



LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS

Houston Garden Newsletter



July 16, 2020 - Issue # 348

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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 lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com



WEED REDEMPTION & MOTHER NATURE BATS LAST WITH SURPRISES

"Some say weeds are flowers who have not yet found their potential."

-- Stefni Kueht, Weimer Garden Club,

"Plant a Victory Garden," *The Weimer Mercury*, June 25, 2020

by **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

STEFNI KUEHT's "weed" note above brought to mind this "trumpet tree." Talk about a weed finding it's potential! Our common trumpet creeper vine (*Campsis radicans*) is the bane of many a local gardener (including me!). But this clever (and ambitious!) homeowner has turned it into a neat,



beautiful "tree."

This surely is more work than most lazy gardeners would undertake. But what a beautiful job of probably years of twisting new aging vines into this delightful trunk, not to mention having to constantly remove persistent lower growth.

* * *

For those of you just tuning in, **WOW NOW!** is an open-invitation to all readers to help brighten these uncertain days by sharing pictures of (and tidbits about) their fabulous, now-in-bloom garden treasures. I've learned a lot from all the ones turned in these past few weeks. [Click to see these.](#)

A wonderful bonus has been notes from gardeners about unexpected delights, such as discovering Jere Noerager and Patty McFall shared my surprise at uninvited guests -- albeit very welcome ones! -- in our gardens!

- **JERE NOERAGER** raised my eyebrows when he wrote of experimenting with tree dahlias. I never heard of these. When one of his *Dahlia imperialis* reaches bloom time, it should look like the photo at left and eventually can reach 6-10' (**no bending to admire the blooms**).



Jere thought one was going to bloom. But - surprise! It turned out a morning glory tree (*Ipomoea species*) that had somehow sneaked into his tree dahlia plantings. (Probably a nursery mix-up.)

No matter, this tree morning glory definitely qualifies on its own as a WOW NOW! plant. It can reach 6-10' and hardiness depends on our so-hard-to-predict winters. Encouragement comes from a SW Houston gardener who reports her decades-old one doesn't even die back except in exceptionally severe winters. It has always returned to thrill again. She does water well every time a freeze is forecast.

- **UNEXPECTED GUESTS** in my garden are pictured here, the 5' (so far) more

brilliant green shrubs towering over (and smothering) my regular 2-3' cosmos with their brilliant yellow and orange flowers on delicate, airy branches. Plants from seed sown every spring not only last all summer, new seed are easily scattered (not even planted) throughout the yard, producing new plantlets in amazingly short time.



This year, for the first time ever, suddenly have also sprouted three 5' high, thick-trunked, shrubby versions of my delicate ladies with similar but larger and brighter green leaves. So far only a single flat-petaled bloom (top insert) has appeared on these oversized invaders. My regular ladies have multi-overlapping petals (bottom insert).

Searching online for clues, I find I'm not alone! These "giant cosmos" or "freakish mutants" (as some call them) seem to appear sporadically from "normal" cosmos seed packets. One theory: they are throwbacks to the original plant form from which the hybridized seed was derived. Wow, just like an episode of NOVA!

These voluminous cosmos "shrubs" are said to bloom best in fall. I hope so! Decision time (maybe): Let their rampant growth smush my pretty ladies? Or wait to see what happens next? Guess what a lazy gardener will do?

- **PATTY MCFALL'S** shell ginger (left insert) was one of our [very first WOW NOW! submissions](#)

The right insert is the surprise guest who suddenly appeared in Patty's 10-year-old, 15+ foot stand of shell gingers. Devoted ginger enthusiast [Ceil Dow](#)



pointed out it's a butterfly ginger, probably *Hedychium* hybrid 'Sherry Baby.' Butterfly gingers usually grow from spreading rhizomes, rarely setting seed. Perhaps a neighbor's plant's did and wind or birds spread them?

However it happened, I have great admiration for any plant that survives, much less blooms, amid the almost impermeable clusters of shell ginger rhizomes. Once established, these are the devil to dig up (*we once worked all day to salvage just a handful from my grandfather Henry Gracida's home in Texas City*).

If Patty wants find and transplant this butterfly ginger, Ceil recommends waiting for the shells to stop blooming. Cut the shell stalks to the ground. Maybe she'll find the butterfly source tuber. Then fertilize the shells with Microlife or an all purposes fertilizer and water well. But even if the search is in vain, Ceil notes

this will promote new prettier growth that will, she notes, "bloom next year if the winter temperatures don't freeze the leaf stalks down to the ground." If you missed Ceil's great ginger-growing tip links earlier, here they are again:

- [Ginger Planting Demo / Ceil Dow](#)
- [Edible and Landscape Gingers for Your Garden by Ceil Dow](#)

* * *



Online Mercer Sale offerings will include I to r:Erythrina x syesii (Australian Coral Tree); Duranta erecta (Golden dewdrop); Heirloom Tomatoes mixed flats; Justicia carnea 'Thelma's Pink' (Brazilian Plume Flower, Thelma's Pink) and Agave victoria-reginae variegata (Queen Victoria Agave Variegated)

"AMAZING PLANTS FOR A STUNNING DRY GARDEN"

The Mercer Society Virtual Specialty Plant Sale

ORDER at <https://themercersociety.square.site/>

Choice sun-loving, heat/drought-tolerant plants will be among the stars offered online at The Mercer Society's Virtual Specialty Plant Sale Sat., July 18, 8am-8-pm. Pickup instructions will be issued at time of purchase. Gingers, lantanas and roses, along with heritage tomatoes will be among the selections overseen by The Mercer Society's Horticultural Propagation Greenhouses at [Mercer Botanic Garden](#) in North Harris County. Browsing is now underway at the themercersociety.square.site/. All orders are pickup ONLY, as the plants cannot be shipped.

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HIGH TEMPS = HIGHER WATER BILLS We're going to feel even more effects of recent high temperatures when our next water bill arrives. Great tips on more efficient landscape water use can be found online at [Texas A&M's Water University](#). Up to 50% of landscape use water can be lost to evaporation when it passes through the air or if it only settles in upper soil levels. Roots will grow up into those levels and become more susceptible to greater dehydration damage than they would at lower levels. Fewer but longer periods of slowly-applied deep waterings are better than daily quick doses, especially for trees and large shrubs.



POTPOURRI

- An increasing number of Virtual and Zoom gardening events are now listed in our calendar below.
- So glad to see Doug Tallamy has published "*Nature's Best Hope- A New Approach to Conservation That Starts In your Yard*" — a followup book to

his "[Bringing Nature Home.](#)" Both should be a must-have for every home gardener. For more on his new book, see John's column below.

- We're still delighted to have your **WOW NOW!** garden delights. Email to: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com

**"LAZY GARDENER SPEAKER LIST" & "PUBLICITY BOOKLET"
& Brenda's "LAZY GARDENERS GUIDE ON CD" 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

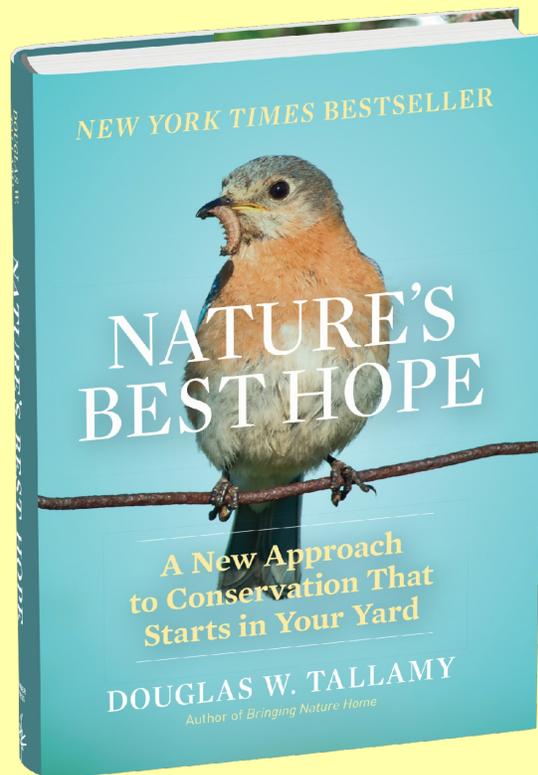


BOOK REVIEW

"Nature's Best Hope- A New Approach to Conservation That Starts In your Yard"

by Douglass W. Tallamy, Timber Press, 2019, ISBN-13: 978-1-60469-900-5

This book picks up where Doug's book "Bringing Nature Home" leaves off, which is a must read for all serious gardeners and nature lovers. This book is more of a "How To" book on using our yards as part of our ecological solution to many of societies problems today. Not only does these techniques mentioned bring back life in our yards from bees and butterflies to birds, it saves money and resources.



Doug is a great writer and presents information in an easy to understand format. Doug has lectured several times in Houston over the last few years for those fortunate enough to hear him. He is a great speaker and really drives home the need to use our yards and gardens as part of the solution.

"In this new book, Tallamy takes the next step and outlines his vision for a grassroots approach to conservation. *Nature's Best Hope* shows how homeowners everywhere can turn their yards into conservation corridors that provide wildlife habitats. Because this approach relies on the initiatives of

private individuals, it is immune from the whims of government policy. Even more important, it's practical, effective, and easy—you will walk away with specific suggestions you can incorporate into your own yard.

If you're concerned about doing something good for the environment, *Nature's Best Hope* is the blueprint you need. By acting now, you can help preserve our precious wildlife—and the planet—for future generations."

In this book Doug presents a new idea of "Home Grown National Park" how by working together we can create corridors of habitat for plants and wildlife.

I found a review by Sue Dingwell, where she did a very nice review of the book so no need to repeat her work.

Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard, is a richly layered work, providing a contextual look at the evolution of our thinking about conservation, as well as detailed guidelines for getting started with native plants in your own nearby spaces, and, perhaps most importantly, the reasoning that will convince you, your neighbors, and your neighborhoods that now is the time to do so. Far from a dry treatise or an impassioned rant, the writing here reflects Tallamy's character: cautiously optimistic, and gently but perceptively humorous. This book is an enjoyable read both for his fans, and for those who are new to his ideas about the roles native plants play in our landscapes. One of his stated goals was to write a book that would meet the needs of three groups of people: those who like plants, those who like animals, and those who like neither. He has done so.

Of course, at the heart of this book is the depth of Tallamy's knowledge and experience. A professor in the [Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology](#) at the University of Delaware for over 40 years, author of more than 95 research papers, and — read the book cover for a list of awards and bona fides — a person ultimately qualified to make the arguments he does.

Tallamy's explanations of the specialized relationships among plants, insects, and animals are fascinating stories, but also foundational building blocks for understanding the natural world we live in, whether we live in the city, the country, or anywhere between.

So many significant changes have come about in our world since the publication of *Bringing Nature Home*. The words 'monarch decline,' 'climate change,' and 'the sixth extinction' are no longer strangers to our conversations but have become part of the common parlance. In his new book Tallamy has taken the opportunity to address some of the common questions that have surfaced during this intervening time. Debates about the value of introduced plants and novel ecosystems; the feasibility of restoration projects, or the advisability of letting nature 'take its course.' These issues and more receive detailed and clarifying explanations.

Sue Dingwell is a Master Naturalist, Master Gardener, former Board Member of the Virginia and Florida Native Plant Societies, and is on the Conservation and Media Committees of the Colorado Native Plant Society. Sue is also an accomplished communications and media professional, blogger, and photographer.

HAVE YOU TRIED

is taking a break. It will return soon!

LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER CALENDAR EVENTS

(See Farmers Markets at end of calendar)

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 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/

MON., JULY 13: STARTING YOUR FALL GARDEN by SCOTT HOWARD, 7pm, Houston Urban Gardeners ZOOM or Google meeting. Free. Details: houstonurbangardeners.org

THURS., JULY 16: SIMPLE HABITAT PONDS, 7pm, Native Plant Society of Texas/Houston ZOOM event. Register: npsot.org/wp/houston/

FRI., JULY 29: Registration deadline for CREATING SCHOOL GARDENS WORKSHOP (VIRTUAL), 4pm, \$10. Harris County Master Gardener event. Register: schoolgardensjuly31.eventbrite.com. /harris.agrilife.org/

SAT., AUG. 8: BOKASHI – WASTE NOT, WANT NOT , 9:30-11:30am. ZOOM class, Urban Harvest. \$20. Register: urbanharvest.org/education/classes/

WED., AUG. 12: BIG BEND CAMPING AND COLLECTIONS TRIP by JACOB MARTIN & BRANDON HUBBARD, noon-1pm, Mercer Botanic Garden virtual event. Free. 713-274-4160. bit.ly/302GAjb

AUG 18: TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST COASTAL PRAIRIE CHAPTERS FALL TRAINING CLASS BEGINS. \$125. Evening & Saturday classes. coastalprairie.org; carol@coastalprairie.org.

THURS., AUG. 27: BIRD SURVEY led by Paul Gregg and Christy Jones, 8am-10am, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble. Free. Register: 713-274-4160. <https://bit.ly/2On3WdT>

SAT., AUG. 29: THE MERCER SOCIETY - VIRTUAL SPECIALTY PLANT SALE - PLUMERIA, 8am-8pm, Online Only. 713-274-4166. themercersociety.square.site

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

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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](#). 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)
- [MEMORIAL VILLAGE FARMERS MARKET](#), Saturdays, 9am-1pm, 10840 Beinhorn 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 . . .

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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 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.

