



LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS

Houston Garden Newsletter



June 5, 2020 - Issue # 342

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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



CELEBRATE GARDEN WEEK WITH 'WOW NOW!' FLOWERS

"Gardens say, slow down, look around you, believe, hope . . ."

-- Zoraida Rivera Morales (courtesy of [Urban Harvest.org](http://UrbanHarvest.org))

by **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

NATIONAL GARDENING WEEK starts Sunday, June 7. Good timing since so many of us are in our gardens now more than probably ever before! I hope you enjoy the WOW NOW! submissions of readers as much as I am. With all the new plant introductions in nurseries these days, it's so easy to forget old favorites from the past. Such as this first one that I treasured for years:

* * *

WOW NOW! PLANTS

FROM READERS



GLORIA TOBOR was surprised by these vivid red jewels suddenly appearing in a bed of Asian jasmine. She rescued blood lily bulbs from garden to be destroyed almost a decade ago. They bloomed for years, but disappeared when Asian jasmine began to thicken over the site. Then it was thinned out.

Gloria wondered if the Asian jasmine was responsible for their disappearance? Possibly. Blood lilies (*Scadoxus Multiflorus*) are in the Amaryllis family. Like amaryllis, they prefer to be planted with their necks above soil level in part shade or full sunlight. Could be they gradually were pushed too deep by the groundcover. Or the groundcover created too much shade.

Most bulbs do very well with groundcovers that allow them access to sun when they are in leaf. Most important, don't water them heavily when the foliage has died back. They're dormant and can rot during that period if they stay wet too long. Whatever, how exciting that Gloria's blood lilies are back! (*For those of you fighting deer, these are said to be deer-resistant.*)



MARGIE BARLOW can't guarantee her WOW NOW! plants won't be eaten by deer now overpopulating her Montgomery area community. But her garden is still alive with color at the moment, including, above, left to right, lovely deep pink crinums, brilliant yellow turnera and giant white milkweed.

- Crinum lilies are great for any spot (high or low) with good sun.
- A [Proven Winner](#), *Turnera ulmifolia*, also called yellow alder, gets covered with sunshine yellow blooms that, while they only last one day, are so prolific no one notices. Full sun to part shade, evergreen, 2'-3' high & wide shrub. Margie warns turnera often reseeds so don't be surprised if it appears in other garden areas!
- Giant white milkweed (*Calotropis gigantea*) gets huge (8'-10'), so be prepared! Major monarch plant. Sun/part shade. Blooms all summer.

PS. Do you have any plants deer refuse to eat? Do share!

NOTE: Would love to see your "WOW NOW!" flower photos! Email with your name, area of town and info about the plant to: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com.

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Left, white Veined Hardy Dutchman's Pipevine. Center, Carlos Hernandez's pipevine swallowtail photo. Right, pipevine caterpillars for Paula from a nice reader!

PIPEVINE FOLLOWUPS: Thanks for all the feedback to **Paula Bazan's** lament last week on her garden's lack of pipevine caterpillars this year, in spite of prolific growth and blooms on her white veined Dutchman's pipevine. Others, like Jan Fish, were delighted to know they're not the only ones wondering!

- **A WILLOWBROOK MALL** area reader, on the other hand, reported her pipevine caterpillars were so abundant, she would gladly share (right above). Thanks to her generosity, Paula's yard now has a good start on future pipeline butterflies.
- **BOB HONIG** (one of our area's most active environmentalists), reported: *"At our house on the Katy Prairie in Waller County, Maggie and I have some Aristolochia fimbriata that has been eaten, but not completely. I've been seeing a Pipevine Swallowtail pretty regularly for a couple weeks, including today - not necessarily every day, and only one at a time so can't really say how many may be around. Maggie saw one fifth-instar caterpillar about 2 weeks ago."*

* * *



THAT GREAT QUOTE AT THE TOP OF THIS COLUMN comes from [Urban Harvest](#)'s webpage that also includes an enlightening (and very useful) map of its affiliated area community gardens. Most share produce with shelters, food pantries, corner stores and meal center as well as participate in Farmers Markets, [Click here](#) to see locations of UH's now 160+ sites in the Greater Houston area. Get to know those in your area and support them any way you can!

* * *

NOTES:

- **CALENDAR'S GROWING!** After weeks of no new event listings, our

calendar is inching up in length. Check it out! Online events listed too and more Farmers Markets (an added listing during this pandemic).

- **NEWSLETTER ALIGNMENTS:** A reader noted that when this newsletter is viewed on a cellphone or tiny pad, flower IDs may not appear where labeled (left or right). Can we fix that? Unfortunately no. The format is designed to be seen on a computer or large pad screen and we have no control over how it rearranges on tiny screens.

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"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

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NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS #122

A new study by Michigan State University published in the journal Nature (2020) has found that plants control the microbiome diversity inside their leaves to promote health as well as in their root systems.

It turns out that increased microbiome diversity correlates with plant health and each different microbe supports one aspect of plant health.

We have known for years that when a plant's leaves and bark are covered by good microbes, then when a pathogenic fungus or bacteria wants to enter the plant, the entry site is already occupied by beneficial microbes and they cannot infect the plant.

I suspect that this is one of the reasons when a good compost or a high-quality compost tea is used, a huge variety of microbes are made available to the plant, which helps it be healthy.

A recent article in the Crop Science Society News Magazine (2020) was on ancient agricultural fields and why they eventually failed. The researchers discovered they were irrigating with water with a high salt content.

Sodium salt has a particularly strong effect on clay soils. The salt causes an effect called dispersion of the clay particles. Over time, these clay particles plug soil pores which decreases drainage (and aeration) leading to salinization which harms plants.

The repeated drying and rewetting of clay soils contaminated by salt (sodium) can cause the clay to form a solid cement like layer, which reduces water availability to the roots.

This is another reason why gardeners along the Gulf coast should avoid poultry and cow manure fertilizers, spent mushroom substrate (aka mushroom compost), and many artificial fertilizers.

It is often said the best gardening tool is the gardeners shadow while walking around the garden. There was an article in Science News (April 2020) recently on walking. They found that the more steps per day a person takes the lower their risk of dying from any cause.

The annual death rate from those taking less than 4,000 steps per day was 76 per 1,000 people. Those whom walked 4-8 thousand steps a day the death rate dropped to 21 per thousand people. If one walked 8-12 thousand steps a day the death rate was only 6.9 deaths per thousand. The full study was published in the Journal of The American Medical Society (March 2020).

In the January 2020 issue of Life Extension there was an article on the health benefits of eggplants.

They found in animal studies that eating eggplants led to lower LDL cholesterol and triglycerides. In addition, it also has protective cardiovascular effects. The study also found that eggplants contain numerous compounds that have anti-cancer properties. One cup of raw eggplant contains only 20 calories and is loaded with fiber.

Eggplants are easy to grow and produce a lot of fruit in a small space. They also love our summer heat and humidity.

A paper in the journal Trends in Ecology and Evolution (2020) by the university of California has found that plant domestication has changed how plants interact with microbes in the soil or absorb nutrients as compared to their wild relatives.

As we have bred plants to be more productive and sustainable, we have made them dependent of artificial fertilizers and toxic chemicals. These modern plants have lost the ability to work with microbes in the soil and to absorb nutrients from the soil. Our pollinators from bees and butterflies to hummingbirds prefer heirloom flowers.

This is one of many reasons why gardeners are growing heirloom vegetables and flowers.

Below is a link to the Rodale Research Institute, where there are 3 studies that show Healthy Soil = Healthy People.

www.rodaleinstitute.org

We have often talked about the importance of mycorrhizal fungi to growing plants. Below is a link to an animated video that explains some of the benefits and how the fungi work to help us have healthy plants.

www.mycorrhizae.com

The Rodale Research Institute has released a paper on regenerative agriculture and why it is so important to our health and survival called "[THE POWER of the PLATE - The Case for Regenerative Organic Agriculture in Improving Human Health](#)".

This is a good summary of why we need to incorporate regenerative practices in our flowerbeds to our agricultural fields.

We have all heard the phrase "Let Food Be thy Medicine" attributed to Hippocrates. A plant known as *Glycyrrhiza glabra* and *Glycyrrhiza uralensis* has traditionally been used in natural medicine from the Greece to China for thousands of years. Most of us know this plant as licorice root or just licorice. Numerous studies have shown this plant to be a strong antiviral. It was very effective against the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) virus. As a result, it is now being studied as a treatment for COVID-19. Journal of General Virology, Journal of Biological Sciences, Botanical Medicine, and Dr. Mercola.

* * *

HAVE YOU TRIED . . .

CAROLINA BUCKTHORN

(*Rhamnus caroliniana*)

This deciduous, low-maintenance, thornless (!) native shrub with glossy green leaves thrives in full sun to part shade and makes an attractive privacy hedge or windbreak. Perfect backdrop for perennial native plantings. Its somewhat insignificant, creamy-green May-June flowers are followed by edible berry-like, bird-loving drupes which ripen showy red before finally turning black (as they mature) in September-October. No serious insect or disease problems. Some call this species *Frangula caroliniana*.



Carolina buckthorn 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!

- *Events NOT submitted in the EXACT format below may take 2 weeks or longer to be reformatted/retyped and added to calendar.*
- *Events in this EXACT format (below) are copied/pasted immediately in upcoming calendar. Pdfs or flyers need re-typing - only delay publication.*
- *Submit to: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com. Put group name in email subject.*

CHECK UPDATED CALENDAR BEFORE ATTENDING ANY PREVIOUSLY-SCHEDULED EVENT & THOSE LISTED IN CASE OF LAST MINUTE CANCELLATION.

WED., JUN. 10: LOCAL IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE by Hans F. VanBrackle, noon-2pm, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: 713-274-4160. hcp4.net/parks/mercer

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

SAT., JUN. 13 – SUN., JUN. 14: THE MERCER SOCIETY - VIRTUAL SPECIALTY PLANT SALE, begins 8am Saturday and ends 8pm Sunday, Online Only. 713-274-4160. themerchersociety.square.site

WED., JUN. 17: FAMILY NIGHT – MICRO-MERCER, 4pm-6:30pm, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: 713-274-4160. hcp4.net/parks/mercer

THURS., JUN. 18: TREE MEASUREMENTS by Laura Medick, 9:30am-11am, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: legacytrees@hcp4.net. hcp4.net/parks/mercer

WED., JUN. 24: FAMILY NIGHT – GEOCACHING, 4pm-6:30pm, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: 713-274-4160. hcp4.net/parks/mercer

THURS., JUN. 25: BIRD SURVEY by Paul Gregg and Christy Jones, 8am-10am, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: 713-274-4160. hcp4.net/parks/mercer

SAT., JUNE 27: STARTING A SCHOOL OR COMMUNITY GARDEN, 10:00am-12:30pm. Zoom Live Class by Invitation, \$20. Urban Harvest class. Register: urbanharvest.org/education/classes/

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

SAT., JULY 18: FALL VEGETABLE GARDENING, 9:30am-12:00pm. Zoom Live Class by Invitation, \$20. Urban Harvest class. Register: urbanharvest.org/education/classes/

SAT., AUG. 8: BOKASHI – WASTE NOT, WANT NO, 9:30am-11:30am. Zoom Live Class by Invitation, \$20. Urban Harvest class. Register: urbanharvest.org/education/classes/

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

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LOCAL FARMERS MARKETS

- [URBAN HARVEST FARMERS MARKET](#), Saturdays, 8am-noon, in St. John's School parking lot, 2752 Buffalo Speedway.
- [FULSHEAR FARMERS MARKET](#) Saturdays, 9am-1pm, 9035 Bois d'Arc Lane @ FM 1093, Fulshear.
- [THE WOODLANDS FARMERS MARKET AT GROGAN'S MILL](#), Saturdays, 8am-noon, Grogan's Mill Shopping Center Parking Lot, 7 Switchbud Pl., The Woodlands
- [BEAUTY'S GARDEN](#) is now participating in the Acres Homes Farmers Market Saturday, June 29, 10am-2pm, 4333 W Little York Rd.

Although normally we did not run out-of-garden events, during this pandemic period when most gardening events have been cancelled, we are happy to publish a running list of local 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 . . .

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

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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 -- 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 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.

