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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](mailto:lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com)

\* \* \*



## TREASURES FOUND BY READERS TREASURE LOST FOR GARDENERS

*"Flowers... are a proud assertion that a ray of beauty  
out values all the utilities of the world."*

— — Ralph Waldo Emerson

by **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

Our subtropical climate does set us apart from the rest of Texas in terms of temperatures and moisture. That's one reason I love hearing success stories from local gardeners, especially about plants I've never grown or they expand my horizons on growing advice:

**SUSAN CHAPPELL** in Clute is thrilled with her Queen



of Sheba shrubby vine. Also called pink trumpet vine, it had to be cut to the ground last year after a neighbor's falling tree flattened it. It had covered both swing & trellis (pictured). It not only recovered nicely, it should be solid blooms soon, she said, if winds hold off.

Susan, who is President of Lake Jackson Garden Club, thinks her vine is a *Podranea bryce*, but it could be its more energetic cousin, *Podranea ricasoliana* --



also called pink trumpet vine (hard to tell apart) -- which can become even more aggressive. Either way, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#) is sure it has *P. ricasoliana* in its extensive Tropical Garden, and it's been manageable for around five years.

\* \* \*

**'THE HERB LADY' MARILYN O'CONNOR** is having great fun these days harvesting seed pods off her edible hibiscus (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*), which reminds her of a rhododendron.



When not in bloom, it doesn't look very "hibiscus-y," but the red outer seed coverings are spectacular. Marilyn thinks the pod tops (insert) look like ladybugs and make colorful decorations.



Thanks, too, Marilyn, for noting your passion vine (pictured) took 5 years to bloom and fruit. Mine's been planted only two years, but twice died back, then returned, after I moved it. Maybe 3rd time's a charm. Hope springs eternal! Come back, Lazarus, & I promise I won't move you again!

\* \* \*

David in Near Northwest Houston, another fan of [last week's touted Profusion zinnias](#), has found single flower bloom (such as these zinnias) are "friendlier to pollinators" than double-petalled varieties. He easily starts these zinnias in both in pots and in ground. His tip: keep moist until germination. His potted ones are ready to transplant in about six weeks. Zinnias are best started/planted in the ground when soil temps reach about 70°.





How do you tell soil temp? Check the daily weather forecast. The closer you are to winter, subtract a few degrees. Closer to summer, add a few degrees. It's a gamble, of course, but 70+° days usually become average in March. Zinnia seed usually germinates in a week or so. Instant gratification for kids! These are annuals but should keep blooming maybe even into winter.

\* \* \*

### **PRAIRIE DAWN PRESERVE -- A PEEK INTO THE FUTURE.**

What we see as weed-filled vacant lots, children are learning to appreciate as botanical treasures that not only reveal an area's past, but also protect wildlife and our land investments as well.



Catch up with your kids. ["PRAIRIE DAWN PRESERVE"](#) is a film produced by Harris County Precinct 4 Communications Team for the Texas Master Naturalist Virtual Conference. Mercer Botanic Garden's Botanist Anita Tiller and Botanical Collections Curator Suzanne Chapman take a visual tour of this urban preservation area, named after the endangered Prairie Dawn (pictured), a sunflower cousin, now found only in a few sites worldwide. Why bother? How might this tiny plant lead us to solutions to our flood problems? See if [this YouTube video](#) doesn't change your perspective even just a little on that overgrown, undeveloped site you pass every day.

\* \* \*



**CATALPA FAN** For decades I thought I was the only one in Houston who noticed when our native catalpas bloom. So I'm delighted John is writing about them below! I know, I know, oldtimers are shaking their heads over the worms they encourage, which I've been told are great for fishing. But the flowers are so beautiful! Check out John's column!

\* \* \*



**A LOST TREASURE: JERRY SEYMORE** A great guy who quietly made a major impact on our gardens has passed away. On 5 acres on Hill Road in Aldine, he created Jerry's Jungle Gardens -- literally a jungle! -- filled with exotics and new varieties of old favorites. Jerry Seymore traded plants with folks across the globe, mailing his in black plastic bags.

Hurricanes & floods took a toll on Jerry's "Jungle," but we'll forever enjoy plants he introduced. Jerry would call me &



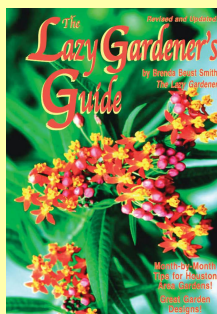
say: "I've got a plant even **YOU** can grow!" One such was Brazilian Red Cloak (*Megaskepasma erythrochlamys*). Jerry was one of the first in Houston to promote this spectacular long bloomer.

Ironically, the same email batch that brought word of Jerry, also brought a note from Sandra Evens, with this picture, reporting Brazilian red cloak was one of the best sellers at the recent Houston Federation of Garden Clubs sale. Jerry's

legacy at work!

Jerry will be buried at Houston National Veterans Cemetery 10am, Fri., Oct. 23. Donations in his name should be to the [Houston Zoo](#).

\* \* \*



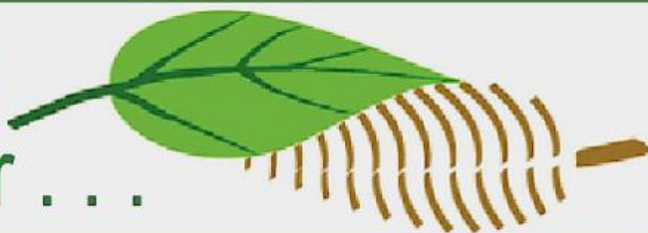
**Brenda's LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER column is based on her 40+ years as Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener**

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

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

John's  
Corner . . .



## NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 132

I read an interesting statistic the other day. The Earth's most valuable bio-system is its living soil which provides a minimum of several **trillion** dollars in eco-system services each year!

The toxic chemical rescue approach to agriculture is rapidly degrading this asset to the detriment of all life on Earth. The cultivated soils are eroded, degraded, devoid of organic matter and declining at an unprecedented rate.

This has resulted in a steadily declining quality of our food supply which is directly correlated with the increasing sickness and health problems in society. I can only speculate, but if we had the same variety and high quality, nutrient dense food, free of toxic chemicals, and GMO free of 100 years ago, I bet the pandemic would not have occurred.

The field of Ecopsychology continues to grow. There are now around 1,000 studies showing the benefits of being in nature. Just two hours per week can make a tremendous difference in our health. Nature is an antidote for stress, it can lower your blood pressure, reduce harmful hormone levels, enhance immune function, increase self-esteem, reduce anxiety, and improve mood.

These are all great reasons to be an organic gardener. One of the most popular trends in gardening is “Habitat Gardening” which is creating habitats for birds to butterflies. As our gardens fill with all kinds of life the benefits to our health increase.

Research at the University of California published in the journal Scientific Reports (2020) has found that on *sloping* land that shrubs can help increase water infiltration which helps replenish groundwater storage. However, grasslands work better on flat ground.

We often hear about the lost of forests worldwide like the clearing and burning of Amazon forests. This process leads to climate change, erosion, and several other effects bad for life on this planet.

A paper in the journal Landscape Ecology (2020) reporting on studies by several universities has found that a decrease in forests is related to an increase in diseases like covid-19. As we continue to remove forests, we as a society can expect the emergence and spread of more diseases.

It made me think that maybe Mother Earth is trying to cleanse itself of a disease called humans.

We have often talked about the importance of pollinators. Research at the University of Texas has found that the pesticides flupyradifurone and sulfoxaflor are extremely harmful to beneficial insects like bees, bumble bees, lacewings, etc.

We have known for years that certain species of bacteria on the plants we call legumes can fix nitrogen from the air and give it to the plants. Recently we have learned that actinomycetes bacteria and blue-green algae also have the ability to provide nitrogen to plants from the air IF they have the trace elements present.

Algae growing in the top few inches of soil can also fix or make 6 tons of organic matter per acre each year.

This assumes that we do not kill off these beneficial microbes with toxic chemicals or salts.

The problems with our water supply have been steadily increasing like those reported in Flint, Michigan, Newark, New Jersey, and many more. Research from the Flint River study research group has found another mechanism for the



extreme pollution. They found that the water from the Flint river was 19 times more corrosive to lead than the original water from Detroit.

The Flint river and its tributaries drain an agricultural region where glyphosate is heavily used on area crops. If you remember from our study on this extremely toxic cancer causing chemical a few years ago, the first patent for glyphosate was as a descaling agent for pipes. When this contaminated water flowed through the pipes it pulled the lead out causing the increased contamination.

The above leads to another issue with fluoride and chloramines added to our public water supply. These chemicals also leach heavy metals like lead from pipes leading to 3-4 times higher levels in our drinking water.

**A** few months ago, the US National Institute of Health released a study that found the herbicide Dicamba increases the risk of developing numerous cancers, including liver and intrahepatic bile duct, acute and chronic lymphocytic leukemia and mantle cell lymphoma.

This herbicide can drift in the air for miles; hence many people are forced to breathe this very dangerous chemical. Journal of Epidemiology (2020)

**A** plant I love is the tree known as Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) for its many virtues from beautiful flower clusters in the spring, to fixing nitrogen like a legume, very fast growth rate, to its light shade that help grow sun sensitive plants underneath it. The magazine Mother Earth News (June/July 2020) had another use that I did not know about. This was Black Locust fritters or just eat them raw as they are crunch and sweet. The flowers are also used to make syrup.

The Rodale Institute released a paper the other day called “The Power of the Plate”.

This was a joint paper by Rodale Institute and The Plantrician Project. Our partnership, and this conversation, are signs of a bright new future. Rodale Institute has always been, at its core, a human health organization. Its mission of building healthy soil to grow healthy food, which supports healthy people, has been the foundation of nearly 70 years of research and education in the area of regenerative organic agriculture.

The Plantrician Project brings a medical perspective to the impact of food on the body and the benefits of a whole foods, plant-based diet. In this way, our partnership is a first step in the agricultural and medical communities coming together under a shared goal: human health. This white paper is the result of that partnership.

We hope this paper encourages not only consumers but farmers, medical professionals, and policymakers to rethink the stories we’ve been told about human health and our food system. It is our sincere wish that this report inspires those who read it to seek out regenerative organic growing practices in

their food, incorporate more organic whole foods into their diet, and stand up for a system that actively supports the health of people and the planet.

[This report is free to download and print](#) and is for those whom want to learn more about the connection between soil, plants, agriculture and our health.

**Most** of us love our butterflies especially our Monarchs. A study by the University of Nevada, published in the journal *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution* (2020) found 64 different pesticide residues in milkweeds in California's Central Valley.

This amount of toxic chemicals is contributing to the decline of the western populations of Monarchs which are only 1% of the population that it had in the 1980's.

This scares me as much of our food supply comes from this same region. If the chemicals are killing Monarchs, what are they doing to us? Just another reason to buy organic food and use the modern biological methods (organic) in our gardens.

**Two** new organic herbicides are being tested. They are pelargonic acid and cinnamon plus clove oils. Pelargonic acid occurs widely in nature in products such as goat's milk, apples and grapes.

This study compared these organic herbicides to glyphosate in killing tough invasive woody vines. Glyphosate required two applications and the organic herbicides required three. For the organic herbicides there were no negative effects on nematodes, mosses, ferns. *Natural Areas Journal* (2020).

The New York University Grossman School of Medicine recently released a study in the journal *Environmental Research* (2020). They found that in children and young adults, those with high blood levels of pesticides and the related chemicals called DDE's (dichlorodiphenyldichlorethylenes) were more likely to develop Celiac disease. They found that females were 8 times more likely to become gluten intolerant. Additionally, young females with elevated levels of non-stick chemicals (PFA's) like Teflon were 5-9 times more likely to have Celiac disease than those without elevated levels.

The reasons to live an organic lifestyle continue to increase daily.

**A** study by University College of London that was published in the journal *Biology Letters* (2020), has found that moths are a major source of pollination. Moths are very effective pollinators by both their hairy bodies as well as their proboscis. However, they also visit many species of plants NOT visited by bees and other daytime pollinators.

Moth populations have experienced steep decline in recent years all over the world. To have a balanced habitat garden we need to plant flowers and host plants for moths in addition to those for other pollinators.

For example, at our nursery we have planted several Southern Catalpa trees (*Catalpa bignoniodes*). These plants have beautiful white flowers in spring, long beans that add texture to the visual garden and they will grow to 60 feet tall. Somewhat of an ugly duckling when small as they mature, they become a beautiful shade tree, producing a heavy dense shade that is great to sit under during hot summer days.

The seed pods are used in traditional medicine as treatments for ailments ranging from skin infections to conjunctivitis to asthma, although there is no scientific evidence backing these claims. According to the USDA the seeds and pods were used by pioneers in the 19th century to treat asthma, whooping cough, and various heart diseases.

Now for the best part. The Catalpa is the host plant for the lovely Catalpa Sphinx moth which has a very large caterpillar that makes excellent fish bait. Hence the nickname "Fish Bait Tree".

## HAVE YOU TRIED . . .

### FLORIDA LEUCOTHOE (*Agarista populifolia*)

Florida (or Coastal) leucothoe is a superb broadleaf evergreen native shrub or even small tree. Multiple tall, erect stems (8-12' high and 6-8' wide) arch over with creamy white small fragrant bell-like flowers in spring. New growth emerges bronze or reddish and darkens to glossy green with age. Best in semi shade with moist acid soil that is reasonably well-drained.



*Florida Leucothoe 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.



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

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/](http://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](http://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](http://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](https://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](http://HeritageGardenersofFriendswood.com).

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/](http://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/](http://homegrown2020october.eventbrite.com/).

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

THURS.-SAT., NOV. 5-7: GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS BULBS SALE (online). Inventory posted: [galveston-county-master-gardener-assn.square.site/](http://galveston-county-master-gardener-assn.square.site/)

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](http://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/](http://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](https://facebook.com/KingwoodGardenClub)

MON., NOV. 16: TREES: PLANTING & CARE (online) by HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 10:30-11:30am. Free. Houston Community College event.. Register, [hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops](http://hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops)

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

### 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 do not run out-of-garden events, during this pandemic period when most gardening events have been cancelled, we are happy to publish a running list of local Farmers Markets.  
Send notices to [lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com](mailto:lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com)



For event submission rules, see top of calendar

If we inspire you to attend any of these,  
please let them know you heard about it in . . .

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About Us



## **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

WE KNOW HER BEST AS THE LAZY GARDENER . . .

. . . but Brenda Beust Smith is also:

- \* a national award-winning writer & editor
- \* a nationally-published writer & photographer
- \* a national horticultural speaker
- \* a former Houston Chronicle reporter

When the Chronicle discontinued Brenda's 45-year-old Lazy Gardener" print column -- started in the early '70s as a fun side-, it then ranked as the longest-running, continuously-published local newspaper column in the Greater Houston area.

Brenda's gradual sideways step from reporter into gardening writing -- first as a just-a-fun side Chronicle assignment in the early '70s -- led first to an 18-year series of when-to-do-what Lazy Gardener Calendars, then to her Lazy Gardener's Guide book which morphed into her Lazy Gardener's Guide on CD. which she now emails free upon request.

A Harris County Master Gardener, Brenda has served on the boards of many Greater Houston area horticulture organizations and has hosted local radio and TV shows, most notably a 10+-year Lazy Gardener specialty shows on HoustonPBS (Ch. 8) and her call-in "EcoGardening" show on KPFT-FM.

For over three decades, Brenda served as as Production Manager of the Garden Club of America's BULLETIN magazine. Although still an active broad-based freelance writer, Brenda's main focus now is THE LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER with John Ferguson and Pablo Hernandez of Nature's Way Resources.

A native of New Orleans and graduate of St. Agnes Academy and the University of Houston, Brenda lives in Humble, TX, and is married to the retired Aldine High School Coach Bill Smith. They have one son, Blake.

Regarding this newsletter, Brenda is the lead writer, originator of it and the daily inspiration for it. We so appreciate the way she has made gardening such a fun way to celebrate life together for such a long time.

## **JOHN FERGUSON**

John is a native Houstonian and has over 27 years of business experience. He owns Nature's Way Resources, a composting company that specializes in high quality compost, mulch, and soil mixes. He holds a MS degree in Physics and Geology and is a licensed Soil Scientist in Texas.

John has won many awards in horticulture and environmental issues. He represents the composting industry on the Houston-Galveston Area Council for solid waste. His personal garden has been featured in several horticultural books and "Better Homes and Gardens" magazine. His business has been recognized in the Wall Street Journal for the quality and value of their products. He is a member of the Physics Honor Society and many other professional societies. John is is the co-author of the book Organic Management for the Professional.

For this newsletter, John contributes articles regularly and is responsible for publishing it.

## **PABLO HERNANDEZ**

Pablo Hernandez is the special projects coordinator for Nature's Way Resources. His realm of responsibilities include: serving as a webmaster, IT support, technical problem

solving/troubleshooting, metrics management and quality control.

Pablo helps this newsletter happen from a technical support standpoint.

