



# LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS

Houston Garden Newsletter



**July 3, 2020 - Issue # 346**

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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)



## WOW NOWs STILL POPPING EYES TO PRUNE OR NOT TO PRUNE THAT IS THE QUESTION . . .

*"Gardening is easy. Stick it in the ground the right way up and most plants will grow perfectly well."*

-- Monty Don, UK's leading garden writer/broadcaster

by **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

## WOW NOW!s FROM SUGAR LAND AND EL CAMPO . . .

**LEON  
MACHA'S**  
25 or so-year  
old, labor-free



**EVA GRILLIS RODRIGUEZ** in Sugar Land enjoys three bloom stages of her WOW NOW! hydrangeas and all 3 can be seen in this grouping: clockwise from upper left: pink/green, white and delicate lavender bouquets.

Mexican Bauhinia has magnificent and longer-lasting flowers than a lot of bauhinias. Propagated long ago by Leon's coworker Mark Morrow



at Greenleaf Nursery from his grandmother's plant, it returns quickly to full size if freezes back in winter. Leon says limbs will spread horizontally, even wrapping around other shrubs. This one has already grown into a less-prolifically-yellow-blooming cousin (bought at Mercer Botanic Gardens years ago). This red one now spans a record 4' high with 18' spread. "I never dreamed it would grow this big!" Leon marvels.

\* \* \*

## 'DO I 'HAVE TO' PRUNE NOW?' 'NO'!

**LANNIE BROWN** in Brazoria County was told by her lawn company she HAS to prune shrubs now or they'll "grow crazy." Neighbors say, "No, you don't." Lannie wants to know who's right?

As far as I'm concerned, pruning is often an unnecessary moneymaker here. Or, pointless do-it-yourself busy work — with this caveat, that is:

- Some folks love to prune, just for pleasure or control. Nothing wrong with that. They're your plants. Do whatever you want — on your own property and assuming your HOA doesn't have other ideas, of course.
- Some folks prune to force more and/or bigger flowers and fruits or more horizontal or vertical growth. Nothing wrong with this either.



But if you're happy with the way your plants grow, bloom, bear fruit, etc, there's no need to prune. In our subtropical area, almost all hardy flowering plants will flower, fruiting plants will bear fruit, trees will grow, groundcovers will cover, vines will entwine -- whether you prune them or not.

**TRUE STORY.** One caller wanted to know when should she prune her climbing roses? "Why?" I asked. "Climbing roses usually don't need pruning." She replied: "Well, they're pulling down my house eaves." Of course, my



answer was: "YESTERDAY!"

That was definitely a good reason to prune. Other good reasons:

- Branches grab and scratch you as you mow by.
- Large dead branches hang over the roof.
- Or worse, live branches scrape off shingles
- Expanding tree canopies are cutting off so much sunlight, grass and other plants will no longer grow in the yard.

This last is common as a tree ages and its canopy expands -- something to consider BEFORE planting a new tree.

**NEVER CUT A TREE ACROSS THE TOP.** "Topping" a tree interferes with its natural growth processes. Sometimes power lines dictate topping. But that's unavoidable.

Removing lower tree branches, however, can effectively raise the tree canopy, allowing more horizontal sun rays underneath. Husband once went so overboard on this, for years I felt like Alice in Wonderland going into our back yard. Fortunately our trees forgave us. More plants, including grass, did grow.

Be reasonable if removing lower branches. A top-heavy tree may topple over in very strong winds.

**JUST HAVE A GOOD REASON** to prune. Pruning creates an open wound. Most trees can handle that, but why take the risk if it's not necessary? Don't feel guilty if you don't feel like pruning.

One way to get more fruit/flowers without pruning is to stretch branches out horizontally, whether informally or deliberately as in espalier. Often top buds on vertical stalks secrete hormones to suppress lower bloom production. On a horizontal cane (so they say) there is no dominant bud. All buds grow and bloom/produce. That's why [fruit trees are so popular for espalier](#).



Another caution:

- Prune early spring bloomers -- azaleas, camellias, dogwoods, bridal wreath, etc., after blooming (only if absolutely necessary). Spring flowers develop on old wood. Pruning before blooming removes developing buds. New buds start developing a month or two after blooming stops so don't delay if you must prune.
- Plants that flower in summer -- hummingbird bush, lantana and others blooming right now) produce buds on new wood. Pruned these (only if absolutely necessary) in early spring to encourage the new growth that produces flowers.



Sometimes pruning helps different size plants live in better harmony, especially on our now smaller lots. These pictured here (l to r, lantana, oleander and hummingbird bush) are called "standards," normally shrubby plants turned into small trees, perfect for patios. But lazy gardeners beware! Pinching off lower-sprouting growth is a constant task for at least a few years.

The safest way with most shrubs is to select 3-5 good strong stalks and let them grow into a multi-trunked tree. Let them grow independently or try weaving them together to create a single braided trunk effect. Selecting just one stalk is done, but is more risky. It might die.

On all, remove all sprouting growth on selected stalks one half way down. As the plant grows upward, keep removing more lower vertical growth until the canopy bottom reaches the height you desire.

Either plant the emerging "tree" where you want it to be, or pot until it starts growing well and then transplant or keep in pot. Pots will naturally bonsai the confined roots, resulting in a smaller specimen. The danger there is that roots will begin growing in a circular pattern around the pot edge. If you notice roots poking out the top or bottom, go up two sizes on the pot or trim the roots back.

Standards will be more tender than usual. Protect in winter for a while with heavy mulch. Even if they die back, hardy shrubs should return in spring.

ONE LAST POINTER: To make a shrub taller than usual, prune side growth to encourage more upward growth. For shorter, wider shrubs, prune upward-pointed branches.

Generally speaking, unless you have an excellent reason, never prune more than 1/3 of a shrub off at any one time. Wait until you see good strong new growth, then cut off another 1/3, and so on,

**"STANDARDS"**  
**ARE WORKS OF**  
**ART IN JUDGED**  
**SHOWS**, with very  
 careful pruning to  
 create specific  
 shapes. My  
 haphazard attempts  
 do not qualify as



creating true "standards." I just want these "trees" to bloom above lower flowering shrubs below. My still-relatively-new yellow thryallis and pink *Hibiscus mutabilis* pictured here want to be more shrub than tree. Removing leaf



sprouts on lower branches doesn't retard blooming on top levels. This "abuse" is also being inflicted on my pride of Barbados, duranta and esperanza. Time will tell if they cooperate or not.

Hopeful the remaining "trunk" stalks will become thicker and stronger with bark hard enough to discourage lower sprouts. If that worries you (it doesn't me), stake them at first in the direction(s) you want them to grow. The taller they get at first, the more susceptible they might be to wind breakage.

\* \* \*

### "9 VEGETABLES FOR SMALL SPACE"

Don't miss Houston radio gardening host **DANY MILLIKIN's** great suggestions below for using unlikely small spots to grow edibles.

[Home Show Garden Pros radio show](#)

**Saturdays, 7-9am on SportsRadio 610AM**

\* \* \*

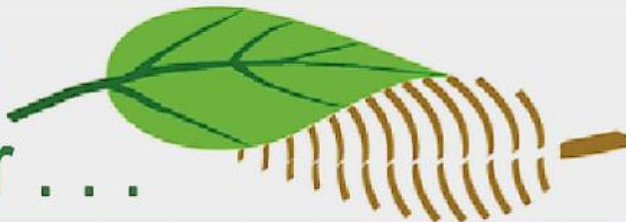
**NOTE: STILL HAPPY TO RECEIVE "WOW NOW!"** photos of flowers/varieties not already shown. Your "pride 'n' joy" may be the exact plant another reader has been looking for!

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)

**"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**

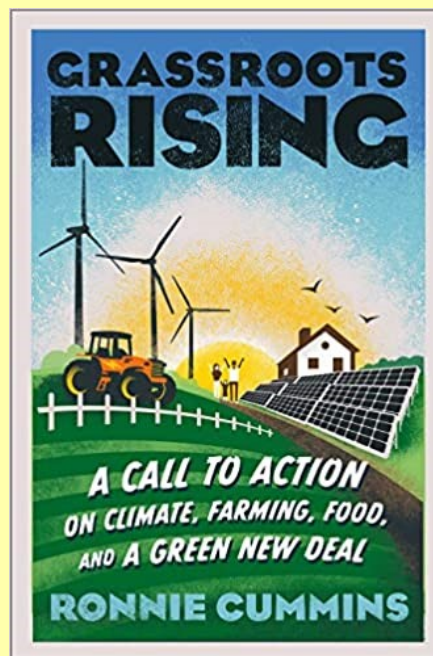


## BOOK REVIEW

**"GrassRoots RISING** – A Call to Action on Climate, Farming, Food, and A Green New Deal, by Ronnie Cummins, Chelsea Green Publishing, 2020, ISBN: 978-1603589758.

Ronnie Cummins is founder and director of the Organic Consumers Association (OCA) a non-profit network of over 2 million concerned consumers dedicated to safeguarding organic standards and promoting a healthy and just system of farming and commerce.

This book is about regeneration, a rapidly spreading, carbon sequestering, ecological forward-thinking world view that take us to a new way of sustainability.



Often in this newsletter we have talked about regenerative agriculture and the benefits it provides. This book helps one understand how regenerative agriculture will help solve issue from global warming to improving the terrible quality of the American food supply that causes so many health problems from our backyard gardens to our large farms.

Gardening is the number one hobby in America, especially "Organic Gardening" as it provides much better results at a far lower cost with over 35% of American households participating in some degree. Since the occurrence of the covid-19 pandemic many more Americans are looking to vegetable gardens (Victory Gardens) to get fresh safe and healthy food. This book will help gardeners understand how they can be part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

To carry this trend forward, Ronnie explains the connection between poor quality food, global warming, and our health in an easy to understand manner for the average reader.

From the Amazon website: "Grassroots Rising is a passionate call to action for the global body politic, providing practical solutions for how to survive—and thrive—in catastrophic times. Author Ronnie Cummins aims to educate and inspire citizens worldwide to organize and become active participants in preventing ecological collapse.

This book offers a blueprint for building and supercharging a grassroots Regeneration Movement based on consumer activism, farmer innovation,



political change, and regenerative finance—embodied most recently by the proposed Green New Deal in the US. Cummins asserts that the solution lies right beneath our feet and at the end of our forks through the transformation of our broken food system. Using regenerative agriculture practices that restore our agricultural and grazing lands, we can sequester massive amounts of carbon in the soil. Coupled with an aggressive transition toward renewables, he argues that we have the power to not only mitigate and slow down climate change, but actually reverse global warming.

This book shows that a properly organized and executed Regeneration Revolution can indeed offer realistic climate solutions while also meeting our everyday needs. If you're wondering what you can do to help address the global climate crisis, joining the Regeneration Revolution might be the best first step".

***"[Grassroots Rising] is a 'good news' instructional book for Regeneration, a practical, shovel-ready plan of action for the United States and the world to transition to climate stability, peace, justice, health, prosperity, cooperation, and participatory democracy." —Ronnie Cummins***

The items discussed in this book are not only good for society they also benefit all life from microbes, bees and butterflies to birds and small animals.

Remember as Ronnie so eloquently brings to light "Healthy Soil = Healthy Plants = Healthy animals = Healthy Food = Healthy People."

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



## **9 VEGETABLES FOR SMALL SPACES**

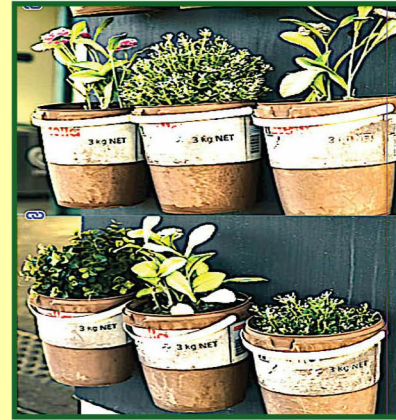
by **DANY MILLIKIN**

[\*HomeShow Garden Pros radio show\*](#)

*Executive Director / Organic Horticulture Benefits Alliance*

Find a good location. Many vegetables are highly growable in containers if we fulfill a few basic requirements: full sun, a well-drained soil with copious amounts of organic matter, and

consistent watering. If you happen to be new to vegetable gardening, start out with few containers so you can have success from your very first season onward. In the future you can always add more. Now, Get Gardening!



### GREEN BEANS

in bush form do well in containers as small as 8" x 8" per plant. Try "Gold Rush" or "Blue Lake" for good flavor & consistent production. Pole beans need a larger container and a sturdy trellising system. 'Cherokee Trail of Tears' can be grown both for fresh green bean or as a dry bean.



**ROOT VEGETABLES**, like **TURNIPS** work well in combination with other greens. Plant an early fall crop and again in mid-summer for a spring crop. Don't forget that turnip leaves (greens) are also edible, like mustard, as they are both the same plant species, just different varieties or selections.



**CHARD** is becoming a container super-star for the beauty (and taste) of colorful foliage that can be harvested throughout the summer and into fall. If kept picked, tender chard leaves can be used in salads. If the leaves are older, they make a great summer spinach substitute.



**GREENS** — Asian greens like 'Tatsoi' or mustards like 'Red Giant' grow well in containers. Start other salad greens such as arugula, indoors under lights at winter's end. Outdoors, sow as soon as soil is workable. Kale and collard greens can extend harvests into summer and fall.



**EGGPLANTS** are very ornamental when grown in a pot, especially the purple Asian varieties. Try the hybrid varieties 'Hansel' or 'Gretel' for compact plants and good production. Cage the plant for support, as with most vegetables, in containers.



**LETTUCES** grow very well in a spring or fall container. They can be sown directly into a container or planted as transplants. Some gardeners get creative and make salad balls by connecting two wire baskets and then planting with salad plugs.





**PEPPERS** do well in containers and don't need as much water as other plants, such as tomatoes. The variety of colors, flavors, heat, and sizes is endless. Make sure you provide a cage for support. Fall crops can be quite heavy



**RADISHES** are fun to grow with children. They grow quickly, satisfying eager beginners. Harvest before temperatures begin to rise as they develop strong flavors later in spring. 'French Breakfast' has a mild flavor and tasty crunch.



**SPINACH** can be started in succession for a ready supply through spring and fall. The plants will bolt when the weather gets hot. Consider replacing with malabar or other heat loving plants in the height of summer.

*Dany, who is also Executive Director of the [Organic Horticulture Benefits Alliance](#), shares the [HomeShow Garden Pros](#) radio show with [Nelson Nursery & Water Garden](#)'s Anita Nelson & Mary Nelson Gonzales; [Warren's Southern Gardens](#)' Diane Bulanowski; [Plants for All Seasons](#)' Sherri Harrah & Zach Buchanan and [Enchanted Forest & Gardens](#)' Joey Lenderman.*

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## 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 WEBSITES FOR . . .**

- **COVID-19 - RELATED PRECAUTIONS AT EVENTS**
- **UPDATED CALENDAR BEFORE ATTENDING ANY PREVIOUSLY-SCHEDULED**
- **LAST MINUTE CANCELLATION.**

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

TUES., NOV. 17: HEIRLOOM PLANTS by GREG GRANT, 10am; St. Basil's Hall, 702 Burney Road, Sugar Land. Free. Sugar Land Garden Club event.  
sugarlandgardenclub.org

\* \* \*

## **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, 10am-2pm, 4333 W Little York Rd.
- **WESTCHASE DISTRICT FARMERS MARKET**, Thursdays, opens 3pm, St. Cyril of Alexandria Catholic Church, 10503 Westheimer Road (at Rogerdale Road, one block west of Beltway 8)

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 . . .

**THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS NEWSLETTER!**  
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# NATURE'S WAY RESOURCES

*an organically based service company*

## 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 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.

