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<u>Nature's Way Resources</u> 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@gm











GARDENERS NOW 'MAJOR INFLUENCERS' . . . THINK EDIBLE TROPICALS!

"Gardening is an exercise in optimism.
Sometimes, it is a triumph of hope over experience.'

- Marina Schinz, noted garden photographer, author of "Visions of Paradise"

by BRENDA BEUST SMITH

You may not feel a spotlight on you right now, but one is if you regularly read this newsletter. Folks who watch trends seem to be in total agreement: homegardeners are now "major influencers."

Nurseries traditionally are struggling enterprises -- prone as they are potential

disasters. Yet from this pandemic's beginning, they have been viewed as safer places, easier for socially-distancing and resources for much needed at-home projects.

As a decades-long nursery-watcher, I can promise you this is a MAJOR silver lining in all we are going through. Most independent, local nursery folks started out as true plant lovers, only to quickly discover if they're successful (most aren't), they have no time to actually garden anymore.

So, a huge **Tip o' the Trowel** to our local, independent nurserymen. You hung in there when work was overwhelming and rewards not always adequate recompense. I am so happy that you're our silver lining!

You are the go-to experts every home gardener should be utilizing now. You share our challenges (bugs, weather, etc.), carry plants that do best for us and are willing to go the extra mile to make sure we're happy.

On a broader scale, home gardeners are now considered major national retail influencers, driven in part to ensure safe food as well as to combat boredom and find comfort and security in these trying times. Gardening gives a sense of self-sufficiency, even if only on a philosophical level.

While most trends are heavily weighted by "profit-for-me" facilitators, the vast majority of home gardeners simply love to share, to learn and put \$\$\$ far down the influence scale. These breaths of nonpartisan rapport and delight, fresh air and safe social-distancing are pretty welcome these days.

In our Spotlight article, below, are what will probably be some new, eyeopening edible possibilities for most gardeners and more evidence of climate change really hitting home. One caution: google new-to-you suggestions if you want. But DON'T follow any statewide or -- worse -- national planting advice without first checking local sources. We can grow many things protection-free inground that might not survive even 150 miles north of here without heavy protection. Well, most of the time, anyway!

To get you started on the right foot, below Deborah Birge, Fort Bend County Master Gardener, previews just a few of the new-to-most-of-us fruits that will be discussed in an online class **SAT., OCT.. 17: GROW YOUR OWN FRUIT TREES**, 9am-10:30am. Details: *fortbend.agrilife.org/grow-your-own/*; 281-342-3034; or Brandy.rader@ag.tamu.edu.

GARDENS, with even more "exotic" edibles, during this weekend's "CELEBRATION OF ASIA." Fri.-Sun. (Oct 2-4), 9am-5pm, part of HBG's opening celebrations. Click here for HBG's <u>Asia Regional Guide</u> – with garden map, schedule, and plant facts. <u>Details/Tickets.</u>

* * *

IDENTIFYING INSECTS How well do you know your garden's insects? Learn to identify these and help a local group win a prestigious award.

Native Prairies Assn. of Texas Education/Houston Education Director Della Barbato and volunteer



Chuck Duplant do a great job in "Deer Park Prairie: A Closer Look at Insects," an entry in the Wild About Houston Green Film Festival, cosponsored by NPAT and Citizen's Environmental Coalition. Citizens' Environmental Coalition. Ticket link. Click on entry title to view.

* * *

THREE DELIGHTFUL REPORTS from readers are guaranteed smile-triggers:

INGRID HAMILTON'S HUMMINGBIRD VIDEO shows the value of lantana, a fantastic sun-loving, drought-tolerant perennial that should be in every habitat and pollinator garden. Our native variety -- once called Lantana horrida (for strong leaf smell) -- has been renamed L. urticoides, (translates "like a nettle"). Click link or picture for today's moment of Zen.





HELLO, LADIES! -- how can anyone not grin at these? Cute planted face pots will be among garden delights at San Jacinto County Master Gardeners' PROPAGATED PLANT SALE, Sat., Oct. 10: 9am-2pm, Shepherd Community Center, 10251 TX-150, Shepherd. Drive through or shop tables. facebook.com/SJC-Master-Gardeners

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HERE COME TA' GOATS, HERE COME TA' GOATS ... to the Houston Arboretum & Nature

Center. In an innovative twist on urban conservation management, more than 120 Rent-A-Ruminant® Texas goats will assist with "mowing" overgrown vegetation. Goats, an effective "eco-friendly solution", will help "clear" 1.5 acres around the North and South Woodway ponds through Sat.,



Oct. 10, starting Mon., Oct. 5, 9:30-11:30am. **Link to map here**. P.S. Goats are cute, but NO PETTING! Just like service dogs, they're on the job!

MERCER'S POLLINATOR BIOBLITZ:

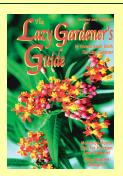
Great horticulturists-selected Pollinator Plants are available online during Mercer's virtual <u>Texas Pollinator BioBlitz</u>. In an effort to raise awareness of Texas pollinators, including many species of butterflies, moths, bees, and more, Mercer is encouraging Texans of all ages to both:



Venture outdoors now through through
 Oct. 18 at Mercer Botanic Gardens, 8
 a.m.-8 p.m., Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield Road in North
 Harris County, and . . .

Participate in an open Virtual Pollinator Festival & Plant Sale, Sat., Oct. 3, 8am-8pm, 713-274-4166. Pollinator nectar and host plants, including plenty of Texas native plants such as milkweed, passionflowers and (pictured) coneflowers will be available with proceeds benefiting Mercer Botanic Gardens. Details: Mercer's Facebook event.

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

Free PDF download of Brenda's now-out-of-print
"LAZY GARDENER'S GUIDE"

• Lazy Gardener Guide Front Cover • Lazy Gardener Rest Of Covers • Lazy Gardener Guide Book Pages

In exchange for this free book, all I ask is that you be safe . . . PLEASE WEAR A MASK! Protect yourself and the rest of us!







L to r, dragonfruit bloom & pineapple. (Deborah Birge photos)

TROPICALS TO GROW

IN FORT BEND COUNTY & ACROSS OUR AREA

By DEBORAH BIRGE

Fort Bend County Master Gardener

Fort Bend County has become warmer over the past few decades. As a girl, the most tropical fruit my parents grew was a kumquat. Now, we grow a wide array of citrus fruits. And we have moved from protecting them in containers to planting them in the ground.









Most of FBC and surrounding areas are alkaline soil of heavy clay. For this reason, growers are encouraged to plant citrus on berms or in raised beds. In addition to citrus, gardeners have moved into growing the more tropical fruits such as (pictured above I to r) banana, avocado, passion fruit, and guava.



It has become a common sight to see papaya trees (flower/fruit pictured) towering over back fences. With strategic site planning, gardeners can add mango, pineapple and passion fruit into their gardens.

Less common but still doable (I to r below) are the carambola or star fruit, cherimoya or custard apple, jaboticaba, mangosteen, sapodilla, soursop, and white

sapota. These fruits are best cultivated in containers and will need protection in winter. This can be a trip to the garage or a wrapping of insulation.



L to r, above: carambola (starfruit), cherimoya (custard apple), and jaboticaba. Below: mangosteen, sapodilla, soursop, and white sapote.



All the plants listed in this article need the same consideration as an apple or peach tree would require. Given rich, well-draining soil, sunlight, and irrigation, they will grow well and provide you with delicious, unusual fruit.

Some tropical fruits are easily grown but need hand pollinating such as the

pitaya or dragon fruit. The blooms are utterly breathtaking, the thorns demand respect, but the blooms...







L to r, dragon fruit (plant/flower pictured at top of column), ginger zingiber and tumeric

Two of the more exotic herbs being grown are:

- Ginger zingiber. This ginger is easily cultivated and can be removed from the container when needed, broken off and returned to continue growing. It does go dormant in the winter so it is best to let it stay on the very dry side until spring to avoid rot.
- Turmeric or Curcuma longa is not only a beautiful flowering plant but has the bonus of rhizomes that can be dried and powdered into turmeric. They begin to grow with the warm, wet summers but are ready for dormancy in winter.

* * *

Many more new-to-most-of-us fruits will be discussed in an Fort Bend County Master Gardener online class SAT., OCT.. 17: GROW YOUR OWN FRUIT TREES, 9am-10:30am. <u>fortbend.agrilife.org/grow-your-own</u> 281-342-3034; or Brandy.rader@ag.tamu.edu.

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October 14, 2020 • 5:00-6:00PM CST

JOIN ZOOM MEETING

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89894560546

MEETING ID: 898 9456 0546





NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 130

Over the years some readers have commented that I am too technical and others that I am not technical enough. So, for the technical loving readers enjoy the article summary below.

For the scientists reading this newsletter there was an article in the August issue of Physics Today titled "Does a New Physics Lurk Inside Living Matter?" Studies have suggested that classical physics does not explain some of the processes found in living microbes and plants. For example, why does life use left-handed amino acids and right-handed sugars?

Why does Slime Molds which are a collection of free single cells form cooperatives and function as a single organism with a common purpose? Why does their growth pattern look like fractals?

During development, how does an embryo know how to grow its cells in relation to other cells?

In physics there is a theory that information is actually a physical quantity (just like mass or velocity) and can actually affect the way matter behaves. "In biology, information transfer is a 2-way process, involving feedback loops and top down information flow".

As a result, it is believed that information is stored at the molecular level and the non-tribal quantum phenomena such as super position, entanglement, and tunneling, might be important for life after all. This has resulted in a new field of study called quantum biology and is under intense investigation.

Topics include coherent energy transport in photosynthesis, the avian magnetic compass, and the olfactory response of flies. Many other studies have suggested that many biological important molecules, such as sucrose and vitamin D-3, have unique electron-conductance properties associated with the critical transition point between an insulator and a disordered metal conductor.

A group of scientists from the University of Zurich have been studying landscapes and published a paper in the journal Nature Communications (2020). They analyzed 5,000 landscapes for a period of 17 years and found that biodiverse landscapes function better than monocultures (e.g. grass). Landscapes that have a mix of landcovers including grasslands (grasses, forbs, wildflowers), forest, shrubs, and water bodies, improve the functioning and stability of the landscape. Irrespective of the plant species, diversity, region or climate.

A paper in the journal Nature Ecology & Evolution (2020) was on the benefits of biodiversity and energy use. The researchers found that energy flows through an ecosystem by the food chain from grasshoppers to spiders and other lifeforms. There is a fixed amount of energy reaching the ground from the sun. So how does this energy be captured and move through the ecosystem? How much stays in the system or how much is lost?

They looked at every tropic level looking at plants, herbivores, carnivores, omnivores, soil microbes, organic matter above ground and in the soil, and the decomposers that feed on organic matter.

Researchers studied a system for 18 years and found that the higher the plant diversity and ore energy was stored. Ecosystems with 60 plant species contained twice the amount of biomass than monocultures.

In our gardens this same principle applies: the more plant diversity the healthier it will be.

By now we have all heard the term "Nature Deficit Disorder" originally coined by journalist Richard Louv in his book Last Child in the Woods. It was later used in the manual of psychiatric disorders the DSM-V a few years ago. To date there have been over 1,000 studies about the importance to our health by being in natures. Only 2-3 hours per week has tremendous health benefits. A 2019 study found that patients in psychiatric hospital benefited greatly from just working in a garden.

Gardening is so powerful as a health benefit in part due to what is called attention restoration theory. Being in a natural garden helps restore people's ability to concentrate. Engagement in gardening activities has been associated with stress reduction, increased attention, social health, and increased selfworth.

These benefits are in addition to exercise, vitamin-D production, calming effect of the green color of plants, fresh oxygen rich air, and chemicals the plants produce that stimulate feel good hormones in our brain, stimulate our immune system and many more benefits.

When we design our landscape using modern organic methods, we gain so many health and environmental benefits with the added bonus is that they cost less and provide better results.

Below are two great books to help you get started:

"Bringing Nature Home - How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants"

by Douglass W. Tallamy, Timber Press, 2014, Edith Printing, ISBN-13: 978-0-88192-992-8

"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

We have known for years that photosynthetic bacteria have the ability to convert energy from sunlight into plant compounds made of carbon chains (stored energy). These organisms helped create the oxygen rich atmosphere we have today by their photosynthesis.

Researchers at Arizona State and Penn State universities have found that when cyanobacteria live in low-light environments (under water, beneath a mulch or leaf layer) they can convert their metabolism to use or harvest the low energy (weak) far-red sunlight that can filter down to them. Journal Science Advances (2020).

Phillip Callahan, PhD (now deceased) was an entomologist whom decades ago, proposed that insects living in the soil could harvest and use energy that penetrated into the soil from electromagnetic radiation (all types of energy from

the sun both visible and invisible to humans). He stated, "If not, why do so many organisms in the soil have electromagnetic radiation absorbing antenna?"

A recent study published in the journal Bioscience (2020) was on fireflies facing extinction. They found that fireflies, of which they are 2,000 species are declining all over the world.

They found that habitat loss, artificial light, and pesticides were the leading cause. For gardeners, fireflies are not only fascinating to watch but in their larval stage they are a voracious predator of many insect pests. Without them we will experience more insect problems in our garden.

The worse pesticides are the organophosphates and neonicotinoids which also threaten our butterflies, dragonflies, etc. These pesticides are also used for mosquito control. The organization Beyond Pesticides published an article in July on this issue.

They also mentioned that these same toxic chemicals make all respiratory illnesses like Covid-19 much worse.

We often hear about excess CO₂ in the atmosphere in relation to climate change and growing plants like trees to sequester carbon. In the Journal of Environmental Quality (2019) there was an article on organic matter in soils. Soil is one of the largest carbon sinks due to its organic matter. Globally, SOM (soil organic matter) stores an estimated 1,460 Pg (petagram) of carbon. This is greater than the combined carbon storage of the atmosphere (760Pg) and vegetative pools (560 Pg).

If we as a society want to stop global warming, we have to take care of our soils...this means quit destroying it with artificial fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, hazardous waste like sewage sludge and heavy metals, etc.

When a gardener uses modern methods based on soil biology (organic) you become part of the solution. In addition, one gets better results (aka a beautiful lawn or landscape) at lower cost and less work.

HAVE YOU TRIED . . .

WHITE SWAMP MILKWEED

(Asclepias perennis)

What could be more beautiful than gorgeous, monarchs atop crisp, prolific white/pink blooms and lush green foliage? That's what aquatic milkweed



can bring to your garden or in pots on patios spring through first frost. This long-blooming perennial tops out about 2', thrives in full sun to partial shade and appreciates regular watering, except perhaps during our monsoons! In

addition to monarchs, attracts Queen and Soldier butterflies. Evergreen in warm winters; if not returns reliably from roots. Said to be deer-resistant.

<u>White Swamp Milkweed</u> is carried by Nature's Way Resources (<u>Map</u>). Or contact our other sponsors below or your neighborhood nurseryman for possible sources.

LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER CALENDAR EVENTS

All events in Houston unless otherwise specified.

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.
- <u>FARMERS MARKETS</u> -- Normally we do not run non-gardening/plant events. During this pandemic, when most gardening events have been cancelled,we are happy to publish a running list of local Farmers Markets. See at end of calendar.

Submit events to: <u>lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com</u>.

<u>ALWAYS</u> put group name in email subject.

ITE COVID-19-R

FRI., OCT. 2-SUN., OCT. 4: HOUSTON BOTANIC GARDEN OPENING SEASON – CELEBRATING ASIA, 9am-5pm daily, One Botanic Lane. *Purchase tickets*

SAT., OCT. 3: VIRTUAL POLLINATOR PLANT SALE (online event) 8am-8pm, <u>The Mercer Society</u> event. <u>themercersociety.square.site</u>. 713-274-4166.

SAT., OCT 3: BRAZORIA COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS FALL ONLINE PLANT SALE, 9am-4pm, Plant Pick Up 585 CR 443, Angleton. Brazoria County Master Gardeners event. 979-248-8257, smshanks195@gmail.com; https://txmg.org/brazoria/home/

THURS., OCT. 8: FABULOUS FRAGRANT SHRUB ROSES OF DAVID AUSTIN (virtual program), 7-9pm. Houston Rose Society event. Free. https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/508500077 access code: 508-500-077. Phone: +1 (312)757-3121.

SAT. OCT.10: HOUSTON FEDERATION OF GARDEN CLUBS PLANT SALE & FOOD DRIVE, 10am-1pm, 1501 Sunset Blvd. Houston Federation of Garden Clubs & The First Christian Church event. houstonfederationgardenclubs.org/special-events, 281-352-3370. SAT., OCT 10: SAN JACINTO COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS' PROPAGATED PLANT SALE, 9am-2pm, Shepherd Community Center, 10251 TX-150, Shepherd. Drive through or shop tables. Masks required. facebook.com/SJC-Master-Gardeners

WED., OCT. 14: VIRTUAL PRESENTATION–FABULOUS FIGS! (online event) by Stephen Brueggerhoff, noon-1pm, Mercer Botanic Gardens. Free. https://bit.ly/3m5cVjj 713-274-4160.

FRI., OCT. 16-SUN., OCT. 18: HOUSTON BOTANIC GARDEN OPENING SEASON -

CELEBRATING AFRICA, 9am-5pm daily, One Botanic Lane, *Purchase tickets*

SAT., OCT. 17: FRUIT TREES-WHAT TO GROW IN FORT BEND COUNTY, online class. 9am. Fort Bend County Master Gardener event. \$15. Register at least 2 days prior; fortbend.agrilife.org/grow-your-own/. 281-342-3034 or Brandy.rader@ag.tamu.edu

MON.-SAT., OCT. 19-24: HOUSTON. ARBORETUM & NATURE CENTER 'SCIENCE SPOOKTACULAR,' 4501 Woodway Dr. houstonarboretum.org

SAT., OCT. 24: NATIVE LANDSCAPES FOR BIRD (Zoom program), 9am-4:30 pm. Native Plant Society of Texas - Houston Chapter event. \$52. Details/Registration: www.npsot.org/wp/nlcpnps

FRI., OCT. 30-SUN., NOV. 1: HOUSTON BOTANIC GARDEN OPENING SEASON – CELEBRATING THE MEDITERRANEAN, 9am-5pm daily, One Botanic Lane. <u>Purchase tickets</u>

SAT., NOV. 7: NATIVE LANDSCAPES FOR BIRD (Zoom program), 9am-4:30 pm. Native Plant Society of Texas - Houston Chapter event. \$52. Details/Registration: www.npsot.org/wp/nlcpnps

SAT., NOV. 14: COMPOSTING - BENEFITS & HOW TO COMPOST (virtual class). 9am. Fort Bend County Master Gardener event. \$15. Register at least 2 days prior; fortbend.agrilife.org/grow-your-own/. 281-342-3034 or Brandy.rader@ag.tamu.edu

TUES., NOV. 17: HEIRLOOM PLANTS (Zoom program) by GREG GRANT, 10am. Sugar Land Garden Club event. <u>sugarlandgardenclub.org</u>

LOCAL FARMERS MARKETS

- <u>URBAN HARVEST FARMERS MARKET</u>, Saturdays, 8am-noon, in St. John's School parking lot, 2752 Buffalo Speedway.
- <u>FULSHEAR FARMERS MARKET</u> Saturdays, 9am-1pm, 9035 Bois d'Arc Lane @ FM 1093, Fulshear.
- <u>THE WOODLANDS FARMERS MARKET AT GROGAN'S MILL</u>, Saturdays, 8amnoon, Grogan's Mill Shopping Center Parking Lot, 7 Switchbud Pl., The Woodlands
- <u>BEAUTY'S GARDEN.</u> 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 . . .

THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS NEWSLETTER!

& please patronize our Newsletter & Calendar sponsors below!

THIS NEWSLETTER IS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please contact us at 936-273-1200 or send an e-mail to:lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com





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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.





