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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.

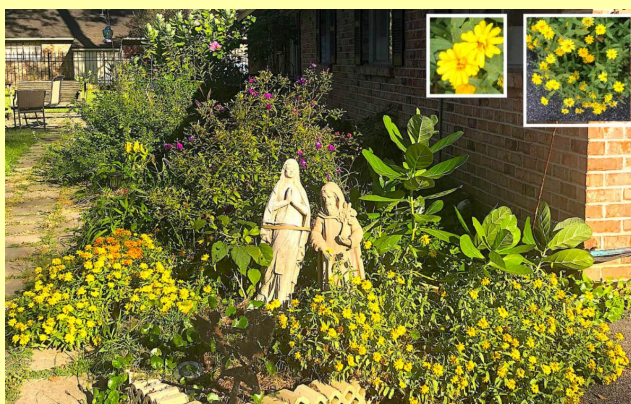
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CORONAVIRUS CANCELLATIONS

If your event in our calendar below is cancelled, please let us know as soon as possible at lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com

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2020 LAZY GARDENER PLANT AWARD SMALL TRIUMPHS IN GARDEN -- YEA!!!!

*"A garden is always a series of losses
set against a few triumphs, like life itself."*

— — May Sarton (2014). "At Seventy: A Journal", p.53, Open Road Media."

by BRENDA BEUST SMITH

At any given moment, eye-popping beautiful flowers are everywhere these days. BUT . . . how long will they survive?

Even more important, will they survive total neglect by a lazy gardener who takes that moniker seriously. After all, I can't tout a plant as "great for lazy gardeners" if I water, feed, prune and otherwise expend energy on it.

So when a particular flower jumps up and down and yells "*HEY! Look what I've done, look how long I have bloomed . . . TOTALLY without your help!*" -- I have to acknowledge such performances.

Hence a tip o' the trowel to [*'Profusion' zinnia*](#), above. I bought a handful of these at [Jed's Hardware](#) in North Houston (59/69N at Aldine-Mail Route) early this past spring, enough to cover perhaps 1/4th of the spread you see above.

If I ever watered them, I don't remember doing it, not even during our blasting hot dry summer. I do remember wondering if they'd survive our prolonged monsoon rains in this un-raised area? They didn't even blink. The true test will come when we see if these advertised-as-annuals make it through most of, if not all, winter? A lot of labeled annuals do.

[Jed's Hardware's](#) buyer Dale Barkley ordered these through [Joe Smith Farms](#), nursery/wholesale grower in Jacksonville in East Texas where owner Betty Lou Smith reports, their winters are too cold for them to be perennial. But she wouldn't be surprised if -- barring any prolonged deep cold spells -- my Profusions might just be able to handle our Zone 9 dips. After all, [Donath Garden Works](#) owner Melaine Donath, who also carries these from Joe Smith, says in their Baytown area, these will last long into winter, even beyond, barring any extreme cold. She will definitely be reordering these in spring as will fellow Joe Smith customer [Wabash Feed & Garden on N. Shepherd](#)

Profusions should be easy to find in spring at most area nurseries & plant centers, as they are touted as a major breakthrough in the world of zinnias. A cross between *Zinnia angustifolia* and *Z. Elegans*, these low-growing, spreaders are touted as disease resistant as well as drought, heat and humidity tolerant and easy maintenance (no deadheading).

Normally I wouldn't publicize in Fall a plant that probably won't be in nurseries until spring. But since a growing number of gardeners are eager to try seeds, now's a good time to order these to sow in pots. Great winter project for kiddos. Google "*Profusion Zinnias*." Many seed companies carry them.

Are you wondering if these smaller flowers attract as many butterflies as large-flowered zinnias? Some say yes, but smaller butterflies. I can't say. Mine are not where I can easily watch.

Anytime you find a totally undemanding spectacular variety worth touting, do share at lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com. By undemanding, I mean it does NOT need regular watering, fertilizing or other care to bloom nonstop (or repeatedly) spring, summer and fall. Even better, through "average" winters as well.

* * *



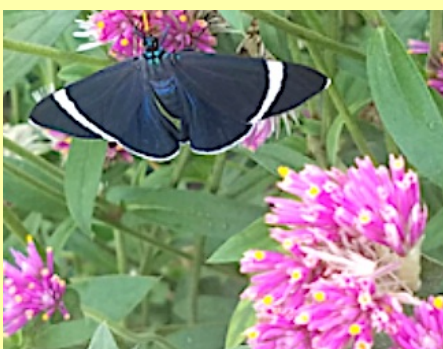
L to r: Dwarf buddleia (butterfly bush) 'Flutterby Petite Tutti Fruitti' (24"-30"); Darma loropetalum (Chinese fringe flower - 3'-4') , and Vitex /Blue Diddley' (3'-6')

PLANTS GROWING TOO BIG? Too-happy plants can be frustrating, especially in shrinking living spaces in our subtropical environment many plants grow larger than labeled anyway. You can whack away to keep them in bounds. Or, explore the growing world of dwarf plants. So many of our elephantine favorites have been hybridized down now.

Google "Dwarf azalea, butterfly bush (Buddleia), canna, crape myrtle, goldenrod, fruit trees, holly, honeysuckle, hydrangea, loropetalum (Chinese fringe flower), sweetspire, spirea and vitex, to name just a few.

Also, check out **"Have You Tried . . ."** below (between John's column and the calendar) for the compact "Little Henry Sweetspire."

SPEAKING FOR SHRINKING SPACES, [HOUSTON URBAN GARDENERS' current newsletter](#) is a great resource for local city-gardening-related organizations, especially new ones. Urban gardening is an evolving approach that takes into account our shrinking spaces, pollution and other unique challenges. [Houston Urban Gardeners facebook page](#)



LEPIDOPTERA ENTHUSIAST? Dale Phillips spotted what turned out to be a rare *Hypocrita Celina* moth on his *Gomphrena* firecracker plant (pictured). Not recognizing it at first, he contacted Texas A&M folks who identified it, adding it's not normally seen in this area. It stayed around all morning then disappeared. Your local Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agents is a great resource. [Find yours.](#)

We have two more great butterfly resources, both of which are excellent sources for attracting plant selection advice:

- [Cockrell Butterfly Center](#), located inside the Museum of Natural Science in Hermann Park.
- [National Butterfly Center](#), in Mission in South Texas.

Both are happy to answer any butterfly questions you might have. Get on their mailing lists!

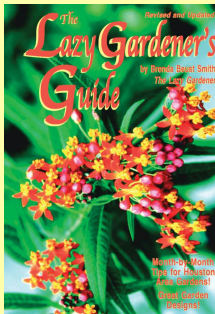
WITCHES BROOM. First time I spotted a witches broom was in Canada, at the top of inconceivably-tall trees. Linda Gay, then Mercer Botanic Garden director, laughed at my "What is this?" email. She pointed out they're in trees all over Houston. I



looked up. True! Never noticed before.

This [*witches broom*](#) pictured, from a dying tree cut down near our house, is the first one I've ever seen up close. Pretty exciting! These dense masses of growth sprouts from a single point, creating a tightly-growing, circular, broom-like mass. Don't confuse it with mistletoe or nests.

These can get HUGE and provide nesting habitat for birds and mammals. Should they be removed? Yes & no. Many trees easily tolerate them. But some don't. If it's easy to do so, yes. But these are usually at the very top of trees, so it's definitely a job for a professional. [More info](#)



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

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

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[• Lazy Gardener Guide Book Pages](#)**

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

MEDICINAL LANDSCAPING -YOUR HIDDEN PHARMACY-



with Mark Merriwether Vorderbruggen, Ph.D.

Become a forager! Join us via zoom & discover what medicinal plants might be in your own yard. Learn the basic methods of turning those plants into teas, tinctures, and salves.

October 14, 2020 • 5:00–6:00PM CST

JOIN ZOOM MEETING

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

MEETING ID: 898 9456 0546

OHBA

THANK YOU SPONSORS



John's Corner . . .



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 131

Many times, over the last few years I have reported on the research on the different dangers of fluoride exposure and how it hurts everything from soils, plants, microbes, animals, and people. The fluoridation of water supplies was a massive scam to get rid of a hazardous material and protect the profits of

several industries

FLOURIDE Update #12

Several environmental health groups filed a lawsuit under Section 21 of the Toxic Substances Control Act in November 2016. This was by a coalition including FAN (Fluoride Action Network), Food & Water Watch, Organic Consumers Association, American Academy of Environmental Medicine, International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology, Moms Against Fluoridation and several individuals all calling on the EPA to ban the deliberate addition of fluoridating chemicals to U.S. drinking water.

The trial began on June 8, 2020. During the trial the EPA's own scientists agreed under oath that the evidence supports the biological case that fluoride causes neurotoxic effects in human beings!

Evidence presented during the trial included over 300 animal and human studies that shows water fluoridation poses a significant risk to children's brains and significantly lowers IQ.

A more recent study published in 2020 by the National Toxicology Program included 149 human studies and 339 animal studies, that concluded fluoride was a neurotoxin based on the quality and consistency of the brain studies. These studies have also shown that fluoride is an endocrine disruptor that suppresses thyroid function and promotes iodine deficiency.

From the Doctor Mercola's newsletter, "During the Manhattan Project, enormous amounts of fluoride chemicals were used in the processing of uranium for the atom bomb.

Records clearly show fluoride was a highly dangerous substance causing significant environmental harm. In 1946, farmers in Salem County sued the U.S. government for \$400,000 in damages to peach crops caused by fluoride fumes traced back to a facility involved in the bomb-making process. Cattle were also killed.

As noted by Connett, the aluminum and bomb-making industries realized they had a serious problem on their hands and were facing staggering liability for fluoride pollution. As a result, you start to see a shift in the science at that time. Harmful effects on human health were suppressed, and potential benefits were being introduced — even before there was any safety data available whatsoever."

In reality, studies have found that children with fluorosis have increased rates of cavities - a finding that suggests more fluoride is definitely not better, not even when it comes to protecting against cavities.

For the full report from Dr. Mercola go to: www.articles.mercola.com

[The Fluoride Action Network](#) is another good source of information:

In previous articles I have reported that another major source of fluoride is from the manufacture of artificial fertilizers that is produced from phosphate mining. When one uses artificial fertilizer, you are part of the problem versus when one

uses organic fertilizers one is part of the solution.

The EPA continues to earn its nickname “The Enhanced Profit Agency”.

Note: Fluoride does not prevent cavities and often makes them and other dental problems worse. I bet you can guess which industry profits the most from this effect.

Note: Many species of plants are fluoride sensitive and when watered with municipal water containing fluoride it weakens their immune system resulting in increased disease and insect problems.

A recent study published in the journal Ecological Applications (2020) by the University of Washington and the US Forest Service, following the massive 2014 Carlton fire in Washington State that burned 250,000 acres, was on the benefits of prescribed burning.

They found that tree thinning and prescribed burns helped forest naturally survive fires. Small prescribed burns prevent fuel buildup, hence limiting the energy or heat from being so intense that the heat would cause damage to the trees. They found that areas that had prescribed burns suffered far less damage to the trees.

A few years ago, I took a week-long course at Texas Tech University on prescribed burns. Nature (God) uses small burns to control invasive plants, recycle nutrients back into the soil, create shrub understory that many species of plants and wildlife need.

In Texas we are lucky as we have several prescribed burn associations to help property owners manage their farms and ranches.

A related study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science (2020) by researchers at Northwestern University has found that prescribed burns are critical for successful reproduction of prairie plants (grasses, wildflowers, forbs, etc.).

One of the benefits of a burn is that as the plants regrow, their flowering is synchronized ensuring a much higher rates of successful pollination, resulting in more viable seeds, ensuring survival of the species and prevents local extinction.

Several times over the last few years we have reported on research that trees have some form of intelligence. A new paper published in the journal Current Biology by researchers from the University of Helsinki supports this idea.

Trees are known for their weight, height and trunk diameter, however the principle of how they respond to their increasing weight is unknown. As a result, a theory of “vertical proprioception” has been developed that explains a mechanism that balances radial growth of the stem with weight increases.

Through a series of tests, they found that trees adjust their stem radial growth

in response to the added weight and the strength of this response varied along the length of the stem.

We have believed for some time that the trees sense their own weight and thicken their stems accordingly. This is the first study that supports that observation.

Researchers at Rice University published a report in Science Advances (2020) on how plants regulate the acquisition of nutrients and pest control. They found that plants have evolved to call for nutrients they need by using bacteria.

They looked at how plants measure the local environment and when required release chemicals called flavonoids which attract the microbes (others call these compounds root exudates).

They found that organic carbon in the soil was essential to this process. We have known for some time that organic matter in the soil (humus or compost) is required for healthy plants. They found that dissolved carbon shuts down some of this signaling process. This is one mechanism where plants decide to spend their energy from root exudates to attract certain microbes or not.

HAVE YOU TRIED .

. .

LITTLE HENRY SWEETSPIRE

(Itea virginica)



One of the very first Proven Winners shrubs, this fragrant, pollinator-attractor is touted as one of the best flowering shrubs for shade! A dwarf version of the 6' +/- Henry Garnet sweetspire, this 2-3 ft. heat-tolerant version produces pure white early spring flower spikes with glossy foliage and over-the-top brilliant red/burgundy fall color. Evergreen in milder winters, the glossy foliage, tolerates shade and our often extended monsoons.

Little Henry Sweetspire is carried by Nature's Way Resources ([Map](#)).

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.
- **FARMERS MARKETS** -- 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: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com.
PLEASE ALWAYS put group's **FULL** name in email subject.

CHECK WEBSITES FOR ON-SITE COVID-19-RELATED PRECAUTIONS!

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

MON., OCT. 12: TRANSITIONING TO SUSTAINABILITY (Zoom event) by TRANSITION HOUSTON, 7pm. Free. Houston Urban Gardeners event. [Zoom link](#).

WED., OCT. 14: VIRTUAL PRESENTATION--FABULOUS FIGS! (online event) by Stephen Brueggerhoff, noon-1pm, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. <https://bit.ly/3m5cVji> 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., OCT. 19: CONTAINER & SMALL SPACE GARDENING by HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 10:30-11:30am. Free. Houston Community College Northwest event. Register: hcc.events.idloom.com/hcc-community-learning-program-on-line

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

TUES., OCT. 20: TREES, PLANTING & CARE by HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 11am-noon & 7-8pm, Free. Harris County Public Library System. facebook.com/harriscountyppl/live

FRI/SAT OCT 23-24: Heritage Gardener Holiday Market & Plant Sale, 9 am to 4 pm each day at 112 W. Spreading Oaks, Friendswood. Free. [Heritage Gardeners of Friendswood](#).

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

THURS., OCT. 29: WILDLIFE FRIENDLY GARDEN TIPS (virtual lecture) by BRANDI KELLER, 10-10:30am. Free. Harris County Master Gardener Program. Register: homegrown2020october.eventbrite.com/.

FRI., OCT. 30-SUN., NOV. 1: HOUSTON BOTANIC GARDEN OPENING SEASON – CELEBRATING THE MEDITERRANEAN, 9am-5pm daily, One Botanic Lane. [Purchase tickets](#)

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

SAT., NOV. 14: KINGWOOD GARDEN CLUB 1ST ANNUAL REFOREST THE FOREST TREE SALE & GIFT MARKET, 8am-1pm, Kingwood Town Center Park, 8 N Main St, Kingwood. Free. facebook.com/KingwoodGardenClub

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

WED., NOV. 18: FORAGING OF THE KATY PRAIRIE (online event) by DR. MARK 'MERRIWETHER' VORDERBRUGGEN, noon-1pm. Free. Katy Prairie Conservancy event. [Register](#)

* * *

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 . . .

THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS NEWSLETTER!
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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.

