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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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PUTTING IN (OR REDOING) GARDENS? GUILTY SECRETS . . .

"I will be the gladdest thing / Under the sun!

I will touch a hundred flowers / And not pick one..."

~Edna St. Vincent Millay, "Afternoon on a Hill," 1917

by **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

I hope Edna St. Vincent Millay isn't looking down from above. She won't like my guilty secrets from the past.

VICTORIA GRIFFIN's views (below) of her new "island" gardens in Montgomery County are filled with still-young shrubs such as (*l to r*) abelia, dwarf sage, dwarf gardenia and Virginia sweetspire (*in fall color*) (*All file photos*).



Similar beds are filled with camellias, dwarf Japanese maple, crepe myrtle and today-yesterday-today-and-tomorrow bushes. Great plants all, but still very young. What groundcover, she asked, could she put in to fill in the extra areas?

Groundcovers are certainly one option, but not one a lazy gardener might necessarily choose. If it would be your preference, my advice: visit your **local independent nursery** (to be sure you buy the best choice for your area and situation). But don't buy a lot of any single variety. Buy one or a few of several different varieties. Plant and watch. Take out ones you don't like. Buy more of those ones you do like . . . and, most important, that like YOU.

Remember, groundcovers are NOT maintenance-free. If they like you, they will spread and will need watering, trimming and/or thinning, etc.



- Another option: Use mulch over several newspaper layers (to cut down on weeds). Good organic mulch also provides fertilizer; cheap mulch may do more harm than good. Choose a reliable source. Speaking from similar bad memories, neither Victoria nor I like weed cloth or plastic undershoots. Weeds sprout on top from seeds dropped by birds, wind, etc. Plastics decompose. Cloth becomes entangled in roots, making it a pain to remove down the line.
- To encourage shrubs (not trees!) to spread sideways, tip-prune top vertical branches to force more lower horizontal growth. Added benefit: branches spreading sideways produce more flowers than do vertical branches. *(NOTE: It's getting late to prune azaleas or camellias. They're starting to set next year's buds. If you must, do it quickly.)*
- Now, my guilty secret: As an high school head coach's wife, I hosted many post-game and other parties. Folks are naturally curious about a garden writer's yard, even if she's called "lazy" and the column was a side line to a full-time reporting job. A day before a party, I'd hit then-extensive undeveloped wooded Aldine areas to dig up, roots & all, coreopsis and other wildflowers in ditches. These would be mowed down anyway. I'd quickly plant them in my bare garden spots.

If I couldn't get enough, there was always Plan B. At El Cheapo plant sources, I'd buy (hopefully sale) hanging baskets with some blooms & but especially long vining branches. I'd ditch the baskets & plant clumps in garden bare spots, loosely spreading branches outward atop the soil. Looked like they'd been there forever.

This could be temporary solution for Victoria too. Sometimes my "hanging basket" plants lived and actually became pretty garden delights. Whether they become permanent or not, Victoria would have "bare soil covers" to give existing shrubs time to spread out with new (top tip-pruning-triggered) horizontal growth.

* * *

HORTICULTURAL THERAPY has become a major component on many levels these days, but perhaps nowhere more so than with "senior" gardeners.



"Senior" is a tricky word to use these days. We all know folks still energetic long into their 90s. But even so, all of us would be out in the garden more often than we are now if only things were a little easier to reach, lift, move, etc. So in a sense, horticulture therapy is good for everyone!

At Brookdale First Colony Senior Community, **Mary Kay Tortorice** says their 4-foot high raised garden has proven to be a very workable height, especially for those with reaching or other challenges that make ground level beds less appealing. Under the direction of FCSC Programs Director **Cathy Rupf**, they've succeeded with tomatoes (regular and cherry), Japanese eggplants, basil, rosemary and mint.

Adding flowers and using more container plantings, she says, seem to draw even more residents to the garden, Mary Kay says. Now, if they can just stop squirrels from eating the buds off their hibiscus!

I've long thought horticultural therapy techniques are godsend to lazy gardeners. Any approach, tool, design or system that makes gardening easier for those of us who -- at any age -- have trouble with bending, reaching, standing, stamina, etc., is a welcome blessing. Manna from heaven for lazy gardeners! Here are two resources that might give you helpful ideas:

- [**Accessible Gardening for People With Physical Disabilities: A Guide to Methods, Tools, and Plants**](#) by [Janeen R. Adil](#)
- [**Building Raised Beds: Easy, Accessible Garden Space for Vegetables and Flowers**](#) by [Fern Marshall Bradley](#)

* * *

POTPOURRI:

- **APOLOGIES TO Patty McFall** who (*not Paula Bazan*) sent in last week's photo (insert) of an overly-enthusiastic Peggy Martin rose.
- **Paula Bazan's** own Peggy Martin rose is this beautifully pruned compact shrub (large picture). A great illustration of the



benefit of the judicious top pruning tip mentioned earlier. Increased horizontal branching noticeably triggers more flowers than do vertical branches.

* * *

*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*

* * *



OHBA

Landscaping with The Experts

May 25TH 4:00-6:00 CT PM
Our First Spanish Speaking Free Zoom Event!

You Will Learn From...

3 Horticultural Experts:
Joanna Botvin with Urban Harvest
David Figueroa with The Native Plants Society of Texas
Carmelo Orellana with Landscape Art

Register Online at ohbaonline.org/register

Joanna Botvin <i>Warm Weather Vegetables</i>	David Figueroa <i>Great Native Plants</i>	Carmelo Orellana <i>Organic Landscape Practices</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Find out how to get the most out of growing Summer Vegetable gardens• Great information to share with clients & apply in your garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn about beautiful & worry free native plants• Be water smart & pollinator friendly at the same time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discover how to solve landscape problems & heal soil Organically• Learn many tricks for how to make a positive environmental impact with landscaping 

Thank You Sponsors!



For any event questions please contact Daniel Millikin at daniel@ohbaonline.org

OHBA

Paisajismo con Los Expertos

25 de Mayo 4:00-6:00 CT PM

Nuestro Primer Evento Gratis en Español via Zoom!

Aprenderás de...

3 Expertos en Horticultura:

Joanna Botvin con Urban Harvest

David Figueroa con The Native Plants Society of Texas

Carmelo Orellana con Landscape Art

Regístrate en Linea a traves de ohbaonline.org/register

Joanna Botvin

Verduras de Clima Cálido

- Descubra cómo aprovechar al máximo el cultivo de huertos de verano
- Excelente información para compartir con los clientes y también aplicar en su jardín



David Figueroa

Maravillosas Plantas Nativas

- Aprenda sobre plantas nativas que son hermosas y sin preocupaciones
- Sea inteligente con el agua y amigable con los polinizadores al mismo tiempo



Carmelo Orellana

Prácticas de Paisaje Orgánico

- Descubra cómo resolver problemas del paisaje y curar la tierra orgánicamente
- Aprenda muchos trucos sobre cómo lograr un impacto ambiental positivo con el paisajismo



¡Gracias Patrocinadores!



Para cualquier pregunta sobre el evento, comuníquese con Daniel Millikin en daniel@ohbaonline.org



John's Corner



NEWS FROM THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF SOIL AND PLANTS # 153

A paper in the journal *Frontiers in Forests and Global Change* (2020) was on carbon storage by trees. The researchers found that the largest 3% of the trees accounted for 42% of the total above ground carbon stored within the forest systems studied in Oregon and Washington.

If a tree ring is added each year to the circumference of a large tree, then it is obvious that it will store more carbon than a small tree. This means we need to protect our large trees from logging, forest fires or other destruction.

Many cultures have used herbs and berries as natural medicines for thousands of years. The plant *Artemisia annua* (Sweet Wormwood, Sweet Annie, etc.) has been used as a treatment for malaria. The anti-malaria drug Artesunate contains two compounds from the artemisia plant.

Additionally, this plant has been found to have anti-cancer and anti-viral properties. Researchers at several universities are studying it use as a treatment for covid-19.

So far, they have found that a tea made from the leaves provided more anti-viral activity than when the compound is used in a drug.

For decades we have known that many animals use bio-minerals to produce a body armor (crustaceans, sea urchins, etc.). The research published in the Journal Nature Communications (2020) has found the first example of insects using bio-minerals as armor.

Researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison noticed that Leaf Cutter ants had a whitish coating on them. They discovered that it was a bio-mineral that developed as the ants mature, which increased the hardness of their exoskeleton. The armor is made from a high magnesium calcite which increased the hardness of the armor.

Leaf cutter ants are territorial, and often fight. They observed that ants without this armor always lost and those with the armor always won their battles. It is also believed that it helps protect them from a pathogenic fungus.

Many plants make bioactive compounds called saponins. Soysaponins found in soybeans have anti-cancer and antioxidant properties. The Licorice plant produces saponin glycyrrhizin a natural sweetener.

A study published in the journal Nature Communications (2020) by researchers at Chiba and Osaka Universities discovered a new enzyme that is used by plants to produce these chemicals. This enzyme is similar to those used in legumes to make cellulose in plant cell walls. They hope this discovery will lead to new products.

A paper published in the journal Science of the Total Environment (2020) has found a new way of cooking that removes some of the arsenic found in rice. It removed 50% of the arsenic in brown rice and 74% in white rice.

Researchers at the University of Sheffield called this new method PBA (parboiling with absorption method). Rice as a plant species accumulates ten times more arsenic in its cells than other grains and plants.

“This new method involves parboiling the rice in pre-boiled water for five minutes before draining and refreshing the water, then cooking it on a lower heat to absorb all the water.”

The arsenic accumulates in the outer bran layer. Hence the milling of white rice removes much of the arsenic containing bran layer, but removes 75-90%

of the nutrients and is why brown rice is far more nutritious. This new cooking method removes a lot of the arsenic in brown rice while keeping most of the nutrients.

More and more folks are talking about a concept called “One Health” as a large majority of our human health problems are directly linked to the poor quality of our food supply and lack of environmental stewardship worldwide.

Simply defined:

**Soil health → Plant Health → Animal Health → Human Health →
Environment Health → Planet Health**

One health is not a new concept as it has a rich history in the bible. Moses recommended that the people observe as they entered Canaan. “See what the land is like and weather the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees on it or not? Do your best to bring back some fruit of the land.” Numbers 13:18-20

From the book “The Soil-Human Health Nexus” edited by Rattan Lai, CRC Press, 2021, ISBN: 978-0367422134 (pbk).

* * *

Have you tried ... PRAIRIE DROPSEED

(Sporobolus heterolepis)

Prairie Dropseed's delightful, showy, emerald-green tussock-forming growth takes on even more appeal in fall and through winter when it projects a lovely golden blue hue and a distinctive cilantro scent from airy pink-brown-tinted blooms that ultimately form seed heads beloved by birds. Beautiful landscape movement when breezes blow, tidy but dense clumps 2-3' tall and wide. Slow-growing, long-lived, low-maintenance compliment to native plantings, especially prairie species that thrive in sunny, hot, dry situations. Excellent drainage is a must. Sadly, in many areas of its range, Prairie Dropseed populations are in decline. Adding this species to your landscape is a great way ensure it continued presence as well as to provide eye interest to native landscapes.



PRAIRIE DROPSEED 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**

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.

SAT., MAY 22: TEXAS ROSE RUSTLERS SPRING MEET (rescheduled), 10am, Memory Park @ Charles B. Stewart West Branch Library, 202 Bessie Price Owen Dr., Montgomery, Free. [Texasroserustlers.com](https://texasroserustlers.com)

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/

THURS., JUNE 10: PRODUCTS TO BOOST YOUR ROSES IMMUNE SYSTEM by MARK CHAMBLEE (virtual), 7-9pm, Houston Rose Society/Houston event. Free.

houstonrose.org/

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. Check for updates: galvestonhomeandgarden.com/

THURS., JUNE 10: PRODUCTS TO BOOST YOUR ROSES IMMUNE SYSTEM by MARK CHAMBLEE, (virtual), 7- 9pm, Houston Rose Society/Houston event. Free. houstonrose.org/

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/

TUES., JUNE 12; PLUMERIAS IN YOUR GARDEN by HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS (virtual), 11am-noon, HCMG & Harris County Public Library System event. Free. Facebook Live: facebook.com/harriscountyp/live

TUES., JUNE 15; PLUMERIAS IN YOUR GARDEN by HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS (virtual), 11am-noon, HCMG & Harris County Public Library System event. Free. Facebook Live: facebook.com/harriscountyp/live

THURS., JUNE 17: ART FROM THE GARDEN by BRANDI KELLER (virtual) 10am, Harris County Master Gardener event. Free. Register: homegrown2021Q2.eventbrite.com/

SATURDAY, JUNE 19: FATHER'S DAY VIRTUAL PLANT SALE, 8am-8pm, [Mercer Botanic Gardens](#). Online only at themerchersociety.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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RESOURCES
an organically based service company

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.

