



Dec-4-2020 | Issue 367

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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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TO PRUNE OR NOT? JUMP START ON GIFTS HAPPY POINSETTIA DAY!

*"The lovely flowers embarrass me,
They make me regret I am not a bee –*

-- Emily Dickinson, 1864

by BRENDA BEUST SMITH

**I LOVE IT WHEN OLD FAVORITES ARE
USED IN A NEW WAY. SUSAN CHAPPELL's
WOW NOW** isn't "new," but it's a technique few
utilize. Plumbago blooms almost year-round
(weather permitting - returning in spring if not).
Susan creatively wove hers into a 12' & slightly

wider high hurricane fence to create this pictured "wall of blue."

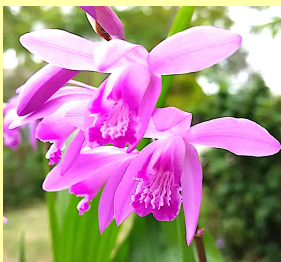
Plumbago wants to spread up and out. Susan prunes lower horizontal branches. She never fertilizes it and watered it only during a bad drought a few years ago, not since. "A true no care" plant, she says.



Underpruning (removing lower branches) is a way to turn low shrubby plants into trees or, in Susan's case, into forcing longer, more manageable vine-like growth. I'm "torturing" several plants that way too: my giant red turk's cap (pictured), thryallis, esperanza, Confederate rose and duranta.

If it sounds like "work!" . . .*naw!* I find it cathartic in times of anger or frustration (*especially these days!*)

As you remove lower or horizontal branches, vertical growth increases, as in this "lantana tree" (called "creating a standard"). Once the desired bottom-of-canopy height is reached, remove only below-canopy and downward pointing growth. As "trunks" harden, lower growth becomes minimal.



SUSAN CHAPPELL also gave a huge thumbs up to [Galveston County Master Gardeners](#) Lisa Nicklow Davis and Fran Brockington's "[Bulbs for the Gulf Coast](#)" seminar now on [YouTube](#). It's a wonderful overview of your bulbs' historical past and shows the wide range of these low care bloomers that love our area, including (pictured) Chinese ground orchid (*Bletilla striata*)

* * *

TO REMOVE OR NOT TO REMOVE . . .that is the question as we look out over nasty black stalks where beautiful flowers once perched.

PRO: They're ugly. Neighbors might complain.

CON: (Lots more of these):

- Ugly brown/black leaves help to a plant's interior from future freezes.
- Pruning into still-live tissue can trigger new growth far more susceptible to frost/freeze damage, which might end up killing a plant that could have survived had you left the damage to fade off naturally. And . . .
- Many small animals/insects (eg.,wintering-over monarchs and native bees) use cold-damaged and dead stems as hiding places or supports for almost-invisible chrysalis (unborn life).

If you just **MUST** remove these, go slowly. Make sure

you don't cut into live wood. Or ... post a sign explaining your "neglect. Great project for the kids on a cold wet day? (Feel free to copy & use this one!)

* * *



JUMP START ON CHRISTMAS GIFTS?

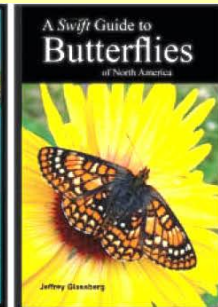
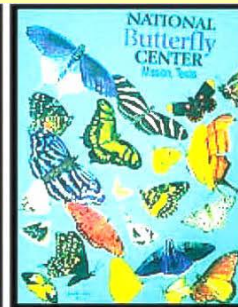
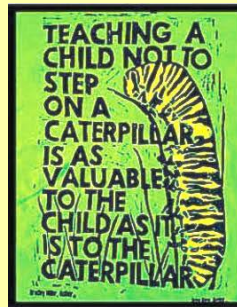
- **OKRA ON THE TREE?** Intricately-painted, one-of-a-kind okra ornaments are grown & painted by [Plant It Forward](#) farmers and volunteers. [Details & Order.](#)



NOTE: huge Tip o' the trowel to Plant It Forward, a 2020 [USDA's Beginning Farmer & Rancher Development Program](#) award

recipient. This Houston nonprofit provides refugees with the tools, training, and business skills to start and grow urban farm businesses.

- **BUTTERFLY LOVERS ON YOUR LIST?** The National Butterfly Center in Mission, TX, has clever tee shirts that educate as well as delight. Need a faster reference? How about a "Swift Guide to Butterflies"? Order: nationalbutterflycenter.org/shop



- **BEE - UTIFUL UNDER TREE** I'm awed by surging interest in attracting bees. Still fresh in my mind are lectures where audiences visibly shuttered at bee-on-flower photos. Now they ask how to attract them!



Plants* aren't the only way -- try a [SoloBee](#) solitary bee shelter. Hive or honeybees -- nonnative imports -- make up only 10% of Earth's 20,000 bee species. The majority in our gardens are native solitary, or solo, bees. They live alone, seldom sting, deposit eggs in native "tunnel" flora (eg. your now-dying plants!) and are 60 times

more effective than honeybees at pollination.

Deborah Wiley's Solobee (a gift) sat unused until she noticed a bee using tunnel-like holes in her balcony sculpture! She set out her SoloBee shelter and two bees immediately moved in (to separate tunnels). They laid eggs, then moved out. Deborah cleaned the burrow -- the only times she ever touches it. Other other bee tenants followed.

SoloBee is the brainchild of habitat restoration advocate Candace Vanderhoff, San Diego architect and founder of RainThanks & Greywater, a water conservation company. SoloBee aims to replicate the type of natural "home" of solitary bees we've destroyed through urbanization. SoloBee shelters are made of recycled salvage mahogany donated by Taylor Guitars. Tunnels can be re-drilled after a bee departs or SoloBee offers replacement blocks.

Deborah's arty-looking shelters aren't even noticed by neighbors. She'd like to see larger shelters throughout her apartment/townhouse compound which, she says, includes trees and nectar-rich flowers, a year-round must for bees. Her advice: since native solitary bees have evolved along with the native wildflowers, etc., it's best to "go native" whenever possible with your plants.

- **SoloBee habitats:** solobee.com/store/c1/Featured_Products.html
- * **For more plants to attract native bees in Houston:** burger.com/beeplant.htm

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HAPPY POINSETTIA DAY - SAT., DEC. 12

Most of the 35 million poinsettias sold every year are tossed. Here we plant them in spring in an extremely well drained, partly shaded site (or in a container). Treat as you would other plants. In meantime, don't overwater or set near heat drafts. Can't hurt to try! Ed Holland's Memorial area poinsettias (pictured) have thrived under his pine trees for decades. They didn't even blink at our recent light freeze! His advice: they grow spindly. Cutting them back helps produce stronger stalks.



[**Legend of the Poinsettia \(for children and the young at heart\)**](#)

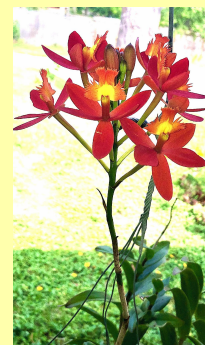
NOTE: [Brookwood Community](#) will sell poinsettias Sat., Dec. 12, at **HOLIDAY AT HOUSTON BOTANIC GARDEN: CELEBRATING NATIONAL POINSETTIA DAY**, 9am-5pm, 8210 Park Place Blvd. \$15/adult, \$10/child/student. Tickets: hbg.org/events/holiday-at-the-garden-2020-12-12/

So many nonprofit groups' gift shops have closed due to Covid. If yours is open and/or offers online shopping, we'll be glad to help spread the word. Please send info & links to: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com

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WOW NOWs STILL BLOOMING? DO SHARE!

Have any of your left-uncovered flowers survived the recent light freeze temps without blinking? Do share! Pictured is my *Epidendrum* orchid 'Montezuma Crown,' a gift from longtime Chronicle friend Tim Fleck. She's going into her 3rd winter hanging on the outer edge of our covered patio -- no protection whatsoever, and only occasional watering year-round. Flowers last forever. Amazing plant.



In the meantime, to warm your hearts, here are some pre-freeze WOW NOWs held over due to the Thanksgiving break. Curious to know if this beautiful dianthus from the garden of [Bluebonnet Garden Club of Houston](#)'s Valeda



Collins Landry made it. Dianthus is a cold-hardy choice that is known to often easily survive our winters.

CLINT & MARY ALICE HORNE's spectacular red-blooming variegated bougainvillea is one of four with different colored blooms gifted to them by Flora Tiedt. With quick freezes such as we just had, the Hornes water well all 17 (!) of their bougainvilleas, cover with sheets and blankets which, in turn, are also watered well. For prolonged freezes, they move all into a garage with a lamp kept lit all night for warmth.



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*Brenda's LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER
column is based on her 40+ years as Houston Chronicle's Lazy Gardener
Email: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com*



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 138

We often talk about environmental issues in this column, like water shortages, global warming, toxic chemicals, poor quality food, etc. One of the best ways to solve many of these problems is by composting.

In our area over 50% of the material going into our landfills is organic waste (grass, leaves, manure, food waste, etc.). In a landfill these organic materials generate a lot of odors and greenhouse gasses including methane and nitrous oxides that are molecule by molecule 28 and 300 times worse than carbon dioxide.

Landfills try and capture some of the gasses produced after a cell is closed and covered, but over 90% of the greenhouse gasses are released before the landfill cell is covered.

Our metropolitan area is growing rapidly with more and more people, hence more and more waste. Landfill space is decreasing and disposal costs are

steadily rising. New landfills will have to be located farther out increasing transportation and disposal costs and generate more greenhouse gasses. As a society we need to recycle these organic wastes (over 20 states ban organic waste from landfills).

Cities from Seattle to Austin are now recycling their food waste by composting. Additionally, at Nature's Way Resources, we often get calls from restaurants, small businesses, and homeowners whom want to recycle their food and other organic wastes.

So, for those whom want to be part of the solution, there is a new company in our area that will provide collection services for food and other organic waste called "**Moonshot Compost**".

From their flyer:

Moonshot Compost specializes in providing clean and simple methods for diverting food waste from Houston landfills. Why? The case for diversion is straightforward. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, between 30 to 40 percent of the food supply is estimated to result in food waste. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says that approximately 20 percent of what goes into municipal landfills is food waste. And once there, food waste decomposes anaerobically to produce methane gas, which is at least 28 times more damaging to the atmosphere than carbon emissions.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has implemented a Food Recovery Hierarchy that identifies an order of preference for managing excess food. Logically, the best methods are to reduce the volumes of surplus food generated, to donate any excess foods to feed hungry people and to divert food scraps to feed animals. It is even possible to utilize food waste to recover energy. After these activities are exhausted, the next best alternative is composting.

According to data from the 2015 Report on Commercial Food Waste prepared for the Houston-Galveston Area Council, approximately 5.47 pounds of food waste per person per day was being deposited in Texas landfills. One of the biggest barriers to large-scale diversion of food waste in Houston is the lack of food waste collection companies. Houston is a progressive city when it comes to quality-of-life issues, including the environment. Many other cities have extensive composting programs, including Denver, Seattle and San Francisco. Why not Houston?

When compost is placed on top of existing soil, there are many benefits, because compost adds valuable nutrients, leading to healthier plants; enhances soil structure, increasing water retention; and grows healthier plants, increasing the amount of carbon dioxide drawn from the atmosphere. When compost is added to soil that grows crops to feed people and animals, there are several benefits for our nutrition. Because the soil is rich and complex, that complexity is passed along to the food that is harvested. Savvy gardeners have been using compost for years to maintain beautiful and healthy gardens, whether residential or commercial.

Moonshot provides services for both residential and commercial clients, and we are excited by the interest in each program. Some of our commercial

entities include ConocoPhillips, Ostia, Henderson & Kane, Rice University, St. John's School, and Annunciation Orthodox School. Word is spreading, and we are ready to meet the challenge.

The company delivers organic feedstocks for composting to select collection facilities, including Nature's Way Resources in The Woodlands-Conroe area. Earned compost is returned to subscribers twice a year, in the fall and spring. All the valuable nutrients and benefits of compost stay right in here in the Houston community.

Moonshot also reports diversion amounts for all clients, because the company believes you cannot change what is not measured. In our experience, we collect between 10 to 12 pounds per week from a family of four. Check out Moonshot Compost at www.moonshotcompost.com.

Have You Tried . . .

Heartleaf Skullcap

(Scutellaria ovata)

This Texas native attracts hummingbirds, butterflies and bees. An herbaceous, drought-tolerant perennial with showy snapdragon-like blue-purple blooms May-Sept. 16-24" tall. Prefers full sun and EXCELLENT drainage. May go dormant after blooming in hot dry summers. Named for Latin word *scutella* (small dish or saucer) for the calyx shape after flowers fade. No major insect/disease problems. Great for cottage and native plant gardens. Member of the mint family. Many medicinal uses.



HEARTLEAF is carried by Nature's Way Resources ([Map](#)).
Or contact our other sponsors below or your neighborhood nurseryman for possible sources.

LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS HOUSTON GARDEN NEWSLETTER CALENDAR EVENTS

All events in Houston unless otherwise specified.

See Farmers Markets at end of calendar

ADULT GARDEN PLANT EVENTS ONLY
ALWAYS CHECK TO MAKE SURE YOUR EVENT IS IN! HOWEVER . . .

PLEASE READ BEFORE SUBMITTING EVENTS!

- **Events NOT submitted in the EXACT format below may take 2 weeks or longer to be reformatted/retyped and added to calendar.**
- **FARMERS MARKETS** -- Normally we do not run non-gardening/plant events. During this pandemic, when most gardening events have been cancelled, we are

happy to publish a running list of local Farmers Markets. See at end of calendar.

Submit events to: lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com.
PLEASE ALWAYS put group's FULL name in email subject.

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

SAT., 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

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

SAT., DEC. 12: HOLIDAY AT THE HOUSTON BOTANIC GARDEN: CELEBRATING NATIONAL POINSETTIA DAY, 9am-5pm, a.m. to 5 p.m., 8210 Park Place Blvd. \$15/adult, \$10/child & student. Tickets: hbg.org/events/holiday-at-the-garden-2020-12-12/

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

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/

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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.

