



LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS

Houston Garden Newsletter



Oct-30-2020 | Issue 362

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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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THOUGHTS ON ONLINE SHOPPING ... RECYCLING FALLEN TWIGS

*"I go to nature to be soothed and healed,
and to have my senses put in order."*

— — John Burroughs

by **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

Next to getting all of us out into our own yards, one of the biggest changes Covid has brought to the gardening world is the growing number of sanity-saving virtual (or online) meetings, lectures and programs, but even more impacting, organizational plant sales.

It's hard to give up wandering through rows of plants, reading labels, mentally

placing here and there around our gardens. But relaxing too can be scrolling down picture after picture in the comfort of one's own homes - especially when it's cold outside! Even if the online "inventory list" doesn't answer all your questions, a quick "google" can.

But I do feel for those who don't have a computer, cellphone or pad, or can't use the internet. If you're blessed enough to be able to take advantage of today's virtual experiences, enjoy. But remember those around you who, for whatever reason, can't. Share the virtual experience with these folks if you can. Don't take your good fortune for granted.

WARNING: BE SURE TO CHECK THE COMPLETE DATE OF SALES -- month, date and years. In working on this, I repeatedly mistakenly logged onto past sales. Please, webpage creators, make sure the full month(s)/day(s)/year dates are VERY prominent at the top of the view.

Check our calendar below for virtual sales that are already starting.

* * *

FRI., NOV. 6, 2020: TEXAS ARBOR DAY Most of the nation celebrates Arbor Day in April, but thank goodness Texas powers-that-be recognize we should be planting trees now through winter. [Mercer Botanic Garden](#) will be celebrating the free tree giveaways (as long as supplies last) and other activities 1-4 p.m. Friday, Nov. 6. Details: 713-274-4160.

* * *

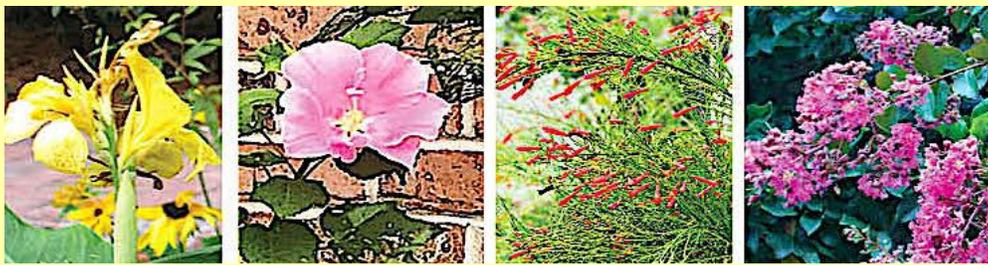
AS ALWAYS, THE FIRST COLD SPELL brings in a predictable question: "*Which plants are you covering, Brenda?*" The answer as always: None. Plants that can't handle our insane weather vagaries do not belong in a "lazy gardener's garden."

Hardy selections help . . . and leaves piled on whenever neighbors feel the need/urge to rake & bag. They know these will disappear as soon as their neighborhood "bag lady" drives by,

Piled-on leaves and pine needles stop grass and weeds from growing, but that's just the beginning. In summer they keep roots cooler, and soil more moist. In winter, they keep soil warm. As they decay, they return nutrients to the soil and, perhaps even more important, organic matter that helps keep the soil friable and filled with microorganisms and other beneficial wildlife.

Best of all, they're from our local trees which, over the centuries, have developed and maintained a cycle of processing and replenishing nutrients they need in our soil needs to be mutually successful. Win-win for a lazy gardener.

In the three post-Harvey years we've been in our new north Harris County home, here are some who have survived my almost total neglect, extremely cold winter, monsoon rains, and blasting summer heat and drought. I do sometimes water but probably not anywhere near as often as most of you probably do. ***Disclaimer: most, but not all, pictured plants are my own. I include extra pictures mainly to help those not familiar with these plants,***



Above, l to r, My cannas, Confederate rose (*Hibiscus mutabilis*), coral fountain plant (*Russellia equisetifolia*) and (not-mine-but-right-color) dwarf crape myrtle. At right are flowers for which I now only have extremely healthy foliage so not sure yet whether they're giant white spider lilies (*Hymenocallis*, left), pink crinums (top right) and/or native white Texas swamp lilies (*Crinum americana*). Transplanted bulbs of all three from old yard.



L to r: This is the first year my (post-Harvey-transplanted) firespike have bloomed. In my late-50-year-old "Lazy Gardener Laboratory," firespike was one of the best hummer-attractors. White butterfly ginger is 3-years-old but yet to produce a flower. Both standard and dwarf orange-blooming hamelias (hummingbird bush) are blooming as is lantana. This is not my ligularia (tractor seat, leopard plant). My leave look great but still no flowers.

More next week. Hope some helped you and if you have any advice for me or questions about them, do share at lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com

* * *



BEWITCHING PLANTING? If this spooky season (*talking about Halloween*) has you wondering if we can grow celebration-size pumpkins, the answer is yes. But they need to be planted in June or July.

[Plants for all Seasons'](#) current newsletter details how and when to get started to harvest this time next year. Among the points they warn to consider:

- Pumpkins this size develop massive root systems. They grow best when planted on hills—or, rather, mounds of soil about 3-5 feet wide, and 1.5 feet at their highest point.
- Space mounds 20' (that's right - feet) apart for typical large Halloween pumpkins. The good news: 8-10' apart should do for smaller varieties!

Still interested? More tips: plantsforallseasons.com/texas-pumpkins/

* * *

LUCIA & MICHAEL BETTLER (RIP) are still sharing with us gardeners who adored them and their wealth of horticultural delights at Lucia's Garden. An estate sale of their treasures will be held Fri.-Sat., Nov. 6-7, at their home, 2213 Portsmouth St. (9am-5pm Sat., 10am-3pm Sun).

* * *

HUGELKULTUR, ANYONE? Below, we're repeating a Spotlight Article on Hugelkultur written a couple of years ago by Waller County Master Gardener Mary Khazen Karish. I kept thinking about Mary's explanation of this ancient gardening technique as I gathered up all the fallen branches scattered across our lawn by the recent high winds. Hugelkultur is not lazy gardening. But even if you don't go that far, it does highlight benefits of recycling as many of smaller fallen limbs in your gardens instead of setting all of them out for trash pickup. Layer of leaves/mulch, layer of limbs, layer of leaves/mulch so they can decay slowly -- the way nature does it.

* * *

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



Left, the Author's Hugelkultur mound planted with peppers topped with compost. Right, replenishing the mounds with wood logs

HUGELKULTUR: BUILDING FERTILE SOIL WITH WOOD LOGS

by MARY KHAZEN KARISH
Waller County Master Gardener

Forests have existed for thousands of years without landscaping companies installing irrigation systems or chemical companies fertilizing the soil. Trees grow as tall as buildings, trunks expand to almost the size of a trailer and

branches extend as far as the eye can see. How do they do it?

Hugelkultur, an ancient form of sheet composting, has been practiced in Eastern Europe for centuries. Its German translation, "Hill Culture," mimics the composting cycle forests go through every year. It starts with the following steps:

- Clear the sod from the desired area or place thick overlapping cardboard.
- Assemble the biggest wood logs you have available. Most types of wood work, whether fresh or rotting.
- However, stay away from cedar or black walnut as they contain naturally occurring herbicides or toxins.
- Cover with wood sticks and tree trimmings, water the pile generously.
- Add 2 to 3 inches of organic matter, such as grass clippings, leaves, vegetable scraps or manure.
- Then add 2 to 3 inches of compost and water the pile
- Finally, cover it with leaves or wood chips to keep the pile moist and weeds from camping on your Hugelkultur mound.



*Left, mound - logs in the bottom, followed by wood chips and twigs.
Right, final look, after the mound is covered with wood chips*

Sit back, and let nature do the work for you. As time goes by, the wood logs and branches decompose much like the natural composting process in the forest. As they rot, they become like a sponge extracting moisture and slowly releasing it into the soil, eliminating the need for irrigation. Simultaneously, the rotting wood becomes the source of organic matter that all living plants need to grow.

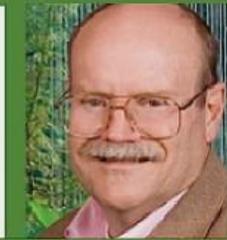
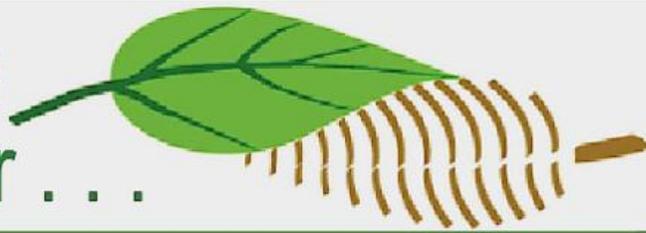
The bigger the mound the longer it would take to decompose. A mound that is 5 feet high would take about 5 to 7 years to decompose completely. If you do not have access to wood logs, branches and sticks will do. However, the rate of decomposition will go faster. You can replenish the mound after each planting season by adding a layer of twigs or branches.

Hugelkultur is like aging wine, it gets better with time. You will also discover you do not need to dispose of yard waste because you will be using them!

Additional Resources:

- <http://www.holzeragroecology.com>
- <http://www.richsoil.com>
- <http://www.allthingsplants.com>

NOTE: Mary Khazen Karish can be reached at marykarish46@yahoo.com



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 134

Honey has been used for thousands of years to treat colds and coughs. Researchers at Oxford University has found that honey is a better treatment for upper respiratory tract infections than conventional remedies. It also reduced the duration of the infection by two days as it speeds up healing.

Since honey kills bacteria it is also useful for a topical treatment for cuts and scrapes. British Medical Journal Evidence Based Medicine (2020).

Note: Best to purchase raw unfiltered honey from a local farmers market or vendor. A lot of the grocery store brands are from China and watered down and cut with corn syrup and are worthless.

We have often talked about the importance of nutrients especially the minor and trace elements. A study in the journal Nutrients (2020) by researchers at Oregon State University, have found people whom take multi-vitamins and mineral supplements (iron, selenium, zinc, magnesium, copper, etc.) had less illness and the illness were less severe, and they went away faster than those not taking them.

These is especially important as we grow older as our immune system declines. Remember, if one eats foods with the herbicide glyphosate on or in them, especially GMO's the body cannot absorb these essential nutrients required for good health. See the link to the animated spoof at the end of the column.

Note: The large majority of rice, corn, wheat, and soy products are full of glyphosate. Remember study by a researcher at MIT found that when one is exposed to glyphosate their chances of having a severe Covid-19 infection increases dramatically.

The best way to protect one's family is to buy and eat organic products or look for the glyphosate free label.

Researchers at the Max Planck Institute for Chemical Ecology has discovered that *strigolactones* a class of plant hormones that affect growth, also help with a plants immune system defense chemicals. Tobacco plants with these hormones were able to tolerate stem boring weevils better. PLOS Biology (2020)

A recent article by the Organic Consumers Association stated the chronic

disease in America is the biggest threat to global economic development. “Life-style caused diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer now kill 50 million people per year”. This twice as many than from infectious diseases.

This is a direct function of our industrialized food production system that promotes low quality processed food. This low-quality, mass-produced, fake food, is causing trillions of dollars of health care costs to society.

The best way to protect your families is to raise one’s own fruits and vegetables organically or at least but produce directly at farmers markets that was grown organically.

I have often reviewed books by doctors on health and our food supply. There is a new one just released called “Food Fix: How to Save our Health, Our Economy, Our Communities, and Our Planet—One Bite at a Time” by a functional medical doctor Dr. Mark Hyman that I just ordered. He has authored several books related to using food as a medicine to prevent health problems.

There was an interesting article a few days ago in the newspaper The Epoch Times on research at Emory and Notre Dame universities on one of our native plants. The study was published in the journal of the American Chemical Society Infectious Diseases.

They found that the Beauty Berry (Bayberry, French Mulberry, Spanish Mulberry and other common names) but is botanically known as *Callicarpa americana*. This plant has been used for hundreds of years to treat many health problems.

They found this plant has potent abilities to fight antibiotic resistant infections. The leaves by themselves have little effect, however when extracts from the leaves were used in combination, it made common antibiotics far more effective against antibiotic resistant bacterial infections like staph (MRSA).

Native Americans used the roots, leaves and bark for centuries treating arrange of concerns including malaria, rheumatism, dizziness, stomach aches, and dysentery amongst other issues.

Beautyberry a deciduous shrub found naturally in Texas and the southeastern United States. It grows between 3 and 6 feet tall and wide on average, though it's been known to reach 9 feet tall. It has a moderate to fast growth rate, gaining around 1 to 2 feet per year until it is mature. The shrub can be planted in the fall or spring and is very drought tolerant once established.

The plant has distinctive medium green foliage that is unspectacular and its pink or light purple flowers are fairly insignificant. However, this plant is known for one remarkable feature: its bright purple berries that grow around the plant's stems in lump clusters.

The berries appear in the late summer or early fall and can persist into winter, providing visual interest for the landscape and food for wildlife. The berries are nontoxic to people and animals, and some people even use them to make jelly and other foods (even wine). In the fall, beautyberry foliage turns yellow, though frost can cause the leaf color to pass directly from green to brown

before the leaves drop for winter. (Photo from the Internet)



Another study from Europe published in the journal PLOS Medicine (2020) has found that regular exposure to greenspace by children living in urban areas increased their IQ's by 2.6 points and reduced their bad behavioral score by 2 points.

The journal Nature (2020) has a paper on a new discovery on how a plants immune system works. They found that the plants stomata have two guard cells around it. These guard cells respond to calcium (Ca) signals that tells them to expand or contract closing the stomata and triggering the plants immune system to respond. Calcium normally cannot pass through the guard cells membrane; however, an immune system protein triggers the process.

Numerous antidotal studies have shown that applying products like seaweed or fish emulsion to the leaves, helps plants be more disease resistant. Perhaps it is the water-soluble calcium in these products that help promote disease resistance in addition to feeding the good microbes living on the leaf's surface.

It is now well known that the microbiota in our guts play a large role in the human immune system. A paper in the European journal of Cardiology (2020) found that microbes (bad) are also linked with dozens of health conditions including high blood pressure, high body lipids, and body mass index.

By ensuring we have a large diversity of good microbes we help protect our health. When one gardens using organic methods in rich topsoil or with a good compost or mulch, they are exposed to billions of good microbes that enter or bodies by our nose or mouths.

When we eat organic food, avoid toxic chemicals and avoid highly processed food, we ensure our guts have the good microbes and not the bad ones that may cause health problems.

A study from Europe by the European Association for the Study of Obesity by researchers from several universities found that Ultra-processed food consumption is associated with chromosomal changes linked to biological aging. This means our bodies wear out quicker and it leads to more diseases

and health problems.

This morning I read some scary statistics:

- 11 million people/year die from a bad diet
- 50 million people/year die from lifestyle diseases (heart, diabetes, cancer, etc.)
- 2 billion people are over weight and at the same time 800 million people go to bed hungry every night
- Health costs, direct and indirect due to the poor quality of our food supply are \$3.7 Trillion/year in USA!

It amazes me that our politicians (both democrat and republican) all talk about treating the symptoms (insurance, health care, etc.) but none of them want to address the root cause, our extremely poor-quality food supply that is contaminated with toxic chemicals.

God's word tells us that he gave us everything we need. The reason to grow one's own fruit and vegetables organically continue to increase daily.

[The E-The Environmental Magazine](#) had a few tips on in-home pest control.

[The Alliance for Natural Health](#) has a spoof on the EPA (Enhanced Profit Agency) and glyphosate.

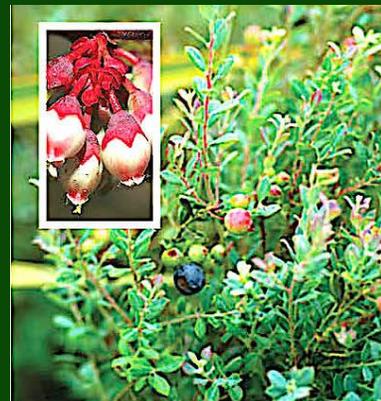
HAVE YOU TRIED . . .

Darrow's Blueberry

(Vaccinium darrowii)

This dwarf 1-3' evergreen shrub beloved by native bees is very ornamental with pink-to-white bell-shaped spring flowers. It is as popular for its all-season foliage as for the sweet edible berries.

New spring growth is bright pink to bluish green in summer and, although an evergreen, to reds and purples in fall. Full sun/part-shade. Ideal for low hedge or border planting in native or habitat landscaping. Berries attract birds and other wildlife.



Darrow's bluberry are 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!

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

SUN., NOV. 1- THURS., DEC. 31: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER FRUIT TREE SALE (online only). Pickup: Sat., Jan. 31, Richard & Meg Weekley Park, 19110 Longenbaugh Rd, Cypress. Order: [HCMGA-online.company.site](#)

SUN., NOV. 1- SUN., JAN. 31: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER FRUIT TREE & TOMATO PLANT SALE (online only). Pickup: Sat. Feb. 20 at Campbell Hall, Pasadena Fairgrounds, 7601 Red Bluff Road, Pasadena. Order: [HCMGA-online.company.site](#)

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

FRI., NOV. 6: TEXAS ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION, 1pm-4pm, Mercer Botanic Gardens. Free. 713-274-4160.

SAT., NOV. 7: NATIVE LANDSCAPES FOR BIRDS (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 20th ANNUAL REFOREST THE FOREST TREE SALE & GIFT MARKET, 8am-1pm, Kingwood Town Center Park, 8 N Main St, Kingwood. Free. [facebook.com/KingwoodGardenClub](#)

SAT., NOV. 14: VIRTUAL SPECIALTY PLANT SALE, 8am-8pm, [The Mercer Society](#). Online only at [themerchersociety.square.site](#). 713-274-4166.

SAT., NOV. 14: WILDFLOWERS FOR WILD WOMEN by Harris Count Precinct 4 Trails Parks Staff, 9am-10am, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. 713-274-4160.

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

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](#)

2021

SAT., JAN. 23, 2021: Harris County MASTER GARDENER FRUIT TREE SALE, 9am-noon, Richard & Meg Weekley Park, 19110 Longenbaugh, Cypress.
<https://hcmga.tamu.edu/plant-sales/>

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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 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



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 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.

