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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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BRAGGING ON YOUR PLANTS CLEAN UP COMPOST ACT

"Be like a tree and let the dead leaves drop."

— Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi, Persian poet, 1207-1273

by BRENDA BEUST SMITH

I love it when readers brag on plant experiments. Longtime North Houston plant grower extraordinaire Patty Allen, now in her 80s, reports with such delight about her yellow jacobina. She had severely cut it back about a year ago to make cuttings. In this short period, it has not only grown as tall as these visible house eaves, it now sports 11 huge beautiful bloom clusters. Yellows do sporadically rebloom but not as often as her pinks



which reflower throughout the year. So far, tho, not much luck with white ones.

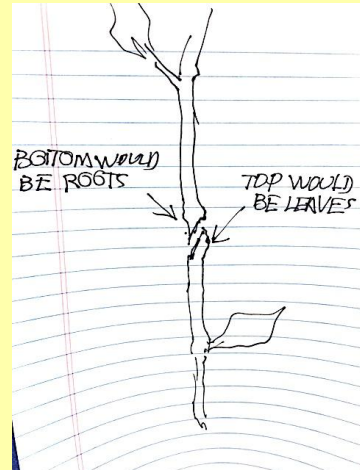


Once well-known for her now-closed, home-based Bayou City Gardens nursery, Patty has been successfully growing plants from cuttings for decades — mostly in fall and utilizing her own rooting twist which works particularly well with clerodendrons, including one of her favorites, this white bridal veil, a tall shrub with arching flower stalks.

Patty's rooting regimen started when she wondered: if the stem bottom takes in the rooting hormone, why wouldn't scraping off all the way around some of the outer layer up over a node give the cutting an even better chance?

Researching how stems take in chemicals led her to cut the stem on a diagonal, down below the node on one side and up above the node on the other side. It worked.

Jars/containers for cuttings are filled 1/3 water with diluted liquid (or pre-dusting) rooting hormone on a heat mat which she definitely feels speeds growth. When a mass of roots develops, she switches them to pots, set on heating mats. Clerodendrums in particular root much faster with a heat boost.



Patty's starting to compile collections, gathering as many different colors and/or varieties of the same type plant as she can. For example, in addition to the jacobinas listed at top, she now has red, salmon and lilac firespikes, among other collections.



She's especially excited about her bi-colored Chinese hat plants (some open one color and turn another. Orange appears to be the most vigorous grower (tall & wide) with red a close second. Summer blooming purple doesn't grow as

tall or wide but flowers are bigger. Yellow looks good for hanging baskets. Orange, red & yellow bloom fall through winter; purple in summer.

LAKE JACKSON GARDEN CLUB'S SUSAN CHAPPELL encourages gardeners to try Chinese pistache, which is recommended for her Brazoria County but is also a [Texas SuperStar](#) Tree. Susan's tree is around 30 years old and still producing spectacular bright red berries and, later, red fall foliage. It's one of the last trees to put on new foliage in the spring, Susan warns, but well worth the wait.



MORE LAZY GARDENER HARDIES Need to cover a fence or camouflage other large unsightly structure/view? These vines gave me extensive, rapid growth & gorgeous flowers in spite of literally almost total neglect (i.e. sporadic watering to get them started. After that, they've survived on rainfall. Below, left to right: coral trumpet vine, snail vine, red passionvine & Mexican flame vine.



These four vines all can take full, hot sun, although my snail vine and coral trumpet vine are shaded all afternoon yet bloom well. (Note: Native trumpet vines can become very invasive. Buy these only from nurserymen you trust. They will carry more civilized, named varieties.) I've been told deer don't eat Mexican flame vine. Can anyone confirm/dispute this? (For more on Mexican flame vine, see *"HAVE YOU TRIED . . ."* below of John's column)

Two vines doing well in almost all day shade are evergreen wisteria and our native nodding clematis. Our bell-shaped, lavender Texas native nodding clematis is a small delicate vine. Mine has never grown longer stems than 3' but it is amazingly hardy returning every year to bloom off and all spring and summer. I transplanted it from the top of a ditch bank on our pre-Harvey property at least 30 years ago. The pictured maroon evergreen wisteria is as fragrant, but isn't invasive like the lighter purple Chinese wisteria that, like kudzu, is killing trees throughout the Deep South. It also does well in full sun.



* * *

TIP O' THE TROWEL TO:

- WHITE OAK BAYOU ASSN. MEMBERS** who have put together an incredible free resource for gardeners who want to both attract more birds and to better identify those who already visit their landscape. ["Bayou City Birding"](#) offers a number of identification options to download, including posters and zines (folding brochures) that ID birds that frequently seen around Greater Houston area bayous and surrounding areas. whiteoakbayou.org/resources-and-zines.html
- URBAN HARVEST** for its free ["Sprouting Up & Garden Advice"](#) on Facebook Live, 10:30am every Tuesday in November .featuring noted horticulturists, Be amazed at Urban Harvest's offerings when you [log on for more details](#).
- FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENER**



GARRETA KIPP for her revealing Spotlight Article below about common composting mistakes even experienced gardeners often make. This is just a preview of all the tips that will be shared Sat., Nov. 14: GROW YOUR OWN - COMPOSTING by FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 9am-10:30am,.For more information and to register for this online Class. (deadline Nov 12)



visit <https://fortbend.agrilife.org/grow-your-own/>; call 281-342-3034; or email Brandy.rader@ag.tamu.edu. Don't forget to check out all the upcoming FBCMG's programs.

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

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"Improving the quality of life through horticulture education"

COMMON MISTAKES EVEN EXPERIENCED GARDENERS MAKE WHEN COMPOSTING

By **GARRETA KIPP**

[Fort Bend County Master Gardeners](#)

Savvy gardeners will be the first to declare nature a bountiful teacher and provider, especially when it comes to composting! Gather fresh plant debris (a nitrogen source), mix with dried plant debris (a carbon source), add cycles of rain and sun (sources of moisture and heat), oxygen, a host of microbes and... Voila! Over time, the best food and nutrition source for the garden has gloriously been "made."

Following nature's example, gardeners have a reliable composting formula to follow but they have to get the mix and ratios of each critical ingredient right if they want to successfully create virtual gold for their gardens. Here are some common composting mistakes gardeners need to avoid when building and

tending their compost piles!

- **Adding too much green material** to the compost pile, throwing off the 30% green/70% dry ratio! This mistake can easily be made when, for example, a large, fresh load of grass clippings is added, all at once, to the pile. The result? A smelly pile and a delayed composting process.
- **Adding too little dry material** to keep the 30% green/70% dry ratio. The result – slow composting and a pile that is potentially too dry. For some, dry matter can be harder to come by. Plan ahead to save dry leaves and twigs that can be cut down into relatively small pieces. No diseased material!
- **Mismanaging moisture levels.** Too much water leads to diminished oxygen levels, a soggy pile and off-odors. Micro-organisms essential for decomposition also suffer and the composting process slows. In rainy weather, consider covering your compost pile with a tarp to prevent oversaturation and the washing away of precious nutrients! In dry weather, add water as needed to support healthy micro-organisms and to keep the decomposition process going.
- **Neglecting to turn the pile** frequently enough to add oxygen and distribute moisture. Too-little oxygen means a slowed process, off-odors and fewer oxygen-loving, compost friendly microbes and earthworms! Some people find it useful to compost in a tumbler, instead of pile, to make the aeration process easier – no pitchforks needed!
- **Relegating the compost pile to an out-of-sight**, off-in-the distance location of your yard. Compost piles that are located for easy, close-to-the-garden access are more likely to be properly maintained, and appreciated!

NOTE: For the "...rest of the story": SAT, Nov. 14: GROW YOUR OWN - COMPOSTING by FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 9am-10:30am,.For more information and to register for this online Class. (deadline Nov 12) visit <https://fortbend.agrilife.org/grow-your-own/>; call 281-342-3034; or email Brandy.rader@ag.tamu.edu.

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NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 135

I read an article the other day on the science of flavor in the Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry (2020), on the changes in Whiskey by the

University of Tennessee.

Tennessee whiskey is famous for a processing stem called the Lincoln County Process (after the location of the original Jack Daniels distillery) which is required to be called a Tennessee whiskey and made from at least 51% corn. The process is also known as charcoal mellowing as the fresh distillate is passed through a bed of charcoal (usually burnt sugar maple), prior to be placed in oak barrels for ageing for a minimum of two years. They found that the type charcoal used changes the flavor profile.

They identified over 49 different molecules responsible for the flavor. Maybe this is why I enjoy sipping a small glass of Jack Daniels on a cold winter eve. Numerous studies have shown that organically grown foods taste better beside more naturally occurring flavonoids and being more nutritious. I wonder what would occur if the distillers used organically grown corn or other grains instead.

If you know someone that enjoys a fermented beverage occasionally, a great Christmas gift might be the following book.

The DRUNKEN BOTANIST- The Plants That Create the World's Great Drinks.

By Amy Stewart, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2013, ISBN: 978-1-61620-046-6

I reading this book a few years ago and it was fascinating to me. For years, I have enjoyed a glass of wine with a meal, a shot of whiskey or brandy when camping around the campfire and a cold glass of dark beer when cooking barbeque. As one knows, I am also a passionate gardener. This book combines two of my favorite activities.

This book is about all the plants, trees, herbs fruits and flowers used to make alcoholic beverages and their history.

Another paper on the dangers of neonicotinoids pesticides was in the Journal of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (2020). The research was done by North Carolina State and Pennsylvania State Universities.

They found that when these dangerous pesticides are used, they are absorbed into the plant and into the insect that may feed on the plant. The chemical can be transported through the sap, pollen and nectar.

Other life from birds, amphibians, lizards, to small mammals then eat the contaminated insects poisoning them also. They found that these toxic chemicals bio accumulate in their bodies.

“Insects are food for thousands of different vertebrates, everything from birds to mice”. These pesticides only provide a 5% benefit at best.

A couple years ago many nurseries were buying milkweeds from growers that treated seeds with these chemicals. As result, when Monarch caterpillars ate the leaves, it killed them defeating the whole purpose of planting milkweeds in

the first place. This is why an Nature's Way Resources we grow a lot of our own milkweeds.

Speaking of pesticides, there is one that was banned in 1972 that is still causing problems. We know it as DDT or the breakdown product DDE. This chemical has been found to take 100 years to biodegrade in soil.

As a result, plants that are grown on contaminated soil will absorb this toxic chemical. As insects that live in the soil or feed on the plants then collect this chemical in their bodies.

When chickens or other poultry eat these plants or the insects, they hyper accumulate DDT in their tissues. This is similar to how large fish like tuna accumulate mercury in their bodies. When we eat chicken or use chicken manure products, we run the risk of being exposed to higher levels of this chemical.

Even if they are organic now, there is a risk if they used DDT in the past, hence best to buy chickens or eggs from local small farmers.

By the way the EPA or USDA does not require that soil be tested for DDT residues for organic certification.

I read an interesting statistic the other day on family pets. Fifty years ago, only 1 in 100 dogs got cancer. Today it is 66 in 100! Cancer is also the leading cause of death in cats. These animals roll around in our lawns and flower beds where toxic chemicals are used and we wonder why.

It makes me wonder what is happening to our children? Public parks, playgrounds, school grounds, etc. are full of these dangerous chemicals like glyphosate and many others where children roll around in and play.

More and more homeowners are growing their own food and herbs (spices). The Journal of Nutrition (2020) has a paper that showed that post meal inflammation could be reduced by spicing up the food. Food was prepared using a mixture of basil, bay leaf, black pepper, cinnamon, coriander, cumin, ginger, oregano, parsley, red pepper, thyme, and turmeric. Blood sample showed that when the group that ate 6 grams of this spice mix with their food had much lower inflammatory chemicals. Lower levels of the spice mix (only 2 grams) did not provide the same benefits.

The information below is very important, as GMO crops have the highest levels of glyphosate on them which is linked to many health problems like cancer. This is even more important today as eating foods, with glyphosate on them has been linked to greatly increased chance of catching and the severity of the Corona-19 virus. As glyphosate on and in our food prevents the absorption of zinc, magnesium, and other elements that our immune system requires to fight viruses.

From the Organic Consumer Association newsletter:

Information is power and a new database of studies into the harmful effects of GMOs provides powerful proof that **genetic engineering is the wrong direction of travel for our food system.**

The [GMO Research Database](#)—a project of GMO Free USA—is an easy-to-use public resource and a valuable research tool for scientists, researchers, physicians, educators and students.

It contains over 2,500 studies, surveys and analyses on the impacts of genetically engineered (GE/GMO/bioengineered) crops, foods and their related pesticides.

The fully searchable database **is available in multiple languages** and contains links to abstracts and studies on **health impacts, environmental impacts, pesticide drift, genetic contamination**, horizontal gene transfer, unintended effects, as well as references regarding yields, social impact, ethics, economics and regulations.

Another study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (2020) by researchers at the University of Arizona has found that GMO corn with Bt genes to kill the corn rootworm and the Bt cotton to kill bollworms are failing. The insect pests are developing resistance to these GMO plants. They also found that a simple solution is just crop rotation provides good control. Just as most experienced gardeners know, NOT to plant tomatoes in the same location two year in a row.

Another study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (2020) by researchers at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory has found a sub class of peptides in the nodules of the legume plant *Medicago truncatula* in the medic family. These chemicals have proven effective is inhibiting the growth of the pathogenic fungus known as grey mold.

They believe that this discovery will lead to a new class of spray on biological fungicides that break down in the soil to amino acids that feed the beneficial microbes.

Have You Tried

. . .

MEXICAN FLAME VINE

(Senecio confusus)

Often listed one of the very best perennial monarch nectar vines, Mexican flame vine actually attracts

wide variety of butterflies and bees. No serious pests issues, drought-tolerant, can take full sun to part shade, blooms spring-fall. Some advise



deadheading regularly for more blooms but these two are Brenda's own and she never does. Too many flowers, she says! Nor does she ever feed or water. GREAT lazy gardener plant. Ideal for privacy fence, roots easily from cuttings, will be evergreen most winters.

Mexican flame vine 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!

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 themercersociety.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 . . .

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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.

