



Feb-5-2021 | Issue 375

Nature's Way Resources is proud to produce & email you this free weekly newsletter. We have no ads, but sponsors do graciously help support this project as a public service. Please note their names below & show your gratitude for this free service by patronizing their businesses! To become a sponsor, call (936) 273-1200

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.

[Click here to join our email list](#)

[CLICK HERE for PDFs OF PAST LG&F NEWSLETTERS](#)

CORONAVIRUS CANCELLATIONS

If your event in our calendar below is cancelled, please let us know as soon as possible at lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com

* * *



NOT WHAT WE WANTED TO HEAR, AL! BUT BIRDS HOPE WE'LL LISTEN TO LAUREN

"Chances are you never thought of your garden--indeed, all of your property . . . as a wildlife preserve that presents the last chance we have for sustaining plants and animals that were once common throughout the U.S. But that is exactly the role our suburban landscapes are playing."

– Doug Tallamy,
"Bringing Nature Home : How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants"

by BRENDA BEUST SMITH

Even though Big Al (below left) sadly predicted Spring 2021 is NOT yet around the corner (and the 'hog agreed on Groundhog Day), this is a good time to think about giving our gardens a stronger role in the grand scheme of things. .

([Big Al's story.](#))

First, however, I would like to pay tribute to my own "2020 Plants of the Year". I have two: Giant Turk's Cap and '[Profusion' zinnia](#), below.



My 9-10' high Giant Turk's Cap (*Malvaviscus penduliflorus*) has much large and longer-lasting brilliant red blooms than regular Turk's caps. Both Profusion zinnias and giant turk's cap were still in full bloom throughout most of January although that string of 2021 nights in the 30s nearly knocked them out. Note that "nearly." The turk's cap was so pretty at Christmas, I'm thinking of planting another by the front fence to drape with Christmas lights next year. No ornaments needed! And I do have one flower more to tout . . .

CYCLAMENS MAY NOT BE YEAR-ROUND BLOOMERS. They die in summer (if they even last that long). But they are the most reliable, longest-lasting outdoor (no-need-to-cover) winter bloomers for me. If there's one thing I can't stand, it's a plant that ups-'n'-dies with no warning just because I forget to water. Not only do cyclamen bloom all winter . . .



. . . they TELL YOU if they're thirsty! At left is the way they looked this morning, like a dramatic Greta Garbo on a chaise lounge. One quick drink of water 'n' up they pop, even if they've been thirst-draped like that for days!

* * *

ONE OF THE NEATEST aspects of writing as the Lazy Gardener for all these decades is when major advancements trigger a need more sophisticated advice. That's exactly where we are now with habitat/pollinator plantings. We're advancing from "gardens" to "landscapes."

Most readers know -- or know how to find -- the basics of creating a habitat/pollinator "garden":

- plant natives
- ban all pesticides/insecticides
- provide water and shelter

Now questions are about expanding horizons - how to take plantings to the next level, to convert single habitat areas into a pollinator/habitat landscape.

The good news is: we now have a much wider array of Texas natives available for purchase, not only through the many organizational sales (albeit online now), but also through a proliferation of nurseries promoting natives.

The next level? Narrowing your geographic perspective.



St. Julien's Crossing (Lauren Simpson photos).

Left, Lauren Simpson (University of Houston Law Center photo)

Among the most qualified teachers in our area is Lauren Simpson, creator of the premier “St. Julian’s Crossing Wildlife Habitat,” the name her family adopted for the gardens upon certification as a Monarch Waystation.

You can learn more by visiting Houston Audubon Society’s Bird-Friendly Communities site: [“St. Julian’s Crossing--a wildlife habitat.”](#) Lauren has earned several certifications related to habitat gardening. ([National Butterfly Center interview with Lauren](#) — a Clinical Associate

Professor at the University of Houston Law Center.)

Our next step: looking at things more closely from the insect’s perspective. Understanding struggles our local insects face in our urban areas and just exactly HOW creating native plant landscapes can help will be the focus of Lauren’s upcoming Zoom presentation:

TUES., FEB, 16: “Pollinator Challenge: the What, Why, and How of Gardening to Support Pollinators (and other Wildlife) at Home:

10 am, Sugar Land Garden Club ZOOM presentation. Free, but advance registration required: [sugarlandgardenclub.org](#)

In the meantime, here are a few pointers from Lauren to help you mentally broaden the horizons of your habitat garden.

- Around 90% of Lauren’s plants are native to our specific eco-region, which can help support insects that have evolved in this part of Texas.
- Lauren documents the insects that actually inhabit her traditionally sized front yard. So far she has identified 51 species of butterflies, around 30 species each of bees and wasps, and over 20 species of hoverflies. If you build it, they will come!
- Remember to plant native grasses among your flowers. Our prairie grasses add character to your garden while sheltering and feeding

wildlife. Their seeds feed birds, and their leaves can feed insects, like little Skipper butterflies.

Lauren is especially fond of -- below, l to r —Little Bluestem, Gulf Muhly, Sideoats Grama, Inland Sea Oats and Splitbeard Bluestem..



A few principals to keep the garden looking its best year-round:

- Have clean edges and borders. Beef up borders around wilder-looking beds to help them “read” garden.
- Plant clusters of particular species of plants.
- Communicate and be a good neighbor. Consider a yard sign that encourages people to recognize the value of a wildscape.

More on Julian's Crossing:

- Facebook: [facebook.com/St-Julians-Crossing-wildlife-habitat-1609337762653792/?ref=bookmarks](https://www.facebook.com/St-Julians-Crossing-wildlife-habitat-1609337762653792/?ref=bookmarks)
- Website: Lstjulianscrossing.com/

* * *

*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*

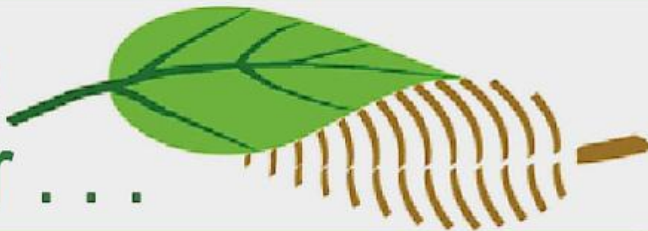
* * *



The Pines and Prairies Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas is now forming.

If you are interested in joining, please visit The Native Plant Society of Texas Web Page and go to the top right corner and click on the red box (join/renew) Or use this link.

Under chapter affiliation choose Pines and Prairies. This chapter will serve (but not be limited to) the Montgomery County Area.



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 143

Many companies that handle sewage sludge and handle waste water from sewage treatment plants, often want to dispose of this toxic waste on gardeners.

One of the contaminates of this waste is painkillers like aspirin and ibuprofen which interferes with a plants growth and immune system. One of the things recently discovered is that these painkillers interfere with the flow of auxins which are a plants major growth hormone. They also interfered with the whole endomembrane system that resulted in disrupted cellular systems.

These changes lead to faulty plant growth, an example is that roots grew up rather than down. Journal Cell Reports (2020)

A lot of our food supply is grown with sewage sludge (biosolids) as a fertilizer or they fields are watered with the waste water. No wonder we see so many reports on the news about health problems from our conventional food supply. Another reason to buy organically grown food whenever possible.

One of the issues facing the worlds food supply is a lack of phosphorous (P) as most of the geologic deposits are almost mined out. So, on the positive side of the sewage sludge issue which is rich in phosphorous, some nitrogen and other elements that plants require, is new research to remove these nutrients and leave the heavy metals, pharmaceuticals, etc. behind.

Research at The National University of Singapore has discovered a new strain of bacterium that can remove both of these elements efficiently as compared to current methods. Hence, maybe in the future we can find better methods of handling this waste. Journal Water Research (2020).

Most gardeners know that ants often protect certain insects like aphids to get the honeydew they produce. The Journal Ecological Entomology (2020) had an interesting article on how some caterpillars also use ants for protection.

Ants have very poor eyesight and sense the world by chemical signaling in the environment. Some caterpillars produce chemicals on their skin that mimic the chemicals that plants put out, a form of camouflage. Other species of caterpillars produce a sugary nectar that feed the ants, so they protect the caterpillar. God's creation is amazing with all the subtleties of how nature works.

The Journal Antibiotics (2020) had a paper on oak trees in health care. They were studying drug-resistant bacterial on surfaces of many materials. An estimated 700,000 people die each year from infections linked to antimicrobial resistant organisms.

Contrary to what they expected, they found that wood from oak trees inhibited bacterial growth. They also discovered that how the wood was cut, with the grain, against the grain, etc. made a difference. Wood that was cut transversal or tangential, rapidly decreased bacterial counts when they were placed on the wood!

My wife's hobby is cooking, hence the next time I need a gift for my wife, I think I will look for some nice oak cutting boards.

When we are low in iron (Fe) we tend to feel weak, dizzy and fatigued. Similarly, the microbes that make our soil healthy need iron also. When the soil is low in iron the microbes slow down the carbon absorbing process since they have to invest a lot of their energy into making mineral dissolving compounds to survive. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (2020).

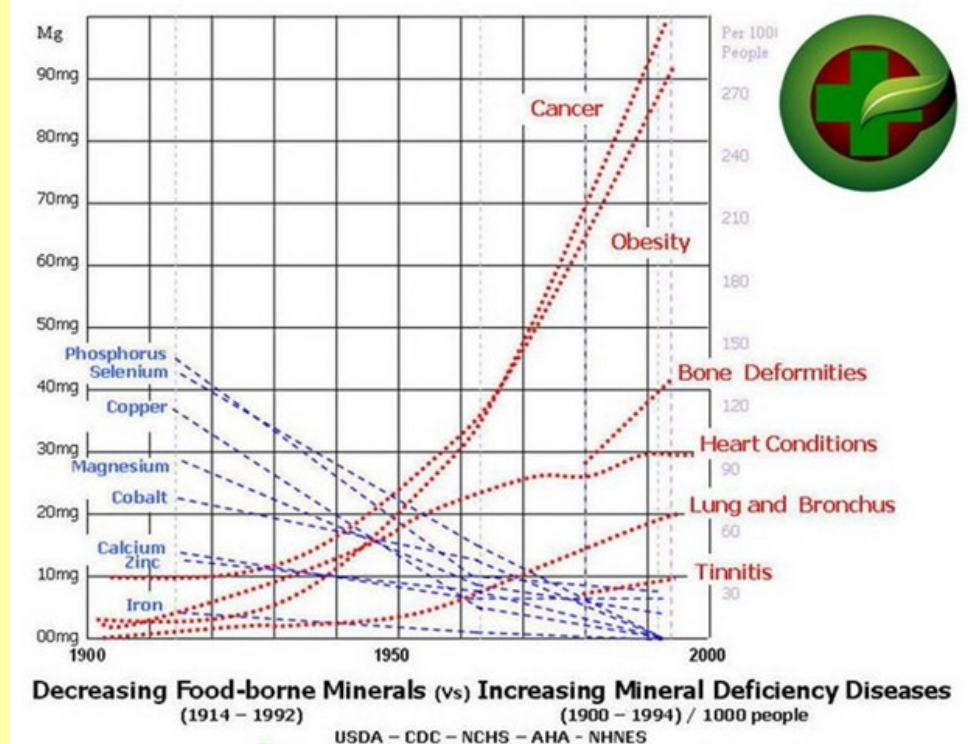
A while back I reported that researchers found that basalt sand could speed up humus formation (carbon sequestering) in soils by 400%. Basalt is a good source of iron. Texas greensand is another natural source of iron. The red soil of East Texas is caused by iron that is oxidized (think rust). Re-mineralizer contains both greensand and basalt and a great way to get iron and other essential elements into one's soil.

A study published in the journal Nature's Communications (2020) using new techniques, examined carbon in the soil at the atomic scale (size of atoms). They discovered that there are several types of carbon stored in the soil. One surprise was that a lot of the carbon they found was from microbes, from their waste material and from their dead bodies.

They confirmed that the form of nitrogen (N) supplied to plants affects carbon storage in the soil. The nitrogen interreacts with elements in the soil like iron (Fe) and aluminum (Al) to form stable carbon compounds at the atomic level. The research suggests that organic forms of nitrogen work best at increasing carbon storage in the soil.

Soils with higher organic matter (carbon-based molecules) are healthier and grow better plants. This is another reason to use organic fertilizers and re-mineralizer and build one's soils. Toxic agricultural chemicals destroy soil life and destroy carbon compounds in the soil.

A recent paper titled "Why are there Fewer Nutrients in Our Food?" released by the Orthomolecular Medicine News Service (December 2020) talks about some of the issues. Nutrient density is a subject we have talked about numerous times. As shown on the chart below, as nutrients decrease health problems increase.



A report by the USDA found that between 1963 and 2000 there was a 50% decline in nutrition for all types of fruits and vegetables.

There are multiple reasons for this decline, and a few are:

1. When one grows a crop and then harvests it, nutrients (elements in the form of minerals) are removed from the soil. Over time these essential elements are depleted and they are no longer in the soil for the plants to absorb.
2. Many elements require microbes in the soil to help roots absorb these essential elements. When toxic chemicals are used (pesticides, herbicides, artificial fertilizers, etc.) the required microbes are killed off.
3. Many genetically modified and some hybridized crops have lost the ability to absorb these nutrients even if they were in the soil. Note: Heirloom varieties tend to have higher nutrient density and better flavor.
4. Herbicides like glyphosate (Round Up) bind with many elements in the soil (zinc, magnesium, manganese, etc.) and prevent them from being absorbed.
5. Plants prefer to absorb potassium than calcium and magnesium. Too much potassium in the soil (artificial fertilizers) prevents these elements from being absorbed. A shortage of calcium and magnesium leads to weak bones. Elements like zinc and magnesium are essential for our immune system to fight viruses like covid-19.
6. From our study of all the elements found in the human body a few years ago, we learned there are 79 elements found in the human body. Our agricultural universities tell us we only need 16 elements. This is a huge disconnect. We need to apply rock dusts and re-mineralize our soil for better health.

The reasons to grow as much of one's own food from vegetables to fruits is essential to good health. Next best is buying local organic food from farmers markets and least beneficial is organic from the grocery store. Non organic food is not good and has many problems from GMO's to toxic chemicals.

* * *

Have You Tried . . . LITTLE BLUESTEM

(Schizachyrium scoparium)

This bird-attracting, deer-resistant native grass provides great foliage for all seasons. Vibrant blue hues morph in fall into slender deep-purple plumes atop foliage, accented by small, airy, silver-white seed heads that glisten in the sun as foliage shifts to a warm bronze-orange fall color. Pleasing bird-attracting foliage winters over. Great foliage plant for all seasons for both formal structured mass plantings and natural-looking landscapes. Exceptionally cold-hardy grass. Great for containers too. Full Sun, 36-40" tall, 18-24" wide.



Little Bluestem and other native grasses 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., FEB. 5: GARDEN CRUISIN': TOUR DE 4, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield. For ages 60+ and ages 12+ with transportation needs. Free. 713-274-4160.

SAT., FEB. 6: KEYS TO SUCCESS IN FORT BEND COUNTY FRUIT PRODUCTION (online event), 10-11:30am. Fort Bend County Library event. Free. Register: fortbend.lib.tx.us/event/live-success-growing-fruit-fort-bend-county/

SAT., FEB. 6: FORT BEND COUNTY 2021 FRUIT TREE SALE FINAL ONLINE STORE

DAY, closes 5pm. Master Gardener event. fbmg.org/2021-fruit-tree-sale/

MON., FEB. 8: SPRING VEGETABLE GARDENING (virtual) by HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 10-11:30am, free. Register: hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops

THURS., FEB. 11: PRUNING WITH THE MASTERS by KELLY TEXADA and BILLIE FLYNN (virtual) ,7pm, Houston RoseSociety/Houston event. Free. global.gotomeeting.com/join/935062093, or 1-224-501-3412, code 935-062-093

THURS., FEB. 11: MERCER BOTANIC GARDENS VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION. Register: 713-274-4160.

FRI., FEB. 12: CHILE PEPPERS FROM A TO Z by GENE SPELLER (virtual event), 10-11:30am. Register: galveston.agrilife.org/event/chile-peppers-a-to-z/

FRI., FEB. 12: WALK 'N' TALK - PLANT FOLKLORE: LOVE & DEVOTION, 10-11am, Mercer Botanic Garden, 22306 Aldine-Westfield, Humble, Free. Register. 713-274-4160

SAT., FEB. 13: VIRTUAL TOMATO & FRUIT TREE SALE, 10am-8pm. The Mercer Society event. Details: hcp4.net/news/tomatoes-or-fruit-trees-try-some-of-each/

TUES., FEB 16: SPRING VEGETABLE GARDENING (virtual) by HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, 11am-noon, Facebook live: facebook.com/harriscountyp/l/live

TUES., FEB. 16: POLINATOR'S CHALLENGE by LAUREN SIMPSON, 10am; Sugar Land Garden Club ZOOM event. www.sugarlandgardenclub.org

FRI., FEB. 19: GARDEN CRUISIN': TOUR DE 4, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield, Humble. For ages 60+ and ages 12+ with transportation needs. Free. Details: 713-274-4160. Register: 713-274-4160

FRI., FEB. 19: GARDEN CRUISIN': TOUR DE 4, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield, Humble. For ages 60+ and ages 12+ with transportation needs. Free. Details: 713-274-4160. Register: 713-274-4160

FRI.-SAT., FEB. 19-20: GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER SPRING PLANT SALE (online only). Shopping starts noon Fri.; ends noon Sat. noon-ends Sat. Details: store.galvestonmg.org

FRI. FEB. 26: GROWING PEACHES IN GALVESTON COUNTY by HERMAN AUER (virtual), 10am-noon. Register: galveston.agrilife.org/event/growing-peaches-in-galveston-county/

TUES, MAR. 2: MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENER VIRTUAL HERB 7 VEGETABLE SALE, 8am – Wed noon, Online at mcmga.square.site AgriLife Extension Office, 9020 Airport Road, Conroe. mcmga.com Details: (936)539-7824

WED., MAR. 3-WED., MAR. 10: 2021 SPRING VEGETABLE AND HERB PLANT SALE by FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS (online). Vegetable/Herb Sale Plant List (pdf download: Details: <https://fbmg.org/events/annual-sales/vegetable-herb-sale/>. FortBendmg@ag.tamu.edu; 281-341-7068.

FRI., MAR. 5: WALK 'N' TALK: TEXAS TOUGH PLANTS FOR A GULF COAST GARDEN, 10-11am, Mercer Botanic Gardens, 22306 Aldine Westfield, Humble.

FRI., MAR. 5: HERBS FOR THE GULF COAST GARDEN by BRIANA ETIE & NANCY LANGSTON-NOH (virtual), 10-11:30am. Register: galveston.agrilife.org/event/herbs-for-the-gulf-coast/

MON., MAR. 8: SUCCESSFUL SPRING VEGETABLE GARDENING by HERMAN AUER (virtual), 10-11:30am. Register: galveston.agrilife.org/event/successful-spring-vegetable-gardening/

THURS., MAR. 11: ONLINE BROWSING ONLY FOR FRI.,-SAT., MAR. 12-13:
GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER MARCH MADNESS
SALE. store.galvestonmg.org

FRI.,-SAT., MAR. 12-13: GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER MARCH
MADNESS SALE (online only). Shopping noon Friday-noon
Saturday. store.galvestonmg.org

SAT., MAR. 13: BUDDING OUT PLANT SALE, John Fairey Garden Conservancy,
Hempstead. info@jfgarden.org

FRI., MAR. 19: YEAR-ROUND CARE OF LANDSCAPE TREES AND SHRUBS (virtual)
by DR. WILLIAM M. JOHNSON (virtual), 10-11:30am. Register:
galveston.agrilife.org/event/year-round-care-of-landscape-trees-and-shrubs/

SAT, MAR. 20: MARCH MART VIRTUAL PLANT SALE, 8am-8pm The Mercer Society.
Online only at themerchersociety.square.site. Details: 713-274-4166.

FRI., MAR. 26: TOMATO STRESS MANAGEMENT – GROWING GREAT TOMATOES
(virtual) by IRA GERVAIS, 10-11:30am. Register: galveston.agrilife.org/event/tomato-stress-management/

SUN., MAR. 28-APR. 3: NEAR NORTHWEST MANAGEMENT DISTRICT VIRTUAL
SPRING PLANT SALE, SALE PREVIEW by HEIDI SHEESLEY at nnmd.org. Pick up at
Treeseach Farms, Inc.

TUES, APR. 13: MONTGOMERY COUNTY MASTER GARDENER VIRTUAL SPRING
SALE, 8am – Wed noon, Online at mcmga.square.site AgriLife Extension Office, 9020
Airport Road, Conroe. mcmga.com Details: (936)539-7824

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!
& please patronize our Newsletter & Calendar sponsors below!

THIS NEWSLETTER IS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please contact us
at 936-273-1200 or send an e-mail to: lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com



Saturdays 7-9am • SportsRadio 610

YearRound

Organic Fertilizers
Core Aeration
Compost Top Dressing
YearRoundHouston.com

MicroLife™



www.bartlett.com



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.

