



# LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS

Houston Garden Newsletter



**June 25, 2020 - Issue # 345**

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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](mailto:lazygardener@sbcglobal.net)



## PLANTS HAVE "A STORY" BESIDES "WOW" NOW

*"There are no gardening mistakes, only experiments."*

*-- Janet Kilburn Phillips*

by **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

When we started asking for readers' WOW NOW! pictures and reports, I wasn't prepared for the personal associations triggered by submissions, and I hope the same is true for all of you.

Dale Phillips triggered not only a wonderful personal plant flashback, but also one of our fascinating garden leaders: Dr. Ying Doon Moy. Dale reports his Dr Moy Grande is covered with "at least a dozen everyday of these giant hibiscus." Some of his cherry pink-to-red blooms measure over 12" across!

That was my experience too. Then suddenly, one day, I walked outside, and it had died. No idea why. I wanted another one but somehow never got around to getting it. Will now for sure! Dale first Hibiscus x 'Moy Grande' died but he knows why. Following the Harvey floods, he didn't realize until it was too late that the pot it was in wasn't draining. The ground it sat on was too saturated. (A lesson for all of us!)



This one, bought this one last spring at [Buchanans Native Plants](#), is planted in the ground. It died back this past winter as usual and, he reports, *"grew like a weed from nothing to over 5' starting in April"*. Every day now at least a dozen flowers are in bloom, some over 12" across.

The plant's in full sun, west-facing, with a little morning shade, in a bed that for decades has been highly mulched with pine needles and oak leaves.. He cheerfully admits he feeds Moy Grande Hibiscus more often than he should with highly recommended [Space City Hibiscus Society's Hibiscus Fertilizer](#).

Thanks, Dale, for reminding us about [Dr. Ying Doon Moy](#), a survivor of indescribable hardships during WWII and the Chinese Cultural Revolution, who became an internationally-renowned geneticist with San Antonio Botanical Garden. Dr. Moy is credited with developing not only the Moy Grande Hibiscus but over 150 new species, many of which now adorn gardens worldwide. Don't you treasure plants so much more when you know their histories?

\* \* \*



**WOW NOW! IN CRYSTAL BEACH** The first time we drove past Rita Moseley's yard in Bolivar Peninsula, so many different flowers were blooming interwoven in a small jungle-like enclave, no individual bushes identifiable. I left a note asking her to call. Rita's gardening cohort Gloria Bratton's is an equal treasure trove, including these NOW WOW! (2nd row above) pink Epiphyllum Ackermannii 'Orchid Cactus' and two different purple shades on the same vine.

**THIS DETERMINED ICE PLANT** has spent the past three years in a very special pot on our front patio and has



mostly only been watered by rain and has the most fascinating growth pattern. It would be pretty cascading equally all around the rim. Instead the whole thing (not just new branches) insists on growing en masse toward the sun. Turn the pot eastward and in a day or two the whole cascade is on the west side. Love independent plants! It's a *Dorotheanthus Mezoo* Trailing Red (aka ice plant).



**SHARE YOUR "WOW NOW!" photos of flowers/varieties not already shown. Email to [lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com](mailto:lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com). Be sure to include name of plant, your part of town and notes other gardeners might find interesting! Other submissions can be seen at [natureswayresources.com/NLindex2020.pdf](http://natureswayresources.com/NLindex2020.pdf)**



**VICTORIA GRIFFIN's** picture of her new front garden is worth sharing, as it addresses a potential problem too many gardeners overlook. Although this garden doesn't abut the actual house wall, providing adequate plant drainage without covering up foundation weep holes can be a challenge. With our monsoon rains and clay soil, it's essential to avoid pooling of moisture that could damage a

house foundation.

This technique installed for Victoria, explains Don Dille of [Dille Landscapes](http://DilleLandscapes.com), is used to catch and disperse excess roof rain runoff. The area is bordered with steel edging, weed fabric is laid on the bottom and then filled with large bullrock (river rock). Excess water is allowed to both soak downward and flow out.

Garden mulch is kept away from weep holes, and spreading out excess moisture helps prevent foundation cracking, a major problem in every Greater Houston area. This also allows for more adequate air circulation around plants and soil levels can be raised in the planting area, providing much needed drainage during our monsoons.

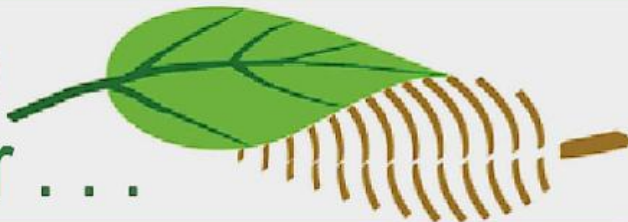
The drain relief areas can be extended to attractively wander through lawns or gardens. Filled with moss stone, they create an attractive dry creek effect.

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**"LAZY GARDENER SPEAKER LIST" & "PUBLICITY BOOKLET"  
& Brenda's "LAZY GARDENERS GUIDE ON CD" are free  
— email request to: [lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com](mailto: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 #124

**An** emerging area of pest control is using scents from one insect to control another. The Max Planck Institute for Chemical ecology has discovered another mechanism of how this works.

Many insects use a plants scent to determine the best place for them to lay their eggs. They discovered that scents from the frass of feeding larva tells other insects that this area is already occupied and to find another location to avoid competition during egg deposition. (Journal of the National Academy of Sciences 2019).

**A** new study by Cornell University shows that when plants like the Golden Rod (*Solidago altissima*), when attacked by the goldenrod leaf beetle, it sends out a chemical signal that other plants of the same species can recognize. The other plants turn on their immune system so that they are all working to defend against this pest.

The Smithsonian Tropical Research Center has found that warm soils release carbon faster than cool soil. A vital component of healthy soils is humus which is chains of carbon atoms. In warm soils humus is destroyed at a much faster rate and released to the atmosphere as carbon dioxide. This is another good reason to keep our flowerbeds and trees mulched with several inches of a good aged (composted) Native Mulch to keep the soil cooler. Not only does it slow the breakdown of humus, it actually increases humus, as it continues to decompose.

**Speaking** of humus, it has four main components; fulvic acid, humic acid, ulmic acid and humins. When humus is dry, we call these components humates, fulmates, ulmates, etc. or collectively "humus".

Fulvic acid is yellow to yellow brown humic substance that is water soluble and composted of short chain carbon atoms.

Humic acid is a dark-brown humic substance that is only water soluble at high pH. These molecules are composed of medium to long chains of carbon atoms and may remain stable in the soil for years. Humic acids hold onto and help transport nutrients and water to a plant's roots.

Ulmic acid is a dark brown molecule composed of 16-35 carbon atoms. It has recently been identified as a component of humus and its role in nature is still being determined.

Humin is a black humic substance that is not soluble in water, and is extremely long chain carbon molecules which is very stable in the soil for decades or more. Humins can compose over 50% of the organic matter in healthy soil. A good compost will contain 5-8% of humus which is about 110-112 pounds per cubic yard. A high-quality compost will contain more humus and can have over 150 pounds of humus (humates) in a single cubic yard.

Whether from compost or mined humates, humus is a great way to improve the quality of one's soil.

**A**nother issue with our conventional food supply is contamination by toxic heavy metals from artificial fertilizers. The US Geological Survey has reported that the clean safe phosphate deposits have been used up, and the deposits being used now contain the toxic heavy metal we know as cadmium (Cd).

Additionally, new studies have shown that the phosphate used in artificial fertilizers now contains the radioactive element Polonium (Po). Polonium-210 is produced by the decay of uranium and is found in nature in small amounts.

Polonium is the same element found in tobacco smoke that causes lung cancer as it is a powerful carcinogen. It is chemically similar to the essential element selenium hence easily absorbed by plants.

According to a study the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (1983), eating food including meat and dairy products raised using this type fertilizer exposes one to the same amount of radiation as smoking cigarettes.

Some say it does not matter as polonium decays away. However, polonium decays into lead which has significant health risks, especially for children.

*Note: When the practice of adding hazardous wastes to artificial fertilizers were exposed, the state of Washington and Canada made it illegal. However, in the USA, the EPA on October 23, 2002 during the Bush administration, made it legal to dispose of hazardous waste in artificial fertilizers and they do not have to disclose it to anyone.*

*A book on the discovery of this practice and the governmental cover up can be found in the book:*

*Fateful Harvest by Duff Wilson, Harper Collins Publisher, ISBN 0-06-019369-7, A history of how hazardous waste is disposed of in synthetic fertilizers and ends up contaminating the food supply. Wilson was an investigative reporter for the Seattle Times Newspaper and published a series of articles in July-August 1997-1999.*

For the best gardens use only organic fertilizers and amendments. My personal favorite is the Microlife<sup>TM</sup> line of organic fertilizers and is one of the sponsors whom helps underwrite the cost of this newsletter.

**R**esearch continues to explain that soil health is directly related to human health. Microbes in the soil and natural environment evolved with us and have



the power to communicate with us. We know that soil microbes play an important part and help regulate our emotions and immune response.

We now know that an active and healthy soil microbial community helps plants grow and protect them against insects and disease. More and more research are showing that the toxic chemical methodology of agriculture is screwing up the bacterial and fungal populations in the soil and that it reduces the quality and nutrients in our food.

One of the biggest health issues in our society today is inflammation caused by oxidation, which is behind many health issues. For example, researchers in the Food Health department at Pennsylvania State University have found that one anti-oxidant they call Ergo (l-ergothioneine) is only made by soil fungi!

When a fungicide is applied or when soils are tilled the required fungi are destroyed, hence our food no longer contains this important anti-oxidant.

A good introduction for homeowners on the link of soil care and human health is the book written by Daphne Miller, MD and a clinical professor at the University of California and the author of the book "Farmacology: Total Health from the Ground Up", ISBN: 978-0-06-210315.

**Researchers at Bowling Green State University have found another cause of the toxic algae blooms in our lakes and streams. This is backed by additional research by Ohio Northern University. They found that the herbicide glyphosate (active ingredient in Round Up) was the cause. Many species of cyanobacteria have evolved to use the phosphate in this chemical as fertilizer (food). A study in the Northeast USA found that this chemical causes or feeds 20-25% of the toxic algae blooms that occurs each year.**

In this newsletter we have often talked about the importance of minor and trace elements in re-mineralizing our soils for all plants but especially when we are growing vegetables and fruits. If these 79 elements that are found in the human body are not in the soil they do not get into our food.

Most food items (unless they are organic) has the herbicide glyphosate in and on them, with GMO products having the highest levels. When we eat this contaminated food with glyphosate, it prevents the absorption of the essential nutrients like magnesium, zinc, selenium, and other elements required by our immune system to fight off viruses.

The report below is from dozens of MD's and PhD's doing research into Covid-19 prevention that has linked the lack of these essential elements to severity of the disease along with vitamin D which requires these elements to work.

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Orthomolecular Medicine News Service, June 22, 2020**

#### **HOW WE CAN FIX THIS PANDEMIC IN A MONTH**

[www.orthomolecular.activehosted.com](http://www.orthomolecular.activehosted.com)

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**HAVE YOU TRIED...**  
*is taking a break. It will return soon!*

## **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](mailto: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. 24: FAMILY NIGHT – GEOCACHING, 4pm-6:30pm, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: 713-274-4160. [hcp4.net/parks/mercer](http://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](http://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/](http://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](http://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/](http://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/](http://urbanharvest.org/education/classes/)

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

TUES., NOV. 17: HEIRLOOM PLANTS by GREG GRANT, 10am; St. Basil's Hall, 702 Burney Road, Sugar Land. Free. Sugar Land Garden Club event. [www.sugarlandgardenclub.org](http://www.sugarlandgardenclub.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 20, 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](mailto: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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& 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.

