



LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS

Houston Garden Newsletter



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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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CORONAVIRUS CANCELLATIONS

If your event in our calendar below is cancelled, please let us know as soon as possible at lazygardener@sbcglobal.net



KATYDID DELIGHT PIPEVINE CONUNDRUM WOW'S THE WORD!

"What do you suppose? / A bee sat on my nose.

Then what do you think? / He gave me a wink

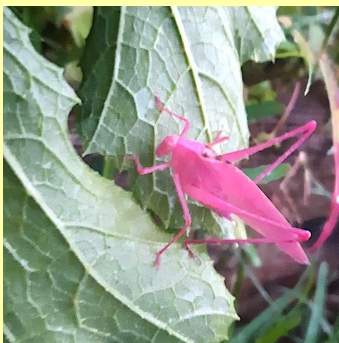
And said, "I beg your pardon, / I thought you were the garden."

— Rhyme from England

by **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

Much as we'd like to take credit for beautiful blooms in our gardens, the truth is we're just helpers in Mother Nature's global kingdom. Ranking FAR above us are insects. The more we know about them, not only the more successful we will be, the more we will enjoy the vast world in our own backyards.

Angela Chandler's [The Garden Academy](#) website has long been one of this area's best horticultural resources. Trust her to not only notice but share with our readers one of her latest excitements: a rare pink katydid.



Amblycorypha oblongifolia (left) was spotted in the Chambers County garden of local singer/songwriter Christy Chandler. As Angela wrote, "Just past being newlyweds, Christy and her husband are enjoying their first veggie garden and all the discoveries it brings."

"The pink coloration," Angela wrote: "occurs in about 1 in 500 individuals. It is caused by erythrism, a genetic mutation similar to the one that causes albino mammals and birds. Several American insectaries have accomplished captive breeding of Pink Katydid since its discovery in 1874."

And, Angela adds, "There is also a rare orange version, which ought to get you Longhorns out scouting in your gardens!"

Read more at [Gardening Know How: Katydid Facts: Managing Katydids In The Garden](#)



Left, pipevine swallowtail feeding on porterweed (Carlos Hernandez photo). Center, Dutchman's pipevine flowers. Left, pipevine caterpillars (Paula Bazan photo).

PAULA BAZAN's beloved pipevine swallowtail butterflies are absent this year. In her multi-certified habitat yard, Paula grows this jeweled treasure's favorite (and only) egg-laying site, Dutchman's pipevines. In the past, Paula has had numerous broods by this time of year. She's seen other types of swallowtail butterflies, but this year, almost no pipevines. What's going on?

A number of Houston naturalists and butterfly experts empathized with Paula. Joining Paula in noticing the scarcity of pipevines are:

- [Linda Gay](#), Horticulturist extraordinaire with too many achievements to list.
- [Lucinda Valdez](#), Coordinator, [The Woodlands Environmental Education](#)
- [Lan Shen](#), Director, [Native Plant Society of Texas/Houston Chapter](#)
- [Nancy Greig](#), founding director, [Cockrell Butterfly Center](#), along with her butterfly gardening friend **JoAnn Trial**.

Nancy has contacted butterfly enthusiasts in the Hill Country -- where

pipevines are usually one of the most visible butterflies in the spring. Turns out they are far less abundant there too, an observation echoed by **Carlos Hernandez**, noted nature photographer and a member of [Butterfly Enthusiasts of Southeast Texas](#).

I reached out to three well-known national gardening/nature experts to see what they have to say. Turns out, little birds in their nests don't always agree:

- [Doug Tallamy](#), internationally-renowned "[Bringing Nature Home](#)" guru, emailed back: *"I'm blaming it on the weather. All over the east we have been 20 degrees below normal with above normal rainfall all spring. For example, Prothonotary warblers are usually finishing up their clutch this week but this year they are just starting to build their nests. Way behind!"*
- [Grumpy Gardener Steve Bender](#), *Southern Living* magazine retiree, agrees it could be the weather, but adds:
 - Loss of habitat? (*Maybe not in your yard, but in your area?*)
 - Folks spraying yards for mosquitoes?
- [Greg Grant](#), Texas Extension Horticulture Agent extraordinaire and national horticulture author, has to disagree. He says no shortage of pipevine swallowtails in the Tyler area!

Still, a lot of folks are looking for answers. Lan Shen urged Paula to think about physical changes in her yard. Lan recalls the time her usually abundant swallowtails dwindled after building alterations were made, removing a favorite hanging site for swallowtail chrysalis. It took the pipevines 3-4 years to return to the same general area. But they finally did.

Lan also wonders if Paula has done any pruning lately of trees or shrubs where swallowtail chrysalis might be attached to limbs. (*Paula said no changes or prunings were done, but you might want to keep this in mind.*)

Joshua Kornegay of [Joshua's Native Plants](#) says Paula's question is being repeated by numerous customers. His answer: Not to worry. He monitors such trends through nationwide websites, especially now that his folks are complaining about missing pipevines. He says online, some areas across the nation are echoing our concerns; others are seeing more pipevines than usual. His own Heights-area Dutchman's pipevines were covered with caterpillars earlier this year, now there are none. He expects another onslaught later on.

Joshua says we're just used to butterflies like monarchs which predictably blanket large areas. Pipevines, Joshua points out, are less numerous and sometimes inconsistent in their geographic selections for egg-laying.

CERTIFYING GARDENS

Paula 's garden has several wildlife/habitat certifications (right). Click links to see if your landscaping will qualify:

- ["NATIONAL WILDLIFE CERTIFICATION"](#) -- National Wildlife Federation
- ["TEXAS WILDSAPES"](#) — Texas Parks & Wildlife (also link for Best of Texas Backyard Habitat certification)
- ["MONARCH WAYSTATION"](#) — MonarchWatch

The North American Butterfly Association also has a [NABA Butterfly Garden certification](#).

- Paula Bazan's Dutchman's pipevine was purchased at the Cockrell Butterfly Center's annual plant sale.
- Even if you don't worry about pipevine swallowtails, keep in mind what these folks are saying if and when other treasured wildlife suddenly disappears from your own garden.



* * *

WOW NOW! PLANT SUBMISSIONS this week open with the fascinating clematis, specifically with garden clematis as opposed to one of our Texas native varieties. This is my nodding clematis right, lifted off an Aldine wooded lot's ditch top over 40 years ago. To my amazement, it transplanted easily to our new home . Repeating blooms are only about 2". *(I just had to plug one of my most treasured plants!)*



Sandra Nichols in Clear Lake City is rejoicing over her 3- to 4-year-old Bourbon clematis, left. As recommended, she chose a site with only filtered sun, in the shade of a big crape myrtle. Last fall Sandra needed to move it into full sun. Rather than dying, as she feared, it thrived and is now covered with 18-20 blooms, many 4-5" in diameter! Is it the full sun, she wonders, or just the plant's maturity?

Clematis, it's said, like their feet in the shade and their heads in the sun. Mercer Botanic Garden's **Suzanne Chapman** said that's the usual advice for this traditionally short-term grower in this area, one reason you probably won't see them growing at Mercer, where the emphasis is on plants that do well here, especially flood-survivors!

If you want to try the large-flowered clematis, Jackmanii purple cultivars seem to do best, Suzanne says, but definitely with some afternoon shade.

NOTE: Click here for a great [Kathy Huber Houston Chronicle column on clematis](#).

KAROLYN GEPHART cheerfully did



night duty waiting for the 5 buds on her Giant Fuchsia Cereus to open. The first spectacular 7.5" florescence started around 11pm but lasted 2 days, as they all have, instead of the usual one day! Multi-shaded, shocking pink petals were luminous and, as Karolyn described it, "the extension of

the stem from the flat branches was curious and beautiful," drawing oohs & ahhs from visitors. She has a white night blooming cereus on which blooms are withered by 8 or 9am after opening the night before. Her hanging baskets are in cactus/succulent soil in partial sun and are watered every 5-7 days.

Email "WOW NOW!" flower photos with your name, area of town and info about the plant to: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com. They should be in full, SPECTACULAR color right now.

* * *

ONE LAST THOUGHT ON 'MOLESTING PLANTS' in the May 15 newsletter. **Kenneth Warren** found this fascinating tidbit from an article that appeared in "[Science](#)": When pollen is scarce, bumblebees can successfully trick plants into flowering up to one month early by nibbling on their leaves. When attempts to artificially replicate this 'trickery' in a lab failed, scientists decided something in the bee's saliva must be involved.

(NOTE: We do NOT recommend nibbling on leaves to induce flowering!)

* * *

"LAZY GARDENER SPEAKER LIST" & "PUBLICITY BOOK LET" are free — email request to: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com

Brenda's column in the LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER is based on her 40+ years as the Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener

* * *



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS #121

Numerous reports from all over the world have shown a tremendous decline in the amount of water in our rivers and streams worldwide. A study in the journal Nature (2020) has found that groundwater pumping to irrigate crops and landscapes are a major reason. Groundwater often contributes significantly to the amount of water flowing in our streams. As a society we are running out of inexpensive and reliable water sources. The cost of water will continue to rise

as population grows and a greater demand is placed on our water supplies. For example, The San Jacinto River Authority is looking at the possibility of raising water rates another 14.5% in the near future for the Conroe-The Woodlands area.

Many municipalities are now offering rebates for homeowners to replace water thirsty plants with beautiful low water use native plants (City of San Antonio, The Woodlands Township, etc.). Minnesota is paying homeowners to remove their lawns and plant urban wildflower meadows that not only save water, they do not require mowing, edging, fertilizing, etc. and they provide food for our beautiful butterflies and other pollinators. These pollinators then feed our beloved birds.

For those in The Woodlands, you can go to the [Nature's Way Resources](#) website for a list of plants in our nursery that qualify for the rebate.

For more information on the plant purchase rebate please see: www.woodlandswater.org

Experienced gardeners know that a high-quality compost is the single best amendment one can add to their lawns and gardens to have a beautiful landscape. A 19-year study by the University of California has found that a good compost also raises soil carbon not only on the top one foot of the soil but increased carbon to depths up to 2 meters (6.5 feet).

When they used both compost and cover crops, they found they could increase soil carbon content an average of 0.7 percent annually which is a lot! Journal Global Change Biology (2020)

As a gardener one of my favorite vegetable plants I love to grow is chilies of many types. I enjoy watching them grow and turn colors from green to black and finally a beautiful red. I love these peppers from stuffed bell peppers, to pickled jalapenos, to banana types great for grilling. It has been known for years that the capsaicin in hot peppers has anti-cancer properties and many other health benefits.

A study published in the journal of the American College of Cardiology (2020) has found that people that eat chilies at least four times per week or more, were 40% less likely to die from a heart attack, 50% less likely to die from a stroke, and 23% less likely to die for any reason.

An important day is coming up on June 23 which is "National Soil Health Day." As pointed out in the organic agricultural magazine Acres, USA, *its not* national soil fertility day and that difference is critical. The word health is from the old English and old Norse words for something that remains whole, uninjured, sacred.

As they state It is a simple equation: "If we fail to take care of the soil, it will fail to take care of us."

To celebrate, give your soil some love and apply some leaf mold compost today. If you want to find out more go to www.acresusa.com.

I frequently talk about the link between minerals (elements) in the soil and our health. A study published in the journal PLoS Pathogens (August 2019) was on the importance of zinc (Zn). They found that zinc is an essential nutrient for our immune systems to fight off bacterial infections. Zinc has also been found to help the immune system fight viruses like the common cold.

Remember if you eat food with glyphosate (the active ingredient in the herbicide Round-Up) on or in them, (especially GMO products, your body cannot absorb zinc and other essential nutrients like magnesium from the food supply (assuming it is there in the first place).

The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans is currently underway. The organization Beyond Pesticides has a [short summary](#) of the health benefits of eating organic foods and why they are important. Also included is a link to send a message to congress asking them to include organic foods in the guidelines.

The publication Natural News recently had a good article on health titled “Top 10 all-time immune system CRUSHERS” that United States corporations besieged upon its own people over the last century (that most Americans still suffer from today)”

- #1. [Cigarettes](#) (contain pesticides, formaldehyde, bleach, fiberglass)
- #2. [Canola oil](#) (causes massive weight gain)
- #3. GMOs (pesticides decimate gut flora)
- #4. [Fluoridated water](#) (drains nutrients from body)
- #5. Vaccines and flu shots (lower immunity and spread disease through shedding)
- #6. [Anti-bacterial everything](#) (wipe out good bacteria and literally spread superbugs)
- #7. Antibiotics (build tolerance and enable viruses)
- #8. [Opioid prescription drugs](#) (most painkillers, addictive)
- #9. [Sodium benzoate](#) (cell-choking preservative that kills healthy cells)
- #10. Bleach (found in most white food – causes bladder and pancreatic cancer)

* * *

HAVE YOU TRIED . . .

Sassafras

(*Sassafras albidum*)

A sought-after Texas native tree, right, Sassafras triggers wonderful memories for those who grew up drinking its tea. For the uninitiated, its aromatic fragrance, dainty yellow flowers, bird-delighting fruits and spectacular fall color make this a popular residential choice. Plant in full sun or partial shade in moist, acidic, well-drained soil. Medium-to-fast-grower. Can reach 30'-60' with 25'–40' spread.



Sassafras 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.

At Nature's Way Resources we have uploaded our **Master** and **Native** Plants inventory online to implement a curbside pickup for orders. Any questions and orders for the plant nursery can be directed to Carol at nwrnursery@gmail.com.

LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER CALENDAR EVENTS

ADULT GARDEN PLANT EVENTS ONLY

ALWAYS CHECK TO MAKE SURE YOUR EVENT IS IN! HOWEVER . . .

PLEASE READ BEFORE SUBMITTING EVENTS!

- *droppable-1586288881933* Events NOT submitted in the EXACT format below may take 2 weeks or longer to be reformatted/retyped and added to calendar.
- Events written in the email in this EXACT format will be copied & pasted immediately into the next upcoming calendar.
- No pdfs or flyers!!! They only delay publication.
- Submit to: lazygardener@sbcglobal.net.
- Put group name in email subject.

- **WE ARE REMOVING CANCELLED CALENDAR EVENT AS SOON AS NOTICES COME IN.**
- **CHECK UPDATED CALENDAR BELOW BEFORE ATTENDING ANY PREVIOUSLY-SCHEDULED EVENT, AS WELL AS THOSE STILL LISTED IN CASE OF LAST MINUTE CANCELLATION.**

SAT., JUN. 13: 14" METAL HANGING BASKET by JIM MAAS, & PAT CORDRAY, 10am, Maas Nursery, 5511 Todville Rd., Seabrook. \$35. 281-474-2488; maasnursery.com

TUES., JUL 14: BONSAI by SCOTT BARBOZA, 7-9pm; Cherie Flores Garden Pavillion, 1500 Hermann Dr. Free. Plumeria Society of America event. theplumeriasociety.org

TUES., OCT 13: FALL PLUMERIA SOCIETY OF AMERICA SOCIAL/LUAAU 7-9:00 pm; Cherie Flores Garden Pavillion, 1500 Hermann Dr. Free. theplumeriasociety.org

LOCAL FARMERS MARKETS

- **URBAN HARVEST FARMERS MARKET**, Saturdays, 8am-noon, in St. John's School parking lot, 2752 Buffalo Speedway. urbanharvest.org
- **FULSHEAR FARMERS MARKET** Saturdays, 9am-1pm, 9035 Bois d'Arc Lane @ FM 1093, Fulshear. fulshearfarmersmarket.com

During this pandemic period when most gardening events have been cancelled, we'll publish a running list of Farmers Markets.
Send notices to lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com

For event submission rules, see top of calendar

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 -- started in the early '70s as a fun side-, it then ranked as the longest-running, continuously-published local newspaper column in the Greater Houston area.

Brenda's gradual sideways step from reporter into gardening writing -- first as a just-a-fun

side Chronicle assignment in the early '70s -- ed 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 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 Humble, TX, and is married to the 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 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.

