



LAZY GARDENER & FRIENDS

Houston Garden Newsletter



May-21-2021 | Issue 388

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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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IMPALE A SNAIL? WELL . . . YARD FULL OF 'LAKE BOTTOMS'

*"The lark's on the wing / The snail's on the thorn
God's in his heaven / All's right with the world"*

~Robert Browning, "Pippa Passes" (1901)
by **BRENDA BEUST SMITH**

If poet Robert Browning pictured a snail impaled on a thorn in his verse, he's of one mind with many Houston area gardeners. "Experts" who recommend upturned grapefruit rinds and jars of beer have obviously never tried to cope with a true Houston invasion. These techniques work only if snails and slugs die laughing at you.



Best lazy gardener solution? Replace plants snails and slugs eat with plants they don't eat. I don't know why, but I almost never have a snail problem. Maybe our dogs eat them. Of course, as soon as the snails read this, I'll probably be deluged. Snails reportedly don't attack (l to r below) daylilies,, crocosmia (montbretia), hydrangeas, ferns and iris. Also, are turned off by

dianthus, geraniums and vinca. (Please let me know if they attack yours, as well as your other most-attacked plants! lazygardenerbrenda@gmail.com)



* * *

JOHN'S COLUMN ON SOIL CRUSTING helped me understand what's happened in my own garden. After heavy rains, our new 3-years-ago-yard was a "lake" — literally. Rainwater took forever to soak into lower areas, some of which never completely dried until the middle of summer.

Everyone advised us to haul in lots of topsoil to level it out. But we're talking an acre. That would . . .

1. force excess water to collect in our neighbor's yards and
2. cost a lot of money . . . although we could spread it ourselves, of course. But to quote Maynard: **"WORK???"**



My feeling has always been if I put in a plant, making sure it has the right drainage, sun v. shade, etc., and it dies anyway, obviously God doesn't want it in my yard. Since I didn't have time, in the early years, to garden, I just followed what Mother Nature does. Leaves and limbs falling off thriving trees in her "yards" break down to fertilize not only the Mother tree, but countless new generations of understory plants as they become hardened and survived despite to our area's extreme weather cycles.

Among many other benefits, gradually composting leaves should both feed "imported" plants and help raise the soil level. Generous neighbors rake & bag leaves, I pick them up & dump them around treasured plants and across areas where water stood the longest. (Neighborhood bag lady!)

This actually worked (somewhat to my surprise). I didn't really understand why until John explained. When water repeatedly stands on a site, soil microorganisms are killed by the sheer weight of the water as well as by the depleted supply of oxygen. Upper soil levels harden until, eventually, a lake "bottom" develops. Water accumulates and stays above ground because it can't sink down. I had a yard full of "lake bottoms"!

As my piled-on leaves decayed, compost formed, drawing beneficial microorganisms back in. As the decaying leaf compost gradually elevated the soil surface, microbiological activity below ground helped the soil become more porous. Now, even in areas that are still low, water no longer stands forever as before. Rather it seeps downward noticeably faster. Turned out, I was a brilliant organic gardener with absolutely no idea how or why I was doing the right thing! Lazy gardeners rule!

It's a definite work in progress. One thing's for sure, leaves will continue to fall, neighbors will continue to rake them up and I'll continue picking up any bagsful set



out on our streets.

And my cosmos (pictured with my Kokopelli) will continue to be one of my most reliable flowers. They come up quickly from seed, bloom prolifically, transplant easily and now are coming back up from last year's dropped seed, with no help whatsoever from me. Definitely one of a lazy gardener's best friends.

* * *

POST-PANDEMIC PLANTING It's no secret home gardens & nurseries flourished during the recent pandemic. Order overloads even shut down some seed companies. To quote the Washington Post: *"The veggie garden, (once) a quaint domestic appendage, became overnight a survival bunker."* Although surveys show a definite increase in edible gardening, ornamental sales still top the charts.



Supplying one's own food rated high as an incentive, but most gardeners reported their increased interest in general was due mainly to an effective way to reduce stress. And, the vast majority of gardeners (a lot of them new to this activity) said they plan to continue gardening for the foreseeable future!

IF YOU'RE AN "URBAN GARDENER" branching out into any gardening for the first time, join [Houston Urban Gardeners](#). Log onto [HUG's upcoming virtual meeting](#) when, on Mon., May 24, **Mickey Kleinhenz** will review greens that survive/thrive in our summer heat. Meetings start at 7, but you can log on about 10 minutes earlier just to chat: <https://meet.google.com/gzm-yqio-jeu> Mickey's "Inwood Eden" can be "toured" on [youtube channel](#) — techniques and plants for the Greater Houston area. Newcomers might not realize that it's late now to plant seed or too-young plants of tomatoes or peppers. Better to put in well established plants from nurseries. As HUG's current emailed newsletter points out, this month you need to plant black-eyed & other field peas, okra, sweet potatoes, basil, tomatillos, peppers and kale. Don't forget . . .



Vegetables often provide beautiful garden color!
L to r, black eyed peas, okra, sweet potatoes and peppers

* * *

POTPOURRI . . .

- **MERCER BOTANIC GARDEN'S FATHER'S DAY SALE** in June has been postponed. Stay tuned for the rescheduled date.
- **SUPER FLOWER BLOOD MOON.** Mark your calendar: May 26. A

worldwide lunar eclipse triggers this unusual phenomenon, so named by Ojibwe Tribes to honor the extraordinary floral color this time of year in the Great Lakes area, producers of many medicinal plants.

- **TIP O' THE TROWEL TO . . .** Harris County Master Gardeners (and especially Carolyn Boyd). HCMG's "Urban Dirt Newsletter" Team won 3rd place in a Texas MG Assn.'s Excellence Awards competition.

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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

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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

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| <p>Joanna Botvin <i>Warm Weather Vegetables</i></p> <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  | <p>David Figueroa <i>Great Native Plants</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn about beautiful & worry free native plants• Be water smart & pollinator friendly at the same time  | <p>Carmelo Orellana <i>Organic Landscape Practices</i></p> <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  |
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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

Registrate en Linea a traves de ohbaonline.org/register

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| <p>Joanna Botvin <i>Verduras de Clima Cálido</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descubra cómo aprovechar al máximo el cultivo de huertos de verano • Excelente información para compartir con los clientes y también aplicar en su jardín  | <p>David Figueroa <i>Maravillosas Plantas Nativas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aprenda sobre plantas nativas que son hermosas y sin preocupaciones • Sea inteligente con el agua y amigable con los polinizadores al mismo tiempo  | <p>Carmelo Orellana <i>Prácticas de Paisaje Orgánico</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descubra cómo resolver problemas del paisaje y curar la tierra orgánicamente • Aprenda muchos trucos sobre cómo lograr un impacto ambiental positivo con el paisajismo  |
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¡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 # 154

A paper in the Crop Science Association news magazine (2021) was on how climate change is affecting our food crops like carrots.

“Heat stress, salt in irrigation water, rising ocean levels, even the range of disease and insect pests is changing with the climate and temperature”. Researchers are now studying how wild relatives of cultivated plants may help.

For example, carrots are among the top ten vegetables produced globally for its vitamin A and carotenoids content. The flower we know as Queen Anne’s Lace is a wild relative of the carrot. It is often referred to as a wild carrot.

The wild carrot is much more tolerant of heat and stress than its cultivated

relatives hence by crossing the wild carrot with modern cultivars they hope to develop a more climate tolerant variety.

We often hear about plastic pollution in the oceans, but what about our soils? A study published in the Journal of Hazardous Materials (2021) has found that micro plastics are contaminating our soil also.

Microplastics are now found in soils all over the world. These microplastics adversely affect not only the soil quality but also the physiology of soil life and in turn, the interaction between soil and plants.

It is known that some sources of microplastics in soil come from using sewage sludge and wastewater to grow and irrigate plants. Run-off water from rain is probably another source, as is breakdown products from plastic mulches.

Many plastic products leach toxic, carcinogenic, and hormone disrupting chemicals from the plastic. These will be absorbed by the plants and hence into our food supply.

Another reason to buy organic, buy from market gardeners or better yet grow as much of one's own food as possible.

Researchers have discovered another reason to take care of the microbes in our soil. In the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease (2020) they found a confirmed link between this terrible disease and our gut microbes.

It is well known now that the microbes in our gut are largely responsible for our health or lack of. One of the advantages of being a gardener is that we are constantly being exposed to billions of different microbes. So, the question I will ask is: Do you want to be exposed to a chemically treated, microbe deficient soil, full of pathogens (toxic chemical rescue agriculture) OR use modern organic methods based on soil microbiology that is rich in beneficial microbes?

When we garden in rich soil full of organic matter like compost, and full of trace minerals, we expose ourselves to these beneficial microbes. They are on our hands and clothes, and we breathe them in, replenishing our guts supply of good microbes.

A study in the journal BMC Public Health (2021) has found that there are about 385 million cases of acute poisoning's each year from pesticides. They compiled data from many countries. These poisonings resulted in 11,000 deaths with 60% occurring in India.

The environmental group "Sustainable Plus" that an estimated 14 million people have died from suicide using pesticides since the Green Revolution in the 1960's.

Researchers at the University of Washington and University of California have found a new way that plants fight off pests. Studying cowpeas, they discovered

a type of receptor on the surface of their cells that can detect a compound in caterpillar saliva and initiate the plants defense system.

In response to leaf wounds (being eaten) and to the presence of a protein found in the caterpillar saliva, the plants boost their production of ethylene. Ethylene is a hormone plants use to protect themselves. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (2021).

Similarly, The Max Planck Institute for Plant Breeding Research found that plants have nucleoid-binding receptors/leucine rich (NLR) proteins that form a layer of defense inside cells to protect against pathogen attack. Science 2020.

* * *

Have you tried ... MALAYSIAN SKULLCAP

(Scutellaria javanica)

This mint family member survived our recent freeze. Although it got knocked back, it thriving now. A semi-evergreen herbaceous perennial with creeping stems and small, dark purple-blue flowers, it reaches 3'-4' in our area. An attractive plant in any site, its dark May-Dec. flowers are most impressive when viewed up close. Sun to part shade, tolerates moisture but needs to be well drained. Pest resistant and unpalatable to deer and rabbits.



MALAYSIAN SKULLCAP 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 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](#)

TUES., MAY 25: LANDSCAPE SUCCESS: CHOOSING THE RIGHT PLANTS FOR THE RIGHT PLACE by SUMA MUDAN & Peggy D'HEMECOURT, (online), 2-3:30pm. Fort Bend County Master Gardeners, Fort Bend County Libraries & Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service event. Register: [fortbend.lib.tx.us/.../landscape-success.fbm.org/landscape-success-2021/](#); 281-341-7068.

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

SAT., MAY 29: HOW TO MAKE COMPOST by JOHN FERGUSON, 11:30am-1pm, Houston Botanic Garden, 8210 Park Place Blvd. \$15. Register at [secure.hbg.org/573/762](#)

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/

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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at 936-273-1200 or send an e-mail to: lazygardenerandfriends@gmail.com



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Core Aeration
Compost Top Dressing
YearRoundHouston.com

MicroLifeTM





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.

