



Nov-19-2020 | Issue 365

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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)

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## PLANTS NAME CHANGES - UGH! SNEAKY NAKED LADIES HAPPY BIRTHDAY VIDEO

*"There's no thing that better illustrates 'This too shall pass' than a garden"*

-- Randy Twaddle, Executive Director, The John Fairy Garden Conservation Foundation

by **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

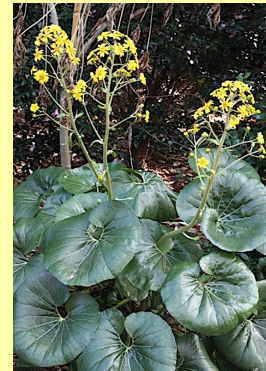


**WHEN WE MOVED** into this house 3 years ago, a partly shaded area looked perfect for ligularia, . . . er, . . . "*Farfugium japonicum*." Someone decided to rename what we used to call "leopard plant" (some leaves have yellow spots). Now it even has a new common name too: tractor seat plant. I was feeling rather dated until Mercer Botanic Garden's Jere Noerager said "tractor

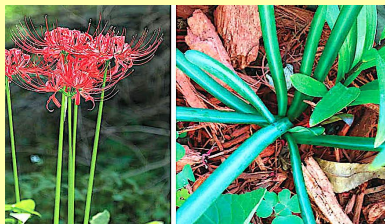
seat" was new to him too. (And pointed out the irony that "tractor seat" refers to a design now found only on antique equipment!)

Back in pre-Harvey years, I fell in love with the huge leaved, yellow-blooming "tractor seat" plantings by Mercer Botanic Garden's Stoney Lake. I've never seen any that large or impressive since.

Mine has grown VERY slowly over the past 3 years, one time looked dead, but revived. Patience is a must hallmark of the truly lazy gardener. My tiny blooms on very short stalks look like infants compared to potential *Farfugium japonicum* 'GIGANTEA' stalks (pictured). No idea what variety mine is, but since size often is determined by the quality of care a plant receives, growing too large probably won't be my problem. I'll think about it tomorrow!



\* \* \*



**WONDER WHERE YOUR NAKED LADIES WENT?** To my surprise, a clump of 8-10" naked lady leaves suddenly appeared in the middle of our lawn. I had planted some bulbs in a garden about 10' away. They have never bloomed.

Naked ladies (aka lycoris, hurricane lilies or spider lilies) bloom sans foliage in September (when hurricanes are common). Leaves follow after flowers fade (about now), so if you want to transplant, now's time. Soon foliage will disappear too until next fall (or sometimes spring), before the exotic blooms appear on tall, thin bare stalks.

I decided long ago lycoris must wander around underground, looking for new places to bloom. I never knew where new ones would pop up until those exotic flowers suddenly appeared. More likely these delights grew from spreading seed (which they do produce). More fun to thinking of them doing the breast stroke among the grass roots.

Look closely at the pictured foliage. Darker edges and a lighter center line make it easy to single out lycoris among weeds with which they like to resurface. Foliage transplants easily, but dig carefully. The tiny bulbs are often close to the surface. Replant bulbs with "necks" slightly above ground. They may take a few years to bloom after transplanting.

The late Sally McQueen Squire use to call lycoris Greta Garbos. "They VANT to be alone!" (Translation: Lycoris bloom better when not crowded in among other plantings.)

\* \* \*





*L to r, lobelia, snapdragon, dianthus, marigolds, calendulas and celosia*

**ROLLERCOASTER TEMPERATURES** will be common now through January, but that doesn't mean to give up on garden color. Our bloom season runs year-round if we're lucky enough not to have prolonged deep freezing temperatures. To quote "Fats" Waller: *"One never knows, does one?"*

The trick is to pick plants that can take our usual ups & downs without blinking. Many local independent nurserymen send out monthly newsletters filled with timely tips and recommendations. In the current [Maas Nursery](#) newsletter, Kathryn Courtney lists some delightful color to perk up fading summer bloomers in gardens or containers. In addition to those pictured above, she also recommends:



*Above l to r, phlox, stock, calibrachoa, nasturtiums, alyssum and verbena,  
Below, petunias, diascia, nemesia, violas, pansies and cyclamen.*



So many new "winter" annuals are on nursery shelves now. Most should last through spring. Usually they can't take our summer heat, but again, *"One never knows, does one?"*

First challenge is availability. Check your neighborhood independent nursery. They want, and need, your repeat business, so will be careful to recommend those that do best in your area. Try a few of a wide variety of choices instead of tons of one. See which you like and, more important, which like you! You can always buy more of the successful ones.



**MEA CULPA, BILLY & NANNY!** The [Houston Arboretum & Nature Garden's goat-mowing crew](#) will be at work, and on public view through Saturday, Nov. 28 (not 10th, as erroneously listed [in last week's issue](#))



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**TIP O' THE TROWEL TO [THE JOHN FAIREY GARDEN](#)** folks who put together "[Taking Root](#)," a fascinating video review of John's life and horticulture creation to commemorate what would have been his 90th birthday this month.



The [THE JOHN FAIREY ONSERVATION FOUNDATION](#) video follows John's artist-viewpoint of gardens as it advances from more conventional designs featuring new-to-us varieties to a far more naturalistic, "warts-n-all" approach. To our advantage, his explorations increasingly brought in native plants of Mexico (and beyond) that are now even more relevant than ever before as climate change opens our garden to more southern plants.

**ONCE KNOWN AS PECKERWOOD GARDENS**, the John Fairey Garden's 'au natural' canvas now features over 3,000 species on its 39 acres near Hempstead, 50 miles NW of Houston. Hopefully you'll feel inspired by this "[Taking Root](#)" video not only to visit this true horticultural treasure, but to [support its upkeep](#) as well.

The John Fairey Garden Nursery is open Mon.-Sat. 9am - 5pm. No reservations are required for OPEN DAY Tours (9, 10, & 11am) Saturdays 11/21, 12/5 & 12/12, face masks are required.. [Details](#).

*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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## NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 137

A recent study from the ARS (Agricultural Research Service) a division of the USDA, has found that a harmless airborne fungus, *Cladosporium sphaerospermum* (strain TC09) can dramatically accelerate plant growth, if a germinating plant is near the fungus as it emits gases. The researchers used

tobacco and peppers in the study.

Following a relatively short time, the plants at the seedling stage were able to sense the fungi's gasses. This stimulated very rapid growth, earlier flowering and increased fruit yield.

"With longer exposure times for 10 days the plants exhibited substantially more vigorous growth, thicker stems, larger leaves, and a more robust root system. The plants also flowered 20 days sooner and yielded twice the amount of fruit".

The University of British Columbia released a study on a plant known as Breadfruit. I first remember reading about this fruit when I was a young boy and reading the Mutiny on the Bounty trilogy.

This fruit is a staple fruit for many South Pacific countries and islands. This fruit can be dried and ground into a gluten free flour. They found that the breadfruit protein was easier to digest than wheat protein. Animals fed the breadfruit diet had a significantly higher growth rate and body weight compared to those on a standard diet.

Breadfruit in addition to being a good source of protein also contains vitamin-C, potassium, iron, calcium and phosphorous (journal PLOS ONE, 2020).

The University of Gottingen had a paper in the Journal of Ecology (2020) on Australian Fairy Circles. They were able to confirm Alan Turing's theory for the origin of these circles. Turing's theory stated that random disturbances can allow for strongly patterned structures to emerge like the patterns on Zebra fish or Leopards.

They discovered that the grasses that make up these patterns act as eco-engineers to modify their own hostile and arid environment to keep the ecosystem working.

These patterns emerge from the ecohydrological biomass-water feedback from the grasses and soil crusts that form. These circles up to 12 feet in diameter are a critical source of extra water for the vegetation. They found the soil temperature under the circles are 25 degrees cooler. The grasses work together as ecosystem engineers to modify their environment and redistribute water. A form of plant intelligence?

We continue to learn that nature is amazing in God's creation.

On a side note for you bird lovers, the same mathematical patterns developed by Alan Turing also help researchers understand bird behavior. Journal of Animal Ecology 2020. Their study showed that some flocks of birds live in separate areas despite there being plenty of food to sustain multiple flocks in a given area. The same mathematics accurately predicts this behavior.

**A** three-year study out of Poland has found that farming in an organic system increased the soil organic matter content (carbon storage) and increased the

nitrogen storage in the soil. They also found that the enzymes systems for healthy soil and plants were significantly higher in the organic system regardless of the crops that were grown. Journal of Agriculture 2020.

The virus Covid-19 is on everyone's mind these days. For the human immune system to fight viruses it needs the elements zinc (Zn) and magnesium (Mg) along with a couple others. The herbicide known as glyphosate that contaminates most of our food supply, prevents the absorption of these essential elements. See issue #116,

Glyphosate was originally patented as a demineralizer to clean pipes (US Patent # 3,160,632) as it strongly binds to these elements. As a result, it ties up the nutrients we need for good health and prevents them from being absorbed by our bodies. Conventionally grown food especially GMO foods are very high in this toxic chemical. If you remember the MIT study a few months ago that found a very strong correlation of having COVID-19 and exposure to glyphosate.

Junk food from our grocery stores and fast-food restaurants have the largest amount of this dangerous chemical.

The Health Research Institute published in the journal Environmental Research (August 2020) has found that switching to a completely organic diet for just six days could cut the levels of this pesticide in our bodies by 70%! The reasons to buy organic or grow our own chemical free food organically continue to increase.

**Researchers** at the University of Maryland have discovered a new role for a plant molecule called ACC. They found that this molecule in addition to being a trigger for pollen and seed production, it also acts like a plant hormone activating proteins that are similar to those found in animals and human's nervous systems.

Previously we thought ACC was only a precursor to ethylene (a plant hormone) that is used in many plant processes. They also found that ACC affects the nervous system in humans so they looked for similar responses in plants and found it.

These were GLR's (glutamate-like receptors) in plants and they are involved with long distance electrical signaling through the plant vascular system. For example, a single injury to one leaf informs the whole plant to turn on its immune system and create chemicals to deter insects. Journal Nature Communications (2020).

**Another** study published in the Journal Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems (2020) by researchers at Penn State has shown the importance of diversity. They evaluated several species of plants growing in mono-culture and measured root growth, etc. They the planted all five species together and they found total root mass increased.

A corn crop following the multi-species cover crop was more productive than a corn crop following the mono-species cover crop.



Nature requires diversity to be the most productive, whether an agricultural crop or the flower beds in our yards. This also applies to our lawns, as lawns with multiple species of grasses are healthier than mono-species.

Note: Some states are now giving grants to folks to remove their lawns and grow urban meadows as they are so beneficial to our health and the environment.

## Have You Tried

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### **CASSIA CORYMBOSA**

(or *Senna corymbosa*)

Also known by many other names, this tough, often-evergreen, root-hardy shrub boasts a huge round mass of bright yellow flowers framed by dark green foliage. An eye-grabber that attracts many butterflies, bees & birds, this late spring-to-late fall repeat bloomer has naturalized over parts of the South. Sun/part shade; 3-6' tall & wide. So many different cassias are found here, it's best to ask for it by its botanical name: *Cassia corymbosa*



**CASSIA CORYMBOSA** 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](mailto:lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com).

**PLEASE ALWAYS** put group's FULL name in email subject.

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

SAT., NOV. 21: THE JOHN FAIREY GARDEN OPEN DAY TOURS, 9am, 10am & 11am, 20599 FM 359 Road, Hempstead. \$10. No reservations needed. [figarden.org](http://figarden.org)

SAT., DEC. 5: THE JOHN FAIREY GARDEN IS HAVE OPEN DAY TOURS, 9am, 10am & 11am, 20599 FM 359 Road, Hempstead. \$10. No reservations needed. [figarden.org](http://figarden.org)

THURS., DEC. 10: CHRISTMAS AND ROSES, 7-9pm, free. Houston Rose Society virtual event. <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/864464213> access code: 864-464-213. Or phone dial: +1(646)749-3122

SAT., DEC 12: CHAPPELL HILL GARDEN CLUB 2020 CHRISTMAS HOME TOUR, 10am-5pm, Tickets \$20-pre-date/\$25 tour day. Tickets: [chappellhillgardenclub.com/home-tour.html](http://chappellhillgardenclub.com/home-tour.html)

SAT., DEC. 19: THE JOHN FAIREY GARDEN IS HAVE OPEN DAY TOURS, 9am, 10am & 11am, 20599 FM 359 Road, Hempstead. \$10. No reservations needed. [figarden.org](http://figarden.org)

## 2021

SAT., JAN. 23, 2021: HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER FRUIT TREE SALE, 9am-noon, Richard & Meg Weekley Park, 19110 Longenbaugh, Cypress.  
[hcmga.tamu.edu/plant-sales/](http://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](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 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.

