



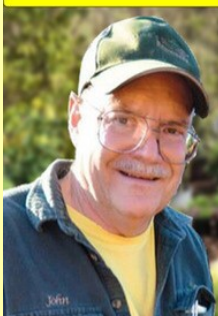
LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS

Houston Garden Newsletter



May-7-2021 | Issue 386

LISTEN SATURDAY



NATURE'S WAY
RESOURCES
an organically based service company

JOHN FERGUSON

7-8am

SportsRadio 610

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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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SPRING IS BURSTING OUT ALL OVER & LAZY GARDENERS RULE!

*"Flowers don't worry about how they're going to bloom.
They just open up, and turn toward the light and that makes them beautiful!"*

— Jim Carrey (tweet)

by **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

MANY THANKS to those of you whose faith & patience is being rewarded with oh-so-welcome green sprouts from seemingly-dead plants. Just to recap Readers-reported, never-protected, recent-returnees from "I'm-sure-it's-dead!" status:

American beautyberry, butterfly vine, clematis, cleyera, coneflowers, firespike, dogwood (rough-leaf), hibiscus, lantana, muhly grass (gulf & lindheimer), rudbeckias, sage (lyre leaf), Salvia farinacea, shrimp plant, Walters viburnum

and winecup.

Remember — readers reported all above came back after WEEKS of looking totally dead following the Valentine's freeze.

Now It's now been almost two MONTHS "since." Should you give up on those who haven't sprouted even minute-green from roots? It's your call. My tendency is to be thrilled by alterity. I'll continue waiting. I assume super-hardy root systems will be more likely than newly-installed plants to survive our increasing extreme cold snaps. And my patience has been rewarded . . .



Green sprout finally showing in my garden (file photos) on, l to r, aloe vera, porterweed, bleeding heart, Ti plant and red passionvine

It's true most are only sporting tiny green sprouts, some visible only after top soil levels are gently scrapped back. These include aloe vera, angel trumpet, bleeding heart vine, bottlebrush, confederate rose, coral fountain plant, duranta, esperanza (*Tecoma Stans*), hummingbird bush, jasmine vines, milkweed (giant white), oleander, porterweed, pride of Barbados, Rangoon creeper (from stalks, not base), Ti plant, tibochina, thryallis and Turk's cap (giant red). Red passion vine shows tiny green, but no sign yet on either Mexican flame vine.

Most are growing relatively quickly, but aren't going to be big and gorgeous overnite. If that's important to you, you've done the right thing in starting over.

My other still-not-yet-showing-greens include snail vine and ixora. There are more, but I forget what those dead stalks used to be!

TIP O' THE TROWEL . . .

- **to Bolivar Peninsula growers of the Jane Long and Kiamata Oleanders**, hybridized flowers that honor the Mother of Texas' historic stay on the Peninsula with the then-very-young Kiamata. Both oleanders have returned from freeze dieback. **ANGE BUSCEME SCHEIBEL** reports the Bolivar Peninsula Cultural Foundation will have both for sale Sat. & Sun., May 8-9, at the [2021 Texas Crab Fest](#) on Jane Long Hwy (81) in Crystal Beach. *(Pictured: Jane Long, left, and Kiamata oleanders)*



- **to rock rose (Pavonia)**, a Texas native that is the latest [Texas Superstar](#) designated plant, selections highly recommended by Texas A&M AgriLife for their contributions both to the beauty of our state and to conservation of our natural ecology resources.



- **to gardener-extraordinaire DALE PHILLIPS** in Friendswood for this shot of his White Queen crinum, hybridized by our mutual friend, the late **MARCELLE SHEPHERD**. From her tiny Vidor, Tx, garden, Marcelle (1929-1919) shipped her incredible crinums to growers across the globe. Among many crinums I salvaged post-Harvey are surely some given me by Marcelle (pictured). But I'll never know. Don't make the same mistake I did. Keep records of your special plantings!



Marcelle 's crinums will forever make life more beautiful for so many, especially for we who live where monsoon rains make lakes out of low gumbo soil areas. Crinum bulbs not only don't mind wet feet, they easily tolerate our droughts, freezes, heat, bugs, you name it. They are among lazy gardeners' best friends!



* * *



DON'T GIVE UP ON OAK TREES YET!! Tree experts across the state are counseling worried oak tree owners to **"WAIT!"** Trees march to their own drummers. Experts are saying many of these trees, if not most, will recover and live far longer lives than most of us will. tfsweb.tamu.edu/content/article.aspx?id=31600

* * *

UPDATES AND FOLLOWUPS . . .

- **PAULA BAZAN's** Peggy Martin rose picture made me think last week's praise should have included an "enthusiastic growth" warning. While she (Peggy, not Paula) does take well to pruning, lazy gardeners might wish they'd see this picture first. To be fair, however, Peggy's is actually 3 plants, not just one.



- **AFRICAN BLUE BASIL UPDATE:** As a Harris County Master Gardener, **MARGARET PIERCE** learned of their practice of planting African Blue Basil plants in HCMG's various test gardens to improve pollination (which we profiled in an earlier edition). She then encouraged fellow members of The Garden Club of Houston to grow cuttings of this very beneficial herb.



Because African blue basil is sterile, it flowers longer and does not go to seed, so attracts many pollinators for long periods of time, which benefits a whole garden with better pollination. GCH propagated 150+/- cuttings for members to plant. The cuttings grew into beautiful plants covered with pollinators all summer long.

- **BEAUTIFUL VIXON INVADING LAWNS** – In our Spotlight article below **PATRICK HUDNALL**, [*Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society*](#) vice president and [*Houston Botanic Garden*](#) volunteer, warns about a most unwelcome newcomer that, unfortunately, some folks are actually encouraging.
- Patrick brings with him another good idea for gardeners as well. He's a member of a number of organizations, which share insights through newsletters, etc., into how true enthusiasts accumulate such fascinating knowledge about their favorite plants. Patrick, for example, belongs to the [*Plumeria Society of America*](#), [*The Cycad Society*](#), [*International Palm Society*](#), [*American Fern Society*](#), [*American Horticultural Society*](#), [*Pacific Bulb Society*](#) and [*American Conifer Society*](#). Don't see your favorite plant? For more, Google: "(name of your favorite plant) society".
- **SPEAKING OF RECOGNIZING INVASIVES**, Houston Parks Board's [*Green Team*](#) volunteers tackle bayou restoration, including invasive species removal and planting of our meadows, wetlands, and forest tracts. [*Register to volunteer*](#).

* * *

*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*

* * *



'I HAD NO IDEA THE INCREDIBLE MENACE THIS WEED REALLY IS'

By PATRICK HUDNALL
Vice President
[*Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society*](#)

A tough new weed is quickly becoming established around Houston. It grows in full sun, shade, thick clay, gravel, sand or with epiphytic ferns and orchids. Already known in Mississippi, Florida and South Carolina, it is quickly spreading through shared potted or purchased plants.

I likely smiled at first seeing this cute little plant when it showed up in my garden. I had no idea the incredible menace this weed really is.



It is self-fertile with a large seed capsule



that develops on very small plants, about 4" in my experience. However, the root develops into a long tuber that is brittle making it nearly impossible to pull. Leaves are lanceolate to ovate in shape, 3" long and up to 1" wide. I have

removed roots (tuber) from a pot of gravel that was around 20" long.

Native to east Australia, *Pseuderanthemum sp. variable* goes by many common names: Pastel flower, Love flower, Night and Afternoon, etc. Sometimes labeled a Gesneriad, it is properly categorized as Acanthaceae. As it is resistant to most weed killers, the best route is to remove every bit by repotting plants or bulbs or remounting epiphytic plants. Persistence may meet with success or control, but it is nearly impossible to kill once it becomes established. Unfortunately, some people are intentionally growing it and it does not appear to have been killed by our 14° F temps in February.

* * *



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 152

A paper in the journal Molecular Ecology (2020) was on how fungal communities in the soil change after burning. They found that there were changes in some ecosystems after the forest was burned but not others.

Evergreen forests had the most changes in the soil biology, while there was little change in oak woodland communities. Oak woodlands depend on fire to survive as fire clears leaf litter and dead limbs, releases nutrients and creates better conditions for some seeds to germinate, helps control insects and pathogens. It also helps prevent other tree species from invading.

We know that many species of fungi have symbiotic relationships with many plants. Fungi also store carbon in the soil and they are food for many other organisms. Fungi are very beneficial and if we want healthy gardens, we need to take care of our fungi. This means we need to feed and protect them.

This means no fungicides (as they kill fungi) and feed them with items like an aged native mulch, liquid humates, and fish emulsion. Remember "Healthier fungi = healthier plants".

The relationship between fungi and plants is so important that Leiden

University has created a database of fungal interactions and is available via the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF). “The goal is to combine all our knowledge on fungi into one database and allow scientists to acquire a new understanding of the importance or the relationship between plants and soil fungi”. New Phytologist (2021)

Another benefit of gardening is exercise. Numerous studies have shown moderate exercise to stretching makes us healthier. Applying mulch is a good example, as the twisting turning shoveling and raking are all moderate exercises.

Reaching to pull a weed or reaching to prune a limb are a natural form of stretching. Being out in the sun increases our vitamin-D production, and many of the microbes in healthy soil produce chemicals that stimulate our immune systems as well as the feel-good chemicals for our minds.

Studies have shown those with moderate exercise have lower all cause mortality than those whom do not. Maybe this is one of the reasons gardening has exploded in popularity over the last few years.

A paper from the University of Nottingham published in the journal Science (2020) was on a sealing mechanism in plants supported by microbes.

The study found that the coordination between root diffusion barriers and the microbes colonizing the root allows (or facilitates) control the mineral uptake by the plant which is crucial for proper growth and reproduction. This mechanism allows for the plant to absorb what they need but not get too much of a given element.

When we use things or products that harm microbes, we harm our plants. A few examples are fungicides, herbicides and pesticides, high salt products like artificial fertilizers and poultry manure, chemicals in public water supplies (the more we water the more harm we do), to even some types of mulch like cedar, cypress and pine that do not rot due to the chemicals in them that kill microbes.

Artificial fertilizers often force too much of a given nutrient into the plant defeating this regulatory system. This may result in fast growth that is weak and actually attracts disease and insect pests.

I was reading in a new book on minerals or elements this morning and our how they relate to our health. It stated that the fluoride in our water systems prevents plants from absorbing iodine from the soil! This leads to thyroid problems for many people.

One of the hottest trends in horticulture is landscaping in such a way that it provides ecosystem services. This type of landscaping design also increases the value of one’s home, especially when compared to just plain grass lawns.

So, what is ecosystem landscaping? Over the years research has established that the health of an ecosystem is tied to the number of interacting species

both in ecosystem stability and ecosystem function. Note: Nature does not like mono cultures.

“We can define ecosystem function in several ways: the ability to hold energy captured from the sun within biological systems before it escapes back into space; the ability to produce products or perform services useful to humans or other species; the ability to create living and dead biomass; and so on.” -- Dr. Doug Tallamy.

I would add to that list the ability to capture and hold water until needed by plants and animals. Numerous folks with beautiful landscapes have stated they have not needed to water their lawns or flowerbeds since the drought of 2011 thus saving them thousands of dollars since then on water bills!

A statement that I once heard from a very experienced landscaper was, “If a person would spend one-half the cost of an irrigation system on soil improvement, they would never need the irrigation system in Houston”.

Another question we might ask is; What type of landscape is capable of producing insects in the numbers required to support food webs? If we want birds then we better have insects. When birds are laying eggs over 80% of their diet is caterpillars (insects), without insects we do not have birds, or toads and frogs, spiders, lizards, bats, small mammals from rodents to racoons, and even large animals like foxes and bears.

So, do we plant a tree from China or maybe a popular species that supports zero or 21 species of caterpillars respectively, or an oak tree that may support 557 species!

There are many places to get started. These range from joining a local Native Plant society or Master Naturalist group or visit several websites.

The agency [Woodlands Water](#) has a lot of information on its website and is even rebating homeowners \$300 per home to plant [drought tolerant native plants and trees](#).

[The Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center](#) also has a lot of good information on plants.

[The National Wildlife Federation](#) under the Native Plant Finder tab lists plants by zip code.

A couple great books on the subject for gardeners are:

"Bringing Nature Home - How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants"

by Douglass W. Tallamy, Timber Press, 2014, Edith Printing, ISBN-13: 978-0-88192-992-8.

"Nature's Best Hope- A New Approach to Conservation That Starts In your Yard" by Douglass W. Tallamy, Timber Press, 2019, ISBN-13: 978-1-60469-900-5.

Have you tried ...

MAXIMILLIAN SUNFLOWER

(Helianthus maximiliana)



Don't believe "authorities" who say Maximilian sunflowers only bloom Sept.-Oct. Here on the Gulf Coast they can flower all summer-late fall. Unlike most sunflowers which are annuals (return from seed rather than roots), Maxmilians are perennials and produce large, bright yellow flowers that spiral around stalks. They can grow 1'-10' (4-6' is average). Well drained soil, full-partial sun. When young, these are heliotrope (sun lover) flowers that "track" the sun east to west during the day and reorient themselves to east overnight. As they age, this habit tends to disappear. A favorite of birds, bees, butterflies, deer and other wildlife. Native Americans grew sunflowers as food, oil, dye and thread. Early pioneers planted sunflowers around homes to repel mosquitoes and bathed in boiled sunflower blossoms to relieve arthritis pain.

MAXIMILLIAN SUNFLOWER 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.

**NOTE: IF YOU'RE CONCERNED ABOUT MASKING
POLICIES AT EVENTS, CHECK WITH CONTACTS LISTED**

SAT., MAY. 8: DAYLILY PLANT SALE, 10am-2pm, 5705 Pinemont, Houston.

Houston Hemerocallis Society event. List of varieties posted at offs.com/hhs/

SAT., MAY 8: SPRING PLANT SALE, 9am-4pm, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. 713-274-4160

MON., MAY 10: INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT, virtual, 10-11am. Harris County Master Gardener event. Register: hccs.edu/community-learning-workshops

MON., MAY 10: SUMMER GREENS by MICKEY KLEINHENZ, virtual, 7-8pm, Houston Urban Gardeners event, Link: meet.google.com/gzm-yqio-jeu, Info: Houstonurbangardeners.org

THURS., MAY 13: BENEFICIALS AND PESTS IN THE ROSE GARDEN by SUZANNE WAINWRIGHT-EVENS, virtual, 7-9pm, Houston Rose Society event. Free. Details: houstonrose.org

FRI., MAY 14 AND 28: GARDEN CRUISIN': TOUR DE 4, 9am & 11am, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. Ages 60+ or age 12+ with transport needs. Register: 713-274-4160

TUES., MAY 18: INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT, virtual, 11am-noon. Harris County Master Gardeners & Public Library System event. Live at: facebook.com/harriscountyp/live

THUR., MAY 20: GROWING FABULOUS HOUSEPLANTS by PAUL WINSKI (virtual). 10am. Harris County Master Gardener event. Free. Register: eventbrite.com/e/home-grown-lecture-series-tickets-143797162183

THURS., MAY 20: VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION, 6-7pm, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. Off-site: Timber Lane Community Center. Register: 713-274-4160

FRI., MAY 21: COMPOSTING by JIM GILLIAM (Zoom), 10-11:30. Pre-register: galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/

FRI., MAY 22: EXPLORING DENDROLOGY: THE STUDY OF TREES, 9-11am, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. Register: 713-274-4160.

THURS., MAY 27: BIRD SURVEY, 8-10am, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. Register: 713-274-4160

FRI., MAY 28: RAINWATER HARVESTING by NAT GRUESEN (Zoom), 10-11:30. Pre-register: galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/

SAT., MAY 29: ALL ABOUT INVASIVES, 9-11am, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. Register: 713-274-4160

FRI., JUNE 4: A PASSION FOR PLUMERIA by LORETTA OSTEEN (Zoom), 10-11:30. Pre-register: galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/

FRI., JUNE 11: LOUISIANA IRISES by MONICA MARTENS, Ed.D. (Zoom), 12 Noon-1:00. Pre-register: galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/

SAT., JUNE 5: MORNING FAMILY HIKE, 9am-11am, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. Register: 713-274-4160

SAT.-SUN., JUNE 5-6: GALVESTON HOME & GARDEN SHOW, Galveston Island Convention Center. galvestonhomeandgarden.com/

FRI., JUNE 11: GARDEN CRUISIN': TOUR DE 4, 9am & 11am, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. Ages 60+ or 12+ with transport needs. Register: 713-274-4160

FRI., JUNE 11: LOUISIANA IRISES by MONICA MARTENS, Ed.D. (Zoom), 12 Noon-1:00. Galveston County Master Gardeners event. Pre-register: galveston.agrilife.org/horticulture/mgseminars/

SATURDAY, JUNE 19: FATHER'S DAY VIRTUAL PLANT SALE, 8am-8pm, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Online only at [themercersociety.square.site](#). 713-274-4166.

FRI., JUNE 25: BEYOND BEES!, 9:30-10:30am, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. Register: 713-274-4160

SAT., JUNE 26: ALL ABOUT INVASIVES, 9am-11am, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Free. Register: 713-274-4160

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!

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If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please contact us
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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.

