drought, an unusually cold or a prolonged winter . . . anything that makes them fear for their lives may trigger excessive flowering to produce more seed to ensure continuation of their species.

Sorry if all these possibilities "tighten your jaws" – as an old friend Mack Cockran used to say. I know this isn't the quickie answer folks want. But maybe these options will help you figure it out.

Sorry, Sigmund.

LOOKING FOR CLUB SPEAKERS & PROGRAMS?

"LAZY GARDENER SPEAKER LIST" — free — lazygardener@sbcglobal.net

Brenda's column in the LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER

is based on her 40+ years as the Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener

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We hope you will repost & share with anyone and everyone!



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 93

I was listening to the news on TV the other day about a recall of vegetables contaminated with pathogens from the livestock manure applied as fertilizer. This reminded me of an article published in the Journal of Applied Ecology (2019) the other day on Dung beetles. The conventional farmers used a lot of pesticides to control pests and as a result it also kills off all the dung beetles. Dung beetles rapidly bury manure in the soil which quickly suppresses any pathogens. The study included 70 farms on the West Coast and the found organic farms had a far greater number of dung beetle and a greater variety of species. Hence the organic farms had a far less issue of pathogens when manure was used than conventional farms. Another reason to buy organic.

After writing the above I just read another paper on dung beetles. There are about 6,000 species of dung beetles that are tunnelers and many more that are rollers. As tunnelers they also carry up to 90% of the nitrogen in the manure with them into the soil (along with the other nutrients in the manure). As they tunnel, they aerate and improve the soil, help it absorb and hold more water. This process also helps sequester carbon in the manure in the soil where it can become humus.

The journal Weed Science (2019) had a paper on cover crop for weed control. They tested seven different combinations of cover crops for several years. They found that cover crops were very effective in reducing all weeds and that cover crops could retard the development of supper weeds that are herbicide resistant. A byproduct of using cover crops is that it sequesters carbon and improves the soil.

A new study released by the University of Washington (2019) concluded that exposure to the herbicide glyphosate (Round-Up) increases cancer risk by

41%. Most genetically engineered crops have high levels of this carcinogen in and on them, as does wheat, oats, soy, corn, and many other products. Along the same lines the University of California San Diego School of Medicine found an association between the glyphosate herbicide and negative effects on the human liver.

I have often reported on the benefits of re-mineralizing our soils and the benefits to plants, animal and human health. I read several reports the other day on this subject. When rock dusts are used in regenerative agriculture not only are valuable elements absorbed into our food supply, the weathering or breakdown of this rock minerals is converting carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the air into bicarbonate in the soil. Re-mineralization creates a positive biological feedback loop that sequesters carbon since the weathering occurs hundreds of time faster than normal.

The University of California won a grant for almost five million dollars to study re-mineralization along with biochar and compost to study carbon sequestration.

Re-mineralization is critical to regenerative agriculture and modern gardening (lawns to flower beds).

There is now a website dedicated to the benefits of re-mineralization:

<https://www.remineralize.org/>

Researchers at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) have developed a system for converting the molecular structure of proteins into audible sounds that resemble musical passages. They can then introduce some variations and reverse the process back into new proteins not seen before. "This way of encoding structure into music does reflect a deeper reality. When you look at a molecule in a textbook it is static. But in reality, it is not static but moving and vibrating. Every bit of matter is a set of vibrations. We can use this concept as a way of describing matter." Journal ACS Nano 2019.

A few years ago, I purchased a DVD of a series of lectures on "The Truth About Cancer". One of the presenters (Mike Adams – The Health Ranger) did the same thing with elements and chemicals, converting them into musical notes. The elements of life (hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, carbon, etc.) sounded smooth, relaxing and very pleasant. Even in combination they were still pleasing and beautiful. However, if one converted the atoms of the herbicide glyphosate into sound it was horrible (angry and irritating). Similarly, for many pesticides it was a horrible and irritating sound.

<https://thetruthaboutcancer.com>

There has been a lot of interest in recent years about growing hemp plants especially the ones known as cannabis sp. One of the interesting facts that have come out is that hemp is very effective at sequestering carbon from the atmosphere if grown with rock dust re-mineralization as part of a fertility management plan.

Speaking of carbon, there is three times more carbon in the soil than in the atmosphere. However, that carbon is being released by deforestation and the obsolete toxic chemical rescue farming. It is estimated that 3.2 billion people worldwide are suffering from degraded soils. This leads to 75 billion tons of valuable fertile topsoil being lost to erosion each year. As a result, more and more gardeners are creating Urban Meadows in their landscape instead of grass, they are adding pollinator plants for the beneficial insects and using lots of native plants and trees that help improve soil and sequester carbon. This is done by using the modern methods in horticulture based on soil biology often referred to as "Organic Methods".



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August 22, 2019
9:30AM–3:45PM

McGovern Centennial Gardens
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TICKETS
\$25 Members | \$50 Non-Members
Register Online @ ohbaonline.org/events

Schedule

9:30AM–10:00AM

**Registration,
Networking,
& Light Bites**

10:05AM–10:50AM

Molly Pikarsky Lake Austin Resort
"How to Sell Organics"

11:00AM–11:45AM

Heidi Sheesley Treeseach Farms
"Habitat Gardening-Plant Materials
for Butterflies, Bees, and Birds"

11:45AM–12:45PM

Fantastic Lunch

12:45PM–1:30PM

Bart Brechter Bayou Bend
"Organic Care of Roses, Azaleas
and Other Common Shrubs"

1:40PM–2:25PM

Angela Chandler The Garden Academy
"Beneficial Insects in the Landscape"

2:35PM–3:25PM

Danny Millikin
Memorial Park Conservatory
"Using Compost: Recent Research"

3:25PM–3:45PM

Panel Discussion: Ask the Experts

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Have You Tried . . . MEXICAN PLUM

(Prunus mexicana)

This beautiful, single-trunk small tree works both in full sun and as an understory delight. Fragrant white spring flowers are among the earliest color (along with red buds). Fall brings

yellow fall color and dark red or purple edible fruit. As it matures, Mexican plum's bark has distinctive birch-like exfoliation. Drought tolerant and -- because it doesn't sucker from base -- Mexican plum doesn't form thickets the way many other native plums do. 25' high and canopy wide.



MEXICAN PLUM is carried by Nature's Way Resources ([Map](#)).
Or . . . contact our sponsor, Montgomery Pines Nursery in Willis, our other
sponsors below or your neighborhood nurseryman for possible sources.

* * *

LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER CALENDAR EVENTS

GARDEN/PLANT EVENTS ONLY

*Events are in Houston unless otherwise noted. No events are picked up from newsletter, etc.
Individual events must be submitted in exact format below to lazygardener@sbcglobal.net*

SAT., AUG. 3: 14" METAL HANGING BASKET CLASS by JIM MAAS & PAT CORDRAY,
10am, Maas Nursery, 5511 Todville Rd., Seabrook. \$35. 281-474-2488, maasnursery.com

SAT., AUG. 3: BONSAI – BUTTONWOOD CARE & STYLING by JOSE RODRIGUEZ,
10:15am, Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Rd. Free. Houston Bonsai
Society event.

THURS., AUG. 8: BUILD YOUR OWN IRRIGATION SYSTEM by Baxter Williams
7pm, Cherie Flores Pavilion, 1500 Hermann Drive. Houston Rose Society event. Free.
www.houstonrose.org

THURS., AUG. 8: FORM DICTATING FUNCTION: AN INTIMATE LOOK AT PLANT
PARTS by BRANDI KELLER, 10-11:30am, Genoa Friendship Gardens Educational Center
Building, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Road, Pasadena. Free. 713-274-0950; hcmga.tamu.edu

THURS., AUG. 8: FALL VEGETABLES – 6:30-8:30pm, Barbara Bush Library, 6817
Cypresswood Dr., Spring. Free. Harris County Master Gardener event. 713-274-
0950; hcmga.tamu.edu

THURS., AUG. 8: LOCAL EDIBLE & MEDICINAL PLANT — AN INTRODUCTION by
ERIK WOLF, 7pm, Rosenberg Convention Center, 3825 Texas 36 South, Rosenberg.
Free. Texas Master Naturalists Coastal Prairie Chapter. 281-633-7033,
mmcdowell@ag.tamu.edu; txmn.org/coastal/

SAT., AUG. 10, DIY: COMPOSTING AND ENRICHING THE SOIL, 8-10am, & HONING IN
ON YOUR FALL VEGETABLE BOUNTY, 10:30am-12:30pm. AgriLife Extension Office,
9020 Airport Rd, Conroe. \$5 each/\$8 both. Montgomery County Master Gardener event.
936-529-7824 or mcmga.com

WED., AUG. 14: BIRDS OF A FEATHER IN YOUR GARDEN, noon-2pm, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: 713-274-4160.

THURS., AUG. 15: FALL VEGETABLES, 6:30-8:30pm, Freeman Branch Library, 16616 Diana Lane. Free. Harris County Master Gardener event. 713-274-0950; hcmga.tamu.edu

SAT., AUG. 17: PLUMERIA CLASS by JIM & MAAS & LORETTA OSTEEN, 10am, Maas Nursery, 5511 Todville Rd., Seabrook. \$35. 281-474-2488, maasnursery.com

SAT., AUG. 17: FALL VEGETABLES, 10:30am-12:30pm, Maud Smith Marks Library, 1815 Westgreen Blvd., Katy. Free. Harris County Master Gardener event. 713-274-0950; hcmga.tamu.edu

MON., AUG. 19: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER OPEN GARDEN DAY, 8:30-11am, Genoa Friendship Gardens Educational Center Building, 1202 Genoa Red Bluff Road, Pasadena. Free. Plants for sale in the greenhouse. 713-274-0950; hcmga.tamu.edu

TUES., AUG 20: TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST/COASTAL PRAIRIE CHAPTER CLASS begins, ends Oct. 12. \$50. Register: 281-633-7033, mmcdowell@ag.tamu.edu or txmn.org/coastal .

THURS, AUG. 22: ORGANICS WORKSHOP, 9:30am-3:45pm, McGovern Centennial Garden, 1500 Hermann Dr., \$50. Organic Horticulture Benefits Alliance event. Register: Ohbaonline.org/events

SAT., AUG. 24: FALL & WINTER VEGETABLE GARDENING CLASS by JIM MAAS, PAT CORDRAY & PAUL NESRSTA, 10am, Maas Nursery, 5511 Todville Rd., Seabrook. \$45. 281-474-2488, maasnursery.com

TUES., AUG. 20: ADDING QUESNELIA TO YOUR COLLECTION by CHARLIE BIRDSONG, 7pm, West Gray Multi-Service Center, 1475 West Gray. Free. Bromeliad Society/Houston event. Bromeliadsocietyhouston.org

TUES., AUG. 20: FALL VEGETABLES, 6:30-8:30pm, Spring Branch Memorial Library, 930 Corbindale. Free. Harris County Master Gardener event. 713-274-0950; hcmga.tamu.edu

SAT. AUG 24: COMPOSTING by JIM GILLIAM, 1-3 pm, AgriLife Extension Office, Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St./FM 519, La Marque. Free. Galveston County Master Gardener event. Register first: galvcountrymgs@gmail.com, 281-309-5065, aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html

SAT. AUG 31: BACKYARD CITRUS by ROBERT MARSHALL, 10:30 am-12:30 pm; TEXAS TUFF PLANTS FOR THE GULF COAST by MARIE LEAL, 1:30-3:30 pm. Friendswood Public Library, 416 S. Friendswood Drive, Friendswood Galveston County Master Gardener event. Register first: galvcountrymgs@gmail.com, call 281-309-5065, aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html

THURS., SEPT. 5, SHADY GINGERS & THEIR FLIRTY COMPANIONS BY LINDA GAY, 10 am, MUD Building, 805 Hidden Canyon Dr, Katy. Free Nottingham Country Garden Club event. ncgctx.org

SAT., SEPT. 14: MINIATURE FAIRY GARDEN CLASS by JIM MAAS, PAT CORDRAY & BRENDA HESSE, 10am, Maas Nursery, 5511 Todville Rd., Seabrook. \$45. 281-474-2488, maasnursery.com

SAT., SEPT. 21: GARDENING FOR HUMMINGBIRDS & BIRDS CLASS by JIM MAAS, PAT CORDRAY & KATHRYN COURTNEY, 10am, Maas Nursery, 5511 Todville Rd., Seabrook. \$45. 281-474-2488, maasnursery.com

SUN., SEP. 22: TIDBITS FROM 50 YEARS WITH DAYLILIES by Hershale Theilen, 2-3pm. Klein United Methodist Church, 5920 FM 2920, Spring. Cypress Creek Daylily Club event. Free. cypresscreekdaylilyclub.simplesite.com

SAT., SEPT. 28: 14" METAL HANGING BASKET CLASS by JIM MAAS & PAT, 10am, Maas Nursery, 5511 Todville Rd., Seabrook. \$35. 281-474-2488, maasnursery.com

SAT., SEPT 28: LEAGUE CITY GARDEN CLUB GARDEN WALK: "UNDER THE MAJESTIC OAKS," 10:00 am-4:00 pm; Tickets \$15. leaguecitygardenclub@gmail.com; leaguecitygardenclub.org.

SAT., OCT. 5: SPRING BRANCH AFRICAN VIOLET CLUB ANNUAL PLANT SALE, 10am-4pm, Judson Robinson Jr. Community Center, 2020 Hermann Park Dr. Free. 281-682-1073, cseverson57@comcast.net

TUES., OCT. 8: GROWING PLUMERIAS, 7-9pm, Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion, 1500 Hermann Drive. Free. Plumeria Society of America event. theplumeriasociety.org

SAT. OCT 12: GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER FALL PLANT SALE, 9am-1pm; SALE PREVIEW, 8am, Galveston County Fair Grounds, Jack Brooks Park-Rodeo Arena, Hwy 6 & Jack Brooks Road, Hitchcock. Free. galvcountrymgs@gmail.com, 281-309-5065, aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html

SAT. DEC. 14, 2019: CHAPPELL HILL GARDEN CLUB CHRISTMAS HOME TOUR, 10am-5pm., Chappell Hill. \$20 advance/\$25 tour day. 713-562-6191; 979-337-1200

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

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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, it then 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 which morphed into her Lazy Gardener's Guide on CD. which she now emails free upon request.

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 specialty shows on HoustonPBS (Ch. 8) and her call-in "EcoGardening" show on KPFT-FM.

For over three decades, Brenda served as 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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