



LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS

Houston Garden Newsletter



Nov. 1, 2019 - Issue #315

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[Nature's Way Resources](#) owner John Ferguson, "The Lazy Gardener" Brenda Beust Smith and Pablo Hernandez welcome your feedback and are so grateful to the many horticulturists who contribute their expertise.

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XERISCAPING, PLANT NAMES MAY PUZZLE READERS BUT CHILES DELIGHT!

"Half the interest of the garden is the constant exercise of the imagination."

— Mrs. C.W. Earle (1836 – 1925), British author

BY BRENDA BEUST SMITH

READERS ASK & SHARE . . .

Sure do love it when reader questions & comments fill this column!

- **POLLY S. ASKS: WHAT IS XERISCAPING?** This style of landscape design focuses on lowering water requirements. Properly designed, it also should result in lower maintenance. Xeriscaping is now widely promoted in arid regions or areas with water shortages (aka the rest of Texas). But xeriscaping does have to be slightly altered for our flood-prone Upper Gulf Coast region.

We along the Upper Texas Gulf Coast may not be as affected as the rest of the

state. But even with our increasing monsoons, our extended periods of extreme drought often make of us wish we'd given more thought to xeriscaping.

"Xeriscape" plants can do well here IF planted in extremely well-drained areas. If their roots stay too wet in heavy rains, they might drown or, at least, never perform up to par. This means raised beds, planting on slopes, totally avoiding anywhere rainwater stands after a rain.

Xeriscaping includes totally removing, or at least reducing, water-guzzling lawn grasses. Top focus goes to St. Augustine. Many areas around Houston already have watering bans and/or alternate day watering activated during drought periods. Some Texas towns give discounts on city services to those who DON'T use St. A. and require businesses to obtain city permits, proving they must use St. A. instead of lower-water choices.

Why? St. A. uses more water than all the other plants, including trees, on a typical suburban landscape combined. The catch is: St. A. is the best lawn grass for us. Healthy St. A. will grow over all other plants. It tolerates some shade, tough usage, etc. Our heavy rains help with water usage most of the year. But not, of course, during summer droughts when water demands are already skyrocketing.

Another can of worms: St. A. in unhealthy soil might go dormant during extremely hot, dry summers — a natural self-preservation option, especially in areas adjacent to concrete with its reflected heat. Insects like chinch bugs are attracted to the dormant (dying) blades. These ever-present soil boarders multiply when the food supply increases, actually doing cleaning chores. When cooler temperatures and/or rains return and healthy grass starts growing again, they retreat.

Many folks/HOAs won't tolerate weak-looking lawns. Over-fertilizing often destroys vital soil organisms, making plants more susceptible to insects/disease, which leads to more soil treatments, etc. Vicious cycle.

Two xeriscape recommendations:

- Reduce St. A.-planted areas with pocket native plantings and/or
- Totally replace St. A. with lower-water-demanding grasses such as Zoysia, Bermuda & Buffalograss.

Reducing is an easier way to start. Bermuda is our most commonly-used total replacement substitute but all 3 have downsides here:

- Some HOA/POA powers-that-be demand homeowners plant St. A. only.
- St. A. is so strong, it has to be TOTALLY removed from an area. If you don't, watering triggers St. A. growth which overpowers other grasses.
- All 3 require full sun, so can't plant any of these three under tree canopies. St. A. does tolerate some shade.
- Zoysia (most \$\$\$) requires more care and a reel (not rotary) mower.
- Buffalograss is a good tough, slow-growing grass for very dry sunny areas. But here our monsoons make it grow faster, so needs mowing more often.

TMI? Hope not. There are many great features of Xeriscaping that can be incorporated in our area. One of the best explanations I've found was written for RCW Nurseries website readers. [Check it out.](#) It'll be well worth your time.



LAURA SIMPSON (of the popular [St. Julian's Crossing Wildlife Habitat](#) Facebook page) contributed her own favorite native species (left), Seaside Goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens*), to [last week's list of good-for-gardens varieties](#). Laura wrote: "it's not aggressive and hasn't shown itself to be allelopathic, either. I have had it in my gardens for years, and I love it!"

* * *

- **ELEANOR K. IS FRUSTRATED BY SO MANY DIFFERENT NAMES FOR THE SAME PLANT**, as are many gardeners. Ironically, along with her email came these readers' pictures below asking for IDs. Both have the same botanical first name: *Thunbergia*. Sure don't look related!

At left is **Anna-Victoria's** Southwest Houston photo sent in by her friend **Marianne Kahlick**. It's a *Thunbergia grandiflora*, best known as a sky vine, blue sky flower, blue trumpet vine and probably a dozen other names.



At right is another *Thunbergia*, *Thunbergia alata*, sent in for ID by Jo Ann in Sugar Land. It's best known as black-eyed Susan vine, the only common name I've ever heard. These two *Thunbergias* are cousins, so to speak.

While botanical names (usually) stay the same, common names grow out of a variety of origins, regional nicknames, visual perceptions and, most frustrating of all, growers arbitrary whims, trying to draw customers to "something new" (whether it truly is or not). I feel for growers, however. They work hard to come up with new cultivars/hybrids, even get them patented. But once into the retail market, these are easily grown from seed by other growers. It's almost impossible to stop baptizing it with yet another name. Must be so frustrating!

Plant ID apps abound now. Someone suggested Plantsnap to me long ago. It's fairly accurate most of the time. When ordering online, be sure you see a picture and read descriptions carefully -- especially the sizes. Sigh . . .



CHILE PEPPERS! When Gene Speller speaks on chile peppers, experienced Upper Texas Gulf Coast gardeners listen. And they'll have a great chance to hear what's best and new in the Capsicum world at the SAT. NOV 23: THE GREAT PEPPER EXTRAVAGANZA, a seminar sponsored by the Galveston County Master Gardeners.

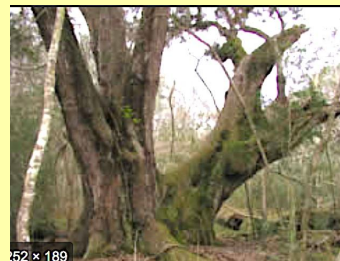
In our Spotlight Article below, Gene gives a preview of his top choices, based on his 40 years of growing edibles in our unique subtropical pocket. Photos are from his own garden with year photographed (serious chile growers will want to know!). A Galveston County Master Gardener, Gene usually grows 25 varieties at home and maintains GCMGA's 80 sq.ft. (4w x 20L) raised bed chile pepper research garden. Gene also points out Christopher Columbus was the one who named this American *Capsicum* fruit "peppers". Gene prefers to say "chile peppers," which is actually redundant, he knows, but it helps novices distinguish *Capsicums* peppers from green peppers (*Piper nigrum*).

(GREAT PEPPER EXTRAVAGANZA by GENE SPELLER, 1-4 pm; AgriLife Extension Office, Carbide Park, La Marque. galveston.agrilife.org/event/the-great-pepper-extravaganza/



TRACKING HUMMINGBIRDS - Encourage children to learn while they watch for migrating hummers. Log onto [Journey North](http://JourneyNorth) to check how migrating groups are progressing as they pass over us. Help children file their own reports of which ones they've seen on which plants. (journeynorth.org/sightings/.) Win-win!

MEA CULPA, SAN BERNARD OAK! – Last week I mistakenly put Texas' Champion live oak in the wrong park! It's in San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge. This 65-foot tall Texas State Champion Live Oak, crowned in 2003, is estimated by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to be 200-300 years old and can be viewed along the [Refuge's San Bernard Oak Trail](#). (On the Gulf Coast, south of Houston, off Hwy 288).



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"LAZY GARDENER SPEAKER LIST" & "PUBLICITY BOOKLET"

are free — Just email 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

* * *





A MASTER GARDENER'S FAVORITE PEPPERS

by **GENE SPELLER**

Galveston County Master Gardener

There's more to life than green bell peppers. Red, orange, and yellow have more nutritional value (Vitamins A & C + beta carotene other anti-oxidants) and are more flavorful than plain-Jane green bell peppers. Peppers with a little heat (*based on capsaicin content*) provide the spice in life. These below -- valued for ornamental appeal as well as food value -- were photographed in my home garden in the years listed:

SWEET PEPPERS



RED KNIGHT

(*Capsicum annuum*, F1 Hybrid, USA)

Decorative bright red fruit in garden. Sweet eaten raw or sautéed. Disease resistant. Maturity: 68 days to green, 78 days to red. Fruit size: 4.5" L x W. Plant size: 3' T x 2' W. (May 2011)



ORANGE BLAZE

(*Capsicum annuum*, F1 Hybrid, USA)

Decorative bright orange fruit. Sweet eaten raw or sautéed. Disease resistant. Maturity: 65 days to green, 75 days to orange. Fruit: 3-4" L x 2" W. Plant: 3' T x 2' W. (June 2014).



GIANT MARCONI

(*Capsicum annuum*,

F1 Hybrid, Italy)

Large, elongated sweet pepper with Lobes ~ 8" long. Plant: 4' T x 3' W. Ripens to red. Sweet. Great grilled or raw. Maturity: 63 days to green, ~ 73 days to red.



Left, above: Speller home garden harvest June 2015. Right above: Speller home garden Spring, 2010.

MILD PEPPER

[Scoville Heat Units (SHU): 500 to 1000]

SAHUARO

(*Capsicum annuum*, F1 Hybrid, USA)

A newer/improved version of other popular green chiles (aka "Hatch", Anaheim, or Big Chili II). Stronger, more productive, disease resistant. Fruit up to 9" long. Plant 3 to 4' T x 2.5' W. Pungency ~ 500 SHU. Great for grilling or sautéing. Maturity ~ 68 days to green, 78 days to red. (Photo: Speller home garden June 2011).



HOT PEPPERS

(SHU: 5,000 to 100,000)



JAPANESE HONTAKA

(*Capsicum annuum*, OP, Japan)

A very attractive and productive hot (SHU: 35,000) chile. Very



popular in Japan and in Asian cuisine. Great for dry grinding processing. Maturity: 80 days (red). Peppers: 0.25" W x 4" L. Plant: 2' W x 3' T. (July 2014)

* * *

NOTE! SAT. NOV 23:
THE GREAT PEPPER
EXTRAVAGANZA

by GENE SPELLER, 1-4 pm; AgriLife
Extension Office, Carbide Park, La
Marque. Galveston County Master
Gardener event.

[Great Pepper Extravaganza](#)

NUMEX TWILIGHT

(*Capsicum annuum*, OP, USA)

Yellow, purple, orange & red all
four at once — attractive
ornamental Chile Piquin-type
pepper. Peppers: 0.25" W x 0.7
L. Plant: 4' T x 3.5' W.

Great in pepper vinegar.
(Closeup at top of column.)
SHU: ~ 50,000. Maturity: 120
days. (photo: 10/28/19).

* * *



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOILS AND PLANTS #101

Many times, after a rain or an application of leaf mold compost, I have had numerous gardeners telling me that their plants were “smiling” at them. I have experienced this myself on many occasions.

This has made me think and ask, “Are plants intelligent?”

A recent article in Acres USA was on plant sentience and an ethical framework for food production. A book in 1973, “The Secret Life of Plants,” first documented experiments that confirmed that plants have some form of sentience. Many others have been published since then. The Bible even states that the plants will cry out and praise God if we do not.

What we now know is:

- plants can learn
- plants can communicate
- plants can hear
- plants can smell
- plants can make decisions
- plants have memories
- plants have the ability to learn
- plants have social lives
- plants can feel
- plants feel stress and pain

- plants are aware of their environment
- plants use the “wood wide web” to share information and nutrients with other plants

We have often talked about the dangers of sewage sludge (Biosolids) which the EPA says is safe. Recently the federal OIG (Office of the Inspector General) found in its report to Congress a different story.

They found 352 pollutants in biosolids which included 61 designated as acutely hazardous. These ranged from antibiotics to steroids, pharmaceuticals and flame retardants. There is an informative book by a former research scientist at the EPA. He turned whistle blower and his assertions were validated in federal court on the dangers of sewage sludge often called bio-solids for marketing reasons. Note: There are compost companies in South East Texas that use biosolids in their products.

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

The Dr. Mercola newsletter reported that pancreatic cancers are associated with fungus and this bad fungus drives cancer growth. This is another good reason to be an organic gardener so our biome is constantly exposed to good bacteria and good fungi to recharge our immune systems.

A study published in the Journal of Phytopathology (may 2019), found that round worms in the soil produce pheromones used for chemical communication. These pheromones also tell plants to prime their immune systems. This priming makes the plants very resistant to many soil diseases. When one uses an artificial fertilizer or a toxic pesticide the round worms are killed and the plants become more susceptible to diseases.

A 19-year study published in the Journal Change Biology (2019) has found that compost was key to sequestering carbon in semi-arid croplands. When compost and cover crops were used, soil organic matter increased 12.6% over the study measuring changes down to a six-foot depth.

Another study has found that children growing up in a rural community where they are exposed to farm animals, appears to confer a decreased risk of allergies and asthma for one’s lifetime. The studies on rodents have shown that inhaling certain molecules produced by soil dwelling bacteria promotes an improved immune system. Maybe this is why I still enjoy playing in the dirt (Soil).

The Dr. Mercola newsletter has a nice article titled [“Why Lawns Are an ‘Ecological Disaster’](#):

A few states like Minnesota are now paying homeowners to get rid of their lawns and replace them with Urban Meadows which cost far less to maintain and provide numerous benefits for the environment.

A study by Michigan State University published in the journal Nature Communications (2019) has found that soil structure is essential in sequestering carbon from the atmosphere. For carbon to be sequestered and protected it has to be able to move through the soil into deeper layers. They found that soils with higher plant diversity (like prairie ecosystems) had the best soil pores or structure to sequester carbon. In other words, the greater number of plant species growing in the soil, the better it worked at storing carbon.

* * *

TEAMING WITH MICROBES
The Organic Gardener's Guide to the Soil Food Web
JEFF LOWENFELS & WAYNE LEWIS

OHBA
ORGANIC HORTICULTURE BENEFITS ALLIANCE
NOVEMBER 7TH 2019

Jeff Lowenfels
Teaming with Microbes
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Come discover the fascinating world of soil microbiology with the most entertaining, Jeff Lowenfels. He is the author of the Teaming Series featuring the award-winning book 'Teaming with Microbes'. As a world renowned soil microbiology expert and leader in the Organic movement, Jeff will blow your mind with his findings from the soil food web.

Come join us as one of the most enlightening and captivating lecturers in the Organic Movement comes to Houston for this can't miss event.

TICKETS
Register Online
ohbaonline.org/events
OHBA Members \$25
Non-Members \$50

ITINERARY
5:00-6:00PM
REGISTRATION, NETWORKING & LIGHT BITES
6:00-7:30PM
JEFF LOWENFELS

Have You Tried . . .

MEXICAN BUCKEYE

(Ungnadia speciosa)

Mexican-buckeye is a multi-delight small (8-12') ornamental tree. Its fragrant bright pink flower clusters appear in spring along with the light bronze foliage that turns green in summer and golden yellow in fall. Often mistaken for redbud or peach trees, it's isn't a true buckeye, but so-called because of its similar large capsules and seeds. Bees use the distinctive March-through-June flowers to produce a fragrant honey. Does as well as its natural 8-12' wide multi-trunk habit as it does when pruned into a single trunk tree. Part to full sun,



*MEXICAN BUCKEYE 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

ADULT GARDEN / PLANT EVENTS ONLY **PLEASE READ BEFORE** **SUBMITTING AN EVENT FOR THIS CALENDAR**

Events **NOT** submitted in the **EXACT** written format below may take 2 weeks or longer to be reformatted/retyped. Submit to: lazygardener@sbcglobal.net.
• No pdfs please! • Type text into email. • Put your group name on the 'Subject' line.

SAT. NOV 2, TEXAS ARBOR DAY, 1pm – 4pm, Mercer Botanic Gardens, West Side Arboretum, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. 713-274-4160.

SAT., NOV. 2, MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENER OPEN GARDENS, 9-11:30 am, AgriLife Extension Office, 9020 Airport Road, Conroe. Free. 936-539-7824, mcmga.com

SAT., NOV. 2: BULB CLASS by J JIM MAAS & MARGARET CHERRY, 10am, Maas Nursery, 5511 Todville Rd., Seabrook. \$45. 281-474-2488, maasnursery.com

SAT., NOV. 2: MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENER OPEN GARDENS, 9-11:30 am, AgriLife Extension Office, 9020 Airport Road, Conroe. Free. 936-539-7824; mcmga.com

SAT. NOV. 2: WHAT IS A GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER by DIANE SCHENKE, 1-2:30 pm; Extension Office, Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St./FM 519. Free. Register: galvcountymgs@gmail.com, 281-309-5065; aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html

TUES., NOV. 5: ALL ABOUT SALVIAS by PHOEBE LAKE, noon-1pm, Trini Mendenhall

Community Center, 1414 Wirt Rd. Harris County Master Gardener event. Free. 713-274-0950. hcmga.tamu.edu

THURS., NOV. 7: HOLIDAY LOOK AT THE GARDEN by FRANKIE GREEN & ALICE BROWN, 10am, MUD Building, 805 Hidden Canyon Dr, Katy. Nottingham Country Garden Club event. Free. ncgctx.org

FRI., NOV. 8: CREATING A BIRD-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY by ANNA VALLERY, 10am, First Christian Church, 1601 Sunset Blvd. Houston Federation of Garden Clubs event. Free. houstonfederationgardenclubs.org

FRI., NOV. 8: NATURE'S KALEIDOSCOPE: A HORTICULTURE SPECIALTY SHOW, 12:30-2pm, The First Christian Church, 1601 Sunset Blvd. Houston Federation of Garden Clubs event. Free. houstonfederationgardenclubs.org

SAT., NOV. 9: THE WOODLANDS GARDEN CLUB ANNUAL PLANTS SALE, 10am, The Woodlands Wildflower Festival, Recreation Center, Rob Fleming Park, 6464 Creekside Forest Dr. Free. thewoodlandsgardenclub.org

MON. NOV. 11: ARBOR DAY CEREMONY & BLUE STAR MEMORIAL BY-WAY MARKER DEDICATION. 1.30pm, Fisher House III, 2002 Holcombe Blvd. A District IV Coastal Prairie Council & Texas Garden Club event.

TUES., NOV. 12: MONARCH BUTTERFLIES IN YOUR GARDEN by AMY STODDARD, 9am, Shenandoah Municipal Complex, 29955 I-45 North, Shenandoah. The Woodlands Garden Club event. Free. thewoodlandsgardenclub.org

WED. NOV. 13, GARDENS (MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS COLLECTIONS), noon-2pm, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: 713-274-4160.

THURS., Nov.14: GROWING HEALTHY ROSES IN CONTAINERS by Donald Burger 7pm, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 1819 Heights Blvd. Houston Rose Society event. Free. houstonrose.org

FRI., NOV 15: HOUSTON URBAN TREE CONFERENCE, 8am-3pm, Weekly Community Center, 8440 Greenhouse Road, Cypress. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, HAUFC and ISA-TX event. \$45. harris.agrilife.org/event/houston-urban-tree-conference-2/

SAT., NOV. 16: MINIATURE FAIRY GARDEN CLASS by JIM MAAS, PAT CORDRAY & BRENDA HESSE, 10am, Maas Nursery, 5511 Todville Rd., Seabrook. \$45. 281-474-2488, maasnursery.com

SUN., NOV 17: LOOKING FOR FERNS IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES by PANAYOTI KELAIDIS, 2pm, Judson Robinson Jr. Community Center, 2020 Hermann Dr. Gulf Coast Fern Society event. Free. tgcfernsociety.org

TUES., NOV. 19: HECHTIAS by ANDY SIEKKINEN, 7pm, West Grey Multi-Service Center, 1475 W. Grey. Bromeliad Society/Houston event. Free. bromeliadsocietyhouston.org

TUES., NOV. 19: HECHTIAS by ANDY SIEKKINEN, 7pm West Grey Multi-Service Center, 1475 W. Grey. Bromeliad Society/Houston event. Free. bromeliadsocietyhouston.org

TUES., NOV 19: A TRIP TO THE MONARCH OVERWINTERING SITES IN MICHOACAN by DR. DIANE RUSSELL, 10am; St. Basil's Hall, 702 Burney Road, Sugar Land. Free. Sugar Land Garden Club event. www.sugarlandgardenclub.org

WED., Nov. 20: CACTI IN HABITAT PART III by DAVID VAN LANGEN, 7:30pm, Metropolitan Multi-Services Center, 1475 West Gray. Houston Cactus & Succulent Society. Free. hcsstex.org

SAT. NOV 23: THE GREAT PEPPER EXTRAVAGANZA by GENE SPELLER, 1-4 pm; AgriLife Extension Office, Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St./FM 519, La Marque. Galveston County Master Gardener event. Free. Register: galvcountymgs@gmail.com, 281-

309-5065; aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/index.html
THUR. DEC. 5: CITRUS SEMINAR & TASTING by MONTE NESBITT, 6-8:30pm; Extension Office, Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St./FM 519, La Marque. Free. Register: galvcountymgs@gmail.com, 281-309-5065; aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston

SAT. DEC 7: GROWING GREAT TOMATOES (1 of 3, GROWING FROM SEED by IRA GERVAIS, 9-11:30am; Carbide Park, 4102-B Main St./FM 519, La Marque. Free. Register: galvcountymgs@gmail.com, 281-309-5065; aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston

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

FRI., JAN. 10, 2020: RECYCLE, REDUCE, REDUCE by Native Plant Society of Texas, & PLANT SALE. 10am, First Christian Church, 1601 Sunset Blvd. Houston Federation of Garden Clubs event. Free. houstonfederationgardenclubs.org

FRI., APRIL 10, 2020: EXCITING UNDERUTILIZED PLANTS ADAPTABLE TO HOUSTON REGION by ADAM BLACK. 10am, First Christian Church, 1601 Sunset Blvd. Federation of Garden Clubs event. Free. houstonfederationgardenclubs.org

FRI. MAY 8, 2020: THINGS I WISH I HAD LEARNED SOONER (ABOUT ROSES) by BAXTER WILLIAMS. 10am, First Christian Church, 1601 Sunset Blvd. Houston Federation of Garden Clubs event. Free. houstonfederationgardenclubs.org

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

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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.



